

PROLOGUE

A Brief Outline Of The Development Of Wine In The Eastern Mediterranean

or

How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Passage Of Time

(not to scale)

14 BILLION YEARS AGO: Interstellar clouds of ethanol, methanol, and vinyl ethanol (aka alcohol that judges you for listening to compressed audio files on air pods) may have coalesced around microscopic dust & been picked up by passing comets - COMETS!!! - traveling the cosmos and in time possibly seeding Earth with the organic matter which became the building blocks of life. (As in 'us.')

9000 BCE: Two independent events take place domesticating the grapevine in the Levant and in modern day Georgia / Armenia

7000+ BCE: Evidence of resinated wine in a mudbrick kitchen in Hajji Firuz Tepe

2600 - 300 BCE: The Phoenicians, in what is now modern day Lebanon, spread vines and winemaking knowledge throughout the Mediterranean - Egyptians of the time said the wine of Canaan was 'more abundant than water'

CIRCA 150: Roman temple to Bacchus is erected at Heliopolis (Baalbek) in the Bekaa Valley

1868: Domaine des Tourelles established in Chtaura, Lebanon

1885: Cremisan Winery is established by Salesian monks in Beit Jala, Palestine

1975: At the start of Lebanon's Civil War there are 6 wineries in the country

2012: Fadi Batarseh publishes his thesis on indigenous Palestinian grape varieties at the University of Udine (and Hebron)

+~ 13000 BCE: Around Wadi al-Natuf near Ramallah, the Natufian people develop a sedentary society and begin early stages of agriculture, engage in various types of fermentation

4100 BCE: World's oldest known winery is operating in a cave in the Vayots Dzor region of Armenia

CIRCA 350: Anonymous author of "A Description of the World and Its People" states "Ashkelon and Gaza export the best wine to all Syria and Egypt."

1100S: Arak!!!

1500S(ISH): Ottoman rule more or less forbids wine production, but with *loopholes*

1857: French Jesuits plant Cinsault at what is now Château Ksara in the Bekaa Valley

1959: Serge Hochar's first vintage as winemaker of Château Musar

1996 - 2020: Following civil war the number of wineries in Lebanon grows from 4 to nearly 80

2015: Sari Khoury produces first vintage of Philokalia, Bethlehem

TODAY

SPARKLING

EN PEU

and though she be but little, she is fierce.

NV TARLANT BRUT NATURE ▶ 92 (375ML BOTTLE)

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Meunier / “Zero” / Vallée de la Marne, Champagne, France

NV PLOYEZ-JACQUEMART EXTRA BRUT (ROSÉ) ▶ 88 (375ML BOTTLE)

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Meunier / Ludes, Champagne, France

CHAMPAGNE METHOD

feeling traditionnelle?

NV KEUSH BRUT ▶ 76

Voskehat, Khatouni / “Origins Sparkling” / Vayots Dzor, Armenia

2020 IMMICH-BATTERIEBERG BRUT NATURE ▶ 170

Riesling / “Jour Fixe” / Mosel, Germany

2021 MERSEL WINE BRUT NATURE ▶ 145

Merwah / “Elevate” Sparkling / Bcharre, Lebanon

NV ETTORE GERMANO (ROSATO) ▶ 102

Nebbiolo / “Rosanna” / Serralunga d’Alba, Piedmont, Italy

2020 RAVENTÓS I BLANC EXTRA BRUT (ROSADO) ▶ 85

Xarel-lo, et al. / “de Nit” / Conca del Riu Anoia, Penedes, Spain

NV CRUSE WINE CO ▶ 120

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir / “Tradition” / Sonoma Coast, CA, USA

NV LILBERT ET FILS BRUT GRAND CRU ▶ 188

Chardonnay / “Blanc de Blancs – Cramant” / Cramant, Champagne, France

NV CHARTOGNE-TAILLET BRUT ▶ 177

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Meunier / “Sainte Anne”

Champagne, France (March 2023)

NV CHARTOGNE-TAILLET BRUT (ROSÉ) ▶ 195

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay / “Le Rosé” / Merfy, Champagne, France (May 2023)

2016 PIERRE PETERS BRUT GRAND CRU ▶ 475

Chardonnay / “Les Chétillons – Blanc de Blancs – Cuvée Spéciale”

Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, Champagne, France (February 2023)

2019 CHARTOGNE-TAILLET EXTRA BRUT ▶ 285

Chardonnay / “Heurtebise – Blanc de Blancs” / Champagne, France

NV ERIC RODEZ BRUT GRAND CRU ▶ 285

Pinot Noir / “Blanc de Noirs” / Ambonnay, Champagne, France

2020 CHARTOGNE-TAILLET ▶ 485

Chardonnay / “Hors Serie” / Avize, Merfy, Champagne, France

2019 CHARTOGNE-TAILLET ▶ 265

Chardonnay / “Ephemere” / Avize, Oger, Champagne, France

2021 COLET / NVAZOS BRUT NATURE ▶ 140

Xarel-lo (maybe a dash of the Andalusian) / “Edición Nº 15” /
(Mostly) Penedes, Catalunya, (Reluctantly) Spain (September 2024)

2020 COLET / NVAZOS BRUT NATURE ▶ 175

Xarel-lo (maybe a dash of the Andalusian) / “Edición Nº 15 Reserva”
(Mostly) Penedes, Catalunya, (Reluctantly) Spain (September 2024)

SPARKLING

NV ULYSSE COLIN EXTRA BRUT ▶ 385

Pinot Noir / “Les Maillons – Blanc de Noirs” / Champagne, France

NV RUINART BRUT NATURE ▶ 245

Chardonnay / “Singulier” Edition 18 / Reims, Champagne, France

2012 GOUTORBE BRUT GRAND CRU ▶ 300

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay / “Spécial Club” / Champagne, France (October 2022)

2021 MARCO DE BARTOLI ▶ 118

Grillo / “Terzavia” / (Marsala,) Sicily, Italy

NV EGLY-OURIET EXTRA BRUT GRAND CRU ▶ 385

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay / “V.P. – Vieillesiment Prolongé”

Ambonnay + Bouzy, Montagne de Reims, Champagne, France (July 2021)

2012 EGLY-OURIET EXTRA BRUT GRAND CRU ▶ 575

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay / “Millésime” Ambonnay + Bouzy,

Montagne de Reims, Champagne, France (July 2021)

Subsection:

What Happens When You Prompt ChatGPT for Condescending Opinions About Your Favorite Champagne Grape in the Voice Of a Stuffy Wine Writer

In truth, Pinot Meunier, you are the wine equivalent of a wallflower at a grand soirée, fading into the background while others steal the limelight. Your name, Meunier, which means “miller” in French, a rather fitting moniker for a grape that grinds away unnoticed and underappreciated. Here’s to you, Pinot Meunier, the humble workhorse of the vineyard, reliable but unremarkable grape of Champagne. May you continue to play your part dutifully, forever supporting but never truly shining.

