



KERMIT LYNCH
WINE MERCHANT

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& Monday, December 24

10 A.M.—2:30 P.M.

- **GIFTING MADE EASY**
- **PRE-ARRIVAL 2010 CLAPE**

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

DECEMBER 2012



The essential foudres in Clape's cellar

© Gail Skoff

— PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER —

2010 **DOMAINE CLAPE**

by *Dixon Brooke*

AH, HERE WE ARE IN THE NORTHERN RHÔNE, home of the great Syrahs. Or even better, kingdom of the great Syrahs. But finding the true masters who can guide these Syrahs to the summit, to the pinnacle, well, they don't seem to be proliferating. There are few aromas as intoxicating or as easily recognizable as old-vine Syrah from the great *terroirs* of Côte Rôtie, Hermitage, and Cornas, *vinified without the use of new oak barrels*. The *barrique* trend and the replanting of vineyards on easier-to-work, mechanizable terrain have both been a scourge on this region, once the home of countless great wines. We find ourselves forced to limit our selection to what we feel are truly representative examples. It is our honor to offer you the opportunity to purchase on pre-arrival terms the textbook Cornas of one of the northern Rhône's living Syrah legends. Now made by three generations working side by side—founder Auguste, son Pierre-Marie, and grandson Olivier—these wines continue to set the standard for the appellation and the entire region. We don't see that changing anytime soon.



2010 **CORNAS**

\$83.00 PER BOTTLE **\$996.00** PER CASE

2010 **CORNAS “RENAISSANCE”**

\$54.00 PER BOTTLE **\$648.00** PER CASE

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

NORTHERN RHÔNE REDS IN STOCK

by Dixon Brooke

2010 SAINT JOSEPH • DOMAINE FAURY

A delicious Syrah right now—check out the intoxicating perfume. I also love its medium body, a characteristic that makes it amazingly versatile with a huge variety of dishes at table. Its geographic location reflects its taste profile—between Burgundy and the southern Rhône.

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

2010 SAINT JOSEPH “VIEILLES VIGNES” DOMAINE FAURY

This old-vines cuvée is our own unfiltered blend and includes the harvest from Joseph Panel’s vineyard. Think old-school Saint Joseph. Think Trolat. A lot of bottlings of Côte Rôtie and Hermitage will be humbled by this beauty.

\$36.00 PER BOTTLE **\$388.80** PER CASE

2010 SAINT JOSEPH “TERRE BLANCHE” DOMAINE MONIER

Monier is a biodynamic farmer with a minuscule property high up on a hillside above the Rhône River. Terre Blanche is his crown jewel, a white limestone parcel that gives a Syrah of great freshness and muscle.

\$42.00 PER BOTTLE **\$453.60** PER CASE

2010 CÔTE RÔTIE “LA VIAILLÈRE” LOUIS BARRUOL

From one of the great sites on Côte Rôtie’s Côte Brune, the bacon fat and white lily aromas instantly tell you where you are. This and the Côte Rôtie Les Roses that follows are the result of the collaboration between Louis Barruol and Kermit. Barruol sources the grapes and makes the wines. Kermit does the blends—with Louis’ valuable input, of course.

\$70.00 PER BOTTLE **\$756.00** PER CASE

2009 **CÔTE RÔTIE “LES ROSES”**
LOUIS BARRUOL

The 2009 is slightly richer than the 2010 above. Their 2010 has a firmer structure. Good luck trying to choose. A few bottles of each is the wiser course. While meaty on the palate, there is a lovely floral character to Les Roses, both in the bouquet and in the aftertaste.

\$72.00 PER BOTTLE **\$777.60** PER CASE

2009 **CÔTES DU VIVARAIS**
DOMAINE GALLETY

Not technically part of the northern or the southern Rhône, Gallety's Syrah/Grenache blend strikes quite a balanced pose between the styles of the two regions. Cooler than the South, warmer than the North, vinified to perfection from grapes grown in chalky limestone soil on hillsides above the Rhône River, this is an incredible value. Many of our finest wine writers appreciate Gallety's red—don't let its unknown appellation stop you.

