



# the bullionaire

BULLION 23C

## THINKING OUTSIDE THE SQUARE ...



*Chateauneuf-du-Pape, France*

We have some unusual and magnificent wines this time around. Unusually they come from winemakers which are making wines from varietals and vineyards that sit outside the regulations of their regions. In Europe especially, there are some very restrictive rules and regulations which determine the style of wine you can make and especially what varietals and vineyards these are sourced from. The wines we have selected largely sit outside the regulations, but in some ways are even better for it.

The winemakers we have chosen come from some of the best regions in Europe (Chateauneuf-du-Pape, Brunello di Montalcino and Chablis) whose top wines costs hundred and hundreds of dollars, but thankfully they also produce other wines to these same exacting standards. When we tasted these wines, I was blown away by the quality and maybe I am still feeling a bit tipsy, but I believe this to be one of the better selections we have offered. A big call, but I will let you be the judge. We are always thinking outside the square at Bullion Cellars, for whilst we love drinking and tasting the great wines of the world, we have realized you don't need to spend \$200 to enjoy a great wine. We love finding these nuggets of vinous gold not only for you, but also for us. So, let's start with the first wine, from a producer in our favourite region, Chateauneuf-du-Pape.

### **Stéphane Usseglio's Les Amandiers Vin de France Rouge.**

The wine literally throws out the rule book. First of all, there is no vintage on the label and it has the most generic of

geographic appellations - Vin de France. Every AOC or wine Appellation in France has a "Cahier des Charges", or rule book that lays down the regulations for each region, including the approved grapes, minimum alcohol levels, maximum yields and a whole bunch of other rules. If a winemaker wants to stray outside these guidelines, then they cannot use the region's name on the bottle. But why then, would a winemaker choose to do this. Well, they might have access to a great vineyard that sits outside the region, or they may wish to make a slightly different style. It certainly creates a bit of drama in what is a fairly conservative region, especially one as old as Chateauneuf-du-Pape, but it can give birth to some very special wines that offer extreme value.

This wine is a great example of this and offers so much more than a run of the mill Côtes-du-Rhône. This makes sense when you realise the winery has been making top class Chateauneuf for over 75 years. This wine is made from 100% organically certified estate fruit, mostly Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre, grown chiefly in Châteauneuf-du-Pape and other sites the winery owns in Lirac and the Côtes-du-Rhône. Sure, this is younger and lesser quality fruit than what goes into their top wines, but the same care, attention and excellence is still followed. If that was all, then the wine would be a simple Cote Du Rhone, but Stéphane Usseglio has sourced a portion of Merlot for the blend from outside the Cote du Rhone, hence why he has to use the generic Vin du France.

*Continued back page*

# the wines



## 2021 CIACCI PICCOLOMINI D'ARAGONA ATEO CABERNET MERLOT *Sant' Antimo, Italy*

The Ateo wine is a classic Bordeaux blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, coming from Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona, one of the very best producers of Brunello di Montalcino. This is a region in Tuscany, and it is their take on a Super Tuscan. This is where the winery uses non-Italian grape varieties to make a wine catering for the International Markets. The sub region of Sant' Antimo was created especially for these types of wines.

It is a 50:50 blend from a vineyard that is 360 metres above sea level. Fermentation occurs in glass lined concrete vats, which is a little unusual and aging is in small oak barrels, which is common for this Super Tuscan style of wine, but not so common for the wines of Italy. For Example, their top Brunello di Montalcino, which is a Sangiovese based wine, would see little to no new small, oak barrel maturation.

This wine is quite intense and full bodied, but elegant and classy at the same time. Think of flavours like tobacco, vanilla and baking spices which are intermingled with sweet black cherries and cassis, with this really engaging plummy texture. The oak and tannins are very nicely integrated.

### **FOOD MATCHINGS**

As you would expect from a Bordeaux blend / Super Tuscan, think all things red meat. Steak or Beef fillet - medium rare, yum.

### **CELLARING POTENTIAL**

Decant the wine for 20-30 minutes before drinking. Can be safely cellared for another 7-8 years.



## STÉPHANE USSEGLIO'S LES AMANDIERS VIN DE FRANCE ROUGE *France*

### **Grenache / Shiraz / Mourvèdre / Merlot - Cote Du Rhone**

It is this addition of the Merlot, from a vineyard outside the Cote du Rhone that gives this wine its rather unusual and short name. You see because of the strict regulations in France, this wine has to use this rather generic name. But that does not mean it is not a very special wine. Made by one of the top Châteauneuf-du-Pape producers, who have been making wine for over 75 years, this is a lot more than your usual Cote Du Rhone.

With 24 hectares of vineyards, Domaine Raymond Usseglio & Fils is one of the top wineries in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The winery was founded by Francis Usseglio, an Italian who set up his own winemaking production. It was not until 1963 that Francis' son, Raymond Usseglio started to produce wines under the winery's present name. Decades later, run now by father and son, Raymond and Stéphane, their wines have become some of the most sought-after from this appellation.

