



the bullionaire

BULLION 208

Travelling around Europe and not a COVID 19 symptom in sight.

We are bucking the trend a little, as Kim Bickley has chosen all 4 wines for her Sommelier Selection from Europe. This is not something we have done in a while, but when we tasted through the various options and wines, these were the standouts. Of interest to probably no one except me, this is the first selection we have done by remote and in self isolation. We each tasted the bottles at our own homes and phoned / texted in our comments. How very COVID 19!

What I find interesting about this selection is that the wines are all fresh and vibrant, with the reds all medium bodied. There are no big ballsy wines, but really this should come as no surprise, as those wine styles are a little out of fashion now. However, do not confuse medium bodied for medium flavour or complexity, as these wines offer plenty of both. You are probably familiar with these wines and regions, but I am guessing you have not tried them for a while. I know it has been for me; which is what I love so much about these Sommelier Selections. The opportunity to try something a little different, but which you know is a great example of the style and region.

The first wine is from Beaujolais in France. Those of a certain vintage might recall Beaujolais Nouveau. This was a brand name created in the 1970's by George Deboeuf, becoming an overnight sensation for about 20 years, then kind of dying away. To be honest it pretty much killed the reputation of quality from Beaujolais, which thankfully has recovered in the past few years. But back to Nouveau, which is an early drinking, light bodied wine, harvested in August and bottled and released on the third Thursday of November. This used to be a huge media and consumer event, with people lining up to be the first to drink the new vintage. To be honest it was a little cringe worthy, but at the time it was a very big deal.

Fast forward to 2020 and Nouveau still represents about a third of the regions production, but it is in the 10 Beaujolais "Cru regions" where the true excitement is being generated in this region today. Beaujolais is made from the grape variety Gamay, and whilst it is different to Pinot Noir and Red Burgundy, there are some similarities, but the pricing is significantly cheaper. Where a premier Cru Burgundy or top-flight Pinot Noir will start above \$100, a Beaujolais Cru can be found for around \$30-\$50. Sommeliers and wine geeks love these wines, because not only can they afford them, but you are also getting a pretty top flight, quality wine, rather than just an overpriced Burgundy / Pinot Noir.



The 10 Crus to look for are **Brouilly, Régnié, Chiroubles, Côte de Brouilly, Fleurie, Saint-Amour, Chénas, Juliéna-s-, Morgon and Moulin-a-Vent**. If one of these names is on the bottle of wine you are drinking, you are sure to get something interesting and tasty. Of interest, you probably won't find the name Beaujolais on the label, as they are trying to differentiate from the whole Beaujolais Nouveau fad. A great example is the wine Kim has chosen, the **2018 Domaine Metrat Et Fils Chiroubles**. Chiroubles is one of the highest regions of Beaujolais and is renowned for a lighter, fresher and more perfumed style. When I tasted this wine, I thought it had a great palate weight, not light at all, but the freshness and perfume really shined through. Like all these wines, the complexity and structure make it a sensational wine to drink.

Next up is Italy and the wines of Piemonte (Piedmont), which is one of the most famous regions in the world of wine. If you love wine, you have likely heard of Barolo and Barbaresco. These are wines made from the grape variety Nebbiolo, sourced from vineyards around the villages of the same name in Northern Italy. These are wines very much of the medium bodied style, very elegant and very prestigious (read expensive!). Prices for these wines start at around \$100 and can end up around \$1000. Nice wines to taste, but not something you can or will want to drink every day. This is where the Nebbiolo D'Alba comes in. These are wines made from the same grape variety, but from less prestigious and less expensive vineyard sites.

Continued back page

the wines



2018 DOMAINE METRAT ET FILS CHIROUBLES *Beaujolais, France*

Beaujolais has been on a bit of a roller coaster over the last 30 years. During the 1980's and early 90's, Beaujolais Nouveau was all the rage, but as the quantity increased, the quality decreased, as wineries raced in to supply the demand. It all came to a halt in the early 2000's, when people stopped buying this style of wine. Thankfully the region is focusing on better quality wines. This is great news for us, as the wines from the 10 Cru's or villages offer amazing value and quality. In fact, the vineyards in the Cru villages are not permitted to make "Nouveau".

Domaine Metrat is a young winery, but one producing plenty of quality wines. The winery can boast vineyards over 60 years old and comes from a region and vineyard that is quite cool and elevated and the elegance and structure really shines through. From vintage to vintage this wine always displays excellent freshness with bright balanced acidity.

This wine drinks a bit like a full-bodied Pinot Noir, with plenty of flavour and structure. It has this mineral freshness that is captivating. Scented, savoury and silky smooth it could easily serve as the poster child for cru Beaujolais. The wine's deep crimson colour sets the tone, but it's the beautiful bouquet of cherry and raspberry fruit with just the right hints of mineral and spice that make the wine special.