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

POGGIO DI SOTTO ROSSO
DI MONTALCINO SIX-PACKS

THE ULTIMATE WINE CONNOISSEUR'S GIFT?

There is no way you can go wrong with this amazing gift box. Packed in a beautiful wooden case emblazoned with the estate's coat of arms, it contains two bottles each of their brilliant Rosso di Montalcino: 2006, 2007, and 2008. If the gift receiver is an Italian wine lover, they will know how special this is. If they are not an Italian wine lover, they will be after tasting these wines. Only fifty cases made it to the United States, and these are the last few that remain. The estate is now completely sold out of the 2006 vintage, one of the greatest in modern history. Poggio di Sotto, the brainchild of Piero Palmucci, produces a Rosso that is made from the estate's Brunello grapes, 100% organic Sangiovese grown in the shadow (but not the shade!) of Mount Amiata. The only difference between the Brunello and this wine is a shorter aging in cask. These are among Italy's grandest reds, and I'd be eager to stand them up against any wines from anywhere.

\$432.00 PER SIX-PACK

DESSERT WINE HEAVEN!

by *Steve Waters*

TIS THE SEASON to eat, drink, and make merry. Why not go all out and put away a few sweet treasures ON SALE to wash down the abundance of holiday treats you'll be tempted to consume? Sweet, luscious, delicious, sometimes downright decadent—oh yes, the nectar of Bacchus.

PER BOTTLE

2007 JURANÇON “LA QUINTESSENCE” 375 ML	
DOMAINE BRU-BACHÉ	\$25.00
2006 MUSCAT DE BEAUMES-DE-VENISE 750 ML	
DOMAINE DE DURBAN	24.95
2009 VOUVRAY “LA MOELLEUSE” 500 ML	
CHAMPALOU	30.00
2011 BANYULS “RIMAGE” 500 ML	
DOMAINE LA TOUR VIEILLE	24.00
BANYULS “RESERVA” 750 ML • DOMAINE LA TOUR VIEILLE	30.00
2006 BANYULS “RIMAGE MISE TARDIVE” 750 ML	
DOMAINE LA TOUR VIEILLE	32.00
2011 MUSCAT DU CAP CORSE 750 ML • ANTOINE ARENA	49.00
2010 SAUTERNES 750 ML • CHÂTEAU ROÛMIEU-LACOSTE	39.00
2009 SAUTERNES 375 ML • CHÂTEAU ROÛMIEU-LACOSTE	24.00
2009 SAUTERNES 500 ML • DOMAINE DE L’ALLIANCE	42.00
2009 “HÉRÉTHIQUE” 500 ML • DOMAINE DE L’ALLIANCE	53.00
2008 RIESLING “PFOELLER” VENDANGE TARDIVE 500 ML	
DOMAINE MEYER-FONNÉ	48.00
2007 PINOT GRIS “HINTERBURG DE KATZENTHAL”	
VENDANGE TARDIVE 500 ML • DOMAINE MEYER-FONNÉ	52.00
2008 VENDANGES TARDIVES DE GEWURZTRAMINER “FRONHOLZ”	
750 ML • DOMAINE OSTERTAG	84.00

15% off per bottle



DOMAINE D'AUPILHAC SAMPLER

by Dixon Brooke

THIS WAS KERMIT'S IDEA, and I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words about heroic winegrower Sylvain Fadat of Domaine d'Aupilhac. Sylvain has become a real pal over the years, in addition to earning my professional respect. He is now a bit of a star in France and elsewhere—you may have seen his photo on the book cover of *Une Promesse de Vin* a few years ago. He's a maker of natural wines (without hitting you over the head about it). He makes true *terroir* wines, wines that capture the character and soul of his native Montpeyroux. With this sampler, we offer you all the chance to get to know this wonderful property at a great price.