– EXCERPTED FROM “PINOT MEUNIER’S PLIGHT”

NV LAHERTE FRERES ▶ 235

Meunier / “Les Beaudiers” / Champagne, France

2018 CHARTOGNE-TAILLET EXTRA BRUT ▶ 300

Pinot Meunier / “Le Barres” / Merfy, Champagne, France (February 2023)

2019 EMILIEN FENEUIL ▶ 275

Pinot Meunier / Les Ruisseaux 1er Cru “Millésime” / Montagne de Reims, Champagne, France

SPARKLING

PÉTILLANT NATUREL

feeling hip?

NV HOFGUT FALKENSTEIN ▶ 96

Weissburgunder (AKA Pinot Blanc) / Saar, Mosel, Germany

| An object lesson in kinetic energy by the Winzer Webers.

2022 TSAREV BROD ▶ 76

Riesling / Danube Plain, Bulgaria

2021 DOMAINE GIACHINO ▶ 89

Jacquère / “Giac Bulles” / Savoie, France

2020 MERSEL WINE ▶ 80

Viognier, Merwah / “Leb Nat Gold” / Bekaa + Wadi Qannoubine, Lebanon

| Eddie Chami, winemaker at Mersel Wines in Lebanon is on a mission to discover (rediscover?) what authentic Lebanese wine is. Turns out that cheekily-named Pet Nat might be a big part of that.

2020 MERSEL WINE (ROSÉ) ▶ 80

Sangiovese, Merwah / “Leb Nat Ruby” / Bekaa + Wadi Qannoubine, Lebanon

2022 JOÃO PATO AKA DUCKMAN (ROSÉ) ▶ 76

Maria Gomes, Baga / “Rosa Duck” / Bairrada, Portugal

2021 FABIO GEA (ROSÉ) ▶ 144

Grignolino (Maybe? Fabio won't say) / “Grignosca” / Piedmont, Italy

2021 GEORGIEV/MILKOV (ROSÉ) ▶ 72

Mavrud / “Funky Mavrud” / Thracian Valley, Bulgaria

2022 KOPPITSCH (ROSÉ) ▶ 86

Blaufrankisch, Syrah / “Pretty Nuts” / Burgenland, Austria

SPARKLING RED

feeling red?

NV TIBERIAN WINE CO ▶ 79

Sauvignon Blanc, Hibiscus / “Piquette” / CA, USA

| Is this a Sauvignon Blanc? Yes, technically.
Is this really a Sauvignon Blanc? No, definitely not.
Is it red? It certainly looks red, but it's interior reality? Well...

2022 FANGAREGGI ▶ 76

Lambrusco di Sorbara / “Puro!” / Lambrusco di Modena, Emilia-Romagna, Italy

NV PODERI IL SALICETO ▶ 69

Lambrusco Salamino / “Albone” / Lambrusco di Modena, Emilia-Romagna, Italy

NOT SPARKLING MIXED FERMENTATION

feeling apples?

2022 HEYA WINES ► 74

Merwah, Apples / “Farha” / Wadi Qannoubine, Lebanon

— An exciting new project, Michelle and Claudine are crafting delicious and ethical wines from high elevation vineyards in northern Lebanon.

Before we go further:

A Love Letter To Château Musar

In the village of Ghazir, 15 miles from central Beirut, one of the world's greatest, most bewitching, and fabled wine estates was founded in 1930 by Gaston Hochar. Descended from French 'Preux Chevaliers,' the Hochar family traces its roots in Lebanon to the time of the Crusades. Gaston's wines found favor among the French administrators during the period of the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon following World War I.

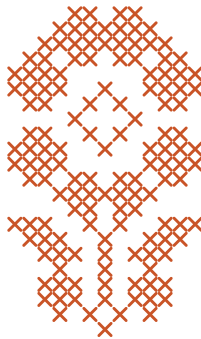
Serge Hochar, Gaston's eldest son, was born in 1939. When, at the age of 20, he took the lead as winemaker at Musar he told his father "I want to make the wine my way, I want it to be known world-wide - and I want you to quit!" Though he became a dedicated student of Emile Peynaud at the University of Bordeaux, Serge gradually set about disregarding most everything his mentor had taught him when he undertook to produce the wines he was determined should become so famous. Leaving aside the technical, 'clean' style he had learned in school, Serge instead crafted wines which were natural long before natural was Natty. Twenty years after he began on his quest, he succeeded in achieving the fame he sought for his estate.

With Lebanon already engulfed in its lengthy civil war, he traveled to England, bringing his wines to the 1979 Bristol Wine Fair. It was there that Michael Broadbent, of Christie's, first tried the wines of CHÂTEAU MUSAR - it was the 1967 vintage which Serge had brought with him, and which Broadbent was to later declare the 'find of the Fair.' By 1984, Serge was declared Decanter's first ever 'Man of the Year' in large part for the perseverance he (and others at the winery and throughout the country) had shown in the face of Lebanon's Civil War. Throughout the 15 years of that war, Musar missed only one vintage, 1976, when fighting in the Bekaa Valley - the site of Musar's (and +-90% of Lebanon's) vines, made it impossible to produce any wine. Another vintage, 1984, the trucks which normally bring the grapes from the Bekaa to the winery in Ghazir in a matter of little more than an hour, were forced by fighting and roadblocks to drive in the opposite direction and load the grapes onto a ship which was delayed by a storm before it sailed north past war-engulfed Beirut, and from there by truck again to the winery. By then, the grapes had already begun to ferment and the wine (exotic and port-like) took another thirty years to come into its own - a small amount released in 2013. Serge made the 1984 Musar as an act of defiance in the face of war and it became perhaps the most fabled wine of his remarkable career.

Serge Hochar died in 2014 - the estate now run by brother Ronald, nephew Ralph, and his sons, Gaston & Marc, along with his 'spiritual third son' winemaker & viticulturalist Tarek Sakr. He was a man of limitless energy and his wines reflect his irrepressible character. Serge often called Musar Blanc his 'fullest bodied red wine.' Exotic and long-lived, it is made from the indigenous Merwah and Obaideh varieties. Serge told a story (one among MANY) about opening a bottle once when receiving visitors, decanting it, finding that it wasn't showing well, pulling another bottle, and forgetting the first sitting in the decanter in his cellar. He happened upon it the next day and tasted it on a lark. "The wine had come alive. It was vibrant, beautiful.

It had come back to life! It was a miracle, really a miracle! And life is a miracle!"

Yes, it is, Serge. Yes, it is. And thanks for reminding us.



SAVORY WHITES

Introducing “airroir.” Airroir is that part of terroir that’s floating in the ether. It’s the idea that a salty seabreeze can make your wines savory. Of course, so can age, winemaking and (though the jury is “officially” still out on this one we’re gonna go ahead and say it) the dirt the vines are growing in can, too. So, volcanoes = savory. Is it a metaphor? Is it psychosomatic? Maybe. But is it perceptible? Yes. And perception is reality after all.

