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Inside on Page 3
Two Great
Champagne Vintages
1995 & 1996

Inside on Page 4
Auguste Clape,
a Retrospective
1988-2001

OCTOBER 4, 2005

CHABLIS

Raveneau

The Elusive 2002's Come Home

Like others, we have long worshipped at Raveneau's throne, reveling in the glory of their transcendent Chablis. With each passing year, we have had to accept higher prices and growing scarcity—but ultimately the wines have been available and affordable.

Yet, few of us understood how ephemeral was our hold on these great wines. With their tiny production, they remained in play simply because Raveneau's magic was known only to serious restaurateurs, journalists, merchants and connoisseurs. Their availability was tenuous, at best; any surge in demand was likely to send them the way of Jayer and Dugat.

2002

Which is exactly what happened when Raveneau's 2002s were released last year. Merchants and importers accustomed to getting their annual share waited ... and waited ... for offers that never came. Eventually, if you were quick, you could grab a couple cases of *premier cru* and, occasionally if you were lucky, a prized case of *grand cru* Valmur or Blanchots. Les Clos remained virtually unobtainable.

As 2005 has worn on, it has become clear that the near-unobtainability of Raveneau 2002s is very real.



Chez Raveneau.

Pierre Rovani on Raveneau's '02s:

"These are magnificent wines that I would do almost anything to own, age, and drink."

Robert Parker on Raveneau:

"Quintessential Chablis ... wines of extraordinary flavor depth, length, and dimension"

Hidden caches are *not* suddenly going to stream onto the market. And for those fortunate few who have latched onto a handful of bottles, they have been blessed with some of the greatest white burgundies of our time.

Magical Vineyards

Raveneau's greatness lies of course in its vineyards. During the 1960s and 1970s, François Raveneau—who died in 2000 and whose wife was a Dauvissat—assembled a domaine boasting one breathtaking parcel after another. Each is a tiny jewel, most no larger than a suburban house lot. In hectares, Les Clos is .5, Valmur .75, Blanchots .62, Chapelot .3, Vaillons .4, Montmains .4 and Forêts .6. Only

Montée de Tonnerre and Butteaux are more than a hectare in size: 2.7 and 1.5, respectively. Raveneau owns nothing that isn't *premier* or *grand cru*.

Raveneau's *premier crus* are nearly as revered as its *grands crus*. In fact, some would argue that Montée de Tonnerre—from the same south-facing slope as the *grand crus*—is one of Chablis' top dozen wines. And Chapelot—from a privileged section of Montée de Tonnerre—may be even better. Certainly, with its tiny production, it enjoys a devoted cult following.

Viticulture is largely natural, with the old vines severely pruned in winter to reduce yields. After hand-harvesting, the fruit is pressed immediately and ►

CHABLIS

The Elusive, Great Raveneau 2002's

► settled for half a day. Fermentation is largely in stainless steel, and the malolactic proceeds at its own pace, followed by a year's aging in small oak barrels called *feuillettes*.

The *feuillettes*, about half the size of a *barrique*, are one of the keys to the great expressiveness of Raveneau's wines. Averaging eight years in age, they don't contribute new oak aromas and flavors, but serve to gently open the wine during the *élevage*. This enhances the wonderful perfume and creamy texture



The view of Montée de Tonnerre from Blanchots

that are the hallmarks of these wines, particularly when they are mature.

This Offer

For its low prices and scope, we believe that the offer that follows is unique in the U.S. market today. But it did not happen easily.

It took nearly a year to acquire the wines—relying on repeated requests and our willingness to pay prices higher than we've ever seen before. But such is the world's belief in the greatness of Raveneau's 2002s.

Premier Crus

2002 Butteaux
\$69.95



Tanzer: "92 rating. Very ripe aromas of peach, mirabelle, almond blossom, spices, white pepper and stone. Wonderfully juicy and spicy; ripe but not overly so. A step up in intensity and concentration ... with a captivating peachy character. Finishes very long, spicy and firm."



2002 Vaillons
\$79.95

Rovani: "93-95 rating ... awesome layers of creamed almonds, salt, flint, and white fruit pulp. Its extraordinary texture, super-rich, plush, and sexy, is only surpassed on the wow-scale by its stupendous length ..."

2002 Montée de Tonnerre
\$79.95



Tanzer: "93+ rating ... pure, with compelling inner-mouth energy and aromatic character ... bracing flavors of lemon and apple and an impression of minerality I can only describe as creamy. A very rich, dense wine."



