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Inside on Page 2
New Châteauneuf
from
Henri Bonneau

Inside on Page 4
Coutet
'Cuvée Madame'
Returns

FEBRUARY 5, 2002

TUSCANY

'Cheval Blanc in the Sun'

Andrea Franchetti's Bold Experiment at Trinoro

In December, Robert Parker resumed a *Wine Advocate* tradition: naming his **Wine Personalities of the Year**. In singling out Andrea Franchetti for praise, he wrote:

"... aristocrat and self-trained wine-maker ... Franchetti is fashioning remarkable wines that offer complexity and compelling richness. His 1999's are superb If Bordeaux's famous Cheval Blanc were produced in Tuscany, it might be here."

"Here" is Tenuta di Trinoro, Franchetti's estate in Southern Tuscany—far from the region's famous viticultural areas. When he bought the property in 1992, it had little more than the remnants of a century-old vineyard and an extraordinary *terroir*—nestled between two towering mountains, it has one of the longest growing seasons in Italy. But in less than one decade, he has made Trinoro one of the great "cult" wines of Europe.

An Unrelenting Passion

Soon after buying the property, Franchetti began an ambitious program of planting vineyards of Cabernet Franc, Merlot and other Bordeaux varietals at densities approaching 10,000 plants per hectare. With an unrelenting passion, his goal was to produce wines that would rival the best of Pomerol and St. Emilion.



Andrea Franchetti

In the vineyard, no compromise is allowed. The vines are pruned to yield a tiny 20 hectoliters per hectare.

In the cellar, only new French oak is used, and rackings are minimized through state-of-the-art "micro-oxidizers." There is no filtration.

The 1999 Vintage

"Astounding richness, gorgeous purity"
—Robert Parker on 1999 Trinoro

The intense heat of 1999 delayed Trinoro's harvest until October, and Franchetti made 13 passes through the vineyard to harvest gloriously ripe fruit. Sixty percent of the crop was ultimately discarded, leaving Franchetti with 800 cases of astonishingly rich wine.

With its Cheval Blanc-like preponderance of Cabernet Franc (70%)—and its creamy texture and flavors of Valhrona chocolate and black cherries—it begs to be compared with the finest Pomerols and St. Emilions. It's an important wine that should not be missed.

1999 Tenuta di Trinoro

\$89.95 *bt.* **\$1050.00** *cs.*



Parker: "This profound, dark purple-colored offering reveals noteworthy aromas of mocha, black fruits, spice box, and toast ... astounding richness, gorgeous purity, definition, and elegance ..."

Henri's Surprise

"One of the most compelling wine personalities on planet Earth ... Bonneau remains the appellation's most ferocious guardian of traditionally made Châteauneuf-du-Pape, producing, from his tiny 15-acre old vine domaine in La Crau, wines that defy all logic"

Robert Parker, October 2000

Anticipating Henri Bonneau releases is a little like predicting the weather. It's always a question of what, when and how much. From a given vintage, how many cuvées will there be? When will we see them? And how much wine will be available? The only certainties are that when a new wine appears, it will be a marvelous example of the winemaker's art and demand will be strong.

With his Châteauneuf neighbors soon offering their 2000's, Bonneau has only just released his 1996 Châteauneuf-du-Pape. In fact, this is the only wine he will be releasing from that vintage. After years of tending to his barrels of '96, he ultimately singled out a half dozen or so casks to be bottled under his own label—selling the rest off to negociants. Total production was a microscopic 200 to 300 cases.

The Market Responds

If anyone ever thought that Bonneau's cult following was limited to his Célestins and Marie Beurrier cuvées, this 1996 Châteauneuf will prove otherwise. Last fall, the wine first appeared on the market in Europe, where it has since been selling consistently over \$100 a bottle *wholesale*. We were amazed that a basic "Châteauneuf-du-Pape" from Bonneau could sell for so much money. But that was before we had our first chance to taste the wine in January.

We were stunned. Not a massive blockbuster like the vintages of Célestins, it is nonetheless quintessential Bonneau, boasting great purity of fruit, impressive length and beautiful texture. Like everything else we've tasted from this unassuming genius, it resonates with the warmth of the Southern Rhône and its stony terroir. Yet, there is a beauty and grace that



Henri Bonneau

even the famous Bonneau vintages would struggle to beat.

This Offering

Longtime Bonneau-watchers have come to associate us with the most comprehensive, lowest-priced offers of his wines. This tradition goes back to the very first issue of this newsletter in September, 1992—when we offered 1989 Célestins at \$42.95 a bottle!—and has continued with market-leading offers of 1990, 1992 and 1995 Célestins and 1990 Cuvée Spéciale.

