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WINE MERCHANT

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- **ITALIAN SAMPLER**
- **PROVENCE IN BERKELEY**
- **PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER: RED BURGUNDY**

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

SEPTEMBER 2006

—PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER—

2004 RED BURGUNDY

NEVER DURING MY CAREER have great red Burgundies been so well priced compared to the top Bordeaux growths.

Vintage 2004 in some ways reminds me of one of my favorites, 1979. At the time, all eyes were on the 1978s, but, generally, I end up preferring 1979s because they made great drinking right from the start and kept on tasting great. Many still do. The 1978s started out wonderful in barrel, then really closed down, and even today a lot of them remain unresolved, squarish, compared to the shapely 1979s.

DOMAINE PIERRE BERTHEAU

The late Pierre Bertheau's son, François, now makes the wines, and the subtle change in style is interesting. Pierre made rustic Chambolles while François has brought more touch, class, and sensuousness. The quality of the Pinot Noir fruit is thrilling in 2004 and in the upcoming 2005s. Chambolle's feminine side is more evident now. The richness and tannins are still there, but that is not what dominates your attention. These are really special and shouldn't be missed.

PER CASE

CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY	\$666.00
CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY 1ER CRU	747.00
CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY 1ER CRU "LES CHARMES"	1,035.00
CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY 1ER CRU "LES AMOUREUSES"	1,533.00
BONNE-MARES GRAND CRU	1,752.00



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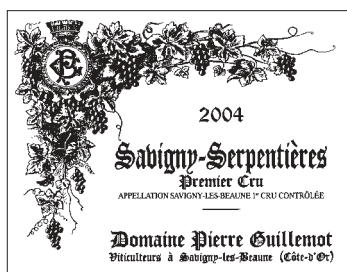
DOMAINE PIERRE BOILLOT

More changes. The two brothers Boillot parted, amicably as far as I can tell, and my old friend Louis is now working with importer Neal Rosenthal. These 2004s are the first of our purely Pierre era.

Now if you wanted to kick all today's egotistical geniuses (the *grosses têtes*, as the French say) out of the Burgundian cellars, you would keep Pierre. He is a *vigneron*, a wine grower, and his wines express their diverse and intriguing *terroirs*.

His 2004s combine rusticity and elegance, a combination I seem to favor. The intense berry fruit is amazing.

	PER CASE
GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN	\$420.00
GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN "LES EVOCELLES"	489.00
GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU "LES CORBEAUX"	606.00
GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU "LA PERRIÈRE"	606.00
GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU "LES CHERBAUDES"	648.00
NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES 1ER CRU "LES PRULIERS"	669.00
POMMARD 1ER CRU "LES FREMIERS"	597.00
POMMARD 1ER CRU "LES CROIX NOIRES"	618.00
VOLNAY 1ER CRU "LES BROUILLARDS"	519.00
VOLNAY 1ER CRU "LES ANGLES"	537.00
VOLNAY 1ER CRU "LES CAILLERETS"	618.00



DOMAINE GUILLEMOT

Many consider Guillemots the best bargains from Burgundy today. Tasting in the cellar last May, we toured the 2005, 2004, and 2003 vintages, followed by comparing his filtered 1995 with our unfiltered.

You can't go wrong here.

	PER CASE
SAVIGNY-LES-BEAUNE 1ER CRU "LES JARRONS"	\$360.00
SAVIGNY-LES-BEAUNE 1ER CRU "SERPENTIÈRES"	360.00
CORTON GRAND CRU	897.00

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

DRY WHITE GEMS

2005 SYLVANER “VIEILLES VIGNES” ANDRÉ OSTERTAG

“The word artist is easy to throw around, but André Ostertag truly is one. He is a serious poet. He is also an artist in wine, faithful to a Platonic ideal of excellence. . . . His Sylvaner ‘Vieilles Vignes’ is scrumptious and inexpensive—the bargain of any wine list on which it appears.” JACQUELINE FRIEDRICH,

The Wines of France (2006)

The nose of the 2005 is honeyed and floral, including rose petal. It smells lovely. The palate is all freshness and flavor, and seems almost weightless because of its perfect balance. One feels fortunate to taste it.

