

THE BLACKDOG
WINE COMPANY



Wine Merchants

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NEW ARRIVALS & SPECIAL OFFERS
DECEMBER 2010

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2008 Le LOUP dans la BERGERIE
DOMAINE DE L'HORTUS,
VIN DE PAYS DU VAL DE MONTFERRAND

Should I really start with the wine I think I love the most? I have known and sold the fine, often rather serious wines from the Orleac family, the leading lights in the young Pic St.Loup appellation, for years. But this, the new baby of the domaine, I have fallen for more completely than any of its peers. Why? Well, for a start it makes me think good Pinot Noir. Grenache that does that is well off the chocks. Bright, quite pale, it has that ethereal note of delicately crushed red cherries, and a wonderful savouriness in the mouth. It is even complex, and lingers alluringly on the palate. And the label is a joy to behold, a wonderful, frivolous typographer's alphabet soup. Mainly Grenache, with Merlot making up the blend.

£9.35 PER BOTTLE £104.40 PER CASE

2009 DOMAINE DE MUS ROUSSANNE VERMENTINO
VIN DE PAYS D'OC

It is unusual to find the noble, rare and sometimes capricious Roussanne in any but the smartest southern French whites, but here it is, alongside the grape that seems to have become the darling of the Midi and Corsica, Vermentino. It possesses that lovely cool, greenish hue that seems to be the marker of good white wine, with a fat, ripe fruit, and ample acidity. Crisp and floral, with a long finish.

£7.60 PER BOTTLE £85.20 PER CASE

2009 DOMAINE DE MUS GRENACHE
VIN DE PAYS D'OC

Mus also work well with Grenache. This example has a fine, medium deep colour, is clean, bright and vigorous on the nose, with sweet, well rounded, softly ripe fruit. A warm, soft, gentle and satisfying red. If the phrase 'kitchen wine' doesn't sound too derogatory (it shouldn't) this is the perfect one. And terrific value too.

£7.60 PER BOTTLE £85.20 PER CASE

2009 PRIMITIVO
TERRE DI MONTELUSA, PUGLIA, ITALY

Primativo is Zinfandel. That is about where the resemblance stops in this case. Ok, it has the deep colour, but it really is Italian. Ripe red fruits, dried apricots, plums and cinnamon. Some cherry, some power, and that hallmark Italian astringency on the finish. Pizza, pasta. Cold turkey.

£6.75 PER BOTTLE £75.60 PER CASE

2009 TUTTOBENNE BIANCO
TENEMENTINI ANGELINI

Iam normally wary of wines with much, indeed any, Trebbiano in them, but in this case, filled out with some Chardonnay and Vermentino, it really works. Pale straw-yellow, with a nose hinting at apples, white flowers, lychee. Clean and intense, with good fat balanced out by a lively acidity and a fresh, crisp finish. Drink it with chicken, seafood and light pasta dishes. And cold turkey. Or just drink it. Tuttobenne. All is well.

£7.35 PER BOTTLE £81.60 PER CASE

2009 TUTTOBENNE ROSSO
TENEMENTINI ANGELINI

No quibbles with the varieties used in the red. Merlot, Sangiovese and Canaiolo (the first we all know, the other two staples of Chianti, from where this harks). Brick red colour, medium body, redcurrants, raspberries, ripe plums and soft herbal notes, with soft tannins and a smooth acidity. A delicious, cheap vinous gem to drink with pizza, pasta, roast chicken or mild cheeses. And cold turkey.

£8.80 PER BOTTLE £98.40 PER CASE

2009 VERDEJO - VIURA, FINCA REMENDIO
RUEDA, SPAIN

The Rueda is Spain's most promising and versatile white wine region, the high, flat plain in the region of Valladolid, to the west of the Ribera del Duero. The crisp nuttiness of Verdejo is held on a tight rein here. Clean, fresh, white stone fruits, intense, with hints of apples and cut grass. Yup, cut grass. Think Sauvignon. I would swear there is Sauvignon in here somewhere. It doesn't say so on the label, but there is lots of Sauvignon planted in the region, so I am sticking with it. Delicious.

£8.95 PER BOTTLE £100.20 PER CASE

2009 CUVÉE R:NAISSANCE
DOMAINE DE LA MORDORÉE, VIN DE PAYS DU GARD

Mordorée is arguably the leading light in the southern Rhône's Lirac Appellation, most famous for its excellent rosés, and overlooked for the at least equally fine reds and whites. This is world-class winemaking, and the top Lirac cuvées are sold at fairly lofty prices. But here, once again, we have a wine from grapes grown in more modest environs, in this case the humble Gard, an unlikely blend of Merlot and Marselan, the latter itself a youthful union of Cabernet-Sauvignon and Grenache. The vines too are young, but this early offering of the estate's new baby is completely delicious. Bright, vivid purple, it has real energy and poise, with sappy, ripe fruit, and good texture. Fresh, beautiful and stylish.

