

# *New World Wines*

Tel: 441 232 2325

Fax: 441 236 2260

Email: [nww@bermudawine.com](mailto:nww@bermudawine.com)

Website: [www.bermudawine.com](http://www.bermudawine.com)

## *Newsletter*

**March 2001**

**No. 3**

The Grand Cru dinner was held in February at Le Figaro and enjoyed by all, except perhaps the next morning. Who said you couldn't get a hangover drinking great wine!

The next event will be a Deerfield Ranch wine dinner to be held on Saturday 28th April at Le Figaro. Robert Rex and his wife PJ from Deerfield will be present to provide some commentary. Five wines and dinner for \$85 inclusive. Book early as this will sell out quickly.

Several additional restaurants now stock our wines including Fourways Inn, Rockfish Grill (Newstead) and the Reefs.

### Notes

Six of the wines we carry made the Wine Spectator top 100 for the year 2000 including:

- #3 Whitehall Lane Cabernet Reserve 97
- #17 Marcarini Barolo Brunate 96
- #29 Bosquet des Papes Chateauneuf du Pape 98
- #43 Fontodi Flaccianello 97
- #46 Landmark Chardonnay Overlook 98
- #69 Calera Chardonnay 98

The Palliser Estate Pinot Noir 99 just won the trophy for best pinot noir at the prestigious Sydney Wine Competition, with the Sauvignon Blanc 2000 taking a gold medal as well. These wines not only provide good drinking but excellent value.

### Loire Valley

This month's report is on the Loire Valley in France. I visited the Central and Eastern Loire in October 2000. The dilemma with the Loire is that neither wine critics or wine

drinkers take the area too seriously. There is no “ranking” system of vineyards as in Burgundy or Bordeaux and quite frankly lots of mediocre wine is made from vineyards with high yields and little attention to detail. Climate is also an issue as the reds can be very lean and herbaceous in poor weather years.

### Chinon

When I visited Chinon on the first occasion in around 1990 my wife and I tried a 1985 from Yves Loiseau (Domaine de Columbier) at Au Plaisir Gourmand, the best restaurant in Chinon. Red chinon is made from the Cabernet Franc grape and this wine was lovely. We visited the vineyard the next day and Madame Loiseau kindly sold us a magnum of their 86 (the 85 having been sold out). Several years later we drank the bottle in Bermuda and it was just as good as the 85. The moral of the story is that Chinon from a conscientious producer in a good year can be delicious young and age for at least 10 years.

This trip commenced with a visit to Domaine de Columbier where we met with Yves, his wife, son-in-law and vineyard manager and tasted through their 97s, and their 98s and 99s, the current available vintages.

The 97s were beautiful, the 98s light and somewhat tannic and herbaceous and the 99s fruity but lacking in concentration and backbone. I knew before I even asked the question what the position would be. Yes lots of 98s and 99s but no 1997s available.

As there is no market for wines like the 98s and 99s in Bermuda I thanked them and made a note to return a year after the next good vintage. (Later that night we had dinner at L’Oceanic in Chinon. On their wine list, at a very reasonable price, was a Domaine de Columbier 85. The fundamentals of the wine I remembered were still there, but the fruit was starting to disappear. Although enjoyable its best days were behind it.) Later in the trip, when visiting Domaine Henri Bourgeois, I had the opportunity to taste the wines of Domaine la Bouchardiere, a domaine whose 97s I stock. Again the 98s and 99s were offered but like the Domaine de Columbier wines they were not nearly as good as the 97s which are drinking very nicely now.

### Vouvray

Heading east along the Loire my next stop was Vouvray. I had arranged to meet Philippe Foreau of Domaine Naudin and after various directional miscues arrived only ten minutes late. He has been described by Robert Parker as one of the best white wine producers in the world. He also speaks little English so we were soon conversing in halting French, with much scrabbling through my dictionary to find those particularly specific wine terms. He took us on a tour of his cellar carved out of the hillside by his grandfather by hand about sixty years before.

We started with a Methode Traditional Brut 96 which had lovely aromas of bread dough on the nose and palate. This was followed by a couple of Vouvray Secs, the 99 and then

the 98. The 99 was good but the 98 was better with mineral, almond and honey notes on the finish. Next was the Demi Sec 98 which was sweeter than the Sec and perhaps difficult to match with food.

Tastings of the Moelleux 96 and 97 were then offered. The 96 tasted of oranges and minerals but seemed somewhat closed. Philippe said the wine should open up in a couple of years. The 97 was harmonious with similar flavours as the 96 but much more approachable. A lovely dessert wine.

