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APRIL 2009

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## OYSTER BLISS XVIII

**D**ENIS JAMAIN makes dry, minerally Sauvignon Blanc at Reuilly in the Loire Valley, and one day he told me that nothing—including caviar, even including black truffles—“nothing tastes as good as a glass of Reuilly and a platter of top-quality raw oysters.” When I told him about our annual Oyster Bliss party, he said he wanted to fly over and pour his wine. By the way, his English is pretty good. I think he attended a Bay Area college, Stamford or something like that—the one that lost the Big Game. (Just teasing, Cardinal fans—I didn’t even go to Cal—they wouldn’t let me in.)

Come one, come all! Live it up at our annual gathering known as Oyster Bliss. Forget yer troubles, c’mon be happy, because as you know, the Decider is outta there.

Iced oysters on the half shell and the wines that go with. And why not some hot little sausages on the side for a heavenly contrast?

Here is our recipe: close parking lot, set up tents just in case, ring up gang at Monterey Fish and ask them to select and shuck the best available oysters, get our pal Christopher Lee of Ecolo Restaurant busy preparing some of his delicious homemade sausages, order bread from Acme, and why not some live music to add to the ambience? Note the date:

SATURDAY, APRIL 18

11 AM TO 4 PM

*The event is staged and presented by Café Fanny.*

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© Gail Skoff

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# SOUTHERN FRENCH REDS

by Dixon Brooke

## 2006 SAINT CHINIAN

### “CLOS DE LA SIMONETTE” • MAS CHAMPART

Mathieu and Isabelle Champart preside over the most celebrated domaine at Saint Chinian, in reality a humble stone farmhouse with a stunning view. It feels good to be there sipping a glass of their wine, and they sure can cook.

Clos de la Simonette is their top cuvée, a blend of Mourvèdre and Grenache barrel-aged eighteen months, then bottled unfiltered. The Champarts have a knack for adding a touch of refinement to their rustic site. Simonette has dark, inky depths and reveals itself as you go through the bottle. Decanting an hour or two in advance is recommended.

**\$30.00** PER BOTTLE

**\$324.00** PER CASE

## 2007 CÔTES-DU-RHÔNE “IL FAIT SOIF”

### MAXIME-FRANÇOIS LAURENT

This red, on the other hand, requires no decanting and its qualities are more readily apparent (read: Rhône-flavored quaffer). In addition to giving his mother a hand at Domaine Gramenon, Maxime-François crafts two different Côtes-du-Rhône under his own label. “Il fait soif” is a red wine that can very easily be chilled slightly for the summer barbeque, but you will also be pleasantly surprised by its robust character—oh yes, there’s some meat on its bones. Two other virtues—it is from organically farmed grapes, and it proves quite versatile at table.

**\$25.00** PER BOTTLE

**\$270.00** PER CASE

## 2007 VIN DE PAYS ROUGE • YVES LECCIA

Yves Leccia is a Corsican hero of ours. Making great wine is like second nature to him—it’s in his bloodline. His village is Patrimonio, home of the great Nielluccios, and we also have his brilliant 2006 Patrimonio *rouge* in stock. I love both reds but decided to focus on his Vin de Pays this month—less known, great value! It is actually a blend of Nielluccio and Grenache, and the latter really softens up the wine and gives a more fruit-driven palate than the Patrimonio, along with all the Corsican character you can handle.

**\$22.00** PER BOTTLE

**\$237.60** PER CASE

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## 2006 MOURVÈDRE • CHÂTEAU LA ROQUE

It just so happens that this Mourvèdre flies under the radar of most Mourvèdre fanatics (which is to say, Bandol fanatics), and that's a shame because in my opinion La Roque deserves the price-to-quality award for pure Mourvèdre. La Roque nails the grape variety like few others do, although they humbly blame their success on their *terroir* at Pic Saint Loup—"it's not us, it's the site." Their interpretation has all the classic flavors of the Mourvèdre (think dark, brambly, spicy, and earthy) in a fruit-driven, approachable style, loaded with character.