2002 Chapelot*
\$89.95

With the smallest production and a loyal cult following, Chapelot can be the hardest of all Raveneau wines to find. In fact, there was so little made in 2002 that it was never offered for review. Very scarce, desirable and great. *Grand Cru* quality.

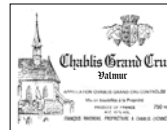
Grand Crus

2002 Blanchots
\$159.95



Rovani: "93-95 rating ... thick, immensely rich ... massive depth, purity, and length."

Tanzer: "93+ rating. Knockout soil-inflected nose ... Wonderfully ripe and lush ... The compellingly sweet flavors of lemon, lime, pink grapefruit and talc really stain the palate. The great, mounting back end displays powerful minerality and great elegance."



2002 Valmur
\$265.00

Rovani: "96-98 rating ... magnificent. Loads of earth tones, apples, flint, and white peaches are found in its boisterous aromatics ... Seashells, minerals, flint, copious spices, pears, and apples are intertwined in its complex core of fruit. This full-bodied wine wows the taster with its concentration, depth, awesomely supple texture, as well as by its huge length."

2002 Les Clos
\$395.00 1-bt. limit



Rovani: "98-100 rating. Off the charts ... A powerful, full-bodied effort, it reveals a personality of awe-inspiring intensity, depth, and concentration. Pure, dense, muscular, exceptionally well-balanced, this brilliant wine boasts a complex flavor profile of salty pears, earth, flint, and hints of candied lemons. Wow!"

CHAMPAGNE

Back-to-Back Classics

Champagne's Great 1995 & 1996 Vintages

It is a singular blessing of nature that great vintages often come in pairs. These duos double the amount of great wine we can drink, while stimulating us intellectually, as we learn to appreciate how great vintages just a year apart can be so different from one another.



Champagne's Côte des Blancs

In this sense, we could not have asked for a better pair than Champagne's 1995 and 1996 vintages. When 1995 came along, it was alone in the spotlight, having arrived in the wake of three mediocre years. It produced wines of incredible finesse and elegance that, while capable of great longevity, are lovely to drink in their youth.

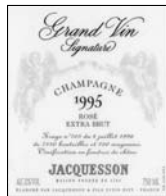
But then along came 1996. Potentially one of the greatest vintages of all time and a possible rival of 1928, it has produced many Champagnes with potential life spans of 30 or 40 years. The wines are rich and massively structured. Though some are delicious to drink now, many others

need time in the cellar to reveal their magnificence.

For now, most 1995s have the edge for drinkability. As Richard Juhlin has written: "Many years will pass before the marathon vintage of 1996 will over take these wonderful jewels."

We are pleased to offer six great examples of these superlative vintages ... all at *very* attractive prices.

**1995 Jacquesson
"Signature Rosé"
95 Richard Juhlin
\$79.95 bottle**



Richard Juhlin: "The finest and most subtle vintage of this delightful Champagne ... the same beautiful aromatic profile as before, but with an extra refined, floral, mineral finesse. Brilliantly 'white' in character, but with a superb creaminess despite the wine being very dry. Crispy, freshness and clarity with spicy, gamy barrel notes swirling together with the red-berry aromas in an exquisite dance."

**1995 Taittinger "Comtes de Champagne"
97+ Steve Tanzer
\$110.00 bottle**

Steve Tanzer: "Incredible shiver-producing 99-point nose ... I was reminded of Chevalier-Montrachet ... Full and creamy-smooth ... brilliantly minerally ... layer upon layer of soil tones. A superconcentrated Champagne"

**1995 Pol Roger "Winston Churchill"*
96 Richard Juhlin
\$139.95 bottle \$285.00 magnum**

Richard Juhlin: "Already big and creamy ... packed with silky fruit, toffee and chocolate ... buy all you can find, you will not be disappointed."

**1996 Jacquesson Avize
Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs
95 Richard Juhlin
\$59.95 bt. \$125.00 mag.**



Richard Juhlin: "Some bottles already show a butteriness that is unusual for this house, but most bottles have a more steely style and let the minerals and apples show in the taste. A potentially great bottle that the Chiquet brothers should be very proud of."

**1996 Dom Pérignon
98 Robert Parker
\$125.00 bottle**

Parker: "I have had a lot of great vintages of Dom Perignon, but I do not remember any as impressive as the 1996 ... reveals tremendous aromatic intensity, offering hints of bread dough, Wheat Thins, tropical fruits, and roasted hazelnuts prodigious ..."

