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2000 Bordeaux
Big Bottles

AUGUST 14, 2001

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Hot 1997 Barolos

In Pursuit of a Dream

A New Page in Spain's Wine History

A half mile above sea level, the view from the top is dizzying. Down one side of the mountain is a chestnut forest; down the other, facing south, are some of the steepest vineyards in Europe, dotted with the trunks of grape vines, many nearly a century old.

The place is Bierzo, in the remote Northwestern corner of Spain—virtually unknown to the outside world and hundreds of miles from the country's most famous wine regions. In this spectacular setting an event is unfolding potentially no less significant than Max Schubert's pioneering vintage of Grange in 1951 or Giacomo Tachis' first Sassicaia in 1968—the birth of a profound new red wine in an area where no one had previously considered it possible.

The wine in question is *1999 Corullón*. Along with its sister cuvée, *1999 Bierzo*, it is the work of two young Spaniards, Alvaro Palacios and Ricardo Perez. The wines have the power and richness of the best wines of Ribera del Duero and Priorato. Yet their distinctive, velvety textures and their mineral-infused red fruit flavors are unique, bearing a closer resemblance to top Burgundy or Côte Rôtie.

In fact, the similarities to these great French reds is no coincidence. Corullón and Bierzo are made entirely from old-vine Mencia, a grape likely born in France centuries ago. Opinions vary, but many

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The Moncerbal vineyard—one of the three jewels in Corullón's crown.

SPAIN

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believe Mencia to actually be either Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir or Syrah.

Ten Years' Wait

Alvaro Palacios—who is an icon in Spain thanks to his Priorat red, *L'Ermita*—first visited Bierzo in the late 1980's. He saw old vineyards that had been neglected for decades; yet he *knew* that incredible red wines could be made here. With the dramatically steep vineyards, the unusual schist-calcaire soil, and such very old vines, the potential was clear. But his enormous success in Priorato, literally on the other side of Spain, prevented him from immediately realizing his vision.

He waited a full decade, until 1998 when his talented nephew Ricardo had finished enology school and completed his internships in Bordeaux. In that year, the pair quietly began to purchase the Bierzo mountainsides they believed held the most promise—particularly around the town of Corullón. It was a delicate process, since each of the slopes was divided among multiple owners. But by the spring of 1999, they had acquired a number of exciting parcels of very old vines, particularly three south-facing slopes in Corullón: Lamas, Moncerbal and San Martin.

Their timing could not have been better. The growing season in 1999 was superb, with brilliant sunshine through mid-October. As a result, the grapes were picked at levels of optimum ripeness.

Both 1999's boast sensational richness and viscosity (alcohol levels are 13.5% to 14.2%), while exhibiting amazing freshness and lift. The Bierzo cuvée was created from plots throughout the appellation, while Corullón comes exclusively from vineyards in that town. Both wines are made entirely from old-vine Mencia harvested at yields of less than one ton per acre.

Our Epiphany

At Alvaro's and Ricardo's invitation, we visited Bierzo this spring—to see the vineyards and taste the wines just as they were being bottled. We've been to most of the world's wine regions, and we've sampled tens of thousands of young wines over the past quarter-century. But few of these experiences could compare to what we felt in Bierzo. The place is that magical and the wines that remarkable.

Alvaro Palacios and Ricardo Perez have embarked on a great adventure—the kind that we see less and less in this era of “internationalization” of wine. There are not many wines made today, even at the highest levels of quality, that say so much about the place they come from or the people who make them.

Your Opportunity

With production of just a few hundred cases—and truly transcendent quality—we expect Corullón and Bierzo to soon join the ranks of Spain's most sought-after. Thus, we believe that the prices at which the inaugural 1999 vintage has been released represent a compelling buying opportunity.

1999 Corullón

Descendientes de José Palacios

\$59.95 *bot.* \$135.00 *mag.*



On first opening, the '99 Corullón displays a brilliantly deep color, bright raspberry fruit, and soft tannins. With aeration, a distinct minerality emerges, with a hint of roasted nuts and oriental spice. The texture gains in weight and depth by the minute—and virtually explodes at the back end. A wine like Corullón defies categorization—the first, and so far the finest, realization of an utterly unique *terroir*.