**\$17.50** PER BOTTLE

**\$189.00** PER CASE

## 2006 MONTPEYROUX DOMAINE D'AUPILHAC

Speaking of character, Montpeyroux has to have one of the most intense personalities of all the Languedoc *terroirs*, especially in the able hands of the talented Sylvain Fadat. He practices biodynamic viticulture, and these methods give us living, vibrant wines with exceptional expression and purity. In my book, the Montpeyroux is the pinnacle of Sylvain's winemaking achievement and his signature bottling. The aromas and flavors will transport you to a wild, stone-and-garrigue-strewn hillside planted in gnarled old Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Carignan, and Cinsault vines. *Bon voyage.*

**\$19.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$215.46** PER CASE

## 2006 CÔTES DE PROVENCE "NOWAT" DUPÉRE BARRERA

Many of you benefited from the wines of this rising star in Provence when you received our special e-mail offer in February offering a sampler of Dupéré, Mañon, and Gramenon wines. Please go to our website at [www.kermitlynch.com](http://www.kermitlynch.com) and sign up to receive our recently inaugurated eNewsletter.

Nowat is this domaine's signature effort and is short for "no watt," meaning no electricity is used in the winemaking. It is crafted using an old wooden basket press and aged in barrel and bottled unfiltered—all richness, layers of complexity and flavor—in short, a wine you chew with great satisfaction.

**\$27.00** PER BOTTLE

**\$291.60** PER CASE



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# FABULOUS DRY WHITES

by Dixon Brooke

## 2007 SAVENNIÈRES “CUVÉE SPÉCIALE” CHÂTEAU D'ÉPIRÉ

And what a special and rare cuvée it is! You will find this cuvée only in the United States, and only from us. Kermit convinced the domaine to maintain the old tradition of aging their best Chenin Blanc parcels in large chestnut barrels, preserving the unique character of this exceptional *terroir* without masking the aromas or flavors in wood. The barrels are still marked with a scrawled chalk “KL,” and we are proud to carry on the tradition. This is a bone-dry Chenin grown in schist, giving it intense minerality. It is a wine capable of aging and improving in bottle for over twenty years. Chenin is the ultimate insider grape for aging—far less expensive than comparable white Burgundies, yet capable of aging for just as long and just as well. Smart buyers will take advantage of such market anomalies.

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

## 2007 MÂCON FARGES • HENRI PERRUSSET

Perrusset's Mâcon Farges is a major contender in the inexpensive white Burgundy category. Thanks to Henri Perrusset's vigilant work in the vines and his willingness to accept lower yields, this Chardonnay shows more complexity and weight than most Mâcons or other inexpensive Chardonnays. You get a lot of wine for your money. Taste Chardonnay from seventy-year-old vines! Thank goodness he isn't replanting his old vines in favor of more productive clones.

**\$18.95** PER BOTTLE      **\$204.66** PER CASE

## 2007 ALSACE BLANC • KUENTZ-BAS

There is Edelzwicker and then there is the Kuentz-Bas Alsace Blanc. For an Edelzwicker the exact composition can vary depending on the domaine, and there are no rules governing the grapes that go into it. This Alsace Blanc is a blend as well, but it is a step up in the hierarchy, because Kuentz-Bas doesn't just take the bottom of the barrel from all their other wines and mix them together. They select the blend for it at the beginning, in the vineyards. Their version is a unique blend of Sylvaner, Muscat, Auxerrois, and Chasselas. It is bone dry with smoky yet bright citrus flavors—a delicious palate freshener.

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

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2007 BOURGOGNE VÉZELAY  
“LA CHÂTELAINE” • DOMAINE DE LA CADETTE

Well, we have values everywhere in France, so it shouldn't be any surprise to you that this is the second classic white Burgundy in this section that won't cost you an arm and a leg. If you subscribe to Ed Behr's journal, *The Art of Eating*, you probably noticed the recent excerpt by David Schildknecht singing the praises of this white Burgundy, which is grown near the ancient town of Vézelay, not that far from Chablis. The limestone soil of Vézelay with its marine deposits is a perfect foil for the rich, buttery varietal that is Chardonnay, and I must say, Schildknecht had my mouth watering when he suggested serving La Châtelaine with seared sea scallops or herb-roasted chicken with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.

