



KERMIT LYNCH
WINE MERCHANT

1605 SAN PABLO AVE.
BERKELEY, CA 94702-1317
510 • 524-1524
FAX 510 • 528-7026

PRESORTED FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
PERMIT NO. 11882

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

- CHÂTEAU THIVIN
- MÉO-CAMUZET
- JIM HARRISON
- ZH VT_s & SGN_s

OPEN • TUESDAY–SATURDAY 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. CLOSED • SUNDAY & MONDAY

JANUARY 2004

— DRY WHITE VALUE OF THE MONTH —

2002 SAVENNIÈRES • CHÂTEAU D'ÉPIRÉ

The vintage produced perfectly delicious reds and whites in the Loire. You should consider coming in for a mixed case of 2002 Loire wines just for the fun of it.

Note that our 2002 Cuvée Spéciale from Epiré, the cuvée you are used to, will arrive later. This is another blend I put together when I visited because they had so much good wine in 2002, it was too tempting to pass up. This bottling combines young and old vines, and blends oak-aged with a batch in stainless steel.

It is an unbelievable buy, so I urge you to stock up on it. It drinks beautifully now, and I'm sure it will make great drinking as it ages over the next 10–12 years. You will not find a finer, more characterful dry white at such a price. Consider that I would be raving about it and recommending it to you if it were three or four times more expensive.

If you have my book, see pages 47–55 for more about this superb château.

\$12.50 PER BOTTLE **\$135.00** PER CASE



Blending at Château d'Epiré

Photograph © Gail Skoff



Photograph © Gail Skoff

— RED WINE VALUE OF THE MONTH —

2001 CORBIÈRES “LA DEMOISELLE” DOMAINE DE FONTSAINTE

Here is another wine that will age well, another one mentioned in my book (which shows that I’ve been a fan of the wine, the *terroir*, for years and years), and at both Epiré and Fontsaïnte sons have taken over from fathers since I began working with them. Bruno Laboucarié at Fontsaïnte seems to me to have progressed and upped the quality a notch or two. Of course his dad is never far away.

Bruno wanted to replace the barrels in his cellar for the exceptional 2001 vintage but feared that new oak would overwhelm the character of his wine, so he bought once-used barrels from Château Lafite. Judging by the taste of the finished wine, they worked rather well.

After tasting La Demoiselle, some are shocked to hear that it is 90% Carignan. A complex, distinctive, serious red from the dread Carignan? Well, yes, and 95-year-old Carignan at that. And besides, Demoiselle is a *terroir*, not a grape.

Typical aromas are cinnamon, Provençal spices, black cherry, and also a neat flavor that it always possesses, and that emerges more and more with age, that doesn’t remind me of anything else I’ve ever tasted, no other wine, no other anything. It must be the flavor of Demoiselle.

This 2001 is a good-sized red, loaded with those typical flavors, and it boasts a sensuous, chewy tannin. My only regret: I shoulda bought some mags.

\$14.25 PER BOTTLE

\$153.90 PER CASE

ZIND-HUMBRECHT

— NOW IN STOCK —

2001 ZIND

ZIND? You may have heard the story. Zind is what used to be ZH's Pinot d'Alsace, which has long contained some Chardonnay from their great Clos Windsbuhl vineyard. The Alsatian wine gestapo, however, don't allow no Chardonnay in no Pinot d'Alsace. Case closed! But Olivier likes what the Chardonnay gives to his Pinot Blanc and Auxerrois, so he created a new label as flashy as Zorro's sword and stuck to his guns, or sword, or Chardonnay.

The 2001 Zind was raised in big, beautiful oak *foudres*, and the extraordinary finesse and sense of completeness would not have been possible had it been raised in new barrels or stainless tanks. What a perfection. And to borrow Aubert de Villaine's favorite compliment, what discretion. This wine presumes that you have good taste and that a wallop from a sledgehammer is not necessary to get your attention.

"Long live Zind," wrote one French review, and blasted the Alsatian wine authorities for their stupidity. Really, the most expensive, most sought after Pinot d'Alsace no longer has the right to call itself Pinot d'Alsace? Isn't that shooting yourself in the foot? Watch out for bureaucracy, folks. It is as dangerous as state-subsidized so-called "capitalism."

Don't miss Zind.

\$29.00 PER BOTTLE **\$313.20** PER CASE

— PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER —

VT & SGN

And now to some of the most awe-inspiring wines ever made. When you drink one you pay attention, sort of like you would listening to a late Beethoven string quartet.