2011 LOU MASET • An aromatic blend based primarily on Grenache and Cinsault. One of our greatest values in red wine.

\$16.00 PER BOTTLE

2011 MOUNT BAUDILE BLANC • A lush yet fresh southern blend, chalky and honeyed.

\$17.95 PER BOTTLE

2010 MONTPEYROUX • A wild, rustic tour de force, this heady blend dominated by Mourvèdre, Carignan, and Syrah is Sylvain's flagship wine from the hillside above his hometown.

\$23.00 PER BOTTLE

2010 LE CARIGNAN • Our candidate for the world's best pure Carignan: tasty and bold when young, fine and complex after a decade in bottle.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE

2010 LES COCALIÈRES ROUGE • A great *terroir*—the vines are at a higher elevation in a volcanic amphitheater. You'll find power, finesse, chalk, lava, and *garrigue*. There's nothing else like it.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE

2011 LES COCALIÈRES BLANC • One of the great whites from the south of France, an incredibly tasty and complex blend of Roussanne, Marsanne, Rolle, and Grenache Blanc.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE

Normally \$161.95

SPECIAL SAMPLER PRICE \$120

(a 25% discount)

BORDEAUX GIFT SAMPLER

by Kermit Lynch

ADMIT IT—WOULDN'T YOU PREFER to receive this in place of the holiday gifts you'll receive? Well, go ahead—so far it is not illegal to give yourself a present, and it is a neat half-case of wine: two colors, four vintages, six appellations.

First, a white Graves. When I opened my doors in 1972, white Graves were about the same price as white Burgundies and no one thought that at all weird. What a change! Gravelle is now one fourth the price of a top Meursault Villages. And this 2011 is marvelous—dry, tender, nothing overblown or out of kilter, and about as versatile at table as a wine can be.

Then onto the reds with two scrumptious, juicy 2009s. Ours are fruity—not oaky, not jammy.

And two 2008s follow—forward wines that you wouldn't mind finding on a restaurant wine list because of their accessibility. One is from the idyllic landscape in the hills to the east of Saint Émilion, the other from a stony hillside above Pomerol. Judging by the names, one château has a beautiful view, the other beautiful gravel.

And finally, a great Pomerol 2006. It may be the only biodynamic Pomerol vinified by a woman, if that matters to you. I have several vintages of Gombaude in my cellar, because it ages beautifully while I try to do the same.



PER BOTTLE

2011 GRAVES • GRAVILLE-LACOSTE	\$18.00
2009 HAUT-MÉDOC • CHÂTEAU ANEY	23.00
2009 MONTAGNE SAINT ÉMILION • CHÂTEAU TOUR BAYARD	22.00
2008 LANDE-DE-POMEROL • CHÂTEAU BELLES-GRAVES	32.00
2008 LUSSAC SAINT ÉMILION • CHÂTEAU DE BELLEVUE	26.00
2006 POMEROL • GOMBAUDE GUILLOT	66.00

Normally \$187.00

SPECIAL SAMPLER PRICE \$150

(a 20% discount)

2010 ALSATIAN MASTERPIECES

by Dixon Brooke

I PROMISED TO CONTINUE a stubborn barrage of assertions that our Alsatian producers are making some of the greatest white wine in the world today. A recent shipment of top single-vineyard wines from the brilliant 2010 vintage shipped by our most talented growers is the best proof I can offer.

2010 PINOT GRIS “ZELLBERG” • OSTERTAG

I spent what seemed like hours swirling, sniffing, contemplating, and discussing this wine with the cerebral André Ostertag before ever taking the first taste. It is a game changer, probably the greatest Pinot Gris of André’s amazing career. After spending a full two years in barrel and undergoing an epically slow malolactic fermentation, it is dry and exceedingly complex, with inspiring depth and polish. It is one for the ages.