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

2008 SAUVIGNON BLANC “UNIQUE”  
DOMAINE DU SALVARD

Sometimes French appellation laws work out in our favor; not often, perhaps, but sometimes. In this case, Salvard has some vineyards just outside the Cheverny appellation—similar *terroir*, but by law it had to be declassified into Vin de Pays. In other words, it tastes like Salvard's Cheverny but costs less. This is classic Loire Sauvignon Blanc—racy, bright, crisp, clean, and refreshing.

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

2007 MARSANNAY BLANC “CLOS DU ROY”  
RÉGIS BOUVIER

Régis makes two reds and two whites from adjoining vineyards in Marsannay, the Clos du Roy higher up on the slope and the Longeroies down below on the gentle saddle between the slope and the valley floor. Clos du Roy always seems to have a bit more meat on its bones, a little more depth and richness, in both the red and the white versions. It is more masculine in style, while Longeroies (which means “alongside the king”) is more supple and elegant. I find the Clos du Roy *blanc* to be quite versatile at my house in Meursault, especially with fowl, pork, and veal.

In case you were wondering, the Clos du Roy (the king's *clos* or vineyard) supplied the Ducs de Bourgogne in Dijon with their house pour back in the 14th century.

**\$32.00** PER BOTTLE      **\$345.60** PER CASE

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# SEASONAL SAMPLER II: SPRING

by Mark Congero

[Mark is a graduate of Chez Panisse, so we all listen to him when he talks recipes.  
His wife, Melissa, still cooks upstairs at Panisse.—K.L.]

**S**PRING IS IN THE AIR, and I am back with this, the second seasonal sampler Kermit has awarded me. We all love springtime, but it can be a fickle beast. Persistent cold spells, unusual warm stretches, and the infamous April showers provide an array of interesting opportunities for both eating and drinking.

I always think of spring as vegetable season. When I stroll through the farmers' market I can see Mother Nature showing off her new crops of English peas, favas, artichokes, morels, asparagus, and new potatoes. Ah, but meat lovers, do not despair: no need to abandon robust meat dishes or hearty pastas just yet. Instead, try putting a little spring in their step. Think lamb shoulder with a spring vegetable ragout or creamy penne pasta with asparagus, morels, and pancetta.

Here is a sampler to match spring's moody behavior. A nice mix of red, white, and pink, some big and bold, some light and quaffable.

I have included in your sampler a few of my favorite springtime recipes. You can use my pairing suggestions, or use your imagination.

Have fun, and *bon appétit!*

PER BOTTLE

2007 POUILLY FUMÉ "VIEILLES VIGNES" • RÉGIS MINET . . . . .	\$19.95
2007 VOUVRAY • DOMAINE CHAMPALOU . . . . .	17.50
2006 MÂCON-VILLAGES • HENRI PERRUSSET . . . . .	16.95
2007 PINOT BLANC • KUENTZ-BAS . . . . .	14.95
2007 CORBIÈRES ROSÉ "GRIS DE GRIS" DOMAINE DE FONTSAINTE . . . . .	14.95
2007 TAVEL ROSÉ • CHÂTEAU DE TRINQUEVEDEL . . . . .	18.00
2006 CÔTE DE BROUILLY • CHÂTEAU THIVIN . . . . .	19.95
2006 PIC SAINT LOUP ROUGE • CHÂTEAU LA ROQUE . . . . .	16.50
2007 VIN DE PAYS DE L'HERAULT ROUGE "PROTEUS" DOMAINE DU POUJOL . . . . .	14.00
2006 CHINON "LES PETITES ROCHES" DOMAINE CHARLES JOGUET . . . . .	19.95
2006 BEAUMES-DE-VENISE ROUGE • DOMAINE DE DURBAN . . . . .	19.95
2006 CAIRANNE "CUVÉE LÉA FELSCH" • CATHERINE LE GOEUIL . . . . .	14.95