**1996 Taittinger "Comtes de Champagne Rosé"
95 Steve Tanzer
\$145.00 bottle**


Steve Tanzer: "Knockout nose ... Wonderfully intense and penetrating, with concentrated flavors of strawberry tart and toast shaped by vibrant acidity and mineral spine ... boasts fabulous fruit."

The King of Cornas

Auguste Clape's Legacy of Great Syrahs

Of the world's most revered wine regions, Cornas is among the few where traditionalists have little to fear from modernists. Here, nearly all the best wines are made by classic methods, producing Syrah of great depth, character and complexity. And for the past thirty years, Auguste Clape has loomed over other Cornas' winemakers, enjoying a position similar to that of Gerard Chave in nearby Hermitage.

This gifted winemaker, with more than 50 years of experience, has vineyards spread across the four *quartier* of Cornas—Les Reynards, La Côte, Les

 "... the passionate guardian of a tradition that in many ways he defined ... the reference point for the appellation."
Robert Parker
on Clape

Mazards and Les Chaillots—all of south-facing granite, but with varying subsoils. Clape vinifies each parcel of fruit separately, ultimately creating a magically complex blend.

His mastery is due in part to his extraordinary vines—many dating back to just after Phylloxera. These very old vines are of the *petite serine* clone, considered by many the Northern Rhône's true Syrah—and contributing the black olive and smoke character found in Clape's wines.

The Turning Point

At first, like many other fine small Rhône growers, ►

A Sizzling Trio from Spain

Three 2001 Superstars, Including Benjamin Romeo's Hot "Andres Romeo"

The 2001 vintage may have been the best ever in Spain. Certainly, it was a Coming of Age for many new producers. Here are three perfect examples: Dos Victorias's Gran Elias Mora from Toro; Valsacro's Dioro Seleccion from Rioja, and the coveted, tiny-production Rioja, La Vina de Andres Romeo from Contador's Benjamin Romeo.

2001 Dos Victorias "Gran Elias Mora"

95 Parker
\$49.95

Parker: "... prodigious ... Fashioned from 70-year old Tinto de Toro (Tempranillo) vines, and bottled unfiltered, this magnificent, dense purple-colored effort boasts a sweet perfume of roasted meats, scorched earth, blackberry liqueur, and cassis. It is a dense, full-bodied, fleshy effort ... Flamboyant yet well-delineated, it will be a treat to drink over the next decade."

2001 Benjamin Romeo "La Vina de Andres Romeo"

96 Parker
\$110.00

Parker: "Truly compelling ... from a single vineyard called La Liende. It boasts ... a huge nose of graphite, black currants, cherry liqueur, licorice, cedar, and spice box. Powerful, rich, full-bodied, impeccably pure, elegant flavors reveal nicely integrated wood, acidity, and tannin. The finish lasts for nearly a minute."

2001 Valsacro "Dioro Seleccion"

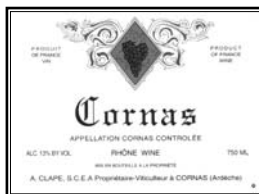
96 Parker
\$65.00

Parker: "The prodigious 2001 Dioro Seleccion is a 200-case cuvee packaged in a heavy bottle ... a sweet perfume of lead pencil shavings, white chocolate, tobacco leaves, creme de cassis, cherries, cola, and smoky new oak. Full-bodied and ripe, with superb purity and a multilayered texture, this exceptional red should ... last for 15+."

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A Clape Cornas Retrospective

► Clape committed most of his fruit to negociants like Paul Jaboulet, selling the remainder in barrel to private customers. That changed with the small 1957 harvest, when demand caused the price of his wine to double, prompting him to begin bottling his wine for sale under his own label.



Little in Clape's approach has changed since then. He harvests only when the fruit is fully ripe, and he ferments his old vines with the stems. (The fruit from his young vines is today destemmed to produce the more fruit-forward Renaissance *cuvée*.)

The primary fermentation takes place in concrete tanks for six to seven days, followed by three to seven days of maceration to extract fine tannins. After malolactic, aging is in old *demi-muid* and *pièces*; there is no new oak. As Clape told author John Livingston-

Learmonth, "as for aging casks, here you need neutral wood with no tannin in it. The Syrah must breathe."