FOOD MATCHINGS

It is important this wine is served at the right temperature. Too warm and the wine will not show at its best. Ideally 15-16 degrees. It is a good idea to think like Pinot Noir with food matchings, so stick with simple roast chicken, grilled pork, lamb or veal. Also, a great lunch time wine, matching with hearty salads that include a protein (beef/chicken/salmon).

CELLARING POTENTIAL

It can be cellared for the next 2-3 years.



2017 BODEGA MENGOBA BREZO MENCIA *Bierzo, Spain*

Mencia the grape variety and Bierzo the region are very on trend with sommeliers and wine lovers alike. As the world gets smaller, it has never been easier to discover the next big thing and people are always on the lookout for any new exciting wine and region. Over the past 20 years this isolated region in the North West of Spain has been scoring a lot of goals. Bierzo boasts a long winemaking history, but for most of the 20th century it was neglected and largely left alone. Fast forward to the 21st century and young winemakers have flocked to the area taking advantage of old hillside vineyards planted to the Mencia grape, making fresh, energetic and intriguing wines.

The owner / winemaker Greg Perez is one of the most exciting young guns in the Bierzo region. He works his vineyards with traditional practices, ploughing the vineyards using cattle, eschewing chemicals, allowing the indigenous vineyards to find harmony in their native environment with as little interference as possible. This sensitivity is carried over to the winery.

It's such a versatile wine, wonderfully aromatic, juicy and long, brimming with vibrant cherry notes. On the palate, raspberry fruit is matched with elegant tannins, the high-grown Mencia character shining through in a blend that also includes a small amount of Garnacha Tintorera (Alicante Bouchet) that adds to the wine's deep colour and perfume.

I know this sounds a little fanciful, but you cannot help but think of the granite and slate soils where the grapes are grown. You also cannot help but notice the acidity of the wine, so fresh and vibrant. I can see why these wines have become so popular.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Red meats and non-spicy Asian dishes would be a great match. Peking duck would be a match made in heaven. The earthy tones also make it great with Smoked meats and other BBQ'd dishes.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before serving. Can be safely cellared for 5-7 years.



2015 LUCA BOSIO NEBBIOLO D'ALBA *Piemonte, Italy*

Nebbiolo is one of the great varieties of the world. It is not widely planted in Australia, as outside its ancestral home of Piemonte, it is failed to live up to expectations. So, you really need to stick to Northern Italy if you like this style of wine and trust me a lot of people do.

Luca Bosio was started in 1967 from very humble beginnings as farmers who planted some grapes onto their land. Fast forward several decades, they are now onto their third generation, they own 60 acres of vineyards in the key growing areas around Piemonte, and purchase fruit from hundreds of farmers around the area.

This wine is sourced from several vineyards, with the average age being 40 years old. In the winery they use traditional winemaking process, with the wine aged in a combination of old school Slavonian, large format oak barrels, and the more modern French Barriques. The result is a like a mini Barolo. You don't get the depth of flavour of a Barolo, but you do get the traditional "tar and roses" and the bracing acidity that is a feature of the Nebbiolo grape.

The freshness of this wine is what really attracted Kim and I to this wine. Nebbiolo is known for its prominent tannins and whilst they are certainly prominent in this wine, they add to the overall freshness, vitality and flavour of the wine. You get a hint of the "Tar and Roses" but it is more along the lines of violets, with dark cherries and these complex forest floor like characters, finishing off with a touch of liquorice. A wine that is easy to move onto the second bottle.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Gamey meats like duck or quail, Mushroom inspired risotto, grilled steaks (it's all about the tannins). Steak Tartare is also a match if you are looking for something a little different.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant this wine for 20 minutes before drinking, can be safely cellared for the next 5-7 years.



2018 DR BURKLIN WOLF DRY RIESLING *Pfalz, Germany*

German wine is most famous for Riesling; however, it can get a little confusing as these range from dry all the way up to the sweetest of desert wines. The sweetest being an Ice-wine, where the grapes are harvested frozen. But that is a whole different story. Sweetness in a wine is a tricky topic, for a lot of people tend to shy away from these styles, which is a shame for the great German wines, tend to have a little bit of sweetness, that is countered by their bracing acidity. That being said, this wine is dry, but it has so much flavour for a wine that only reads at 12.0% alcohol. Riesling is the favourite grape variety of most Sommeliers and wine lovers I know, yet to the average wine drinker it is largely ignored. At Bullion we have been a champion of Riesling, but I have to say this is one of my favourites. My wife and I already purchased a case and as I write this, we are half way through and loving every bottle.