12 bottles normally \$207.60

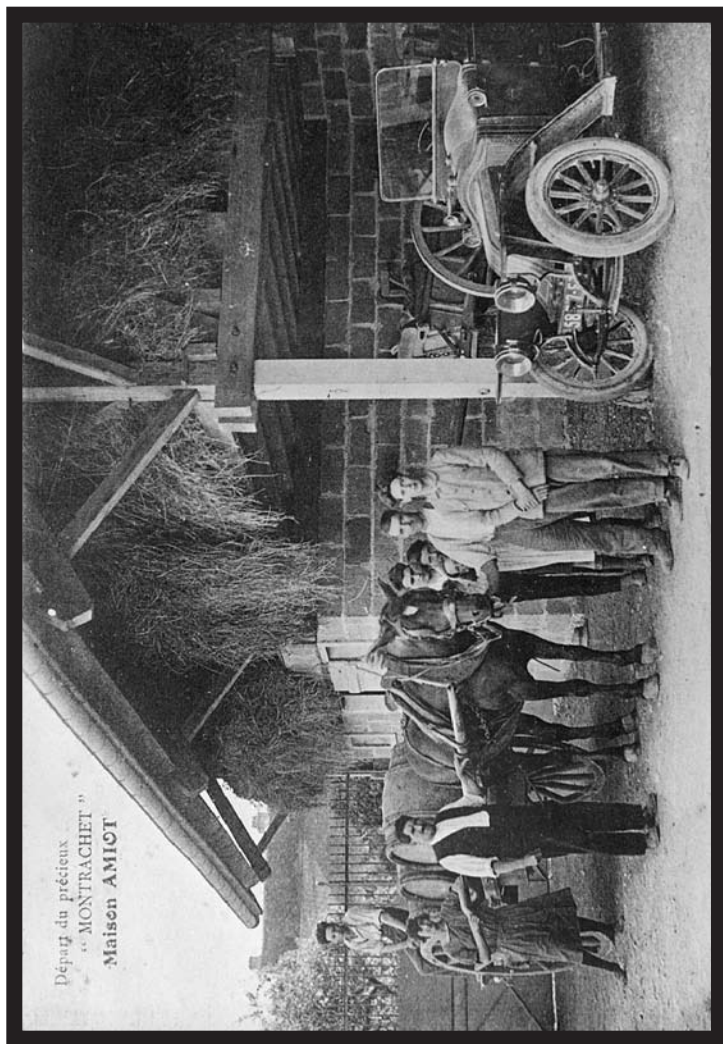
SPECIAL SAMPLER PRICE **\$155**

(25% discount)

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Départ du précieux  
" MONTRACHET "  
Maison AMIOT



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## —PRE-ARRIVALS—

*by Dixon Brooke*

### 2006 GRANGE DES PÈRES • LAURENT VAILLÉ

First, to those of you who have not enjoyed the Grange des Pères experience, winemaker Laurent Vaillé is making some of the best wine in the south of France and seems to keep improving. His stunning blend of Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Cabernet Sauvignon has developed a cult-like following in the United States and abroad for the best possible reason—his wines deliver.

The vines struggle to survive in ultra-rocky terrain near Daumas Gassac. He gives his red a full two years in barrel before finalizing the blend. He does not make eight different cuvées with confusing names, just one great wine. Consider it a blend between a Rhône and a Bordeaux, although while it has its own unique character, to my palate it seems to approach Hermitage more than any other appellation. Perhaps his time in the cellars and vineyards with Gérard Chave influenced his direction. The really magical thing about Laurent's wine for me is the tannin he manages to extract, even from his Cabernet. There is never a rough edge; the wines are always polished and refined, structured but never difficult or astringent. The result is a wine that is drinkable immediately upon release (not unlike a good Brunello, by the way) but which will continue to age and develop for decades in a good cellar. You have the best of both worlds.

Laurent will not be able to release his brilliant 2006 Blanc along with his red this year. His crop was devastated by hungry wild boars just as the grapes reached honeyed deliciousness, and he has decided to release the tiny production next year along with the 2007 red, possibly bottled exclusively in magnum. It, too, is a masterpiece, so put in your request now if you are interested.

Yields for the red, normally Yquem-like in quantity, were even lower in 2006, too, so our allocation is really tight this year.