This Offer

When young, Clape's Cornas are full, assertively flavored and firmly structured, showing youthful aromas and flavors of dark berries, smoke, dried herbs, black olive, flint and pit fruits. But with time, they reach another level, the firm tannins supplanted by rich, velvety fruit, and the aromatics becoming deeper and even more compelling.

Perhaps the finest demonstrations of how Clape's wines age are the beautiful, and now rare, 1988 and 1990. We are pleased to offer perfectly cellared bottles of these two prizes, along with a range of more recent vintages, each of which promises to evolve into a classic.

2001 Clape Cornas 65.00

Parker: "91-95 rating ... A blockbuster ... melted licorice, sweet creme de cassis, blackberries, and blueberries. Profoundly concentrated ... It should turn out to be one of Clape's greatest efforts. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2022. A brilliant Cornas!"

Tanzer: "92 rating ... Superripe, expressive aromas ... Fleshy and sweet, with flavors of blackberry, dried herbs, black olive, pepper and smoke. Very much a wine from granitic soil ... Finishes very long ... Has the material to reward a decade or more of cellaring ..."

1999 Clape Cornas 59.95

Parker: "... a brilliant effort ... The wine displays soft tannin, but good underlying acidity, terrific blackberry and cassis-like fruit, a saturated black/purple color, and aromas of roasted meats, jammy black fruits, hickory smoke, and licorice. Fine purity, sweet tannin, and well-integrated acidity and alcohol result in a seamless impact. This full-bodied, large-scaled offering will be at its finest between 2005-2016."

1998 Clape Cornas 59.95

Parker: "... big, classic ... a muscular, backstrapping, husky style that requires 5-6 years of cellaring. It will last for 16-18 years"

Tanzer: "Spicy aromas of roasted red fruits and black cherry, leather and fresh herbs ... Flavors of leather, licorice and herbs. Tannins spread over the entire palate. This will need a good seven or eight years of patience."

1996 Clape Cornas 69.95

Wine Spectator: "96 rating. Impressively complex, mingling wonderful fruit and spice accents with black pepper, tar, cassis and olive. Dark and brooding ... amazingly ripe, sweet-tasting, seductive—just plain delicious."

1995 Clape Cornas 79.95

Parker: "92 rating. A candidate for the wine of the vintage ... a fabulously ripe, sweet nose of licorice, black plums, and cassis, followed by full-bodied, dense, concentrated, well-balanced flavors ... should be a 20-year wine."

1990 Clape Cornas 125.00

1990 Clape Cornas Magnum 275.00

One of Clape's greatest wines. Parker: "Outstanding ... the nose offers up rich, ripe aromas of black fruits, licorice, and spices. Superconcentrated, with a full-bodied, highly extracted, mouth-filling taste"

1988 Clape Cornas 95.00

Parker: "Impressive with a big, intense, earthy, black-raspberry-scented bouquet, full-bodied, powerful, rich flavors, surprisingly soft tannins for a Cornas, and an expansive, almost sweet finish."

2001 Clape Cornas 'Renaissance' 45.00

Wine Spectator: "93 rating. Thick, rich and massively tannic; showing sweet fruit, mineral, smoke and cigar box aromas. Full-bodied, the cassis bush and green tobacco notes give it a lively kick on the long, tannic finish. A beautiful Cornas made from 12- to 50-year-old vines. One for the cellar."

TUSCANY

Tuscany's Greatest Syrah

... and it's already a wine for historians

With all the innovation that's occurred in Tuscany over the past 25 years, there has been surprisingly little experimentation with Syrah. Only a few estates have planted the variety, and with the exception of Le Macchiole's Scio, none has achieved fame.

As Syrah lovers, we have tasted most of the examples out there, and one that really got our juices going is an experimental cuvée of 100% Syrah that we tasted at Montepeloso in Spring 2004. Just one *barrique* had been made, and we were warned not to get too excited: the vines had been grafted over. In other words, it would never be made again.

Furthermore, the wine was never really intended for sale. It was one of Fabio Chiarelotto's experiments with



Fabio Chiarelotto drawing a glass of his '02 Syrah.

his Suvereto vineyard—perched above Tua Rita, on the same slope—all designed to help Fabio better understand his site's possibilities.

But this Syrah was truly marvelous, with a great affinity to some of the best examples now coming from California's North Coast. Tipping the scales at 14.5% of alcohol, the wine was bursting with smoky blackberry fruit with exotic rose petal overtones.

