

Harrogate Fine



Wine Co.

HARROGATE FINE WINE COMPANY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2011

CORN EXCHANGE CELLARS

THE GINNEL

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You'll be familiar with our rants about the weather and how it affects what we choose to drink. We were, however, slightly lost for words during the heat wave we experienced at the end of September which found both ourselves and our customers reaching for bottles of rosé and freshly flavoured whites to match the sunny days. It's back to reality with a bump as the rain batters the outside of the shop and now we're finding comfort in solid red wines like the sumptuous 2009 Rhones and old-fashioned Riojas that have recently arrived. You'll find these and many more new lines in this latest newsletter - and on the bulging shelves inside the shop of course. The details of our next tasting - Tuscany this time - are included here, so read on to discover what's new and what's happening in the shop in the near future...

Tuscany tasting - Friday November 25th, 6- 8 p.m. in the shop

The wines of Tuscany epitomise what we love about Italy and when you throw in the magic of the olive oil from the region you have a true culinary delight. Many of the greatest Tuscan wineries also produce olive oil, and of a quality that continues to amaze people. Made in small batches and highly prized the arrival of these peppery stars is an event we get very excited about. We're therefore happy to present a tasting of both the wines and the oils from our favourite producers.

You can expect a selection of wine and oil from the following:

Selvapiana

Poggiotondo

Fèlsina Berardenga

Capezzana

Fontodi

As usual tickets are just £5 and available from the shop. Please drop us a line if you'd like to come along.

We are working on our December tasting as we go to press. We have a provisional date of Friday December 9th from 6 - 8 p.m. but will confirm final details when we get them.

Roger Sabon 2009 - Châteauneuf-du-Pape and more

This renowned producer has occupied shelf space at Harrogate Fine Wine for many years and with good reason. Although the family have controlled vineyards in the region since the sixteenth century the domaine was established in 1952. This is very much a traditional producer so such processes as filtration and fining are largely ignored as anything that takes away character is generally rejected in favour of techniques that highlight the magical qualities of the wine. No new oak is used and the domaine favours smaller casks, all of which are old. Sabon's magnificent wines just get better and better and the excellent 2009 Châteauneuf vintage can't have many better examples than the bottles we have in stock. It's worth noting that Sabon was the first Châteauneuf-du-Pape producer to receive a perfect 100 score from Robert Parker. The ripple of excitement which ran through all of us when these bottles arrived made us feel like kids on Christmas morning and they are a glorious sight. We have five of his wines available and hope you'll share in our delight at just how good they are.

Lirac "Chapelle de Maillac" 2009 £14.99

A Grenache dominated blend, this cracking value full-bodied red is one of the best Liracs we have ever come across. Open knit and inviting it's peppered strawberry character will gradually develop into a gamey-style sleek red if you let it develop, but when it tastes this good now maybe you won't be able to resist it!

Châteauneuf-du-Pape 'Les Olivets' 2009 £23.99

Made from 40-60 year old vines and a blend of 80% Grenache, 10% Syrah and 10% Cinsault Les Olivets is curiously approachable already. Essences of herbs, black cherries and truffles with a slightly lighter body than many it displays more elegance than many and shows the quality of the estate beautifully. *Parker score - 90-92 points.*

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Réserve 2009 £27.99

The Réserve has a slightly different make-up - 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah and 10% Cinsault. There's more depth here but the familiar herbaceous 'garrigue' character is noticeable and mingles happily with gamey beef flavours and also powerful plums, spicy blackcurrants and liquorice. A rounded tannic structure add a touch of backbone and there's good cellaring potential. *Parker score - 90-93+ points.*

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée Prestige 2009 £34.99

In a word - stunning. Grenache once again dominates but there's also Syrah, Cinsault, Terret, Counoise, Vaccaresse and Muscardin. Layer upon layer of flavour with wonderful Asian spices such as soy and hoisin amongst the fig, prune and plum notes. This is opulent stuff - full-bodied, muscular and with masses of texture yet the enormous structure features smooth and silky tannins to make it very enticing already. One of the stars of the vintage and worth every penny. *Parker score - 92-95 points.*

Châteauneuf-du-Pape 'Le Secret de Sabon' 2009 £124.99

Proper 'hen's teeth' wine here. Next to impossible to find this outrageously complex Châteauneuf takes on almost mythical status. Smoky, cherry-fruited, smothered in molasses and creosote Le Secret de Sabon is purple/black in colour, has an extraordinary spiced gingerbread, cherry jam and tobacco aroma and is one the stars of the vintage. It needs a little time but will reward the patient. *Parker score - 95-98 points.*

New wines

Greywacke Pinot Gris 2009, Marlborough, New Zealand £17.99

Kevin Judd's latest release reflects the quality of the other Greywacke wines we stock. Impeccably balanced it's classic Alsatian styled Pinot Gris - rich, full-bodied and spicy with candied citrus peel and marzipan notes. We like it with washed rind cheeses such as Livarot or Munster, but it's equally comfortable with oriental food such as Pad Thai or Crispy Duck.