But it is not their flag ship wine we are talking about, rather it is one of their entry wines. They source the fruit from the same vineyards that make their top wines, based along Grenache Shiraz and Mourvèdre, with a good dose of Merlot. This is great value wine that I am sure you will enjoy and rivals a lot of the wines from the region at double and triple the price.

### **FOOD MATCHINGS**

Côtes du Rhône wines are the perfect match for grilled meats, chicken and veggies on the backyard barbecue. It's that full body and spicy red taste that really makes the match.

### **CELLARING POTENTIAL**

Decant this wine for 20 minutes. It can be safely cellared for another 5-7 years.



## 2021 CHRISTOPHE PATRICE CHARDONNAY *Vin de France*

A native of Beine in the Chablis region, Christophe Patrice began working in the family business with his father and uncles in 1996. In 2006 he started his own venture with five hectares of vines. In 2011 he acquired a neighbouring estate, increasing his holdings to 22 hectares with an average vine age of 50-70 years. Today the domain has parcels in the top communes of Chablis and produces a full range of wines; Petit Chablis, Chablis and Chablis Premier Cru. But it is this wine that he sources from slightly outside the accepted region of Chablis that caught our fancy.

This 100 % Chardonnay is still made to his exacting standards. The fruit is whole bunch pressed to stainless steel tanks for a cool fermentation with indigenous yeast. Once fermentation is complete the wine is racked off lees and matured in tank for 4 months, without malolactic conversion. He does not use any oak in making his wines as he does not believe the fruit, or the region requires it.

Expect plenty of minerals with ripe tropical fruit overtones, a touch of melon with a green apple zip to it. The wine has a great palate weight and is quite full bodied, with very crisp acidity and a cracking finish as you would expect from Chablis. This is a great new find and is better than most of the Petit Chablis I have tried.

### **FOOD MATCHINGS**

This wine is quite fresh and vibrant. It can be enjoyed by itself, or with seafoods, salads or non-spicy Asian dishes. A great match with Sushi.

### **CELLARING POTENTIAL**

Can be enjoyed now – or safely cellared for the next 2-4 years.



## 2013 VINEMIND SHIRAZ MALBEC *Clare Valley, South Australia*

No that is not a mistake. This wine is 10 years old. The short story is the winemaker wanted to see how their wines would age, so they kept back a portion of the 2013 and 2018 vintages, and they have only just released the 2013 vintage.

Made in the Springfarm sub-region of the Clare Valley by Jen Gardener (of Adelina fame). While most Adelina wines come from their home block, this comes from the neighbours dry-grown vineyard with vines ranging up to 100 years old. A blend of Shiraz & Malbec, the vineyard is also very close to Wendouree who make one of the most famous wines of the region and of Australia. It is very rare and only sold via the wineries mailing list. This vineyard is red sand on clay base with lime and slate sub-surface. They work very hard on the canopy to get the light in, and all fruit is handpicked. Lightly crushed with some whole berry fermentation with aging in concrete and oak to keep things primary, clean and fresh.

VineMind Shiraz Malbec is what you get when you let vines get to 100 years old and then cellar for 10 years. The Shiraz is dense, rich but not overly heavy. The Malbec adds some grunt and backbone. That means it adds tannins, savoury characters and complexity. Blue and black fruits, meaty, peppery. There are some rugged tannins that are perfectly balanced by the fruit intensity. This wine is in perfect balance now and a treat to drink.

### **FOOD MATCHINGS**

This is still quite a juicy wine, but with lovely, aged characters and extremely soft and smooth. I really enjoyed the wine with a selection of soft cheeses. But would also be lovely with some roast lamb.

### **CELLARING POTENTIAL**

Decant for 10-15 minutes before drinking. There is no need to cellar the wine.  
Best to drink over the next 12 months.

The result however is a cracker of a wine and certainly better than a lot of wines from this region at double and triple the price.

This wine has the hall mark characters of Chateauneuf, think lavender, florals and wild herbs or what they refer to as Garrigue in this region. (This is not just a single scent, for it refers to a variety of aromatic herbs like rosemary, sage, bay leaves and thyme and is reminiscent of the low-lying vegetation that grows wild around the Cote Du Rhone and the South of France). This wine has a very feminine aroma, but it has a full-bodied palate with great texture and weight. Complexity is what you want in a great wine and this has you looking and searching for more aromas and flavours as you drink the wine. There is a terrific freshness to the wine that is just so enjoyable.