From 2001, we get to profit from loads of noble rot at Clos Windsbuhl and at Rangen, where the little patch of Gewurztraminer is located just above the river and the humidity is ideal for the growth of botrytis. In the Vendange Tardive from Rangen the grape variety, Gewurztraminer, is unrecognizable because the *terroir* and botrytis dominate. As for the Clos Windsbuhl, here is Olivier: "Powerful aromas of roses, spices, fruitcake, and honey. The balance of sweetness and richness will make this wine age endlessly."

In 2000, it was the Pinot Gris that enjoyed the noble rot, and Olivier made three incredibly viscous, complex SGN masterpieces. Unbelievable.

2001 Zind-Humbrecht *Vendanges Tardives*

GEWURZTRAMINER "CLOS WINDSBUHL" VT \$44.00 PER TENTH

GEWURZTRAMINER "RANGEN DE THANN" VT 85.50 PER FIFTH

2000 Zind-Humbrecht *Sélection de Grains Nobles*

PINOT GRIS "CLOS JEBSAL" SGN \$70.50 PER TENTH

PINOT GRIS "ROTENBERG" SGN 55.50 PER TENTH

PINOT GRIS "HEIMBOURG" SGN 55.50 PER TENTH

DOMAINE MÉO-CAMUZET

— PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER —

VINTAGE 2001

It must have been daunting to start making wine with Henri Jayet and Romanée Conti in the same village. Well, learn at the feet of Henri Jayet, that would be one solution, and that's what Jean-Nicholas Méo did. In fact he is today making wines as expressive and fine as we enjoyed in our Jayets, but with more depth and chewier textures.

And god bless the diversity from one vineyard to another in Méo's cellar. Turning for example from Clos de Vougeot to Corton you see that the grape variety is there serving the *terroir*, because the two *grands crus* are thrillingly different right down to the bone, to the bone structure that holds them together.

Vintage 2001 chez Méo is classic, with a good firm tannin for aging.

	PER BOTTLE
2001 BOURGOGNE <i>ROUGE</i>	\$26.00
2001 BOURGOGNE HAUTES-CÔTES-DE-NUITS <i>BLANC</i>	
"CLOS SAINT-PHILIBERT"	29.00
2001 MARSANNAY <i>ROUGE</i>	32.00
2001 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES	58.00
2001 VOSNE-ROMANÉE	58.00
2001 VOSNE-ROMANÉE "LES CHAUMES"	97.00
2001 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES "AUX BOUDOTS"	98.00
2001 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES "AUX MURGERS"	98.00
2001 CLOS DE VOUGEOT <i>GRAND CRU</i>	144.00
2001 CORTON <i>GRAND CRU</i>	144.00
2001 VOSNE-ROMANÉE "AUX BRULÉES"	173.00
2001 VOSNE-ROMANÉE "AU CROS PARANTOUX"	190.00
2001 RICHEBOURG <i>GRAND CRU</i>	325.00

*Pre-arrival terms: Half-payment due with order,
balance due upon arrival.*

CHÂTEAU THIVIN

IN 1976 I DID NOT SPEAK FRENCH so I hired Richard Olney to translate for me. Yes, to translate. A friend told me that Olney spoke French, needed some spare change, and besides that, he knew French wine. What I needed in those days was a translator, because I knew about thirty words of French.

We covered the wine route from Richard's home in Provence north to Burgundy in late November. It turned out that Richard knew French wine inside and out and that French wine knew Richard Olney. When we showed up, he was received with respect, and before we left, old bottles appeared.

Michelot-Buisson: Meursault Perrières 1966 and Charmes 1961.

Hubert de Montille: Pommard Rugiens 1966 and 1964, Volnay Champans 1959, and Taillepieds 1953.

Aubert de Villaine: La Tâche 1972, Grands Echezeaux 1962, Richebourg 1954.

I already imported wines from those three, but Richard had some addresses in the Beaujolais, where I had no producers. We began chez Georges Duboeuf (before he became known as the King of the Beaujolais), but I did not buy anything, thereby probably losing several fortunes. I did buy a couple of wines from Louis Tête. Both Tête and Duboeuf were and are *négociants*. Our third visit was to the rather modest Château Thivin up on the south side of the hill they call Côte de Brouilly.

We were received by the widow of Claude Geoffray. He had developed a local reputation somewhat like Lucien Peyraud's at Bandol. He had encouraged domaine bottling and improving quality and crusaded to make the wines of Beaujolais better known as far away as Paris. In those days, Paris was farther away than it is today.