We are happy to report that the tradition is alive and well. With this offering of Bonneau's 1996 Châteauneuf, we have not only defied market scarcity by actually being able to offer case quantities; our price is about half of what many others are selling it for.

Whether you are a lover of traditional Châteauneuf-du-Pape, or simply one of Bonneau's countless fans, this is just too good to pass up.

**1996 Henri Bonneau
Châteauneuf-du-Pape
\$54.95 *bt.* \$650.00 *cs.***



Classic Châteauneuf-du-Pape—and as such classic Henri Bonneau. The nose is redolent of Provençal herbs, sandalwood and earth. The wine enters the palate with great delicacy and then intensifies toward the back end, finishing with a core of tar, licorice and raspberry liqueur. In both flavors and bouquet, you can taste the stony soil of La Crau, hear the howling Mistral, and bask in the warmth of the Southern Rhône sun. It's the essence of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and a joy to drink.

Ciacci

Ushering in a New Golden Age for Montalcino

In that bastion of traditionalism, Montalcino, the Ciacci Piccolomini estate of Giuseppe Bianchini has led the movement towards innovation for more than a decade. The change started in 1988, when the iconoclastic young winemaker, Roberto Cipresso, arrived. While making superb 1988 and 1990 Brunellos, Roberto insisted that the 1989, 1991 and 1992 vintage be entirely declassified.



Montalcino's sensuous landscape

Roberto also encouraged Bianchini to plant French varietals—Cabernet, Merlot and Syrah—something that would have been unheard-of in Montalcino 20 years ago. In 1989, the pair released their first wine from foreign varietals. In naming it “Ateo” (atheist), Bianchini and Cipresso put the local establishment on notice that traditional Montalcino doctrine would play little role in their work.

This Offering

Ciacci's latest releases are their most exciting ever. Leading the charge, of course, is **the great 1997 Ciacci Brunello di Montalcino “Pianrosso,”** a worthy contender to the extraordinary 1988 and 1990. Our first offering last November sold out, but we have since purchased a little more of this benchmark wine.

The 1998 Ateo (the tenth release for this wine) is possibly the best yet, reflecting not only the quality of the year, but the maturing of Ciacci's Cabernet vines.

Finally, **the exciting 1999 Fabius** reveals Montalcino's potential for producing rich, concentrated Syrahs. This limited cuvée was made from a single vineyard, *Vigna del Conte*, and then aged entirely in new barrique. Just 500 cases were made.

1997 Brunello* “Pianrosso”

96 Parker
\$75.00

Parker: “... boasts a staggering aromatic profile of soy sauce, roasted meats, dried herbs, jammy black and red fruits, and Asian spices. This full-bodied, superbly concentrated, layered, multidimensional Brunello is the kind of wine one expects from such a renowned region, but so rarely receives. This beauty should drink well young yet evolve effortlessly for 15+ years.”

1999 Fabius

94 Parker
\$35.00

Parker: “Fabulous ... A huge black/purple-colored effort, it boasts notes of roasted espresso, blackberries, asphalt, truffles, and pepper. Explosive, rich, unctuously-textured, and full-bodied, with low acidity, it is stunning at present, yet unformed and primary. Anticipated maturity: 2003-2015. Bravo!”

1998 Ateo

93 Parker
\$24.95

Parker: “The 1998 Ateo (a blend of 60% Sangiovese and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon) is a gloriously ripe, full-bodied, velvety-textured effort with a dark ruby/purple color, plenty of smoky, earthy, blackberry, cherry, and currant fruit, a touch of graphite, decent acidity, and a seamless, opulent, voluptuous finish. This compelling wine is meant to be drunk over the next 10-12 years.”

SAUTERNES

The Reappearing 'Madame'

After a 7-year hiatus, Coutet's Cuvée Madame Returns

"In certain vintages, Coutet produces a special cuvée called Cuvée Madame ... one of the most powerful and decadently intense wines produced anywhere. The 1971, 1981, 1986, 1988 and 1989 vintages of Cuvée Madame, along with the 1921 Yquem represent the greatest sweet wines from this region I have ever tasted."

Robert Parker, Bordeaux (2nd Ed.)

Coutet's Cuvée Madame is one of those wines many have heard about, but few have actually ever tasted. Conceived in 1943, it was originally intended to be used exclusively for château receptions or as gifts—never to be sold. Its rarity was guaranteed by the fact that the *combined* production from *all* vintages from 1943 to the present has been 1,000 cases.