\$49.00 PER BOTTLE **\$529.20** PER CASE

2010 RIESLING “CLOS MATHIS” • OSTERTAG

Clos Mathis is the only granite-based *terroir* in Ostertag’s collection of vineyard sites. As we know from Meyer-Fonné’s Katzenthal, granite produces fabulous dry Riesling (as well as Cornas, while we’re at it). Clos Mathis is always chiseled, crystalline, and pure, with great energy and vibrancy. A 2005 opened this summer in Burgundy with some colleagues produced fireworks. It really makes an impression. Plus, it doesn’t need the long aging that André’s Muenchberg Riesling needs. This is a great medium-range drinker from Ostertag. Try one bottle, then set more aside to drink before the Muenchberg is ready.

\$42.00 PER BOTTLE **\$453.60** PER CASE

2010 RIESLING “SCHOENENBOURG” GRAND CRU • MEYER-FONNÉ

This is what happens when a great talent vinifies Riesling grapes from a fresh, healthy vintage and one of the best *grand cru* sites in Alsace—a white wine truly deserving of *grand cru* status. It is quite simply a cut above the large majority of white wine being produced anywhere—go ahead, try to find this level of *terroir* complexity in any Riesling from Germany or Austria or Italy. The Schoenenbourg *terroir* is a soil type called *marne de keuper* in one of its rare green-colored forms. Think kryptonite. The wine is electric, a total showstopper. Make room for a bit of it in your cellar.

\$48.00 PER BOTTLE **\$518.40** PER CASE

THE LOIRE

by Kermit Lynch

—THREE TAKES ON SAUVIGNON BLANC—

UNLIKE RONALD REAGAN'S REDWOOD TREE, if you've seen one Sauvignon Blanc, you haven't seen them all—especially if you shop at 1605 San Pablo Avenue. Diverse *terroirs* = diverse wines. It is so cool to actually taste *terroir's* role. Comparing these selections side by side will broaden your wine horizons.

2011 SAUVIGNON BLANC "UNIQUE" DOMAINE DELAILLE

A crisp, fresh blast of the varietal sure to wake up sleepy palates . . . Good body—not light, not heavy—vigorous, boldly flavored. From sandy soil.

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

2010 SANCERRE "CUVÉE MARCEL HENRI" DOMAINE DANIEL CHOTARD

Aubert de Villaine told me that he prefers "understated" wines. An understated Sancerre is not easy to find—you'll encounter more rambunctiousness than finesse, usually. Here, however, is a *cuvée spéciale* that is not an oaky giant. The vines are fifty to sixty years old, and the wine is aged on its lees eighteen months before bottling. Welcome to depth, complexity, understatement, finesse.

\$34.00 PER BOTTLE **\$367.20** PER CASE

2010 QUINCY "VIEILLES VIGNES" DOMAINE TROTREAU

Sauvignon grown in gravelly soil and ripening about a week earlier than nearby Sancerre—that's the only reason to go to Quincy. The *terroir* gives the varietal a somber note in the midst of its lovely fruit—that's what attracts me. Sancerre is the eternal optimist, while Quincy has one eyebrow raised in doubt.

\$25.00 PER BOTTLE **\$270.00** PER CASE

P.S. If you compare the three, recork the remains—they'll keep for three days in the fridge.

—CABERNET FROM THE LOIRE—

2011 CHINON “BEAUMONT” CATHERINE ET PIERRE BRETON

This will be a lot of fun this winter—its freshness and harmony are just right for many winter soups and stews. Try it in and with *coq au vin*, for example—a bottle into the pot, another onto the table. I like the chicken served hot and the Chinon on the cool side.

\$28.00 PER BOTTLE **\$302.40** PER CASE

—TWO RAVISHING VOUVRAYS—

VOUVRAY BRUT CATHERINE ET DIDIER CHAMPALOU

We know that Thomas Jefferson drank wine with breakfast—he documented the fact himself. Here is the wine with which he should have begun his mornings, a gorgeous, dry, slightly sparkling, light-as-a-feather Vouvray that leaves nothing but deliciousness on your palate and wonderment in your mind. Loaded with impeccability!