Madame Geoffray appeared to be in her late seventies. Apart from the taste of her wine, I still have a few vivid memories. One was when, wearing a skirt, she took a *pipette* (or wine thief) and indiscreetly climbed up a ladder in order to draw from *foudre* a taste of her 1976. Pants might have been more appropriate, or was I an immature ageist pig? Whatever, Richard and I quickly began studying our shoelaces. And then, at table, at lunch, her green beans! I had been raised on canned or frozen. When she noticed my enthusiasm, she told me her secret. You have to get up early and pick the beans while they still have dew on them, she said.

We had lunch in the dining room next to a welcome, fragrant fire of vine trunks and old barrel staves. The colorful tile floor, still there today, is patterned somewhat like an oriental carpet. We had a view of the naked winter vines out the window on a bright, glittery day. And Madame Geoffray was a joy, a personality. She had spirit, enthusiasm, generosity, and real class without a hint of aristocratic hauteur.

With tears in her eyes she explained to Richard that her private collection of old wines had been destroyed when a stone cellar wall collapsed during a storm.

Hardly any old bottles of Thivin had survived. Imagine, the fruits, the liquid record of all those years of blood, sweat, joy, and drunken revels crushed and gone.

With cheese, however, she managed to find us a 1971. “Perfect marriage,” I noted in my tasting journal, “and the wine is extraordinary. Dark color. Quite rich, ripe, robust, complex. Good tannin. The closest thing I’ve ever tasted to Joseph Swan’s 1970 Gamay.”

About her new wine from the hot summer of 1976, the wine for sale, I wrote, “Loaded with fruit and quality. Difficult not to drain the bottle.”

Before leaving, Richard translated and Madame Geoffray agreed to ship some 1976 to Berkeley. Shortly after my return home, however, I received a beautifully written letter from her. She explained that her good friend Gerald Asher had imported Thivin into England for years but had moved to the U.S. and wanted to represent her in the U.S. market. Would I mind buying Thivin from him instead of importing it myself? How could I say no?



CHÂTEAU THIVIN

Over the years I lost track of Thivin until I saw the 1991 on a restaurant list at the Château de Bagnols in the Beaujolais. I enjoyed it enough to phone to ask if they were still represented in the U.S. They were not, but importers were advancing rapidly, so I dropped by to see what had become of the memorable domaine.

Mme. Geoffray’s nephew, another Claude, was winemaker and hadn’t changed things much, thank goodness. However, he had jumped on the filtration bandwagon, and I noticed a difference in quality between the wine before and after bottling. When I asked if he would bottle it unfiltered for me, he lit up. Like so many French winemakers (I think it was taught or preached at enology school) he thought everyone *had* to filter.

We have been working together happily ever since, and in his upcoming 2003, from another scorcher of a summer, you will enjoy an echo of his aunt’s 1976.

Oh, and I cannot forget the current Mme. Geoffray, Claude’s wife Evelyne, who treats me like an old friend and always has me to lunch in front of that same fireplace.

Château Thivin is one of France’s historic wine properties. In fact, Colette wrote about visiting and the color and taste of the wine there. You should enjoy checking out each vintage as it appears.

Thivin’s 2002 just arrived. It is a vintage blessed by abundant charm and character, which makes a wonderful combination.

2002 CHÂTEAU THIVIN CÔTE DE BROUILLY

\$14.95 PER BOTTLE

\$161.46 PER CASE

THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

2002 COLLIOURE ROUGE “PUIG ORIOL” DOMAINE LA TOUR VIEILLE

When I bought Domaine les Pallières at Gigondas, the property included a row of ancient cherry trees. We make jam with the fruit and will in fact have enough to offer some here in the shop this year. I mention it because black cherry jam is my favorite, and La Tour Vieille’s Puig Oriol has something similar to black cherry jam in its perfume this year, along with spices, Provençal herbs, and a stony touch.

Round and friendly on the palate, here is a delicious taste of French Catalonia.

\$19.95 PER BOTTLE **\$215.46** PER CASE



Vincent and Christine, La Tour Vieille Photograph © Gail Skoff

2001 MOURVÈDRE • CHÂTEAU LA ROQUE

I live several months per year near Bandol, so I’ve gotten to know the wines fairly well, and I can tell you that it is not easy to find Bandols superior to this pure Mourvèdre from Pic Saint Loup. Take home a case or two and enjoy it over 6–8 years. It is delicious now with that great explosion of young Mourvèdre character on the palate, but you can tell that it is going to age well, too. (La Roque’s Cupa Numismæ, by the way, was recently named one of the *Wine Spectator’s* top 100 wines of the year.)