2023 BRUNDMAYER ▶ 74

Gruner Veltliner / “L+T” / Lagenlois, Austria

2023 LEIRANA ▶ 88

Albarino / Rias Baixas, Spain

2023 DOMAINE BERNARD BAUDRY ▶ 96

Chenin Blanc / Chinon, Loire Valley, France

2022 LAMPYRES ▶ 108

Grenaches, Muscat / “Des Sens” / Roussillon, France

2021 DE MOOR – LE VENDANGEUR MASQUÉ ▶ 160

Chardonnay / Burgundy, France

2023 SUSANA ESTEBAN ▶ 94

Field Blend / “Procura Na Ânfora” / Alentejo, Portugal

2022 SUSANA ESTEBAN ▶ 240

Field Blend / “Foudre” / Alentejo, Portugal

2021 WEINBAU WENZEL ▶ 88

Furmint / “Aus Dem Quarz” / Burgenland, Austria

2022 DE MOOR ▶ 190

Chardonnay / Bel Air et Clardy lieux-dits / Chablis, Burgundy, France

2020 I CUSTODI ▶ 120

Carricante / “Ante” / Etna, Sicily, Italy

2019 SUAVIA ▶ 94

Trebbiano di Soave (AKA Verdicchio) / “Massifitti” / Bianco Veronese, Italy

2022 KARAOLEGOS ▶ 98

Assyrtiko / “Estate” / Santorini, Greece

2020 HATZIDAKIS ▶ 165

Assyrtiko / “Nykteri” / Santorini, Greece

2018 ANTONIO BERNARDINO – PAULO DA SILVA ▶ 175

Malvasia / “Chitas – Branco” / Colares, Lisboa, Portugal

From a vanishingly small, sea-side appellation near Lisbon, facing an existential threat in the face of condominiums... What could be more relatable than that?

2020 VINYES SINGULARS ▶ 105

Xarel-lo / Salinar / Penedès, Catalunya, Spain (technically)

WHITE

2022 ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI ▶ 195

Grillo / “Vino di Contrada - SM” / Vittoria, Sicily, Italy

1990 LUIS PATO ▶ 425

Bical, Cercial, Sercialinho / “Velhas Branco” / Beiras, Portugal

2021 IÑAKI GARRIDO ▶ 160

Listan Blanc / “Las Toscas” / Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain



A SALTY MANTRA

Gone with the wind into the fermenter.

What blows together goes together.

Fossilized sea bed as a thread.

WHITE

#UNAPOLOGETICALLYCLASSICWHITEWINES

No one has ever used this hashtag, and maybe no one ever will. Classic wines don't come equipped with the transitive powers of street-cred. But they are delicious. These are benchmarks. There's a good chance you know these wines, or at least the styles - there's a reason for that. 50,000,000 Elvis fans and all.

2023 LUCIEN CROCHET ▶ 120

Sauvignon Blanc / “Croix Du Roy” / Sancerre, Loire Valley, France

2021 JUTTA AMBROSITSCH ▶ 135

Riesling / “Utopie” / Vienna, Austria

2023 HOFGUT FALKENSTEIN ▶ 96

Riesling / “Onkel Peter” / Saar, Mosel, Germany

2023 HOFGUT FALKENSTEIN ▶ 112

Riesling / “Meyer Nepal” / Saar, Mosel, Germany

2020 DANIEL-ETIENNE DEFAIX ▶ 135

Chardonnay / “Vieilles Vignes” / Chablis, Burgundy, France

2022 JB BECKER ▶ 115

Riesling / Walkenberg Spätlese Trocken “Alte Reben” / Rheingau, Germany

2022 JB BECKER ▶ 98

Riesling / Oberberg Spätlese / Rheingau, Germany

2016 TRIMBACH ▶ 155

Riesling / “390th Anniversary Edition” / Alsace, France

2010 EDMOND ET ANNE VATAN ▶ 600

Sauvignon Blanc (from another and older plane of existence)
“Clos de la Neore” / Sancerre, France

2019 DOMAINE WEINBACH ▶ 98

Gewurztraminer / “Les Treilles du Loup” / Alsace, France

2022 GRANVILLE ▶ 160

Chardonnay / Koosah Vineyard / Eola-Amity Hills, Oregon

2022 FAILLA ▶ 128

Chardonnay / Sonoma, Sonoma Co, CA, USA

2020 DOMAINE EDEN ▶ 105

Chardonnay / Santa Cruz Mountains, CA, USA

2023 MOREY-COFFINET ▶ 118

Chardonnay / Burgundy, France

2023 MOREY-COFFINET ▶ 415

Chardonnay / La Romanee 1er Cru / Chassagne-Montrachet, Burgundy, France

2022 DOMAINE ROULOT ▶ 985

Chardonnay / Clos de Boucheres 1er Cru / Burgundy, France

2012 DOMAINE PAVELOT ▶ 365

Chardonnay / Corton (Blanc - it's a thing)
Corton Grand Cru, Burgundy, France

2021 DOMAINE DES COMTES LAFON ▶ 425

Chardonnay / Clos de la Baronne / Meursault, Burgundy, France

2021 DOMAINE DES COMTES LAFON ▶ 900

Chardonnay / Poruzots 1er Cru / Meursault, Burgundy, France

#UNICORNWINES (WHITE WINE EDITION)

What makes a wine a unicorn wine? That all depends. Sometimes it's scarcity, some people may say it's price (but that's not very interesting, is it?), and sometimes it's just because a wine is...well, maybe kind of weird. Unicorns aren't necessarily 'better' than horses, but they're certainly rarer. And weirder.

2020 GARCES SILVA ▶ 80

Sauvignon Blanc / "Amayna" / Lleyda, Chile

2022 DONNAFUGATA ▶ 88

Zibibbo / "Lighea" / Pantelleria, Sicily, Italy

2021 2NATURKINDER ▶ 77

Silvaner, Müller-Thurgau / "Fledermaus Weiss" / Volkach, Germany

2022 LE PIANE ▶ 90

Erbaluce / "Bianko" / (Boca) Alto Piemonte, Piedmont, Italy

2017 HIYU WINE FARM ▶ 200

Pinots, et al. / "Falcon Box" / Columbia Gorge, OR, USA

2024 ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI ▶ 105

Albanello, Zibibbo / "SP68" / Sicily, Italy

2015 FORLORN HOPE ▶ 104

Semillon / "Nacre" / Napa Valley, CA

2023 DOMAINE MARQUILIANI ▶ 175 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Sciaccarellu, Syrah / "Rosé de Pauline" / Aghione, Corsica, France

What's the most unicorn-ish of unicorn white wines? Maybe when it's a white wine which really isn't. This bottling from Marquiliani, it isn't a white wine, but it actually is a white wine, only, in all honesty, it isn't. And if that seems unnecessarily convoluted, just remember: a unicorn is a horse with a horn on its head, except it isn't.