\$19.00 PER BOTTLE **\$205.20** PER CASE

2004 MÂCON-VILLAGES • HENRI PERRUSSET

I would not trade the farm-fresh purity of Perrusset’s Mâcon for any of the oaky wannabes that litter wine shop bins these days.

“Hey, dose it with timber. Maybe we can charge more.”

Mâcon is one of the sites, the *terroirs*, where the Chardonnay found a reason for existing. They never mucked their wines up with the flavor of new oak, and with good reason. Those of you who own my *Adventures*, pour a glass of Perrusset’s 2004 and read page 214: “The Mâcon *blanc* of my dreams . . .”

\$13.95 PER BOTTLE **\$150.66** PER CASE

2005 GRAVES BLANC CHÂTEAU GRAVILLE-LACOSTE

I sense in France a movement away from the oaky fruitbomb fad. Winemakers are talking about purity, freshness, balance, finesse, and *terroir*. Well, in today’s wine world, they won’t encounter much competition.

My family and I enjoyed a week in Madrid in July. The food was unforgettable, and some of the fresh dry whites seemed like progress to me, but I wanted to throw the next yet-another-inky-black red into someone’s face. Palate scorchers. How did that happen? Spain did not used to make inky monsters.

Grumble grumble, so now I’ve no space to wax poetic about this gorgeous 2005 white Graves from Hervé Dubourdieu, a KLWM “Old Reliable” if ever there was one. But maybe I have told you what it isn’t.

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

PROVENCE IN BERKELEY

THE WAY MY YEAR WORKS OUT THESE DAYS, I'll write the Provence Day announcement in August at my desk in Provence, and then arrive back in Berkeley in time for the event.

The French are firm believers in global warming and have decided that it is George W's fault, while in Berkeley we're happy George isn't trying to tackle the problem. Look what happened when he took on Katrina. But July in Provence consisted of four weeks of 90- to 100-degree heat. No letting up. So far August is only in the 80s, but now we have to live with a door-banging, nerve-racking mistral, a howling wind that is hard to walk against. Rain? Not here near Bandol, not since early March, and it is illegal for the vintners to irrigate, so we all watch the sky.

Heat, drought, and mistral. Each extreme weather seems to hang around longer than usual. But I *can* irrigate my garden. Lots of tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant, red peppers, beets, carrots, string beans, a row of basil, etc. The thyme, fennel, and rosemary grow wild. In Berkeley I'll cook with dried herbs I harvest and prepare from up on the hillside above the Marsanne vines. *Herbes de Provence*.

On Provence Day we recreate some of the gastronomic pleasures of Provence. We close our parking lot to cars, set up tents and tables, peel a ton of garlic, fire up a big bed of coals, and uncork a medley of delicious Provençal wines. I am eager to show off barrel samples of my 2005 Pallières, so we will fly some bottles over for our event.

Provence in Berkeley is presented by Café Fanny and our chef, tried and true, is Christopher Lee from Eccolo Restaurant down on Fourth Street. The lunch will be priced about the same as last year's.



© Gail Skoff

Come one, come all,
Live it up à la Provençale!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2006

11 A.M. to 4 P.M.

1605 SAN PABLO AVENUE

AT CEDAR STREET IN BERKELEY

STEVE WATERS' PUCCINI SAMPLER

Berkeley counterman Steve Waters contributed this introduction to this month's Italian sampler:



Giacomo Puccini

WHO IN THE BAY AREA can forget July's heat wave? It coincided with my parents' annual visit, and one night we tried to beat the heat by dining al fresco in the backyard. By candlelight we enjoyed black olives drizzled with olive oil, a nicely chilled gazpacho, a butter leaf salad with fresh pears, Gorgonzola, and toasted walnuts. All the while, a dry, ice-cold rosé flowed like a mighty stream.