**\$418.50** PER HALF-CASE FIFTHS (6-BOTTLE MAXIMUM)

**\$435.00** PER HALF-CASE MAGNUMS (3-MAGNUM MAXIMUM)

### 2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO • SESTI

Hopefully, you had the chance to become acquainted with the wines of Sesti these past few months. Our first shipment to Berkeley contained their 2003 and 2000 Brunellos in addition to their 2006 Rossos. Vintage 2004 was a spectacular success for the domaine, and we are excited to be offering this wine on pre-arrival for the first time. We had the unfortunate luck of finding this Brunello just as the region was embroiled in scandal thanks to some wineries that decided to blend international varieties into their Sangiovese to render it more supple

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and approachable. The Sestis immediately sent us the government approvals testifying that their Brunello was indeed made from 100% Sangiovese Grosso, which is what, after all, gives Brunello its unique character. Sangiovese is a grape with reasonably high natural acidity that, in addition to its proven track record of helping the wine age, also pairs well with the local Tuscan cuisine of rich sauces and ragouts that are often based on tomato and wild game. Aged for more than three years in large oak *botti* and further refined in bottle for another year, Sesti's 2004 Brunello has magnificent depth and refinement, with the structure and acidity to support it over several decades. We hope that you add this wine to your yearly cellar purchase list and build a vertical, because we are convinced that only good things are to come.

**\$597.00** PER CASE FIFTHS

**\$630.00** PER CASE MAGNUMS

**\$356.00** PER JEROBOAM

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



## GAIL SKOFF IN COLOR

**A**MONG OTHER THINGS, GAIL SKOFF is the photographer whose works adorn the walls of our retail shop and bring such immediacy to my two books, *Adventures on the Wine Route* and *Inspiring Thirst*. Her photographs also decorate and illustrate Richard Olney and Lulu Peyraud's *Lulu's Provençal Table*, and Paul Bertolli's *Chez Panisse Cooking* and *Cooking by Hand*.

Ah, but those were her food and wine photos. You will see another side of Gail Skoff's work at the Triangle Gallery in San Francisco. Her new show opens April 14. Telephone 415-392-1686 or go to [gailskoff.com](http://gailskoff.com) for more information.



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# KERMIT'S KORSICAN ADVENTURE



**I** MUST NOT be getting my message across.

First, no, you don't need to have visited the dazzling island—known as the Isle de Beauté in France—in order to enjoy the wines.

And two, I have heard a few too many clients say, “Isn't that expensive for a Corsican wine?” Folks, do you think I cannot find cheap Corsican wine? Its east coast produces plenty of cheap, flat, cooked plonk. Want some? However, the wines that deserve to be shipped refrigerated all the way to our shores come from the great *terroirs* on the island's west coast, like Patrimonio and Calvi, and you won't find Dollar Store prices or quantities.

Imagine a great Chianti blended with a top Châteauneuf-du-Pape and you will have an idea of what you are missing from Corsica's finest reds. You're going to act like that wouldn't be good clean fun?

As for the whites, the grape is the Rolle, otherwise known as Vermentino, and it is in Patrimonio that I am tasting the grandest, most exciting Mediterranean Rim dry whites today. They are delicious, they have depths to plumb, and the Rolle gives good nervosity even in the Corsican heat. Plus, is there a better white for so-called California cuisine? No.

Allow me to tempt you to experience Corsica's best at a special sampler price.

PER BOTTLE

2006 PATRIMONIO <i>BLANC</i> “GROTTE DI SOLE” • ANTOINE ARENA . . .	\$35.00
2006 PATRIMONIO <i>ROUGE</i> “CARCO” • ANTOINE ARENA . . . . .	35.00
2006 PATRIMONIO <i>BLANC</i> • YVES LECCIA . . . . .	22.00
2006 PATRIMONIO <i>ROUGE</i> • YVES LECCIA . . . . .	26.00
2007 CALVI <i>BLANC</i> “E PROVE” • DOMAINE MAESTRACCI . . . . .	16.95
2004 CALVI <i>ROUGE</i> “E PROVE” • DOMAINE MAESTRACCI . . . . .	18.95

6 bottles normally \$153.90

SPECIAL SAMPLER PRICE **\$115**

*(A 25% discount)*

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT—TERMS AND CONDITIONS

*All wines purchased from Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant are deemed sold in California and title passes to the buyer in California. We make no representation relative to the customer's right to import wine into his/her state. In placing an order, the customer represents to Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant that he/she is at least 21 years of age and the person to whom delivery will be made is at least 21 years old.*