2021 LES FUNAMBULES ▶ 80

Muscat (skin contact) / Alsace, France

2023 FERME DE LA SANSONNIERE ▶ 155

Chenin Blanc / "La Lune" / Anjou, Loire, France

2022 COLLECAPRETTE ▶ 114

Mantonica / "Il Prodigio" / Umbria, Italy

2007 VITTORIO BERA ▶ 120

Moscato Bianco / "Bianchdusèt" / Vino Bianco (Asti, Piedmont), Italy

2021 DROOD WINERY ▶ 99

Lorkosh / "The Warrior - Ariobarzanes" / Shiraz, Zagros Mountains, "Persia"

2014 CVNE ▶ 310

Viura (with a skosh of Manzanilla) / "Monopole Clásico"

Rioja Gran Reserva, Spain

Reintroducing the Monopole Clásico in 2014, CVNE called their long-time winemaker Ezequiel García out of retirement - like a vinous Roger Murtaugh - to show the kids how wine was made back in the day.

LEVANT / MIDDLE EAST WHITES

Winemaking in the Middle East dates to at least 5000BC. It's some of the most ancient wine in the world, and among the most underrepresented in the country today. Sometimes it's pushing grapes in an underground fermenter, sometimes it's making wine in a modern method, but these are all wines to be explored.

2021 CREMISAN CELLARS ▶ 89

Dabouki / “Native Grape Series”
West Bank, Palestine

2021 MASSAYA ▶ 74

Obaideh et al.
Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2020 CREMISAN CELLARS ▶ 91

Hamdani, Jandali
“Native Grape Series” / West Bank, Palestine

2021 MUSAR ▶ 79

Viognier, Chardonnay, Vermentino (AKA Rolle) / “Jeune” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2021 MERSEL WINE ▶ 92 (1L BOTTLE)

Merwah, Sauvignon Blanc / “Lebnani Abyad” / Wadi Qannoubine + Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2022 CHÂTEAU BELLE-VUE ▶ 150

Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier / “Petit Geste” / Mount Lebanon, Lebanon

2023 EL-SABBAN ▶ 96

Viognier / “Kashf” / Mount Lebanon, Lebanon

2022 MERSEL WINE ▶ 135

Daw al Amar (AKA Moonlight) / “Elevate” / Ainata, Lebanon

2019 VOUNI PANAYIA ▶ 155

Xynisteri (skin contact) / “Whole Bunch” / Paphos, Cyprus

2021 PHILOKALIA ▶ 158

Indigenous Varieties (skin contact), “Which ones?” you ask – Good question
“Grapes of Wrath” / West Bank, Palestine

2015 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ▶ 190

Obaideh, Merwah / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2009 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ▶ 375 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Obaideh, Merwah / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

1997 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ▶ 300

Obaideh, Merwah / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

1992 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ▶ 400

Obaideh, Merwah / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

1989 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ▶ 700

Obaideh, Merwah / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

1975 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ▶ 1100

Merwah / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

1970 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ▶ 980

Merwah / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

It's Not Château Mersel, It's Not Domaine Mersel, It's Just Mersel (Wine)

Eddie Chami is onto something. Born in Australia, and with a degree in winemaking from the University of California, Davis, Eddie has positioned MERSEL WINE as a fiercely Lebanese project.

To say that winemaking in Lebanon is nothing new is both an understatement and not necessarily 100% true as over those 400 years, the situation changed once more, and Lebanon went from Ottoman "rule" to French "administration," and if the Ottomans weren't much into wine, the French were positively silly for it. To be sure, France and Lebanon already shared a long and complicated history - see the "Preux Chevaliers" or "Valiant Knights" from whom the Hochars of Château Musar trace their family line - but this early 20th Century creation, the French Mandate for Syria and The Lebanon, brought to Lebanon a very thirsty (and perhaps opinionated) audience for wine. The influence that the French officials stationed in the area had on the (re)development of Lebanese wine simply cannot be overstated. As often happens around the world locals turned their back on traditional and indigenous varieties in favor of proven and prestigious grapes (which also happened to be French) forever changing the makeup of Lebanese vineyards, and significantly impacting the (not yet) country's palate for wine.

We all know the saying about equal and opposite reactions - well, winemaking fashion is generally no different. When it comes to abandoning tradition and traditional varieties - winemakers like Eddie Chami are that equal and opposite reaction. With Mersel Wine Eddie and his team are at work reviving historic and abandoned vineyards, working to resurrect (nearly) lost varieties (and habitats and the Nubian Ibex, but those are stories for another time), and rebuilding a culture of wine in northern Lebanon. Reviving, resurrecting, rebuilding, working. These are not accidental choices in words. Eddie and his team are prolific in their endeavors. Constantly experimenting and pushing to reexamine and explore the possibilities of Lebanese wine. Creating the country's first pétillant naturel - known to cool kids of the world as "pet nat", hence its playful name "Leb Nat," exploring skin contact white wines, amphora fermentation, and more.

There's a whole constellation of projects underway at Mersel's winery in Wadi Qannoubine: Abdullah Richi (DAR RICHI), Amman Alsaqqaf (CLOUD AMMAN), Eddie's wife Michelle and their neighbor Claudine (HEYA), and Laila Maghathe (LOVE LETTER) all produce their wines there - each project inspiring and fueling the other.

Yes, Eddie Chami is onto something. Turns out, Eddie Chami's onto a lot of things.

ROSÉ +

ROSÉ + . . .

In the Rosé + Orange + Amber are some examples of “red” wine made as if it were a white, “white” wine as if it were a red, and, frankly, at least one or two wines which aren’t really made quite like anything else out there.

2022 STEIN ► 92

Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot / “Trocken” / Mosel, Germany

Though, Ulli definitely *did not* plant his Cabernet when it was illegal to do so. That would have been illegal.

2022 CLAUS PREISINGER ► 76

Zweigelt, St Laurent / “Rozsa Libre!” / Burgenland, Austria

2020 MERSEL WINE ► 79

Merwah, Sangiovese / “Phoenix Field Blend” / Wadi Qannoubine, Lebanon

2021 TROUPIS WINERY ► 76

Moschofilero / “Hoof & Lur” / Mantinea, Greece

2022 DOMAINE LIGAS ► 78

Xinomavro / “Pata Trava” / Pella, Greece

2023 LOS BERMEJOS ► 85

Listán Negro / Lanzarote, Canaries, Spain

2024 ALESSANDRO VIOLA ► 78

Nero d’Avola / Sicily, Italy

2015 CLOS CIBONNE ► 155

Tibouren, Grenache / “Tradition”
Côtes de Provence Cru Classé, Provence, France

2019 RIPA ► 98

Tempranillo, Garnacha / Rioja, Spain

2021 CHRISTIAN TSCHIDA ► 130

Cabernet Franc / Himmel Auf Erden / Burgenland, Austria

2020 CHÂTEAU SIMONE ► 150

Grenache, et al. (including some staggeringly uncommon varieties like Castet, & Manosquin) / Palette, Provence, France

2022 ELS JELIPINS ► 122

Sumoll, Macabeu / Catalunya, Spain

2018 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ► 170

Obaideh, Merwah, Cinsault / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

ORANGE + AMBER

2023 LOVE LETTER ► 94

Merwah / Wadi Qannoubine, Lebanon

2017 DOMAINE DE BEUDON ► 99

Chasselas (AKA Fendant) / “Cuvée Antique” / Valais, Switzerland

2020 MERSEL WINE ► 78

Merwah / “Phoenix Skin Contact” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2022 SUPERNATURAL WINE CO ► 72

Muscat, Marsanne / “Green Glow” / Hawke’s Bay, New Zealand

ORANGE + AMBER

2022 MARCO DE BARTOLI ► 135

Grillo / “Integer” / (Marsala,) Sicily, Italy

It would seem you can take the boy off the farm and make him a race car driver, but he'll find his way back in time to reinvent a region and redefine the possibilities.