\$14.95 PER BOTTLE **\$161.46** PER CASE

**2001 LO MOLIN
LA GRANGE
DE QUATRE SOUS**

The winemaker is not French. She is Swiss. Her tiny domaine in one of the most colorful, beautiful settings you can imagine (in the Saint Chinian appellation) is producing some impeccable, serious red wines thanks to her meticulousness and passion. She farms her vines organically.

Her 2001 Lo Molin, a blend of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, does not taste very French. It tastes more like a rich, amply endowed Napa wine, and the bright ripe fruit edged with new oak is quite a treat. You can't call it the international style, but there is something multinational about it.

\$19.95 PER BOTTLE

\$215.46 PER CASE



Photograph © Gail Skoff

Hildegard Horat

**2000 PIC SAINT LOUP ROUGE
“LES NOBLES PIERRES”
CHÂTEAU DE LASCAUX**

If you are a fan of the wines of Château de Lascaux, don't miss their 2000 Nobles Pierres, one of the finest they have produced. And if you are not familiar with their Nobles Pierres cuvée, this is the vintage to try. Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Grenache, that wonderful trilogy, and for Nobles Pierres they are the domaine's oldest vines, barrel-aged and unfiltered.

\$18.95 PER BOTTLE

\$204.66 PER CASE



*Here is another report straight from the wine-drinking trenches
where good struggles to overcome the banality of designer wines.*

ODIOUS COMPARISONS

by Jim Harrison

WHILE DEEPLY EMBEDDED in Paris I awoke from a strenuous post-lunch nap and wondered if we humans had a more than nominal connection to the universe. It was as if the gods had decided to burn a giant question mark on my mental lawn. “Wherefore art thou, Jimmy?” I asked myself. Modern man is always at the crossroads when he should be doing something sensible like floating in a boat on a river. The Seine just down the street didn’t present an immediate possibility so I had a hasty cup of coffee and turned to the alternative that God has always led me to in a lifetime of bitter conundrums. Wine. Yes, gentle reader, wine. When troubled, just have a glass of wine. The truest thing Ernest Hemingway ever said was “good is what you feel good after.”

However, a large step away from the delicious world of sensation is the world of criticism. Whether you are drinking wine or reading a book, quizzical man who has no particular idea why he is alive will ask himself if the wine he is drinking or the book he is reading is any good. Here I must present my trump card rather than waiting for the questionable timing of conclusions. I recently read a fine book by Lawrence Osborne, *The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World*, wherein he quotes the *garagiste* Pierre Seri as saying, “You can’t really describe wine, you can only remember it,” to which I would add, you can’t really describe literature, you can only experience it.

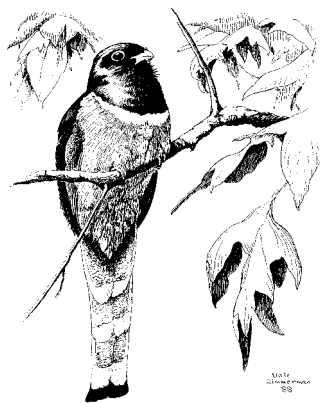
Now we are within the desperately familiar arena of human limitations. I recall that one night in Key West I read Knut Hamsun’s novella *Victoria* in a single sitting and actually sobbed when I put the slender volume down. The first glass of a truly great wine can be as vivid and palpable as sex and, in truth, quite as indescribable unless you wish to resort to “we fell back on great waves of nothingness.”

The existence of much wine and literary criticism seems to presume a stringent orthodoxy, the possibility that there is a perfect scorecard on which one may rate literature or wine, or weigh them on one of those precise gram scales so favored by cocaine dealers in the distant past. This bespeaks the immodesty of the critic, or the reductive capabilities of anyone who shrinks the world to fit into the briefcase of his wobbly ego.

Of course, one occasionally reads a literary or wine critic whose taste or palate is generally admirable. Ezra Pound limited his trust to anyone who had created a notable work. Perhaps this is a tad mean-minded. In literature in our time we’ve had Edmund Wilson, Randall Jarrell, and more recently George Steiner who

owns a stunning range. They are fingers pointing out both grandeur and fraud but few of us own a prized collection of old book and wine reviews. In the field of wine Robert Parker seems to be the reigning champion in terms of credibility but his hundred point system often disintegrates into silliness.