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

2010 VOUVRAY “LA DILETTANTE” CATHERINE ET PIERRE BRETON

Attention, fellow *apéritif* fans: don't miss this beauty. Your palate will thank you for your tender love and care. It is just so . . . peachy. As in peaches. You know how Meursault can hint at peaches? This one is loud and clear about it. The grape is the *Pineau de la Loire*, and I remember when René Loyau told me that he believed the grape to have been the Pinot Chardonnay—brought from Burgundy centuries ago—which then evolved in its own unique fashion in Vouvray's chalk—sort of like the Sangiovese/Niellucciu evolution in Corsica.

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

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.

NOT TO MISS FROM THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

by Anthony Lynch

2011 JURANÇON SEC • DOMAINE BRU-BACHÉ

When I first tasted this white from the foothills of the Pyrenees, my eyes immediately lit up. Zesty citrus notes burst across my palate as if I had just squeezed a fresh lemon into my mouth. The attack of crispy mineral and fruit flavors soon gave way to richer notes of ripe citrus. I swallowed, refreshed and in awe, left only with an almondy finish, like the bittersweet smell of an ex-lover's perfume. The next thing I knew, I was underwater collecting sea creatures for a platter of *fruits de mer*. A second glass of Jurançon washed away all thoughts of my ex. In other words, this dry white can fire up one's imagination.

\$17.95 PER BOTTLE **\$193.86** PER CASE

2011 BANDOL BLANC DOMAINE DE LA TOUR DU BON

Bandol is not known for its whites. However, I believe all colors are created equal, and La Tour du Bon's white is Exhibit A. Clairette and Ugni *blanc* are joined by the same Rolle (a.k.a. Vermentino) that creates such fresh whites in Corsica and coastal Italy. The result? A rich, opulent dry white—reflective of the sun-drenched Southern climate—that is balanced by a refreshing core that keeps the wine interesting sip after sip, swallow after swallow.

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

2011 LE PIGEOULET ROUGE VIGNOBLES BRUNIER

For fans of southern Rhône reds, Daniel Brunier is practically a household name. His majestic Châteauneufs from Vieux Télégraphe and his collaboration with my father to make Les Pallières' noble Gigondas make him a legend for lovers of Grenache, Syrah, and the other usual suspects. Finally, we have a Brunier wine that is at its very best before ten, twenty, even thirty years of aging. You'll appreciate that Le Pigeoulet tastes like a more expensive wine and is a perfect candidate to be your latest everyday red.

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

2011 VIN DE PAYS DE L'ÎLE DE BEAUTÉ ROUGE
DOMAINE DE GIOIELLI

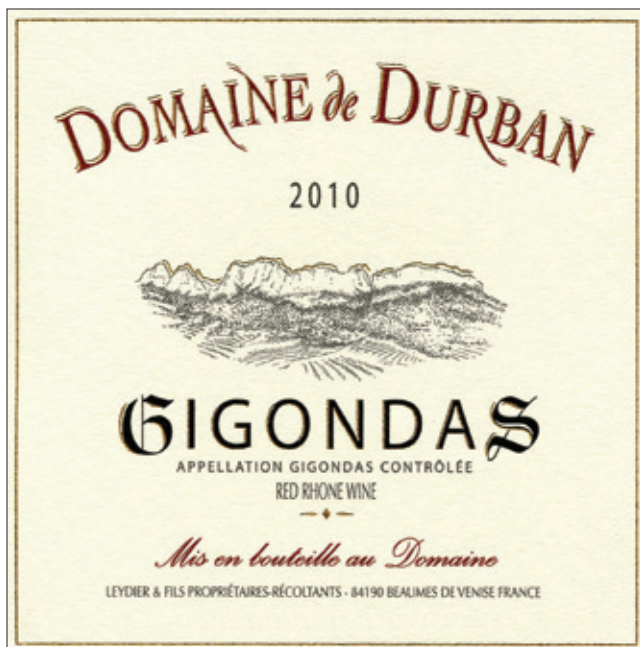
KLWM has become *the* specialist for Corsican wines over the decades, and this red from the northern *cap* of the island illustrates the reason why. Fermented in stainless-steel tanks to ensure a supple mouthfeel, this red from Michel Angeli is a true reflection of its place of origin. The nose is saturated with wild berries and, of course, the ever-present maquis. It is the perfect companion to cuisine featuring Mediterranean herbs, but just being thirsty will suffice. The staff agrees: it's a knockout!