Finally Philippe gave us a taste of the 97 Moelleux Reserve of which he had no more available to sell. I could understand why as it was an awesome wine with flavours of blood oranges and the balance of sweetness and acidity which will keep it going for 20-30 years or more. Just brilliant. It is made from selected grapes affected by the noble rot.

I decided to purchase some of the Sec 98 and Moelleux 97.

## **Sancerre**

I had arranged to meet Henri Bourgeois in Chavignol but headed for Sancerre to find a hotel first. The Panoramic is the best of a fairly mediocre lot but as they did not have any rooms with a view of the valley below I checked into the Hotel St. Martin in the centre of town.

On wandering around the main square I decided to taste a few wines from producers who had small shops in town. The first of these was Alphonse Mellot. I was very impressed with the regular Sancerre but the Cuvee Edmond aged in oak was quite outstanding. Quite different to the generally bland Sancerres I was used to. However I was there to visit Domaine Henri Bourgeois and I duly drove to Chavignol that afternoon. It turned out Monsieur Bourgeois was busy with the harvest but he invited me to join him and the vendagers (grape pickers) that evening for dinner. He turned out to be a jolly and interesting host and after a delightful dinner we agreed to meet the next morning to taste some of his wines.

The next day after a short tour of his newly constructed winery, gravity fed and all mod cons, we started tasting. His Pouilly Fume 99 was acceptable with an aromatic nose and zingy acidity but was slightly lacking in fruit. This was followed by the Petit Bourgeois 99, Quincy 99 and Les Baronnes 99 all easy drinking but lacking the extra dimension I found in the wines of Alphonse Mellot the previous day. The Le Jadis 98 was a marked improvement with oak and almonds on the nose and a round complex finish.

Several of the wines I was particularly interested in were sold out so I decided to follow up on my tasting of Alphonse Mellot's wines the previous day.

I duly returned to Sancerre and visited Mellot's office. I was met by his wife who indicated that Alphonse was in the vineyard, but that she would call him on his cellphone. She seemed hesitant and resigned, no doubt because she knew that her husband would

spend more time than he could really spare with me. As it turned out we spent nearly two hours tasting in his winery.

We started with a barrel sample of the Cuvee Edmond, his reserve wine. It was lovely not even remotely like the generic Sancerres we generally taste in restaurants. We followed with a barrel sample of the 1999 Generation X Sancerre which seemed to be more oaky and less complex than the Cuvee Edmond. Alphonse agreed that of the two “prestige” cuvees he also preferred the Cuvee Edmond in the 99 vintage.

Next we tried a Pouilly Fume made from purchased grapes but this was nothing special. He admitted his heart was not in this wine.

Finally we sampled his 1999 Generation X Sancerre Rouge from the barrel. Made from 100% Pinot Noir my notes read “terrific pinot, great balance, length, superb wine”. I hope it will travel well because although it is priced like a good Burgundy it also drinks like one.

I duly ordered the regular Sancerre 2000, Cuvee Edmond 99 and Generation X Sancerre Rouge 99. These are fine distinctive wines.

### **Pouilly Fume**

Alphonse asked me whether I had considered buying from Didier Dagueneau in Pouilly Fume. I had heard of him of course but for some reason had thought my chances of getting his wines would be remote and I had not followed up. However I duly headed for St. Andelain where Dagueneau’s winery is located. After a few minutes pleading my case I was invited to taste.

We started with “En Chailloux” 99 made from grapes from different vineyards from yields of approximately 50 hl/hectare. Unlike most vigneron in the region he prunes aggressively, strips leaves to allow sunlight to reach the bunches and, if necessary, carries out a great harvest. The wine spends one month in oak before bottling. I thought it was a terrific wine.

Next was the “Buisson Renard” 99 which come from a single vineyard parcel. The wine spends four months in oak and a further four months in stainless steel. My notes read “Slightly sweet but balanced by good acidity, tasty oak. A long finish, pure fruit flavours. So different to the normal Pouilly Fume. Is it too different? A big wine, excellent, exciting!”

The Pur Sang 99 (Pure Blood) followed. The wine is made from the best bunches from different vineyards which are allowed to hang on the vine for a further week before harvest for extra ripeness. Vinified in oak barrels, a majority of which are new. My notes read “Considerable acidity, consistent and insistent fruit flavours. Can wait for two years before drinking.”

The final wine poured for me was the “Silex” 99. This wine had a long finish but although it was the most expensive of the wines tasted I preferred the Pur Sang. When my host indicated that only one case would be available I was secretly pleased that I could look disappointed but obtain exactly what I wanted. The En Chailloux, Buisson Renard and Pur Sang will be available in mid April (see website for prices).

Clive Coates calls Dagueneau the best producer of Sauvignon Blanc in the world and I would highly recommend everyone to try these wines.

***John M. Sharpe***

March 2001