1999 Bierzo

Descendientes de José Palacios

\$29.95 *bottle*

1999 Bierzo offers much of the same explosive raspberry fruit and laser-guided personality as Corullón, with *incredible* concentration and style for a wine of its price. A fantastic expression of its encompassing region ... and a stunning value.

In Honor of José Palacios

Alvaro and Ricardo named their new venture in honor of José Palacios, who passed away in early 2000. He was Alvaro's father and Ricardo's grandfather—and an important winemaker in his own right (at Palacios Remondo in Rioja). Alvaro and Ricardo have dedicated their work in Bierzo to his memory.

The Return to Bierzo

During the late 1980's, Alvaro Palacios travelled his native Spain selling French barriques to winemakers. But his journeys had a dual purpose: to find the best place to achieve his goal of making Spain's greatest red wine.

He ultimately decided, in 1990, on Priorato, where he would achieve worldwide fame with "L'Ermita" and "Finca Dofi." But there had been a close contender: Bierzo. It had all the ingredients that Alvaro wanted—incredibly steep hillside vineyards, distinctive terroirs and, most importantly, countless ancient vineyards of Mencia—a red grape believed brought by French pilgrims in the Middle Ages.

The idea of making great wine from old-vine Mencia never left Alvaro, and his work in Priorato—particularly with L'Ermita—increasingly convinced him of Bierzo's enormous potential. Meanwhile, his nephew Ricardo Perez was training as a winemaker, including internships at some of Bordeaux's most prestigious châteaux. Ricardo also visited Alvaro frequently and came to share a belief in Bierzo's potential. In 1998, the two decided on a joint venture and set out in search of the finest old vineyards of Bierzo.

Corullón

Alvaro and Ricardo found promising vineyards in a

number of Bierzo villages but quickly became convinced that the greatest potential lay in a little town on Bierzo's western border named Corullón. Old vineyards lined the precipitous hillsides there, and the local soils were a unique combination of schist over calcaire, likely to produce wines of unusual finesse and perfume. Even in the very first vintage, this promise is being realized.

Alvaro's and Ricardo's work in Bierzo represents an important step toward Spain's rediscovering its viticultural heritage. Perhaps more than any other country in Europe, Spain is blessed with an incredible array of old vineyards, many on spectacular sites. But for generations, the oldest vineyards were largely neglected in favor of new plantings more easily worked by machines.

That is now beginning to change, thanks to young visionaries like Alvaro Palacios—and his friend Peter Sisseck (of Dominio de Pingus). With their pioneering work, they are resurrecting the priceless old vineyards of Spain, giving us profoundly great wines—with the special character that can only come from old vines in unique terroirs. Make no mistake about it: *these* are the future of Spain's greatest wines. □

An Obsessive Attention to Detail

Followers of Alvaro Palacios' work know well his attention to detail. From the beginning, no chemicals have been used in the vineyards of Bierzo. While this may be easy in hot, dry places like Southern France, it's a different story in Bierzo's more challenging climate. The only fertilizer employed is a natural compost that Ricardo has developed. All vineyards are worked by hand or mule. (The mule had previously worked in Priorat and received his training on the precipitous slope of L'Ermita.) Finally, the pair employ open-top fermenters and extremely gentle grape-handling in order to preserve the freshness of their wines.



Alvaro Palacios driving his L'Ermita-trained mule on the slope at Lamas.

Heavy Artillery

The Great 2000 Bordeaux in Grand Formats

Each year about this time, we make our major *en primeur* offering of Bordeaux in large format bottles. Typically, this is your best opportunity to buy these rarities. Most merchants have little access to them, and those who do usually offer them only after release, and at a substantial premium over the cost of standard-size bottles.

There are compelling reasons to buy top red Bordeaux in double magnums (3 liters) and imperiales (6 liters). For special celebrations, there's nothing like them. The larger the bottle, the better the wine ages. And, because of their scarcity, they appreciate in value more rapidly. This should be particularly true in a special vintage like 2000.

We are happy to offer a choice selection of grand formats, along with an updated list of the 2000's we still have available. Delivery expected 2003.