Made by Dr Burklin Wolf, which has been around since 1597, who certainly know their way around this grape variety. They also farm their vineyards Biodynamically, which is a sure sign of commitment and dedication. It has these lovely green apple and pear flavours that dominate the nose and palate, added to a prominent minerality that I look for in Rieslings.

The palate is full and mouth-watering, and I challenge you to limit yourself to just one bottle.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Perfect with light Mediterranean dishes, fresh salads and most shellfish. Asian dishes are also a great match, although stay away from too much Chilli or spice. Wines are very hard to match to hot curries or really spicy dishes. If you want something very specific, I have found this Riesling is perfect with Korean fried chicken and "medium" red curry with kingfish.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

No need to decant, drink now and over the next 3 months. No need to cellar. Although you could keep for the next 1-3 years, but don't bother!

Continued from front page

The DOC region is based around the town of Alba, encompassing almost 1370 acres of vineyards, where the soils are sandier than the vineyards in the neighbouring Barbaresco and Barolo, resulting in softer wines, which are more approachable at an earlier age. Kim has chosen the **2015 Luca Bosio Nebbiolo D'Alba**, which has the added benefit of a bit of age under its belt and is just a joy to drink.

Mencia ("Men-thee-ah") is a medium bodied red grape variety, producing wines with very floral, red fruit flavours. You might not have heard of this variety, but thanks to sommeliers, the general wine world re-discovered traditional varietals like this, from older regions which fell on hard times during the 20th century. Fast forward to the 21st century and these regions are the shining lights of Spain and Europe. Young talented winemakers have moved in, taking advantage of the "cheap" ancient, hillside vineyard sites, bringing much needed investment and passion to the area. Mencia and Bierzo in Western Spain, tick all these boxes.

Bierzo is a remote region which was largely unknown 25 years ago, yet it boasts a pre-Roman winemaking history. It was devastated by phylloxera in the early 1900's and then dominated in the mid to late 20th century with cheap and cheerful co-operatives. It is rightfully gaining international recognition, right up there with Rioja, Ribera del Duero and Priorat. The **2017 Bodega Mengoba Brezo Mencia** is a great example.

Bierzo is littered with small hilly vineyards, with a soil structure of granite and slate, which always add a sense of energy, tension and minerality to the wines. Two grape varieties dominate, Godello for white and Mencia for Red. If you are a fan of Nebbiolo, or rich vibrant Pinot's from Central Otago then you will be a fan of Mencia. Expect medium to full bodied wines with exotic wildflower aromas and flavours, coupled with red fruits like strawberry, raspberry, cherry and black liquorice. Yum!!!!

The Pfalz in Germany is a narrow stretch of land just 15 km wide that extends through a gentle landscape of vineyards,

fertile orchards and picturesque, half-timbered villages. It is the second largest German wine region by growing area and topped only by Rheinhessen, which it borders to the North. It is also the warmest region, where most of the German red wine is produced, made from Pinot Noir, where it is called Spätburgunder. It is a region that produces a lot of cheap and cheerful wines, but also some classics, concentrating around some very old established families and the Riesling grape variety. The wine Kim has chosen is one such example. The **2018 Dr Burklin Wolf Dry Riesling Pfalz** is from one of the largest and most important family-owned wineries in Germany, with a tradition dating back to 1597. Their total vineyard area totals 85 hectares, producing wines of a distinct character and place. What Kim and I loved about this wine, is at only 12.5% alcohol, it packs plenty of flavour without the distraction of excessive tipsiness. As Kim so eloquently quoted during our phone calls, this wine is very "smashable". If you are not a big fan of Riesling, I think this wine will make you a covert.

So as Europe and the rest of the world find themselves in self isolation, Kim has given us Europe on a plate, or a mixed dozen. Enjoy!

Matt, The Bullionaire



About the Sommelier

Kim Bickley is one of the top Sommeliers in the country, previously working at award winning restaurants Glass Brasserie and Black by Ezard. From there she used her qualifications as a wine educator, teaching WSET wine courses for Lion Beverages alongside being the brand ambassador for Bollinger Champagne and Henschke wines.

Most recently Kim has relocated to the picturesque Hunter Valley and is working for one of its top producers Thomas Wines.

A CMS Certified Sommelier, who finished in the top eleven students who were certified by the Court of Master Sommeliers in Australia in 2008. Kim is also a wine show judge, a Len Evans and Sommeliers Australia Tutorial Scholar and was the first, of only two Australians in the International 'Landmark Australia' Tutorial 2010.

Some of her most favourite wines are Pinot Noir particularly from Morey-St-Denis, good Barolo and Hunter Valley Semillon.