2022 RG MX ► 125

Moscatel, Chenin Blanc / “Naranja” / Parras de la Fuente, Coahuila, Mexico

NV DARIO PRINCIC ► 108

Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio / “Bianco” / Oslavia, Italy

2022 KUMPF ET MEYER ► 117

Gewurztraminer / “Utopiste” / Alsace, France

2021 NUSSEHOF ► 115

Blatterle / “Bl.te.le” / Bolzano, Italy

2021 MERSEL WINE ► 135

Merwah / “Elevate” / Bqaa Kafra, Wadi Qannoubine, Lebanon

2017 HIYU WINE FARM ► 160

Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir / “Aura” / Columbia Gorge, OR, USA

2020 CLOS SARON ► 135

Albariño, Sauvignon Blanc / “Carte Blanche” / Sierra Foothills, CA, USA

2020 GIAMPIERO BEA ► 175

Trebbiano Spoletino / “Lapideus” / Montefalco, Umbria, Italy

2013 STORI ► 84

Mstvane / “Amber” / Kakheti, Georgia

2019 PAOLO BEA ► 135

Grechetto, et al. / “Santa Chiara” / Montefalco, Umbria, Italy

2020 ELISABETTA FORADORI ► 138

Nosiola / “Fontanasanta” / Dolomiti, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy

2021 RADOVAN SCHUMANN ► 160

Rumeni Muskat / Stajerska Slovenia, Podravje, Slovenia

2021 RADOVAN SCHUMANN ► 145

(Sivi) Pinot (Grigio) / Stajerska Slovenia, Podravje, Slovenia

2021 RADOVAN SCHUMANN ► 160

Chardonnay / Stajerska Slovenia, Podravje, Slovenia

RADIKONS ► 145 (500ML BOTTLE)

2019 Friulano / “Jakot”

2018 Chardonnay, Sauvignon / “Oslavje”

Collio, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy

2013 RADIKON ► 185 (500ML BOTTLE)

Pignoli / “Pignolo”

Collio, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy

"A VERY BAD AND DISLOYAL VARIETY"

In 1395 Philip the Bold issued an edict labeling Gamay - "A very bad and disloyal [disloyal?!?] variety," and cast it out of Burgundian vineyards. Thus, affable, innocent Gamay was banned from the Côte d'Or. Luckily for us, our unpretentious castaway found a home in the hills of the Beaujolais, setting its roots into iron and granite rather than chalk. Not many vines are content with granite soils. But Gamay? Gamay positively adores granite. Gamay couldn't imagine happier fate than to have been banished to the rolling countryside of Beaujolais. Also, they definitely still grow Gamay on the Côte.

2022 DOMAINE ROMANEAUX-DESTEZET (HERVE SOUHAUT) ► 104

Gamay / "La Southeronne" / Ardeche, Rhone, France

2020 DOMAINE DE BILLARDS ► 84

Gamay / Saint-Amour, Beaujolais, France

2022 ROBERT CHEVILLON ► 118

Pinot Noir, Gamay

Bourgogne Passetoutgrains, Burgundy, France

What better way to thumb one's nose at authority than to take the undignified Gamay and (cue the pearl clutching) *blend* it with the sweet darling, Pinot Noir. Subversiveness at its finest.

2022 BONNET COTTON ► 112

Gamay / Régnié, Beaujolais, France

2020 BEUDON ► 110

Gamay / Valais, Switzerland

2021 YOHAN LARDY ► 108

Gamay / Moulin-A-Vent, Beaujolais, France

2021 OCHOTA BARRELS ► 260 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Gamay / "The Price of Silence"

Adelaide Hills, Australia

2023 CLOS DE LA ROILETTE ► 125

Gamay / "Cuvée Tardive"

Fleurie, Beaujolais, France

2023 CLOS DE LA ROILETTE ► 245 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Gamay / "Cuvée Tardive"

Fleurie, Beaujolais, France



SMOKY REDS

There's more than just one grape sitting around the campfire. But if we're being honest, there's a lot of Syrah (and Syrah-adjacent varieties) at this particular party - which might be part of why it's such a damn fine party.

Suggested listening: Smoke Rings, Sam Cooke, 1963

2021 BERNABEVA ▶ 94

Garnacha / “Navaherreros Tinto” / Vinos de Madrid, Spain

2020 FABRICE DODANE – DOMAINE DE SAINT PIERRE ▶ 160

Trousseau / Arbois, Jura, France

2021 ELS JELIPINS ▶ 215

Sumoll / Catalunya, Spain

2023 TERAH WINE CO ▶ 88

Barbera / Shake Ridge Ranch, Amador Co, CA, USA

2021 TENUTA DI CASTELLARO ▶ 87

Corinto Nero, et al / “Ypsilon” / Lipari, Italy

2022 COSTADOR TERROIRS MEDITERRANIS ▶ 98

Garnatxa / “Metamorphika” / Catalunya, Spain

2023 ARNOT ROBERTS ▶ 120

Zinfandel / “Mokelumne River – Kirschenmann Ranch” / Lodi, CA

2020 ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI ▶ 245

Frapatto, Nero d’Avola / “Grotte Alte” / Cerasuolo di Vittoria, Sicily, Italy

2022 ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI ▶ 165

Nero d’Avola / “Siccagno” / Sicily, Italy

2021 LUIS SEABRA ▶ 88

Red Field Blend / “Xisto Ilimitado” / Douro Valley, Portugal

2019 DOMAINE LIGAS ▶ 135

Xinomavro / “Bucephale” / Pella, Greece

2022 DOMAINE ALÉOFANE ▶ 96

Syrah / Crozes-Hermitage, Rhône Valley, France

2022 ELIZABETTA FORADORI ▶ 96

Teroldego / Vigneti Dolomiti, Italy

2020 STEFANO AMERIGHI ▶ 179

Syrah / “Apice” / Cortona, Italy

2020 MELVILLE ▶ 110

Syrah / “Estate” / Santa Rita Hills, CA, USA

2023 BODEGAS VIÑÁTIGO ▶ 78

Listan Negro / Tenerife, Canary Islands (Spain)

2019 ÉRIC TEXIER ▶ 122

Serine / “Vieilles Vignes” / St-Julien-en-St-Alban, Rhone Valley, France

2017 CLOS SARON ► 168

Syrah, Viognier / “Stone Soup” / Sierra Foothills, CA, USA

Looking through LinkedIn you're unlikely to find many people other than Gideon Beinstock whose resumes list winemaker positions at any cults. But, hey, it's California, even the cults have wineries.