2000 Mouton Rothschild	295.00	2000 La Conseillante	195.00
2000 Mouton Rothschild 6-liter	2495.00	2000 La Conseillante 3-liter.....	850.00
Parker: "96-98 rating ... potentially immortal ... so thick, it almost needs to be drunk with a spoon ... a fabulously pure, brilliant achievement..."		Parker: "96-100 rating ... a profound wine ... one of the vintage's legends."	
2000 Lafite Rothschild	275.00	2000 Gruaud Larose	69.95
2000 Lafite Rothschild 6-liter	2250.00	2000 Gruaud Larose 6-liter.....	595.00
Parker: "94-96 rating ... a monument to finesse and elegance"		Parker: "93-95 rating ... thick, rich style ... a true <i>vin de garde</i> ."	
2000 Chateau Margaux	295.00	2000 Leoville Barton	125.00
2000 Chateau Margaux 6-liter	2450.00	2000 Leoville Barton 3-Liter	545.00
Parker: "94-96 rating ... Pontallier thinks this may be the greatest Margaux yet made under the Mentzelopoulos administration ..."		2000 Leoville Barton 6-liter	1095.00
2000 Latour	340.00	Parker: "96-99 rating ... transcends anything made at this property in the last fifty years"	
2000 Latour 6-liter	2900.00	2000 Leoville Las Cases 6-liter	1195.00
Parker: "96-100 rating ... power, symmetry and grace."		Parker: "94-96 rating ... sleek, super-concentrated ... explodes on the back of the palate ..."	
2000 La Mission Haut Brion	275.00	2000 Leoville Poyferre	59.95
2000 La Mission Haut Brion 6-liter	2350.00	2000 Leoville Poyferre 6-liter	550.00
Parker: "98-100 rating...prodigious ... a legend in the making!"		Parker: "92-95 rating ... There is a true opulence in addition to gorgeous levels of fruit, glycerin, and extract ..."	
2000 Haut Brion 6-liter	2495.00	2000 Monbousquet	95.00
Parker: "96-98 rating ... possesses tremendous richness ..."		2000 Monbousquet 6-liter	795.00
2000 Cheval Blanc	480.00	Parker: "94-96 rating ... remarkable delineation, enormous concentration, and virtully perfect balance"	
2000 Cheval Blanc 6-liter	4200.00	2000 Montrose	69.95
Parker: "99-100 rating ... a no-brainer, Cheval Blanc 2000 is the wine of the vintage!"		2000 Montrose 6-liter	650.00
2000 Angelus	169.95	Parker: "93-95 rating ... full-bodied, unctuously-textured, fleshy, and pure ... The finish lasts for over 40 seconds."	
2000 Angelus 6-liter	1395.00	2000 Pavie	179.95
Parker: "96-98 rating ... phenomenally concentrated ... looks to be one of the wines of the vintage."		Parker: "95-96 rating ... fabulous first-growth quality ... awesome levels of richness ... the concentraton is fabulous."	
2000 Lynch Bages 6-liter	750.00	2000 Pavie Decesse	99.95
Parker: "94-96 rating ... prodigious ... exploding aromatics"		Parker: "93-96 rating ... a magical elixir that satiates both the hedonistic and intellectual senses."	
		2000 Pichon Baron	75.00
		2000 Pichon Baron 6-Liter	675.00
		Parker: "94-96 rating ... powerful and sweet, with high levels of glycerin, superb concentration ... profound ..."	
		2000 Pichon Lalande 6-liter	995.00
		Parker: "95-97 rating ... one of the superstars of the vintage ... a spectacularly complex, rich wines ..."	
		2000 Pontet Canet	47.50
		2000 Pontet Canet 6-liter	450.00
		Parker: "92-95 rating ... a gorgeously pure, intense bouquet of blackberry liqueur, cassis, smoke, and Asian spices. In that respect, it is similar to Mouton-Rothschild ... Bravo!"	
		2000 Valandraud	195.00
		2000 Valandraud 3-liter	795.00
		Parker: "92-94 rating ... has the potential to be one of the most complex Valandrauds yet made ..."	

DESSERT NECTAR

Kracher's Ambrosial '98's

Austria's Kracher family has acquired a reputation for making some of the most awesome dessert wines on the planet. The turning point for their fame came in 1994, when an '81 Kracher Trockenbeerenauslese ("TBA") crushed '83 and '86 Yquem in a well-publicized tasting in London. Then in the miraculous 1995 vintage, they produced a series of TBA's which, for their diversity and richness, are unparalleled.