£10.40 PER BOTTLE £115.80 PER CASE

2009 VIOGNIER, FINCA LA LINDA
BODEGA LUIGI BOSCA, ARGENTINA

I have never been to South America and I don't really do big, so my growing respect for this extensive (400 hectares is BIG for us) family-run concern is ever so slightly grudging. But they are doing some very good things, not least seeking out suitably cool, well drained vineyard sites in the sub-Andean hills, and a recent extensive tasting of their wines over a suitably red-rare beef-dominated lunch at Gaucho London Bridge showed an impressive concentration of serious wines. This Viognier is really very good. It has a clear, bright gold colour, with aromas of white flowers and apricots. On the palate it is unctuous and poised, with a lovely piercing acidity, ample in both body and length. Sauced fish, and um.... white meats.

£7.75 PER BOTTLE £87.00 PER CASE

2009 ALBARINO, DILUVIO
GALICIA, SPAIN

Now we have had a Galician Albarino here in the shop, but if I am to be honest I felt it a little hollow on the middle palate, and certainly too expensive. Eventually somebody, a customer, told me they thought so too. So...this is neither. It is handmade from a patchwork of tiny, sometimes garden-sized vineyard plots in Barro, with a high proportion of ancient vines. Green gold in colour, white flowers, intensely aromatic and complex, with the trademark Galician acidity. Quite lovely. You know, you could drink this with.....

£11.55 PER BOTTLE £129.00 PER CASE

2009 LES PLANS, VIN DE PAYS DE VAUCLUSE
DOMAINE SANTA DUC, GIGONDAS

Yves Gras is a wild man. I first met him years ago when we stayed at Roc de Cambes (qv) in Bordeaux for Vinexpo together with a group of winemakers and merchants from all over the globe. One night we all dined at a rural fish restaurant on the river. It was terrible, just awful. None of us ate anything, except for him, and he ate everybody's. The effect on him was unspeakable, but he recovered none the worse for the experience, and I am glad he did. He makes a powerful, full-blooded Gigondas at Santa Duc, much beloved of a certain American wine critic (and therefore American and Far-Eastern wine drinkers), but I think I like this modest Vaucluse best. It has richness and weight, but also freshness, poise and balance. A lovely, peppery, mainly Grenache based Rhône. Red meats, farmhouse cheeses, meat pastas, roast poultry. Roast turkey. Hot or cold. Ok, cold, on toast made with that lovely sourdough bread from Igor at Belgique, with stuffing and cranberry, sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Mmmm!

£8.50 PER BOTTLE £94.80 PER CASE

2008 ETERNUM VITI

The trend for naming wines with rather biblical-sounding jargon often makes one suspect there are some inflated egos at work. We can relax just a little here. A back label defines the latin words as 'that which has no beginning or end, which lasts a long time, or is repeated frequently' and 'a crawling plant with long, flexible branches...whose fruit is the grape'. Ok, so you knew that. Here, then, we have a never-ending grapevine without a beginning. Should be interesting. Actually, it is. Pure Tinto di Toro (the colloquialism for Tempranillo in this beautiful region close by the Portugese border), the old vine fruit is aged in French barriques, has a vivid purple colour, and to enter into some Parkersisms, sports an "alluring bouquet of toasty oak, scorched earth, tobacco, espresso and blackberry". Enough! It is dark, rich, smooth and suave. Drink it now, with cold turkey, or cellar for 5 years.

£10.45 PER BOTTLE £117.00 PER CASE

**A SAMPLER CASE OF ONE BOTTLE OF EACH OF THE
ABOVE WINES £93.00**

I suspect stocks will be tested a little, so any out of stock items will be substituted with something equally delicious. Please phone or e-mail to reserve your order.

SANS - SOUFRE

CULT WINES MADE WITH LOW or NO SULPHUR

Bear with me. I'll try to keep this short: Sulphur, or to be precise, sulphur dioxide, is considered to be an essential item in the winemaker's kit bag. It is added to wine in small quantities at various stages of the winemaking process in order to provide microbiological stability, and to offset the deleterious effects of oxygen. Oxygen is needed, of course, in the initial stages of fermentation for the activity of the yeasts, but thereafter it constitutes something of a hazard. However, at some risk of becoming a little tedious, this is not quite the full story. The SO₂ can pull things too far in an anaerobic direction, for just a smidgeon of oxygen is desirable in order for the wine to develop complex and interesting aromas. Too much SO₂, and the wine will become 'reduced', which means that the aromas become subdued, and the wine flat and lifeless. This is not so much of a problem during the winemaking process, for techniques such as 'batonnage' (stirring!) and racking-off reintroduce sufficient oxygen. However, once the wine is in bottle, reduced aromas and flavours are there to stay, and a little sulphur is used at bottling to provide stability. Too much, and you have a dead wine, with a lack of freshness, poor aromatic projection and hard, tannic flavours. Lots of wine is like this. Too little, and it could just go fizzy.