It was only during a two-year period (1992-1994) that it was available for purchase. At the time, we made several raids on the château's library, snagging vintages

between 1971 and 1990—all of which appeared in these pages. But when Coutet signed a distribution agreement with Mouton Rothschild in 1994, the tap was turned off. For love or money, you couldn't coax a bottle of Cuvée Madame out of Coutet.

But we never stopped trying. Having asked repeatedly over the past seven years, the château finally said "yes" this past December, rewarding our persistence with a few coveted bottles of 1981, 1986 and 1989. Remarkably, the prices were hardly more than we paid in 1994.

This could be the last time we see these wines—at least at prices like these. Snooze, you lose.

**1989 Ch. Coutet
"Cuvée Madame"*
95 Parker
\$195.00**



Parker: "Deep, bright gold in color, this blockbuster sweet wine offers up aromas of coffee, custard, *pain grillé*, honeyed tropical fruits and a note of coconut. Unctuously textured, and oozing glycerin, extract and richness, this full bodied yet extraordinarily well-delineated wine offers the rare combination of power and complexity. It is an amazingly thick Cuvée Madame"

1986 Ch. Coutet Cuvée Madame* 220.00

Parker: "96 rating ... unbelievably decadent, unctuous ... has the type of extract (but without the overlay of heavy, toasty oak) that one normally finds only in a great vintage of d'Yquem ... an enormously rich, almost overwhelmingly intense Barsac that needs another decade to begin to reveal its subtleties and complexities. It is mindblowing!"

1981 Ch. Coutet Cuvée Madame* 235.00

Parker: "96 rating. This is a medium-golden wine with a huge honeyed aroma filled with the scents of oranges, toast, coconuts, and other tropical fruits. Thick, unctuous flavors coat the palate. There is just enough acidity to provide lift and focus. This is a colossal wine."

1996 Rieussec Half Bottles at a Mindboggling Price

Rieussec has long been considered one of the elite châteaux of Sauternes, producing wines of rare opulence. Rieussec's style—in the words of Robert Parker—is "one of power and almost roasted richness."

Since Lafite Rothschild purchased the estate in 1984, the quality of Rieussec has gone from strength to strength. Today, it is making some of the most hedonistic wines of Sauternes.

The 1996 was Rieussec's finest vintage after 1990, and could well match that wine in richness and power. We have purchased a parcel of prized half bottles that we can offer at an incredible price.

**1996 Ch. Rieussec
\$19.95 half bt. \$475.00 cs.**



VENETO

1997 Dal Forno Valpolicella

One More Chance at a Legend-in-the-Making

Last October, we told the story of Romano Dal Forno, who—along with Giuseppe Quintarelli and Tommaso Bussola—has led the emergence of a new era in Veneto winemaking. While the octagenarian Quintarelli embodies the most “traditional” interpretation, and young Bussola represents Amarone’s future, today’s reigning star is Dal Forno. In less than 15 years, he has come out of nowhere to create a “new” expression of Amarone and Valpolicella—pushing the limits of what was previously considered possible, while maintaining a deep respect for tradition.

Everything that emerges from Dal Forno’s cellar reveals amazing extract and richness. And nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in his unique Valpolicella. It is perhaps Dal Forno’s most individual wine. Early on, he adopted the *Ripasso* method that other growers use, passing the Valpolicella juice over the skins from his Amarone. *Ripasso* produces an amazingly rich, complex wine, but still Dal Forno

wasn’t satisfied. He adds 10 to 20% of Amarone to the cuvée, resulting in a wine that is superb even in average years (like 1992) and mindblowing in great years (like 1997).

In 1997, Dal Forno’s Valpolicella achieved even greater richness and depth than in previous vintages. In October, we sold out of our initial allocation in a heartbeat. We have since obtained a bit more which we can offer at the same well-below-market price.

**1997 Dal Forno
Valpolicella***
93 Parker
\$65.00



Parker: “An opaque purple color is accompanied by a thick, glycerin-imbued texture with immense concentration, fabulous purity and copious quantities of smoky, earth-infused, blackberry and cherry fruit. **This awesome effort must be tasted to be believed.**”

Charles Heidsieck 1985 Rosé

Three years ago, the *Wine Spectator* rated 1985 Charles Heidsieck Rosé the finest vintage rosé Champagne in the market, besting even Dom Perignon Rosé. We have just purchased a pristine parcel of this now-rare wine.