At the end of the meal, Mother Nature presented us with what actually appeared to be a cool breeze. "So," my father inquired, "we're going to have some kind of nightcap?"

"Of course," I said, and suggested a glass of red wine.

Inside the house I had an older bottle of Villa di Geggiano's Riserva waiting in a lightly iced bucket. While I uncorked the red, my dad asked, "Stevie my boy, do you own any opera?" I knew what that meant: Luciano Pavarotti. My father had the pleasure of seeing Pavarotti several times back in the good ol' days.

To go with our Chianti, I selected a 1972 recording of Giacomo Puccini's "La Bohème" with Pavarotti as Rodolfo and Mirella Freni as Mimi.

I poured generously into our wineglasses. The Geggiano gave a wonderful combination of dark cherry fruit, earthiness, richness, and good backbone. Swirling the glass and savoring the wine, I watched with delight as my father air-conducted the opera, stabbing the air with an emphatic thumbs-up at the peak of each aria. He was really into it and the experience was moving.

On the way to the airport the next day, he said, "Those Italians really know what they're doing."

Yes, Dad, they do. Wine, food, opera, soccer... they're the champs.

Spencer Garrett is just back from a tour of our Italian producers. He helped me put together this month's sampler, nothing but fabulous Italian wines:

NORMALLY

2005 BIANCO DI CUSTOZA • CORTE GARDONI	\$9.95
2004 ROERO ARNEIS • VALDINERA	12.00
2004 PINOT GRIGIO • LA VIARTE	13.95
2005 BARDOLINO “CHIARETTO” ROSÉ • CORTE GARDONI	9.95
2004 DOLCETTO “SURI” • ALDO MARENCO	12.50
2004 DOLCETTO “I PARI” • GUIDO PORRO	14.95
2004 BARBERA “PIRONA” • ALDO MARENCO	9.95
2004 PAESAN • GUIDO PORRO	16.00
2001 BAROLO “SANTA CATERINA” • GUIDO PORRO	38.00
2002 CHIANTI CLASSICO • CANONICA A CERRETO	14.95
2001 SANDIAVOLO • CANONICA A CERRETO	19.95
2000 CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA • VILLA DI GEGGIANO	24.95

Normally \$197.10

SPECIAL SAMPLER PRICE

\$158.00

(a 20 percent discount)



© Gail Skoff

BEAUJOLAIS

2005 MORGON "VIEILLES VIGNES" JEAN-PAUL THÉVENET



How I wish I had ordered this one in magnums only. A bottle ain't enough. (Did Lucinda Williams sing that one?) I wrote a note to myself, *mags only!* and then neglected to look at the note when I ordered.

Out of barrel this was one of the most purely delicious wines of my life. Normally it goes into Thévenet's old

vines blend with two other cuvées, but this time I asked him to separate out three barrels to bottle pure: *Bottle it as is, get it on a boat.* Now folks, your job is easy. No, don't suck on it or spit in it, jump into it or splash it on people. Simply engage that complexity of muscles the creator gave us for downing deliciousness.

\$26.00 PER BOTTLE

\$280.80 PER CASE

2005 CÔTE DE BROUILLY • CHÂTEAU THIVIN

And now for something completely different. The vines are only a few kilometers apart and the grape variety is the same, but the wines act like they are from different planets.

Can a wine caress one's sniffer, like physically seem to gently touch whatever it is in one's schnoz that actually sniffs stuff?

I have tried before to aim your attention to the class and complexity, the sexy, aristocratic carriage of Château Thivin's Côte de Brouilly, but if this 2005 ain't the clincher, I will not stop importing Thivin, no, but I will be tempted to change my mailing list. (Just kidding, folks, I need every one of you.) But remember, you have a certain responsibility, too, to be discerning. Watch the way this beauty acts on your eyes, nose, palate, on your mind, acts upon your god-given aesthetic sensibilities.