So, we can conclude that sulphur is desirable, but only in carefully controlled quantities. However, there are a few mavericks out there (and we like mavericks) who take natural winemaking the whole way, and either use no sulphur at all, or if

they do, only at the '*assemblage*'. Dangerous winemaking. Optimum health in the vineyard to bring properly, physiologically ripe grapes, and good hygiene in the vat room are the essential elements. And when it works, you can find yourself with a wine that transcends our normal expectations. They don't 'close up' when first bottled, offering intense fruit aromas from the out. They can possess astonishing complexity and depth. And my, do you have to be careful when you store them.

Below we have four wines, three of them from a single producer, that are made with the minimum possible use of sulphur. Where any has gone in at all, it will have been at *assemblage*. I believe that they are quite remarkable.

2008 MORGON "CÔTE DU PUY"

Jean Foillard

Many years ago I was visiting growers in the Beaujolais with an eminent Master of Wine. Browsing a wine list at dinner one evening, he asked me if I would like to try the most unique of all Crus Beaujolais. I can't remember the vintage, but it was Jean Foillard's famous Côte du Puy, that unique volcanic *terroir* that produces the best Morgons. Foillard is a disciple of Jules Chauvet, guru figure to all natural winemakers. He worked conventionally until 1985, when he started to develop his use of organic/biodynamic vineyard techniques, and the kind of attention to detail that sets great winemakers apart. The wine is made using traditional techniques more common to Burgundy than Beaujolais. It is extraordinary, and really doesn't resemble Beaujolais in any way. A dark, red/black colour, it has a striking nose of kirsch, ripe cherries and raspberry *coulis*. On the palate it has a wonderful purity of sweet, alluringly complex fruit, both textured and rich, yet elegant and expressive, and a haunting complexity on the finish which leaves you wanting more when the bottle is empty.

£21.45 PER BOTTLE £239.40 PER CASE

2009 CÔTES DU RHÔNE "SIERRA DU SUD"

Domaine Gramenon

Pure Syrah, from old vines on the eastern fringe of the Côtes du Rhône. Michelle Aubery-Laurent practices biodynamic and organic vineyard techniques, and if any sulphur is used at all it is minuscule quantities when the lots are assembled. Deep in colour, but not dense or turpid. Amazing, ripe hedgerow fruits on the nose – redcurrant, blackberry, even raspberry, together with a hint of spice and meat. Vivid, dense ripe and richly layered, but also smooth and fresh and elegant. Only 9 months since bottling, any rawness that might be expected is absent. A couple of hours in the decanter and this is an even more awesome, fascinating wine.

£19.45 PER BOTTLE £215.40 PER CASE

2009 CÔTES DU RHÔNE “LES LAURENTIDES”

Domaine Gramenon

Gramenon’s wines transcend mere appellation, for these are truly great wines. One should put aside comparison with the generality of Côtes du Rhône. The Cuvée Laurentides is a blend of old vine Grenache and Syrah – I am not sure as to the proportions, nor do I particularly care, though I suspect more of the former. Neither fined nor filtered prior to bottling. Deep, vigorous, opaque purple. Dense, very ripe, primeur fruit – blackcurrants, loganberries hedgerow fruits and plums. Intense, mouthfilling, rasping and vigorous, with a bright acidity and a core of dense, concentrated sweet fruit. A powerful package, complex, thrilling and long.

£19.45 PER BOTTLE £215.40 PER CASE

2009 CÔTES DU RHÔNE “L’ÉLÉMENTAIRE”

Domaine Gramenon

I get in a bit of a muddle with Michelle Aubery-Laurent’s labels. She seems to produce a fair number, some of which relate to blends, others to specific vineyard parcels, and not all of which appear in each vintage. Perhaps she is keeping one step ahead of the INAO authorities, who tend to find mavericks difficult to slot. L’Elementaire has on the label a pleasant watercolour sketch of an ancient, thick trunked bush vine. I recall that it is another Grenache *‘pur’*. Deep, bright, vivid opaque purple colour. Brilliantly projected, ripe black and red fruits, with some raw, extractive hints which shake off after a while in the decanter (or a few months in a cool cellar). Substantial and layered, with a firm but super ripe tannin. Silky, refined and smooth, long and rich. Lingers for several minutes on the palate. Not quite as big as Laurentides, l’Elementaire sports a modest(?) 14.5% alcohol, which it conceals admirably.

£18.25 PER BOTTLE £203.40 PER CASE

Now when to drink these wines..? The 2009 vintage in the Rhône, as in so many regions, is outstanding, and due to Gramenon’s tendency to bottle quite early to preserve the vivacity of the fruit, these are some of the first available. They are already delicious, though I think there is a good case for cellaring them carefully, and drawing a bottle or two each year for perhaps 6 years. But that cellar must be cool and constant.

All of these wines are available in extremely limited quantities, and will be sold on a first-come first-served basis.



‘Great wines from small growers’.

CHRISTMAS 2010

Wine Shop at Ashlyn’s Opening Times

Saturday 17th December 10.00 am – 5.00 pm

Sunday 18th 11.00 am – 4.00 pm

Monday 19th to Thursday 23rd

10.00 am to 6.00 pm

Christmas Eve 10.00 am until the last customer is gone.

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