2018 NUSSEHOF ► 155

Lagrein / Reserva / Bolzano, Alto Adige, Italy

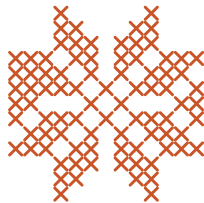
2021 BERNARD LEVET ► 240

Syrah / “Les Journaries” / Côte Rôtie, Rhône, France

2021 GUILLAUME GILLES ► 280

Syrah / Cornas, Rhône, France

“Shall I compare thee to a smoky fire?
Thou art more liquid and more drinkable:
Rough decants may raise thine perfume higher,
And granite's part hath equal say as iron...”



Nikodemos & Makarios

Philokalia: The Love of The Beautiful, The Good

“Good wine for me starts with a lot of coffee and cigarettes.”

Talk to Sari Khoury for any length of time and there's no telling how many topics you'll cover. His pace is intentional, methodical - his thoughts don't race frantically from one idea to the next in a torrent of ideas - there's purpose and care in their flow, but by and by, you'll find yourself far from the starting point, perhaps equally far from what you might have imagined the destination to be. The words and ideas make their way steadily through a cloud of French cigarette smoke and the conversation follows them as they travel. Not so much a stream of consciousness as a tide, something gradual and unrelenting.

The same thoughtfulness, the same intention, and introspection drives Sari's work at PHILOKALIA - work that Sari views as something other than, strictly speaking, winemaking. Wine is the vehicle, the means of exploration, but the central idea of the work is Palestinian, memory, culture, identity, history. The grapevine is woven intricately throughout each of these facets of life in Palestine with deep ties to the land, its people, and their understanding of self, so the product of the vine is a fitting avenue for such meditations. With so many different products that stem from a single plant - grapes, raisins, wine, molasses, leaves for *warak dawali*, fruit leather - the vine is bound up in tradition at every step.

Working with old, stubborn, dry-farmed vines situated in the southern hills of Bethlehem pointed out along the ridge line toward Hebron, Sari is crafting wines from indigenous Palestinian varieties in tiny - practically *noncommercial* - quantities. (Indeed, Sari maintains an architecture practice in addition to his time fermenting and distilling.) The wines are singular expressions of a place and a viewpoint. They capture something both timeless and undeniably present-tense - light and dark, savory and fruit-driven, intense and brooding, weightless and ethereal. These are wines which could come from only one place, and unless they had existed in the long-ago, they could only have come into being now. There is a tension in the wines that unravels gradually, but unraveling not in the way that a fabric comes slowly but irreversibly undone - here the tension unfurls and the wine reveals itself and states its intentions. And part of that intention is to reveal and to learn, from history, from tradition, and from imagination.

“I think that's what we owe ourselves, and what we owe the people who work with us, is that they understand there is no reference for what we're doing . . . for me, if there's no exploration, it's not really worth it. This exploration keeps my sanity.”

LEVANT / MIDDLE EAST REDS

Whether it's on the abrupt rise of Cyprus from the Mediterranean Sea, the humid regions along the coast, the terra rosa hills of Palestine, or the high elevation Bekaa Valley sandwiched between two massive mountain ranges in eastern Lebanon, the vine has a long - seriously long, like thousands of years, and then several thousand more - history in this part of the world.

2022 LOVE LETTER ▶ 92

Marini, Merwah / Wadi Qannoubine, Lebanon

2018 MASSAYA ▶ 100

Grenache, Mourvèdre / “Cap Est” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2020 CREMISAN ▶ 80

Baladi / Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine

2022 MERSEL WINE ▶ 135

Marini / “Elevate” / Blouza, Lebanon

2020 MASSAYA ▶ 79

Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre / “Terrasses de Baalbek” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2020 MERSEL WINE ▶ 87 (1L BOTTLE)

Cinsaut / “Lebnani Ahmar” / Bekaa Valley + Wadi Qannoubine, Lebanon

2021 DOMAINE DE TOURELLES ▶ 80

Cinsault / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2023 PHILOKALIA ▶ 145

“Indigenous Varieties” / “Stubborn Saints” / Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine

2021 PHILOKALIA ▶ 195

“Indigenous Varieties” / “Anima Syriana” / Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine

Sari Khoury and his partner Vicki Sahagian are crafting elegant, textured, and aromatic expressions from old vine indigenous grapes you wouldn't recognize the names of even if you could somehow get them to tell you which ones they are.

2018 DAR RICHI ▶ 74

Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Sangiovese / “Hanan” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2021 MERSEL WINE ▶ 135

Pinot Noir / “Elevate” / Ainata, Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2020 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ▶ 98

Grenache, Cinsault, Cabernet Sauvignon / “Hochar Pere et Fils”
Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2018 SEPT ▶ 120

Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon / “Cuvée du Soleil” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2018 VOUNI PANAYIA ▶ 108

Maratheftiko / “Barba Yiannis” / Paphos, Cyprus

2018 CHÂTEAU KSARA ▶ 79

Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot / “Chateau” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2020 CHÂTEAU KEFRAYA ▶ 92

Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Cabernet Franc / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2020 CHÂTEAU KEFRAYA ▶ 150

Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah / “Comte de M” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

RED

2013 CHÂTEAU BELLE-VUE ► 145

Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon / “La Renaissance” / Mount Lebanon, Lebanon

2013 CHÂTEAU BELLE-VUE ► 165

Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Cabernet Franc / “Le Château”
Mount Lebanon, Lebanon

2012 MASSAYA ► 160

Cabernet Sauvignon, Mourvèdre, Syrah / “Gold Reserve” / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2018 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ► 175

Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan, Cinsault / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2017 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ► 175

Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan, Cinsault / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2012 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ► 295

Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan, Cinsault / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2010 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ► 650

Cinsault / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

2000 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ► 325

Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan, Cinsault / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

1998 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ► 335

Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan, Cinsault / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon



Massaya Means Twilight

In 1992, two years after the official end of Lebanon's protracted Civil War, when the Ghosn family reunited in Lebanon after years in exile in both France and the United States, there were four wineries in Lebanon. In time, loose designs on creating the fifth out of their family's properties in the Bekaa Valley began to emerge, but in a country so damaged, it was difficult to envision a future. Plus, there was the small matter of the squatters who had occupied that countryside home for years. There are not many winemakers nor winery owners whose stories start with them spending their nights sleeping on the roof of their family home with an AK-47 at their side negotiating to remove several families of squatters, but that is precisely where older brother Sami spent four months of his life early upon his return to the country. Making wine in Lebanon in the latter part of the 20th century came with unique challenges.