We had to have some. After endless pleading, Fabio agreed to bottle a quarter of the barrel for us—just seven cases. Needless to say, you'll need to hurry.

2002 Montepeloso Syrah

\$79.95 *very limited*

2003 Montepeloso "Eneo"

\$29.95 *bt.* **\$345.00** *cs.*

In addition to the excitement generated by his experimental wines, Fabio Chiarelotto has become known for two of the Tuscan coast's greatest Sangiovese and Cabernet *cuvées*, Gabbro and Nardo. Both have loyal cult followings, but then so does his far more modestly priced Eneo. Made from Sangiovese aged in 2- and 3-year-old barrels, Eneo is consistently one of Italy's most exciting red wine values. In the ultraripe 2003 vintage, Eneo is nothing less than amazing.

Steve MacRostie's 2002 Wildcat Mountain Syrah

A *difficult site* challenges the vine for survival, but in the process can produce wines of great concentration and character. So, when veteran winemaker Steve MacRostie found Carneros' Wildcat Mountain in the mid-1990's, he was excited about the possibilities. At an elevation of 700 feet, the wind wails from late each morning until late afternoon each day. The vines respond by budding late and developing their crop slowly, producing one of the longest growing seasons in Sonoma County.

So, Steve planted a small amount of Syrah, a variety known to thrive under Wildcat's difficult conditions. In 2002, his third vintage, he made just 500 cases of intensely aromatic, concentrated Syrah. For the second

year in a row, we are honored to receive a small allocation of this intriguing wine.

2002 MacRostie Syrah "Wildcat Mountain"

\$35.00



Dark ruby in color. Perfumed nose of blueberry, iodine, coffee, lavender, and a hint of ginger. The palate is initially tight, but opens beautifully with air. Intensely Syrah in character, the modest new wood is easily absorbed into the wine, which finishes with excellent length and flavor persistence. Even more impressive 24 hours after opening, it should get better and better over the next few years.

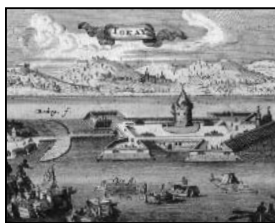
TOKAJI

Stanza III

More Otherworldly Nectar from Tokaji's Eszencia Master

In 2001 and 2002, we offered two versions of Stanza Tokaji Eszencia, each a nectar of staggering and unprecedented richness.

Produced by Peter Vinding—winemaker at The Royal Tokaji Wine Co.—they were arguably the first *pure* Eszencias ever sold. Now, Peter has created a third Stanza, which to our palates is the finest of the three.



Sixteenth-century Tokaji, at the time of Eszencia's birth.

Then in 2000, Peter Vinding received government permission to create, for the first time, a pure, *unfermented* Eszencia. Made from the '96 harvest, Stanza I was offered in this newsletter in May, 2001. The sensation it caused led Peter to release Stanza II, which graced these pages in December, 2002.

Stanza III

Now, nearly three years later, Peter has released a third pure '96 Eszencia, Stanza III. As with the earlier releases, the grapes were from volcanic vineyards classified in 1700. But the production is even less: just 30 liters, put in elegant, clear, hand-blown 100ml bottles.

Stanza III captures the best of the earlier releases: the elegance of Stanza I with the off-the-charts richness of Stanza II. Its 630 g/l of residual sugar is just a shade below Stanza II's 708 g/l, but its acidity is more vibrant (180 g/l versus 149). The result is sheer nectar, exciting your senses with flavors ranging from orange and lemon to mango, passion fruit and coconut.

Stanza III should rank as one of the great tasting experiences of your life. Don't miss it.

Pure Essence

Eszencia is gathered drop by drop from Tokaji's most botrytised grapes at the conclusion of great harvests. Fifty to 70% sugar, an Eszencia can take a decade or more to produce even 1 or 2% alcohol and is richer and more complex than any dessert wine. Yet, for centuries, pure Eszencia was hidden from the world.

Originally, Hungarian and Austrian monarchs kept every drop for themselves and their friends. And when it became possible to sell it, the Hungarian government required that it have at least 5% alcohol, a physical impossibility without blending.

From the past ...

1947 Ch. Pajzos Tokaji Eszencia 500ml....1350.00

Ch. Pajzos is one of the stars of modern Tokaji. In the late 1990's, Pajzos made available a few half-liter bottles of a phenomenal 1947 Eszencia. The richness of this wine more than bolsters this vintage's mythic reputation. Just one bottle available.