\$36.00 PER BOTTLE \$388.80 PER CASE

2010 GIGONDAS • DOMAINE DE DURBAN

Who says Gigondas needs to age years and years before it can be drunk? Who says it needs to cost over a hundred dollars? Well, I don't know about you, but I want to drink Gigondas now, and spend no more than . . . twenty-seven dollars. Top that! And you'll revel in those typical dense tannins, dark fruits, and earthy spices that make Gigondas one of the southern Rhône's top *crus*. Durban's 2010 is perfectly balanced, and it will reward you right now as much as it will in the long run.

\$27.00 PER BOTTLE \$291.60 PER CASE



SAVOIE'S UNIQUE WHITES

by Anthony Lynch

GAZING UP AT THE QUENARDS' VINEYARDS above Chignin, one wonders how they manage to cultivate vines there—or cultivate anything, for that matter. “Soil” is not the appropriate word to describe the steeply inclined mountain rocks into which the vines' roots must penetrate in search of nutrients. This is pure limestone, and the vineyards are planted in places where landslides have left rocky debris scattered about the precipitous slopes. The Quenards, a three-generation team made up of André, Michel, and the youngest, Guillaume, farm sixty acres in Chignin, situated equidistant from Lyon to the west and Mont Blanc to the east. While they produce a variety of wines—white and red, still and sparkling, simple and complex—the common point with all is the presence of delicate aromatics and a beautiful minerality: the product of hard work and old vines in an exceptional *terroir*.

2011 CHIGNIN “VIEILLES VIGNES”

Imagine lying down in a meadow high in the Alps on a sunny day. A fresh breeze blows over your head, carrying with it the delicate scents of white and yellow wildflowers. The joyous sound of birds singing is complemented by the comforting trickle of a crystal-clear alpine creek. It may be impossible to reproduce the feeling, but a glass of Chignin works pretty well. In this special cuvée, seventy-year-old Jacquère vines bring depth and minerality to what is rarely more than a simple thirst quencher. Drink it with a baked filet of fish, or pour it by itself to enjoy the subtle aromas of pit fruits and to be invigorated by its refreshing acidity.

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

2011 CHIGNIN-BERGERON

Bergeron may be the same grape as what most people know as Roussanne, but the Bergeron of Savoie bears very little resemblance to the Roussanne of the Rhône. For starters, Roussanne is never referred to as an “aromatic” varietal. One whiff of this beauty, however, will be enough to convince you otherwise. The Quenards' Bergeron is a masterpiece featuring ripe peach, apricot, and white flowers, packaged in the most elegant format conceivable. The deliciousness lingers until you reach for your glass and take another sip.

\$26.00 PER BOTTLE **\$280.80** PER CASE



BURGUNDY LESS TRAVELED

by *Chris Santini*

**2010 POUILLY-FUISSÉ “LES REISSES”
VIEILLES VIGNES
DOMAINE ROBERT-DENOENT**

The jolly, round-faced bon vivant behind this wine, Jean-Jacques Robert, is a bit of a legend in the natural-wine circuit for the small batches of single-parcel Chardonnay he crafts in his village of Fuissé. It's basically what our Morgon producers drink when they're not drinking Gamay. While most people think of great white Burgundy as coming from farther north in Puligny and Meursault, Jean-Jacques consistently proves that while Pouilly-Fuissé might not (yet) carry the recognition and price tag, it's got nothing to envy of its northern neighbors. His Les Reisses bottling is bold and beautiful, and rich with an exuberant floral and honeyed nose. Take a tip from our hedonist friends in Morgon: there's just no better way to get the evening started than this.