Once the family property at Tanaïl was back in their possession, the Ghosns set about producing all manner of things: dairy, molasses, raisins, and - notably - arak. Initially, these products were sold from the shelves in the family pharmacies, the arak in random and haphazardly hand labeled bottles. But over time, among the products, Sami's arak began to attract attention. While visiting his younger brother Ramzi in France, Sami took notice of a vibrant blue bottle - the color echoing that of the Bekaa Valley sky at twilight when the sun dips below the Mount Lebanon range in the west - and Massaya was born.

With its eye-catching bottle and the quality of its contents, MASSAYA took off immediately - mirroring the rise of the country itself as it emerged from years of war. Its success was such that Sami and Ramzi left their careers to focus full time on their arak. (Given that Sami left his Green Card behind in New York when he returned to Lebanon, it's safe to say that when he makes a decision, he sticks with it.) And with this boost in their confidence, and seeing opportunity, the brother's had their sights set on making wine. The only issue being that they had no idea how one actually does in fact make wine. They needed outside help.

If you had an idea for a movie, but didn't know how to go about making it, it would require a nearly superhuman quantity of gumption to walk up to a Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, or Stanley Kubrick and pitch them on the idea, which is essentially what Ramzi and Sami Ghosn did when they approached a co-owner of Château Cheval Blanc in Bordeaux to sell him on the idea of making wine in Lebanon. To push the idea of opening the first new winery in a generation in a country only recently emerged from war. As it happens, he was sold. They then enlisted the partnership of two winemaking brothers from Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the Bruniers of Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe. Together, the group has worked to revive the family property and push Massaya to become one of the top and most forward-thinking wine and arak producers in Lebanon.

"THE GODFATHER" REDS

O.K. Maybe not everyone likes "The Godfather," but nobody's perfect. Although "The Godfather" is. Undeniably it's a classic, and so are these wines. And classics are classics for a reason, no?

2017 SHANE ► 130

Pinot Noir / "Soixante et Onze" / Sonoma Coast, CA, USA

2018 ROAGNA ► 155

Nebbiolo / Langhe, Piedmont, Italy

2023 MOREY-COFFINET ► 215

Pinot Noir / Morgeot 1er Cru / Chassagne-Montrachet, Burgundy, France

2022 JOSEPH PHELPS ► 185

Pinot Noir / Freestone Vineyard / Sonoma Coast, CA, USA

2022 DOMAINE ROUMIER ► 725

Pinot Noir / Chambolle Musigny, Burgundy, France

2022 DOMAINE ROUMIER ► 835

Pinot Noir / Clos de la Bussiere 1er Cru / Morey St Denis, Burgundy, France

2022 DOMAINE ROUMIER ► 3250

Pinot Noir / Bonnes Mares Grand Cru / Chambolle-Musigny, Burgundy, France

2022 E. PIRA & FIGLI ► 98

Dolcetto / Piedmont, Italy

2022 E. PIRA & FIGLI ► 135

Nebbiolo / Langhe, Piedmont, Italy

2001 LOPEZ DE HEREDIA ► 260

Tempranillo, et al. / "Tondonia" Reserva / Rioja, Spain

2001 LOPEZ DE HEREDIA ► 400

Tempranillo, et al. / "Tondonia" Gran Reserva / Rioja, Spain

2001 LOPEZ DE HEREDIA ► 520 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Tempranillo, et al. / "Tondonia" Reserva / Rioja, Spain

1980 LOPEZ DE HEREDIA ► 725

Tempranillo, et al. / "Tondonia" Gran Reserva / Rioja, Spain

2018 ROAGNA ► 370

Nebbiolo / "Albesani" / Barbaresco, Piedmont, Italy

2006 E. GUIGAL ► 800

Syrah, Viognier / "La Mouline" / Côte Rôtie, Rhône, France

2009 CAIN ► 325

Cabernet & Co / "Five" / Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley, CA, USA

in brief:

“Six Thousand Years Of Beautiful Tradition From Areni-1 To Andre Agassi”

Areni-1, site of the world's oldest discovered winery, dating to 4,100 BCE (also the oldest known leather shoe - sadly, though, not a bowling shoe).

2018 RIKARS ▶ 88

Areni Noir / “Davit” / Vayots Dzor, Armenia

2018 RIKARS ▶ 92

Areni Noir / “Arag Amphora” / Vayots Dzor, Armenia

2021 TARLLC ▶ 106

Areni Noir / “041” / Vayots Dzor, Armenia

2018 OLD BRIDGE ▶ 94

Areni Noir / “Reserve” / Vayots Dzor, Armenia

2015 TUSHPA ▶ 98

Haghtanak / “Reserve” / Ararat Valley, Armenia

in brief:

“The Big Chill”

Michael: [enters kitchen, sees Sarah standing in front of open refrigerator]

“You know, that’s the problem with these things. You have to watch them every minute.”

[Takes a *bottle of red wine* from the refrigerator. *Because chilled red wine is the future.*]

2021 LE NADIR ▶ 98

Grolleau / “La Nuit, Le Silence” / Saumur, Loire Valley, France

2022 ELIZABETTA FORADORI ▶ 92

Teroldego / “Lezer” / Vigneti delle Dolomiti, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy

2022 COS ▶ 94

Frappato / Vittoria, Sicily, Italy

2023 STAR PARTY ▶ 84

Cabernet Franc / Shenandoah Valley, VA

2022 CATHERINE & PIERRE BRETON ▶ 115

Cabernet Franc / Franc de Pied / Bourgueil, France

2022 CLOS CIBONNE ▶ 110

Tibouren (AKA Rossese) / “Cuvée Speciale”
Côtes de Provence Cru Classé, Provence, France

2023 USONIA WINE ▶ 78

Merlot, et al. / “Change the Weather or Change Your Mind” / FLX & L.I., NY, USA

2021 GLINAVOS ▶ 87

Vlahiko / “Ioannina” / Zitsa, Greece

2021 UNICO ZELO ▶ 79

Nero d’Avola / “Pipe Dream” / Adelaide Hills, South Australia, Australia

in brief:

“The Pope Of Greenwich Village”

Because, what's a wine list without a subsection covering the infighting and struggles of 14th Century nation states?

In 1305, following a conflict with Rome, Philip IV of France forces the election of Raymond Bertrand de Got, Archbishop of Bordeaux as Pope Clement V. When the time comes to move to Rome, Clement says “Non, merci,” and sets up shop in Avignon. His successor Pope John XXII builds a hilltop castle (as one does) a little ways to the north. In total, seven Popes (all French, probably a coincidence) rule from Avignon before the papacy returns to Rome.

(Before it was all said and done, the line of Avignon Popes brought about the Anti-Popes, the period of the Western Schism - and at one point there were three different men all claiming the mantle of the Papacy - and they all excommunicated one another.)

In the 1800s, Calcernier, the town below the Papal castle, decides it would rather be known for its connection to the Pope than its lime kiln and changes its name to Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe. In time, Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe becomes the hub of the wheel of the Southern Rhône Valley. As turns Châteauneuf, so turns the Côtes du Rhône, Lirac, Gigondas, Vacqueyras, etc.