1996 Stanza III Tokaji Eszencia \$85.00 100ml

(Can be shipped to all 50 states.)



Andy Smith's 2003 DuMol RRV Chardonnay

"As I was tasting ... I was thinking what a great young winemaker Andy Smith is ... Readers are well-advised to jump on the bandwagon before the mainstreamers find out about DuMol." R. Parker

One of California's most charismatic young winemakers, Andy Smith is well-known for his beautifully textured, Burgundian DuMol Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs. His winemaking is well-suited to the task, incorporating extended fermentations to enhance aromatics; *élevage* with a high percentage of solids, but with limited lees stirring; and no fining or filtration.

While Andy's single-vineyard wines have been celebrated, he takes even greater pride in his blending of sites, clones and maturity levels to achieve chromatic

diversity. Thus, his Russian River Valley Chardonnay *cuvée* has been consistently stunning. Sourced from elite sites like the Dutton Ranch, Heintz and Hanna vineyards, the 2003 continues the tradition. Hurry.

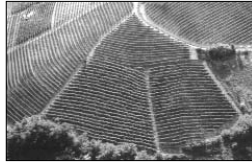
2003 DuMol Russian River Valley Chardonnay 42.50

Exciting in its complexity, this Burgundian dazzler shows precisely focused citrus, pineapple, nectarine and rosemary in the nose. The palate is big, but with vibrant acidity and stony flavors of green apple and vanilla. The long finish foretells an outstanding future.

Perfectly Rare

Clerico's 2000 Barolo "Per Cristina"

With Sandrone and Altare, Domenico Clerico helped found Piedmont's New Wave in the 1980's. He made his mark in 1989/1990 with his great Ciabot Mentin Ginestra and Pajana Barolos. But then in 1995 he introduced what he considered his greatest wine: *Per Cristina*, named for his daughter who passed away at age seven.



The Mosconi Vineyard,
Source of Per Cristina

which produces a wine with greater structure than his other two *cru*. Consequently, he holds Per Cristina for an additional year before release.

Wine Spectator's 100-point rating offers compelling evidence of Per Cristina's stature.

However, due to tiny production, few will ever have the chance to find out for themselves. You can if you hurry.

**2000 Clerico Barolo
"Per Cristina"*
100 Wine Spectator
\$125.00**



Wine Spectator: "Fabulous aromas of blackberries, toasted oak and cedar. Turns to fresh herbs and wild berries. Full-bodied, with big, velvety tannins and lots of ripe fruit. Amazing finish of toasted oak. The greatest wine ever from Clerico. Breathtaking. 470 cases made."

Clerico's Outstanding Dolcetto & Barbera

In addition to his great Barolos, Clerico has also long been known for his ravishing, effusive Dolcettos and Barberas. We are pleased to offer his two new releases at below-market prices.

2004 Clerico Dolcetto Visadi*14.95

Antonio Galloni in *Piedmont Report*: "An extracted, structured Dolcetto, with a gorgeous varietal nose, and a dense palate of rich fruit" **Suggested retail \$18**

2003 Clerico Barbera Trevigne*19.95

Antonio Galloni in *Piedmont Report*: "... well-structured with jammy notes of rich dark fruit. A very beautiful and delicious Barbera ..." **Suggested retail \$30**

A Barolo Bargain

Decades ago, in the days before widespread domaine-bottling in Barolo, the La Morra grower Stefano Farina sold his grapes to big producers. Today, his sons Bruno, Giancarlo and Gino produce their own Barolo, a lush, modern-styled beauty that recently got the attention of *Wine Spectator's* James Suckling. We are pleased to offer the Farinas' 92-point 2001 Barolo at the truly bargain price of \$25.95. Quantities are limited.

**2001 Stefano Farina Barolo*
92 Wine Spectator
\$25.95 bt. \$299.00 cs.**

Wine Spectator: "This is very concentrated on the nose with plum, dried flowers and fruits. Full-bodied, with big velvety tannins and a deep palate of ripe and wild fruits. Port-like. Better than the 2000."

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INSIDE

2002 RaveneauPage 1 2002 Montepeloso Syrah ..Page 6
'95 & '96 ChampagnePage 3 2002 MacRostie Syrah ...Page 6
Clape CornasPage 4 Stanza IIIPage 7
Spanish StarsPage 4 DuMol RRV Chardonnay ..Page 7

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**FIRST CLASS
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