Next in our "wines outside the square" is a type of Super Tuscan from Italy. **2021 Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona Ateo. Cabernet Merlot Sant' Antimo Italy.** This is a wine made from a very prestigious producer in the Brunello di Montalcino region in Tuscany Italy. Brunello is one of Italy's most internationally celebrated wines, prized especially in the US, with extremely high prices. Despite the region producing wines for generations, it is only in the past 30-40 years that this global prestige has come. The wines are always made from a special clone of the Sangiovese grape variety, which is why the DOC region of Sant'Antimo was created in 1996. The winemakers who wanted to replicate the success of the Super Tuscans, from their neighbouring winemakers in Chianti, with the use of French grape varieties, could not use the Brunello name for these wines, so they needed some flexibility. Hence the creation of a new regional name. But Ateo predates this and was first created in 1989. This year was not a great vintage in the region and the family decided not to produce a Brunello in this year, as they did not want to compromise the quality of their top wines. They did however have a recently planted vineyard of Cabernet and Merlot reaching maturity and so Ateo was born. Ateo means atheist which is a slight nod to the renegade nature of the wine, and whilst it first came into existence as a provocation, Ateo is now a regular and classic addition to the winery's portfolio.

The Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona estate is located on the southeast slope of the municipality of Montalcino in the Tuscany region. The entire estate extends over 220 hectares of which 55.5 acres are under vine and 40 acres to olive groves. But what does this wine taste like. Pretty sensational. It is a classic Bordeaux blend of Cabernet and Merlot, and it is rich and dark in colour, and this shines through on the nose with vibrant, spicy and dark fruit notes. Very well structured with crunchy acidity giving the wine plenty of freshness, with sweet black cherry, cassis and plummy overtones. A full-bodied wine of great complexity.

The third European wine is from a well know winemaker in Chablis, who again sourced some fruit from a great vineyard outside his region. Chablis is in the Northern most part of the Burgundy region and has been in the shadow, of sorts, of the very famous and very expensive white and red wines of southern Burgundy. Chardonnay is the major grape variety in Chablis, just like the white wines of Burgundy, but resulting from the cooler climate and unique soil structure, they make less fruity wines that are often described as being quite flinty with strong mineral overtones. This soil type is known as Kimmeridgean soil, which is comprised of limestone, clay and fossilised oyster shells. So, this minerality kind of makes

sense. The top wines of Chablis rival any great wine, but as you would expect these come at a cost. The wine we have chosen comes from outside the region at a fraction of the price, yet still offering great quality. **The 2021 Christophe Patrice Chardonnay** is a beautifully balanced wine from a top Chablis producer of the same name. He created his own winery in 2006 and after acquiring a neighboring estate in 2011, he now has control of over 22 hectares with a vine age over 50 years. Expect plenty of minerals with ripe tropical fruit overtones, a touch of melon with a green apple zip to it. The wine has a great palate weight and quite full bodied, with very crisp acidity and a cracking finish as you would expect from Chablis. This is a great new find and is better than most of the Petit Chablis I have tried and will rival a lot of the great Aussie Chardonnays I have been talking about in previous newsletters.

I had to look twice when we tasted the last wine of this pack. The **2013 Vinemind Shiraz Malbec Clare Valley.** Surely that is a mistake, 2013. That is 10 years old. Normally if a wine is still around trying to be sold at this age, it is a sign the wine is no bloody good. So, I called up the wholesaler to find out the story, for the wine was pretty amazing. I was told that the winery wanted to see what the wine looked like with a bit of age, so they kept in reserve 2 pallets of wine (128 cases) of the 2013 and 2018 vintages. They have only recently released the 2013 vintage. This is a very cool experiment. I was not really familiar with the Vine Mind label, but it turns out it is the side project of a fairly well-known small winery in the Clare Valley called Adelina. These small winemakers like to have their fingers in a lot of pies, or fermenters so to speak. The Clare Valley is one of my favourite wine regions in Australia. It really is so versatile, producing a wide range of wine styles of excellent quality. Their Rieslings are world class, and their Cabernets and Shiraz's are not that far behind. The wines of the Clare Valley are always a safe bet. They have a number of standout wineries and one of these is Wendouree. The reason I raised this winery is that their most famous wine is also a Shiraz Malbec blend which is a little unusual and obviously works with the right vineyard and winemakers. Another interesting fact about Wendouree is they only sell via their mailing list. Great sales and great profit margins if you can get it, as their Shiraz Malbec is around \$150 per bottle. I have learnt that the fruit for this Vine Mind wine is sourced from a vineyard very close to Wendouree, with some vines up to 100 years old. But what does this Vinemind taste like, well very smooth as you would imagine from a 10-year-old wine. There are some obvious dark fruits shining through but what you get the most are these lovely, aged characters. As a wine ages you lose some of the primary fruit characters and then you get these secondary characters like chocolate, smokiness, minerals etc. Hard to describe but beautiful too taste. I generally have a 10-year rule when cellaring wine and this wine is a great example. Sure, it has a few years left, but there is no need to wait. Drink it over the next 3-6 months. I have this 10-year rule, for whenever I have tried wines older than 10 years, I always wished that I have opened the bottle sooner.

So there you have 4 of the better wines we have put together in one of our selections. At least in my opinion. Let me know if you agree.

Enjoy,

**Matt The Bullionaire**