\$17.95 PER BOTTLE

\$193.86 PER CASE

Also available in tenths and magnums.

**JEAN-MARC &
ANNE-MARIE VINCENT
VIGNERONS À SANTENAY**

Domaines like this are so special, and such a treat to visit. At Domaine Vincent we have a husband-and-wife team, and they are passionate, volubly expressive, and thoroughly sweet-natured. Their cellar is under their little home in the center of Santenay, which is the next appellation south of Chassagne-Montrachet. All the journalistic guns are aimed at Chassagne, so the Vincents' gorgeous creations deliver a lot of Burgundian pleasure for the buck.



The only thing you have to fear is limited availability. We have a barrel or less of each wine listed.

I give each wine a rave review. The Auxey-Duresses, for example, is the best white I have ever tasted from the appellation, the nose honeyed, the palate rich and supple. We have 168 bottles.

The Bourgogne *blanc*? I'm open-minded, so go ahead, show me a better Chardonnay at the price and I will admit it out loud.

The reds, they've got it all, including remarkably rich, supple tannins.

	PER BOTTLE	PER CASE
2004 BOURGOGNE <i>BLANC</i>	\$17.95	\$193.86
2004 AUXEY-DURESSSES <i>BLANC</i> "LES HAUTES".	28.00	302.40
2004 SANTENAY <i>BLANC</i> "LE BEAUREPAIRE" <i>1ER CRU</i>	34.00	367.20
2004 SANTENAY <i>BLANC</i> "LES GRAVIÈRES" <i>1ER CRU</i>	38.00	410.40
2004 SANTENAY <i>ROUGE</i> "LE PASSETEMPS" <i>1ER CRU</i>	34.00	367.20
2004 SANTENAY <i>ROUGE</i> "LES GRAVIÈRES" <i>1ER CRU</i>	34.00	367.20



SOUTHERN FRANCE

2003 LA GRANGE DES PÈRES ROUGE

When the French say *grand cru*, it means great growth. A wine can be officially rated *Grand Cru*, or you could opine in conversation that a wine is a *grand cru* simply because you like it so much.

What is the difference between a *grand cru* and other crus? Oh my, difficult to put into words. Size has nothing to do with it, but depth and grandeur do. Tasting at Domaine Gramenon this summer, when we got to the “Cuvée Centenaire,” from vines over one hundred years old, I told the winemaker that it had the qualities of a *Grand Cru*. “That’s because it seems to be three-dimensional,” she said, and that impression of having more dimensions than ordinary wines is certainly one part of *grand cru* aesthetics.

Laurent Vaillé’s 2003 Grange des Pères has *Grand Cru* qualities.

\$66.00 PER BOTTLE **\$712.80** PER CASE

2005 CÔTES-DU-RHÔNE BLANC CHÂTEAU DU TRIGNON

This is an unusually successful blend of Roussane, Marsanne, and Viognier. The wine is so generous aromatically, so cleanly vinified, I can discern all three of the grape varieties in there at once.

Dry, delicious, versatile at table, here is a southern French white that remains lively and refreshing on the palate. Plus, the suggestions of peach and apricot are a turn on.

\$14.00 PER BOTTLE **\$151.20** PER CASE

2004 CAHORS • CLOS LA COUTALE

The 2004 is about as claret-like as any Coutale I’ve tasted. When I say claret, I mean Bordeaux-like. Let’s go further: It has a Margaux-like perfume and a Saint-Emilion-like palate. There is a cushiony plumpness, then the ripe fruit lingers for your pleasure in the aftertaste. A few magnums in your wine cellar can’t do any harm.

\$12.95 PER BOTTLE **\$139.86** PER CASE

Also available in tenths and magnums.