The Krachers have done it again in 1998, producing no fewer than 13 separate TBA cuvées, ranging from marvelous to sublime. We have selected five of these for this offer, each winning a rating of 94 points or higher from Pierre Rovani in issue 134 of *The Wine Advocate*. Though our prices for these gems are sensational, quantities are extremely limited.

1998 Kracher Welschriesling TBA No. 11 375 ml57.95
 Rovani: "96 rating ... exhibits white peach, apricot, smoke, botrytis and freshly cracked white pepper aromas ... this wine is stuffed with candied kumquats, jellied peaches, spices, and fresh apricots. It has an exceptional combination of refinement, power, and concentration."

1998 Kracher Grande Cuvée TBA No. 10 375 ml49.95
 Rovani: "94 rating ... abundant candied white grapes, and apples intermingled with poached pears in its peppery character. It is thick, spicy, oily-textured, and possesses an amazingly long apricot-flavored finish."

1998 Kracher Welschriesling TBA No. 4 375 ml ... 49.95
 Rovani: "95 rating ... fat, thick and dense on the palate. Loads of jellied fruits, spices, botrytis flavors, and overripe apricots conquer the taster's palate ... and refuse to relinquish their grip for what seems like minutes."

1998 Kracher Muskat-Ottonel TBA No. 5 375 ml52.95
 Rovani: "96 rating ... Fat jellied oranges explode on the palate ... This is a refined wine, with exemplary focus, precision, and purity to go along with its massive concentration as well as power."

1998 Kracher Chardonnay TBA No. 9 375 ml55.00
 Rovani: "96 rating ... acacia blossom, creme brulee-scented ... jam-packed with sugar-coated oranges, candied apples, and honey ... seemingly unending ..."

1998 Kracher Chardonnay TBA No. 13 375 ml59.95
 Rovani: "98 rating ... Kracher's most concentrated wine ... hugely dense ... This Rubenesque wine ... will potentially age longer than anyone reading this article."

1999 SAUTERNES

—*The Best in Half Bottles*—

"Powerful ... with considerable potential." Steve Tanzer

1999 Climens 375 ml* 23.95
 Tanzer: "91-94 rating. Deep yellow. Cool, subtly perfumed aromas of yellow plum, spring flowers and peppermint. Very dense and aristocratic; sweet but not at all sugary. Seems richer and more powerful than the more polite '98, but retains great suavity. Finishes extremely long, with a whiplash of flavor."

1999 Rieussec 375 ml* 19.95
 Tanzer: "92-95 rating. Pale yellow-gold. Hugely ripe aromas of orange oil, apricot, roasted nuts and vanillin oak; conveys strong botrytis character. Unctuous, superrich and concentrated, with lively orange peel and fresh apricot flavors and uncommon verve for a wine of this sheer scale. The most concentrated and powerful of these '99s today. Finishes with great richness and palate-staining persistence."

OPORTO-BOTTLED

—*Increasingly Rare 1970's*—

Prior to 1975, most Vintage Ports were shipped to England in barrel, where they were bottled by dozens of different merchants—with widely varying results. Today, finding old ports actually bottled in the Oporto cellars of the producers is getting harder and harder ... yet increasingly desirable. The following top '70's are all Oporto-bottled and in terrific condition.

1970 Graham 145.00
 James Suckling: "94 rating. An extremely full bodied, powerful wine, but it still retains a classy balance. Deep ruby, with chocolate and berry aromas, full bodied, with anise and dried cherry flavors."

1970 Taylor 145.00
 James Suckling: "98 rating. Clearly lives up to Taylor's superb reputation. Amazing balance and finesse."

1970 Fonseca 149.95
 James Suckling: "96 rating ... fat, rich and powerful fruit ... with smoky mint, tar and fruit aromas, full-bodied, with concentrated fruit"

TUSCANY

Cult for a Noble Chianti

Giovanna Morganti's Splendid 1998

☺ *"The Wines Giovanna makes at Le Boncie are refined and elegant ... They sneak up on you, and you find yourself discovering new facets with every swirl of the glass, and every sip."*
Italian Wine Review (1999)

☺ *"Elegant, pure Chianti ... her Sangiovese has a rigorous essential style, a long way from the sweetish tones of many modern labels."*
Gambero Rosso (1999)

In 1995, we met a passionate young Tuscan enologist named Giovanna Morganti. We first heard about her because of her remarkable olive oil, which comes from a tiny grove of trees around her home, Le Boncie.