\$40.00 PER BOTTLE \$432.00 PER CASE

**2010 FIXIN ROUGE
DOMAINE RÉGIS BOUVIER**

Here's another Burgundian village appellation that has always remained in the shadow of a more famous neighbor, in this case Gevrey-Chambertin. Fixin is known locally as the village to go to for solid yet affordable *cru* burgundy with the structure, concentration, and complexity similar to Gevrey-Chambertin's wine, as well as the bright fruit and accessibility of its other neighbor, Marsannay. Besides its reputation for value, it is also famous locally as the hometown of Captain-Grenadier Claude Noisot, a fanatical loyalist to Napoleon who stood by his side until the bitter end. After Napoleon's demise, Noisot built a park in Fixin dedicated to his hero, with statues, a museum, and native Corsican Laricio pine trees. Upon his deathbed, he asked to be buried in uniform, upright and at attention, saber drawn, facing Napoleon's grave. Alas, the impenetrable limestone rock under Fixin prevented his wish from ever being realized. That same limestone might explain the appeal of Fixin's Pinot Noir.

\$38.00 PER BOTTLE \$410.40 PER CASE



EATING OUT

by Kermit Lynch

THESE DAYS I EAT BETTER in the U.S. than I do in France. What a reversal compared to the early years of my travels back and forth. And in Berkeley, I eat better at home than I do in Provence, thanks to our farmers' market. In my Provençal market, there are no producers remaining. The stands sell supermarket produce!

And c'mon, everybody: Bartavelle is now open where Café Fanny was. The other day I had a stunningly delicious glass of Abbatucci rosé and a Richard Olney starter: black olives, radishes with sea salt, and slices of saucisson with baguette. At his house in Provence, Richard loved to begin lunch or dinner just like that. His rosé, however, was from Tempier.

Chris Lee cooked downstairs at Panisse for years, then opened Eccolo, and now does our parking lot events, among other things, like working in Soho to perfect the dining experience at Il Buco Alimentari. It's on Great Jones Street near Lafayette. I've been there several times and I dig it—the ambience, the cuisine—and now I'm trying to sell them a wine or two in case you arrive thirsty.

However, I'm not deserting France or Italy. In Venice, for example, don't miss Alle Testiere. What a meal! Next time I visit, I'm not dining anywhere else.

And in France, just in case you find yourself near Valence, detour west up into the Ardèche to Lamastre. Stay at the Château d'Urbilhac, just outside of town. You can Google it. In early October I was the only guest—like, it was *MY* château! They served salad from their garden and cèpes gathered on the property. For one night, I felt like a prince.

And there are a couple of good restaurants near Gigondas I can recommend. One is called Les Abeilles in Sablet. Patricia Wells lives nearby, and I know that she likes it, too. It's a quiet, shaded little hotel/resto and the chef has touch. It is located just off the major roads and doesn't attract many tourists. That's tough on the owner, but peaceful for you.

The other, Chez Alonso, has a longer story. It used to be located near Mâcon, and I found it via The Gang of Four. The chef was into organic foods and natural wines, and even his cheese platter was to die for. He and his wife, seeking sun, decided to move south. Somehow they ended up in Sorgues, near Avignon, only five minutes from Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe. I began to dine at Alonso's even more frequently. Then this past summer, I called for a table and found out that another couple had just purchased the restaurant. Uh oh, I thought, that's that for my favorite cheeses. No more runny truffly Brie, for example. But the guy on the phone almost begged me to try out what he re-named La Table de Sorgues. "I follow Alonso," he said, "only one menu, organic products—I even bake the bread." So, I went, and I was way convinced—enough so that I returned several times. Go to latabledesorgues.fr and you'll get a good feeling for the place. If you end up someday near Avignon, it's a must.