2020 DOMAINE DE LA SOLITUDE ► 140

Grenache, et al. / Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône, France

2020 DOMAINE DE LA JANASSE ► 225

Grenache (C'est tout!) / “Chaupin” / Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône, France

2012 DOMAINE DU PEGAU ► 1300 (3L BOTTLE)

Grenache, et al. / “Cuvée Laurence” / Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe, Rhône, France

Taking its name from a style of wine pitcher (pegau) used during the period of the Avignon Papacy, Domaine de Pegau was officially established in 1987 by Laurence Feraud and her father Paul (though their family traces its roots in the region back to 1670). And if you've ever wondered how to pronounce 'pegau,' Laurence says it 'pay-go' whereas Paul says 'pay-gow' - so no help there.

"DONNIE DARKO" REDS

The mohawk. The renegade. The abstract art. Donnie Darko - a great movie, but weird as hell. These wines, maybe they're a little weird - not necessarily Donnie Darko level weird - maybe just a little unexpected somehow, maybe some of them aren't for everyone, maybe they just hail from somewhere you'd never expect, but they're definitely delicious.

2022 ROOTDOWN ► 87

Trousseau / St. Amant Vineyard / Amador County, CA, USA

| So, remind me again, how we gonna kick it?

2021 A TRIBUTE TO GRACE ► 150

Grenache / Santa Barbara Highlands Vineyard / Santa Barbara Co, CA

2020 DIAMANTIS WINERY ► 86

(answers the age-old question "what if Beaujolais were a flower shop on a mountain in Macedonia?") Moschomavro / Magoutes Vineyard
Siatista, Macedonia, Greece

2022 MATASSA ► 108

Grenache Noir/Gris, Macabeu / "Coume de l'Olla" / Roussillon, France

2022 FABIO GEA ► 175

Nebbiolo / "Cul Otte" / (technically) Barbaresco, Piedmont, Italy

2022 FERME DE LA SANSONNIÈRE ► 148

Grolleau, Cabernet Sauvignon, Gamay / "Les Gelinettes" / (Anjou) Loire, France

2021 PODERE LE BONCIE ► 178

Sangiovese, Canaiolo / Chiesamonti, Tuscany, Italy

2024 ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI ► 105

Frappato, Nero d'Avola / "SP68" / Sicily, Italy

2021 DROOD WINERY ► 115

Gorchesh, Samarghandi / "The Master - Saadi" / Zagros Mountains, Persia

2022 SUPERNATURAL WINE CO ► 80

Syrah, Malbec / "Paranormal" / Hawkes Bay, New Zealand

2022 CLOS SARON ► 145

Zinfandel / "New Z" / Sierra Foothills, CA, USA

2022 ANNE ET JEAN-FRANCOIS GANEVAT ► 180

Pinot Noir / "Mon Rouge" / Vin de France, Morgon/Jura, France

| Somewhere, someone is sitting in front of a "The Truth is Out There" poster, immersed in the hunt to determine if the Mon Rouge is 100% Gamay from Chiroubles, or Pinot Noir from the Maconnais and the Jura, but until they reveal their secrets, it's Schrödinger.

2022 STAR PARTY ► 87

Saperavi, Cabernet Franc / Shenandoah Valley, VA

2016 OLD WESTMINSTER WINERY ► 65

Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon
"Hilltop Road" / Westminster, MD, USA

2015 PARASCHOS ► 98

Merlot / Gorizia, Collio, Italy

RED

2020 VITTORIO BERA ► 94

Barbera / “Ronco Malo” / Barbera d’Asti, Piedmont, Italy

2019 CHÂTEAU LE PUY ► 165

Merlot, et al. / “Emilien” / Francs - Côtes de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France

Before wines were made for points, or lavished with incomprehensible levels of oak, wines of place like Le Puy and Jaugaret were the rule. Sadly, now, they are the exception.

2000 CLOS SARON ► 270

Syrah et al, / “Once Upon A Time - La Cuvée Mystérieuse”
Renaissance Vineyard, Sierra Foothills, CA

2016 LE PIANE ► 165

Spanna (AKA Nebbiolo) / Boca, Piedmont (the northern volcanic part), Italy

2019 DOMAINE DU JAUGARET ► 300

Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Petit Verdot
Saint-Julien, Bordeaux, France

The Rebel, these wines make more noise than heavy metal.

LARGE FORMAT

"BIG"

At a carnival, young Josh Baskin wishes he was big, only to wake up the next morning and discover his wish came true. But the more Josh experiences life as an adult, the more he longs for the simple joys of LARGE FORMAT BOTTLES.

subsection: sparkling

2020 LUIS PATO ► 275 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Baga (Blanc de Noirs) / “Vinha Pan Espumante No SO₂ No Dosage” / Bairrada, Portugal

2021 MERSEL WINE BRUT NATURE ► 260 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Merwah / “Elevate” Sparkling / Bcharre, Lebanon

subsection: white

2022 JEAN-BAPTISTE HARDY ► 244 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Melón de Bourgogne / “Fief de Chaintre” / Muscadet, Loire, France

2018 FORADORI ► 325 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Nosiola / “Fontanasanta” / Dolomiti, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy

2022 MATASSA ► 250 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Macabeu, Muscat / “Cuvée Marguerite” / Roussillon, France

2017 DO FERREIRO ► 305 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Albariño / Rías Baixas, Spain

2019 DO FERREIRO ► 285 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Albariño / Rías Baixas, Spain

2009 CHÂTEAU MUSAR ► 375 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Obaideh, Merwah / Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

LARGE FORMAT

subsection: red

2022 FLAVIA REBELLIOUS WINES ▶ 84 (1L BOTTLE)

Frappato, Perricone / “Taillé” / Sicily, Italy

2023 ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI ▶ 375 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Frappato / “Il Frappato” / Vittoria, Sicily, Italy

2021 OCHOTA BARRELS ▶ 260 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Gamay / “The Price of Silence” / Adelaide Hills, Australia

2023 CLOS DE LA ROILETTE ▶ 245 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Gamay / “Cuvée Tardive” / Fleurie, Beaujolais, France

2010 FORADORI ▶ 1355 (3L BOTTLE)

Teroldego / “Granato” / Dolomiti, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy

2001 LOPEZ DE HEREDIA ▶ 480 (1.5L BOTTLE)

Tempranillo, et al. / “Tondonia” Gran Reserva / Rioja, Spain

2012 DOMAINE DU PEGAU ▶ 1300 (3L BOTTLE)

Grenache, et al. / “Cuvée Laurence” / Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe, Rhône, France

subsection: something else entirely

2024 YAMADA SHOTEN ▶ 82 (900ML BOTTLE)

Rice / “Everlasting Roots” Tokobetsu Junmai / Gifu, Japan

2017 TAMAGAWA ▶ 148 (1.8L BOTTLE)

Rice / “Heart of Oak” Tokobetsu Junmai / Kyoto, Japan