But as we were later to learn, Giovanna also makes one of the most interesting, compelling wines ever to bear the name "Chianti Classico." Her passion and her skill have won her a legion of admirers—a following that has grown with each passing vintage. Today, the demand for her wine far outstrips her tiny production of 800 cases.

A Labor of Love

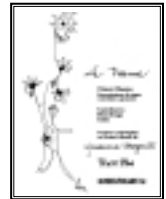
Giovanna makes her living consulting at top estates like

Castello di Volpaia. But her heart is at Le Boncie, where she makes one of the most elegant, perfumed and graceful Chianti Classicos we've tasted. And she does it in a remarkably traditional way, with no Cabernet in the blend and no barrique (she uses large French oak barrels).

We have tasted every vintage of Giovanna's Chianti Classico back to the marvelous 1990, and find it one of the most consistently beautiful red wines of Tuscany. The just-released 1998 is truly seductive, with the richness of the sensational 1997, but even more finesse. Don't miss it.

1998 Le Boncie
Chianti Classico
"Le Trame"

\$19.95 *bot.* \$235.00 *cs.*

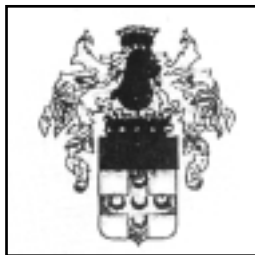


The essence of Sangiovese, bursting with scents of violets, tar and raspberries. On the palate this wine is sleek, supple and velvety, with marvelous length and not a hard edge to be found. There are few wines being made in Tuscany today that offer the such grace, yet with so much character. Another marvelous Chianti from Giovanna.

Syrah Comes to Montalcino

In that bastion of traditionalism, Montalcino, the Ciacci estate has lead the charge for innovation for more than a decade. The property's first breakthrough was the legendary 1990 Brunello "Pianrosso"—arguably the first great "modern" Brunello.

Under Giuseppe Balanchini, Ciacci continues to experiment and has just released a wine that must be unique for Montalcino: a 100% single-vineyard Syrah cuvée, aged entirely in new barrique. The vineyard source is the estate's own *vigna del Conte*. Balanchini named the wine "Fabius" in honor of the 17th century Vescovo di Montalcino.



Deeply colored, the wine is big and mouthfilling, coating the palate from front to back with opulent flavors of cocoa, chocolate, vanilla, blackberries and espresso. Just 550 cases were made.

Eighteen months ago, we got a sneak preview of this wine and had the chance to buy it at a low *en primeur* price. Needless to say, we jumped at the opportunity.

1998 Ciacci "Fabius"
\$32.95

Paolo Scavino

Enrico Scavino is not only one of Barolo's most gifted winemakers, he owns some of the finest vineyards in the zone. And though classified as a "modernist," he has a deep respect for the traditions of the Langhe, producing wines that balance the richness and

opulence of Barolo's new wave with the structure of the classic wines.

This is our first offering of Enrico Scavino's stupendous 1997's, perhaps the finest wines yet made by this important winemaker.

1997 Scavino Barolo Cannubi89.95

Parker: "95+ rating ... surreal ... an exquisite bouquet of black fruits, lead pencil, minerals, smoke, and licorice. Full-bodied and opulent, with more obvious tannin than many 1997s, this structured, muscular, viscous, formidably concentrated effort will be at its best between 2004-2020."

1997 Scavino Caro Bric65.00

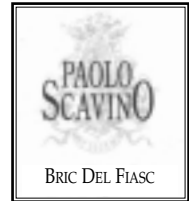
Parker: "93 rating. A new offering, the 1997 Barolo Caro Bric is an elegant, stylish example when compared to the other Scavino wines. It reveals the tell-tale saturated garnet color with amber at the edge, in addition to intense aromas ... full-bodied, with expansive, saturated layers of fruit, and abundant stuffing as well as richness ... an exceptional Barolo to enjoy between 2002-2016."

1997 Scavino Barolo

"Bric del Fiasc"

95 Parker

\$79.95



Parker: "... reveals the essence of cherry jam in its massive constitution. It is a powerful, full-bodied effort displaying pronounced black cherry liqueur-like aromas and flavors, huge extract and glycerin, and 14.5-15% alcohol. Remarkably pure, delineated, and balanced for a wine of such massiveness ... Anticipated maturity: 2003-2020."