2005 **BANDOL ROSÉ**
DOMAINE DE TERREBRUNE

I enjoyed quite a tasting at Terrebrune in July. Their cellar is deep underground, cool and humid in the middle of a heat wave, and they are doing great work. We tasted their reds back to 1985 (showing a wild aroma full of fennel, thyme, and rosemary smoke), but nothing distracted my admiration for the opening wines, their 2005 white and rosé. The white, which arrives later, is reminiscent of clove and spice, round and deep on the palate, as good a Bandol *blanc* as I've tasted.

The rosé is *Now In Stock*. You'll be glad it is. It is unmistakably a Bandol rosé. Terrebrune's brown earth gives all their wines remarkably fresh fruit, a leaner palate than most (this rosé seems streamlined) and a minerally edge, even in big years. All the way through the rosé you will enjoy that wild Provençal herb character, the *garrigue*, typical of a great Bandol.

\$23.00 PER BOTTLE **\$248.40 PER CASE**

2005 **SAINT-CHINIAN ROSÉ • MAS CHAMPART**

The Champarts barely scrape by, so it was a blow when they lost almost half of their 2005 rosé. The Cinsault would not ferment dry, so they had to sell it off. Their 2005 rosé is therefore all Mourvèdre and Syrah. It seems winier than usual, as if someone took the quaffer out of it. It is more colorful, more aromatic than usual, rounder and smoother.

\$13.95 PER BOTTLE **\$150.66 PER CASE**

2005 **VIN DE TABLE ROUGE**
DOMAINE DE DURBAN

BARGAIN ALERT, folks. Carry the cases home till the springs of your car give out. This one boggles the interior of the noggin, because it can compete with any southern Rhône red except the grandest *cuvées* from Gigondas or Châteauneuf-du-Pape. In fact, it is grown right on the other side of the Dentelles from Gigondas.

Gorgeous, deep, black-cherry skin color. The outrageous perfume ("honey, I don't think they charged us enough for this one") is a feast of black cherry, berry, and currants. With age (oh yeah, it'll age) you'll even have black truffles in it, too.

\$9.95 PER BOTTLE **\$107.46 PER CASE**

2004 **TÉLÉGRAMME**
DOMAINE DU VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE

I told you once that the 2002 Télégramme was a one-time-only label, but everybody liked the design of it so much, the Bruniers decided to retire their Vieux Mas des Papes label and use Télégramme instead. Daniel Brunier's wife, Sylvie, did the artwork.

I asked Daniel for his appreciation of the 2004: "The color is one of pure Grenache, complex but not black. The nose is expressive, generous, full of black fruits. The attack on the palate is supple, velvety, ample and rich. The tannins seem luscious and mellow. I'd say it is generous and unctuous."

\$30.00 PER BOTTLE **\$324.00** PER CASE

2005 **LE GRAMENON**
DOMAINE DE GRAMENON

From nearly one hundred percent Grenache, a Côtes du Rhône AOC, there is something unusual and exciting here. It was bottled only eight months after the harvest, no SO₂, no filtration.

When I purchased Pallières, Randall Grahm from Bonny Doon told me that he has come to believe that Grenache should be bottled before its first summer, that it loses too much of its incredibly delicious fruit otherwise. When I mentioned that to Daniel Brunier, he said, "Tell Randall we don't make Grenache, we make Gigondas." Not a bad line.

Well, here at Gramenon you can taste what Randall was talking about: fresh Grenache captured in bottle, nothing added, nothing filtered out. And, well, WOW.

\$22.00 PER BOTTLE **\$237.60** PER CASE

PALLIÈRES FOR BREAKFAST

With all the black cherry flavors zinging through these wines, how about some of the real thing? Pallières has vines and cherry trees. We turn the cherry fruit into jam. A jar is priced at \$10.00. Breakfast, certainly, but try some of the jam with a firm cheese like a Tomme de Savoie or a Brebis. The Corsicans and Basques turned me on to this combination.