De Wetshof Bon Vallon Chardonnay 2009, Robertson, South Africa £8.99

Unoaked Chardonnay that delivers at a super price. Fresh-fruited with aspects of peach, apple and citrus with a hint of Old World minerality.

De Wotshof Lesca Chardonnay 2010, Robertson, South Africa £12.99

Bon Vallon's big brother has a smattering of oak which adds a lovely nutty angle. There's still plenty of refined fruit - lemon, apple and a hint of pineapple - but that mineral-based twist is very much apparent.

Bateleur Chardonnay, Danie de Wet, Robertson, South Africa, £27.99

This carefully selected Chardonnay is regarded as one of the Cape's very finest. Full-bodied with classic buttery textures there's a veritable smorgasbord of fruit - apples, lemons, quince and pineapples - combining with attractive stony attributes to give some elegance. It's a big mouthful and well worth investigating.

Rustenberg R M Nicholson 2009, Stellenbosch, South Africa £11.99

Rustenberg's 'John X Merriman' has a smaller brother! Rather than a Bordeaux blend this time the mixture is made up of Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc and Malbec. The result is a richer, fuller wine with a lean towards spice and pepper. Similar dark fruit - blackcurrant, plums and damsons - coat the mouth and tingle the taste buds.

Spice Route 'Chakalaka' 2009, Swartland, South Africa

Another cracking buy from this useful Cape winery and quite a compote of grape varieties involved - Ayrah. Mourvèdre, Carignan, Petite Syrah, Grenache and Tannat. The winery likes to call their wines 'robust' and we think that's a fine description. There's loads of spiced fruit here - red and black cherries, blueberries, black plums and cassis - as well as lovely savoury, herbaceous notes. Try it with a mild chilli con carne or Toulouse sausages for a fine partnership.

Irancy 'Côte du Moutier' 2009, Colinot, France

Irancy is an area of Burgundy closer to Chablis than the Côte d'Or and used to produce highly prized wines. Despite its less fashionable status nowadays there are a few fine wines still being made. Stéphanie Colinot is one these producers and this lighter style of red is quite delicious. She adds a little César - a little known grape variety - to the Pinot Noir and the result is a spicy red with a hint of Beaujolais character. A step to the side but thoroughly worthwhile.

Camins del Priorat 2009, Alvaro Palacios, Priorat, Spain

It's worth noting that Alvaro Palacios is regarded as one of the key producers in Priorat. Our tasting note reads 'violet-coated spicy berries' which rather sums it up. Less muscle and tannin than one might associate with Priorat and definitely less of the normal bruising power, this shows considerable elegance but with a very persistent red berry flavour.

R. Lopez de Heredia Viña Tondonia Rioja

We keep looking at these bottles on the shelf and grinning. It feels so good to have such ultra-traditional Rioja in stock and from a producer of such enormous pedigree. The wines taste as good as they look and anyone who yearns for that style so few producers still make is in for a genuine treat.

Viña Gravonia Crianza 2001 (Blanco)

Possibly the most old-fashioned of all white Riojas and also potentially the greatest. A deep golden colour, this 100% Viura shows all the hallmarks of the way white Rioja used to be made. With four years barrel ageing there's a huge streak of vanilla scented coconuts dominating the wine. If you don't care for oaky whites this won't be your thing but if, on the other hand, you enjoy waxy-textured bold whites with a sun-baked fruit content and a tweak of sherry then you're in for a treat. Just delicious.

Viña Cubillo Crianza 2005 (Tinto)

Tondonia's baby makes many Riojas of Reserva status sit up and pay attention. 65% Tempranillo (65%) and 25% Garnacho, with the rest Mazuelo and Graciano, this tobacco and liquorice scented beauty exhibits damsons, black plums and vanilla coated berries. Aromatic and enticing it has marvellous balance and a delicate finish.

Viña Tondonia Reserva 2001 (Tinto)

A similar make up as the Cubillo but with a little more Tempranillo, this powerhouse Rioja is the stuff of yesteryear, and how delighted we are that the good folks at Tondonia still embrace the traditional values of Rioja in the way they do. With six years in barrel this medium-bodied Rioja has a delicate brick red colour and pungent vanilla orientated aromas. Dried berry flavours mix with baked fruit and lots of oaky spice, yet there is a remarkable elegance to the wine. It's so smooth it's almost ridiculous - velvet textures and fine-grained tannin - and the flavour just goes on and on.

We'd like to thank everyone who came to our Chateau Musar tasting in September. Despite well over 40 people in the shop that night everything bounced along very nicely and there was a great atmosphere as people began to debate as to which wine was the best. The main bouts seemed to be between two pairs of vintages - was 1999 superior to 1998 and was 1991 superior to 1993? There is no definite answer to this as people were split which just shows how wonderfully subjective wine tasting can be. Not only did we all get an opportunity to try a large selection of wines from the estate - including Musar Jeune, Hochar and Musar itself - we were able to see how the vintages steadily evolve and change over time. It's not often you have a chance to taste Musar from 1979 - the final wine of the night - but it was fascinating to taste the variations between young and old. The main thing is everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, and that includes us too. It was great to meet so many customers at one time and we hope you all had as good a time as we did.

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