Luigi Pira

"There are so many exceptional winemakers in Barolo and Barbaresco that it is unfair to single out Luigi Pira as a star, but certainly his performances in 1995, 1996 and 1997 are remarkable ... These are wines of extraordinary complexity and breathtaking richness."

Robert Parker



The streak of superb Piedmont vintages in the late 1990's was a perfect incubator for new talent.

Consequently, we can look forward to some important new names emerging from the region. And one of the best bets of all to become a superstar is Luigi Pira.

Pira's 1997's have just now been released. We are pleased to offer his two superb single-vineyard Barolos—*Marenca* and *Margheria*—along with his ultra-rare *Vigna Rionda*. While all of these wines are limited, there is a strict single bottle limit on the *Vigna Rionda*.

1997 Luigi Pira Barolo Marenca55.00

Parker: "95 rating ... profound ... displays a spectacular bouquet of roasted espresso, kirsch liqueur, blackberries, tobacco, sardines, cedar, and leather. Sumptuous in the mouth, full-bodied with exotic overripe character, this dense, thick Barolo tastes sweet because of the glycerin levels Anticipated maturity: now-2015."

1997 Luigi Pira Barolo Margheria45.00

Parker: "92+ rating ... Tell-tale notes of kirsch liqueur, dried flowers, rose petals, licorice, soy, leather, and tobacco combine with scents of seaweed, chocolate, and red/black fruits. The Margheria possesses firmer tannin, more muscle ... when compared to Marenca ... a sensationally concentrated, full-bodied, powerful Barolo"

1997 Luigi Pira Barolo Vigna Rionda150.00

Parker: "97 rating. One of the greatest young Barolos I have ever tasted ... The total, miniscule production was aged in a new, 600 liter foudre ... it offers extraordinary opulence, luxurious richness, a viscous texture, exceptional purity, beautifully integrated acidity, tannin, alcohol, and wood, and a finish that lasts for nearly a minute. Like so many 1997s, it possesses unreal levels of glycerin ... a sensational Barolo that magically combines both exoticism and classicism." *One bottle limit.*

WHITE BURGUNDY

Burgundy Maverick

The name changes ... The genius is the same.

Jean Thevenet is one of France's most individualistic—and gifted—winemakers. Though his domaine is in the Mâconnais, far from the Côte d'Or, his white wines are often discussed in the context of Burgundy's elite. But to achieve greatness in modest surroundings, one has to do things differently from the neighbors. Which is the key to the striking brilliance of Thevenet's wines.

We have written before in these pages about Thevenet's ongoing battles with the local wine authorities. For years, it has been reported, the richness and character of his wines so embarrassed other Mâconnais growers that many called for his labels to be denied the use of Mâcon appellations. His wines were just not typical enough, they claimed.

Apparently, things came to a head a few months ago, when the "wine police" revoked Thevenet's right to use the "Mâcon-Clessé" name. Instead, from now on, he will label his wines "Macon Villages."

More Like the Côte d'Or

We're not surprised the other Mâconnais growers forced this move. In fact, Jean Thevenet's wines *are* far from typical of the Mâconnais. They have more in common with *premier* and *grand cru* wines of the Côte d'Or. They

are wines of uncommon body and power, made from grapes left on the vine weeks longer than the norm. In many years, botrytis invades the vineyards, imparting even more dimension and richness.

Thevenet makes a number of wines, but his main claim to fame is the "Quintaine Cuvée Tradition"—a wine that Robert Parker has often compared to a *grand cru* white

Burgundy. The 1999 has just been released and, as you'd expect from this superb vintage, it is a powerhouse. This continues to be one of the great white wine bargains not just of Burgundy, but of the world.

1999 Jean Thevenet
Domaine de la Bongran
"Quintaine Cuvée Tradition"

\$27.95 *bottle* \$325.00 *case*

A classic vintage for Thevenet produced this massive ly ripe white, bursting with flavors of peaches, pears and chalk, with floral nuances. Despite the wine's impressive size, there is an excellent core of acidity and a sharp focus to the flavors. The finish goes on and on. This is quintessential Thevenet and a must buy for anyone who loves his brand of blockbuster Chardonnay.



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