**1985 Chas. Heidsieck
Brut Rosé**
96 Wine Spectator
\$59.95



Wine Spectator: “A connoisseur’s Champagne, this continues to improve ... light amber in color, with an elegant, delicate yet crisp texture. The subtle aromas and flavors reveal themselves slowly, building to interesting notes of baked apple, gingerbread and honey that linger on the long finish.”

2000 Virginie de Valandraud

The leading figure of Bordeaux’s *garagiste* movement, Jean-Luc Thunevin is best-known for his Ch. de Valandraud. But he also has a loyal following for Valandraud’s second wine, Virginie de Valandraud.

Virginie, named for Thunevin’s daughter, is made from the same St. Emilion vineyards and using the same money’s-no-object methods. Little is made; thus, Virginie can be as difficult to find as Valandraud itself. Yet, at a price that is 1/5 that of Valandraud, it is a bargain.

We are pleased to be able to offer this terrific 2000 at a compelling price.

**2000 Virginie
de Valandraud***
\$35.00 bottle \$395.00 cs.



AUSTRALIA

Stars from Down Under

First Offerings of a Few Blockbuster Rarities

**1998 Penley Estate
Cabernet "Estate"***
95 Parker
\$59.95



Parker: "... fabulous ... Voluptuous and full-bodied, with the tannin largely concealed by its wealth of glycerin, fruit, and concentration, this terrific Cabernet Sauvignon will hit its prime in 1-2 years, and last for 15 or more. Impressive!"



**1998 Coriole
"Mary Kathleen" ***
94 Parker
\$42.50

Parker: "... normally a blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot ... a spectacular, opaque purple-colored effort with tremendous aging potential. It offers a promising nose of cassis liqueur, cedar, blackberries, vanilla, and spice. Full-bodied, with fabulous purity and symmetry, and a mouthfilling, palate-staining style ... Very impressive!"

**2000 d'Arenberg
"Laughing Magpie"***
94 Parker
\$32.95



Parker: "... a 95% Shiraz/5% Viognier blend aged completely in French oak ... It is a fabulous debut effort ... An opaque purple color is followed by a soaring nose of blackberry and creme de cassis liqueur intermixed with honeysuckle, pepper, and high class French oak. The wine is explosive on the palate, super rich, full-bodied, voluptuous, and powerful, yet seamless and beautifully balanced with well-integrated tannin, wood, and acidity. It should drink well for 15+ years."

Campbells "Merchant Prince" Muscat* half bt. .. 49.95

Parker: "95 rating. One of the illustrious names in Australian fortified dessert wines, Campbells has been making these gems since 1870. This rare cuvée (blends that average 70 years in age), is a superior fortified wine with extraordinary aromatics, unctuous texture, and luxurious levels of sweetness and concentration."

Noonstruck

1999 Noon Shiraz Reserve*129.95

Parker: "96 rating ... hugely extracted, massive ... An opaque blue/purple color and a knockout nose of blackberry liqueur intermixed with spice box, pepper, asphalt, and licorice soar from the glass. Opulent and viscous, with tremendous palate presence, beautifully integrated acidity, tannin, and alcohol, this superb, larger-than-life wine is a tour de force ..."

1998 Noon Shiraz Reserve*189.95

Parker: "98 rating. The opaque black/blue-colored 1998 Shiraz displays a fascinating bouquet of violets, black raspberry and blackberry liqueur, cedar, fruitcake, and pepper. Surreal levels of glycerin and richness are present in this full-bodied, surprisingly supple-textured wine. The finish lasts for several minutes." *1 bt. limit.*

1998 Noon Cabernet Reserve*179.95

Parker: "98 rating. Nearly perfect, this black/purple-colored 1998 Cabernet offers extraordinary sweet black cherry/black currant aromas as well as huge, gorgeously-proportioned, voluptuously-textured flavors that last for over 50 seconds. The wine reveals ... unbelievable purity, symmetry, and the potential to improve for 10-15 years. It should keep for two decades or more. This is a tour de force winemaking effort"

1997 Noon Shiraz Reserve*175.00

Parker: "98 rating ... One of the most concentrated wines I have ever tasted ... Thick in the mouth, with remarkably full body and surprising balance, the alcohol (15.8%), tannin, and acidity are lost in the cascades of fruit." *1 bt. limit.*

BURGUNDY

Three Great Reds ... One Great White

1996 Jacques Prieur Corton-Bressandes*75.00

Wine Spectator: "98 rating. Sensational. Ultrasmooth, with classy tannins that melt in the mouth. Immensely ripe yet elegant in structure, this full-bodied, royal '96 brims with cassis, wild berry, toasted spice, chocolate, wet earth and mineral nuances that unfold their charisma to a seductive finish. Best from 2003 through 2015."