The holes in any system, like those in race track betting, are as big as bomb craters. An old magnum of Mount Eden not well thought of twenty years ago turned splendid with passing time. The orange juice has a hint of apple juice. The peach nectar has a hint of fermented tamarind or the saddle on which a Missouri virgin rode on a hot day for eleven miles. Grapes taste strongly of grapes. In literature Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* lay totally forgotten for a half century. I suggest in passing that Robert Parker address the French Senate and admit his limitations among which are that he couldn't make a good Burgundy at gunpoint. In literature the Ivy League critics, Harold Bloom and Helen Vendler, both of whom came to power during the Reagan Administration, might bow down and confess that they are house sparrows compared to the elegant trogon that is a good poet.



Trogon

It's a cool and rainy November day in Paris. Yesterday to my surprise I had a more than acceptable Lebanese wine with Peter Lewis at a pleasant wine bar called *Passage*, though we reverted to a grand Beychevelle for a second bottle. We talked idly of our fascination with "terroir," the uniqueness of geology and geography that offers hundreds of wines their peculiar gifts as opposed to the designer "mixologists," who strike me as whorish as the concept of "continental food." But this is my taste, not a rule.

Wandering around France for a couple of weeks returns wine to earth from the abstract territory of the life of the mind. I'm with Guy de la Valdene and Peter Lewis, both of whom have palates that are far more subtle and learned than my own. I still disagree with them on occasion but this is scarcely a serious matter. I tread lightly like a barnyard pig in November's first snowfall. My actual favorite wines, say Gigondas, Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieux Télégraphe, Domaine Tempier Bandol, aren't the sacred Burgundies and Bordeaux. Naturally I love Pétrus and Clos de la Roche, Lafite and Margaux, but theirs is a world in which I don't feel totally comfortable. I am frankly a tugboat, not a graceful Clipper ship. I don't really like Jane Austen, Dickens, Spenser, and Milton, or Hawthorne, T. S. Eliot, Robert Lowell or Sylvia Plath. In both wine and literary criticism I personally

sense an unnerving level of pomposity. I'm just the farmer, not the middleman or retailer. As the author of twenty-five books or so I've had hundreds of reviews, essays, even books, written on my work to which I pay minimal attention. The goose trying to lay golden eggs shouldn't be using a mirror to look at its butt.

The human mind loves to posit absurdities. You can also easily bite off your own fingers such is the dark power of the human mouth. But this is not to say that wine and literary criticism is without a specific value. This would be to doubt the necessity of plane or train schedules or those teachers who, however unpleasant, made us aware of the range of human mental activity. I recall my excitement on first reading Brillat-Savarin, Lichine and Parker, Edmund Wilson and George Steiner. It would be dumb of me not to check in with Gerald Asher, Frank Prial, Hugh Johnson or Sven Birkerts. We just shouldn't confuse educated comment with primary experience.

Meanwhile in Paris I missed the eclipse of the moon because I was inside *Assiette Lulu* drinking a St. Estèphe, a wine that causes moon dreams. I'm headed for an actual thirty-seven course lunch in Burgundy with, naturally, at least fifteen wines. I wonder idly if a doctor will be in attendance. Life would be impossible without wine, fishing, and dogs.

On our long circular journey to this lunch which in the future should be an Olympic event we traveled south of Dijon and Beaune passing my beloved Clos de la Roche though I've never owned a bottle, only sponged on those whom God has given fat wallets. We stayed at the exquisite Villa Louise in Aloxe-Corton and dined at a roadhouse named *La Regalade*, a lovely simple supper of pâté, frog's legs, and sweetbreads drinking a Nuit-St.-Georges and a Vosne-Romanée. At dawn or a few hours thereafter we sped toward Marseilles in order to have the excellent Bouillabaisse at Michel's. Next day Lulu Peyraud gave us an exquisite lunch at Domaine Tempier (urchins, a broth of *coquillage*, lamb leg done in the fireplace, *piéd paquets* done Provençal style).

This little travelogue is offered for a single purpose. With good food and company the numerical absurdities become more so, a "90" wine becoming a "95" because wine doesn't exist in the vacuum of charts but at the center of our lives. The professor who marked your essay 78 after a bad dinner may have given it a 91 after a good lunch. A book that is thought a classic in the western states is utterly ignored in Gotham's verminish cement canyons. To rate either wine or literature as if we were scientists is frivolous. Both are in the humanities, not the sciences. More later.

Jim Harrison's most recent book is his memoir Off to the Side, which has a bunch of good wine stuff in it. The Raw and the Cooked: Adventures of a Roving Gourmand is filled to the brim with great wine stories. He has also published four volumes of novellas, seven novels, seven collections of poetry, and we at KLRW are awaiting the release of his newest novel, True North, with hunger and thirst.