1997 Jacques Prieur Chambertin*110.00

Pierre Rovani: "94+ rating ... reveals an exuberant nose of roses and massively ripe red and black fruit ... this powerhouse explodes on the palate with untold layers of sweet cherries and blueberries. Velvety-textured, medium to full-bodied, broad, muscular, yet refined and noble ... should evolve magnificently over the course of the next dozen or so years."

1999 Domaine Joblot Givry "Clos du Cellier aux Moines"*32.95

Pierre Rovani: "93+ rating ... Medium-bodied and chewy-textured, it is opulent, lush, and awesomely structured. Copious quantities of perfumed blackberries, cassis, blueberries, cherries, and oak spices can be found in its penetrating character. It is structured, yet its tannin is prodigiously well-ripened. Projected maturity: 2005-2015."

**2000 Jean Boillot
Puligny-Montrachet
"Clos de la Mouchere"***

94 Rovani

\$45.00 bottle \$525.00 case

Pierre Rovani: "... from a monopole located within Puligny's Perrières vineyard, reveals spicy mineral aromas. This wine has huge concentration and power, loads of focus and a chewy, satin-textured personality. Candied limes, gravel, minerals, pears, and anise can be found throughout its gorgeous, medium- to full-bodied core of fruit. It is highly expressive, beautifully rendered and elegant."

SPAIN

"Our dessert-wine discovery of the year"

The Saveur 100 (January 2002)

Each January, *Saveur* magazine lists their 100 favorite foods, restaurants, wines, etc., from the previous year. Only a few wines ever make the list, with just three earning mention for 2001. Olivares' marvelous **1998 Dulce** was among them.

Lusciously sweet, lavishly rich, an ambrosial mate to chocolate desserts ... and at \$19.95, it's the most amazing dessert wine value on the market today.



"Soft as a lustrous old oloroso sherry but with the complexity and intense fruit of a vintage port ... Olivares Dulce Monastrell, made from old-vine mourvèdre in Spain's Jumilla region, is our dessert-wine discovery of the year ... Available through The Rare Wine Co." — Saveur

\$19.95 500 ml **\$225.00** case

PIEDMONT

The Wait is Over

A New "Granbussia" is Released

Barolo's single greatest wine? Many would say that it is Aldo Conterno's Granbussia. Aldo produces Granbussia only in the very finest years; between 1971 and 1994, he only made it eight times: 1971, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1989 and 1990. It is a selection of the cream of each of his two top vineyards in Bussia—Cicala and Colonnello—with the important addition of prized wine from the Romirasco cru.

Production is tiny, only about 600 cases. The *assemblage* for Granbussia occurs three years after the vintage; but the wine is not released for a further three years. Aging is in traditional large Slavonian oak, small stainless steel, and bottle. No barrique is used.

It has been five years since the magnificent 1990 Granbussia was released, and during this time almost every bottle of Granbussia (of *any* vintage) has vanished from the market. Granbussia's following is just that large and devoted.

The 1995

Finally, the next vintage of Granbussia has been released: 1995. With its indescribably complex per-



fume, its wonderful richness, with a touch of austerity on the palate, it is a classic Granbussia. And, as such, it will undoubtedly blossom with time in bottle. We look for it to age gracefully for another two decades, achieving that majesty that marks the greatest Barolos.

We are pleased to offer this rarity at a very low opening price. March arrival.

**1995 Aldo Conterno
Barolo "Granbussia"***
92+ Tanzer 93 Parker
\$119.95 limited

Robert Parker: "Sweet, full-bodied and rich ... ranking alongside the fabulous 1995 Monfortino produced by Giovanni Conterno."

Steve Tanzer: "... Knockout perfumed nose combines cherry, dried flowers and tar; classic Barolo aromas. Powerfully structured, dense and sweet ... already extremely aromatic in the mouth, with subtle hints of dried flowers and dried herbs ... **This may well merit a score in the mid-90s with more time in bottle.**"

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INSIDE

'99 TrinoroPage 1 '85 Heidsieck Rosé Page 5
'96 BonneauPage 2 2000 Virginie de
'97 CiacciPage 3 ValandraudPage 5
Coutet 'Madame'Page 4 Aussie StarsPage 6
'96 RieussecPage 4 BurgundyPage 7
Dal FornoPage 5 Dessert wine gem ..Page 7

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