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# Giant Steps

## *2003 Pingus Stakes out Its Place in History*

*Spain's arrival* as a wine superpower can be traced back to a single event: the 1991 release of Vega Sicilia's epic 1968 Unico. This larger-than-life red was not only the first wine from Spain to stir the passions of collectors globally, it proved that Spain could make wines as profound as any.

Yet, 1968 Unico was a wine of The Old Spain, not the new. What of the dozens of elite Spanish wines since that have aspired to rewrite history? How likely is it that any of them will?

While a few may someday fulfill that promise, many have been searching for that towering young wine

 "A candidate  
for perfection  
... one of the most  
profound wines ever  
made in Spain."  
Robert Parker

about which there could be no doubt. It would have an unassailable balance of components, its heroic power offset by heartbreaking perfume, and the structure and depth to stand the test of time.

It was inevitable that, one day, The New Spain would give us such a wine. And, with this month's arrival of 2003 Pingus on our shores, we may hold it in our hands.

Of those few souls fortunate enough to have tasted it, most have pronounced 2003 Pingus a wine of monumental quality—the finest yet made by Peter Sisseck. Some have gone further: that 2003 Pingus is the greatest wine yet born of The New Spain ... ►

## *Coming Up: Peter Sisseck's First-Ever Pingus Verticals in the United States*



While Peter Sisseck has made a number of appearances in the U.S. over the years, incredibly he has never conducted a vertical tasting of Pingus on our soil. This is about to change: Peter has offered to conduct two major Pingus verticals at top U.S. restaurants this spring. As we go to press, New York (March 6) and Chicago (March 8) are likely for the debuts.

The tastings will begin at the Book of Genesis—the mythic 1995, whose rarity was sealed when the U.S. allocation was lost in a shipwreck—and will include other top years through 2003. Those who attend will also be the first in America to barrel-taste the incredible 2004 and 2005 Pinguses.

Details will be forthcoming shortly. Since space will be *extremely* limited, please call or email quickly to be put on the contact list.

# History in the Making: 2003 Pingus

► the first that may be one day be called “perfect.” And collectors the world over are lining up to grab a few bottles on release—before they vanish forever.

## A Different Reality

Some may assume that 2003 Pingus is a freak, the result simply of a super-hot year that may never be repeated. But a closer look reveals a different reality. Ribera del Duero’s high elevation kept daytime temperatures lower than elsewhere in Spain, while giving a cooling respite each night. As for the historic drought that ravaged young vines even in Ribera: the four vineyards that produce Pingus have an average age of 70+ years, their deep roots luxuriating in groundwater while younger vines struggled to survive. Yet, that can’t begin to explain Pingus’ transcendent quality in 2003. Peter Sisseck offers two insights:

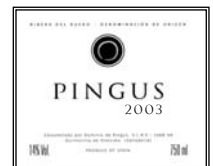
- 1) Luminosity — There was virtually no cloud cover from mid-June through the harvest. The sheer amount of light available meant that vines could ripen their fruit completely and yield juice with amazing flavor concentration.
- 2) Biodynamics — By 2003, Peter had fully implemented a biodynamic regime, and the soils had enjoyed several seasons with no applications of fertilizers or pesticides. Peter believes that the vines have a healthier equilibrium that partially shields them from vintage extremes.

## The First of Three Great Vintages

One only need taste the 2004 and 2005 vintages of Pingus to fully comprehend the significance of this last statement. With both promising to rival the 2003, we may be seeing not just the realization of a *great vintage*, but the realization of a *great wine*.

Due to the summerlong drought, Pingus struggled in 2003 to achieve its normally miniscule 500-case production. This, plus huge worldwide demand, will combine to make 2003 Pingus even more difficult to acquire than usual. Fair warning: this could be your only chance.

**2003 Pingus**  
**96-100 Parker**  
**\$395.00 extremely limited**



Parker: “A candidate for perfection, the profound 2003 Pingus possesses an awesome smoky, black-berry, and cassis-scented nose intermixed with hints of espresso roast, lead pencil shavings, cedar, and subtle new oak. Sensational concentration, a seamless integration of acidity, tannin, alcohol, and wood, and a blockbuster finish lasting nearly a minute result in one of the most profound wines ever made in Spain. It should age effortlessly for two decades or more.”

## ... and a Trailblazing 2003 Flor de Pingus

*It will come* as no surprise that 2003 also saw a breakthrough for Peter’s second wine, Flor de Pingus. Sourced from old, low-yielding Tempranillo vineyards scattered around Ribera del Duero, Flor de Pingus has always been a marvel—resembling Pingus in character and complexity, if perhaps not in power.

But in 2003, Flor de Pingus has reached a new level of intensity and concentration, thanks not only to better viticulture and lower yields, but also to Peter’s growing mastery in his work. This extraordinary wine is not to be missed.

**2003 Flor de Pingus**  
**93-95 Parker**  
**\$49.95 limited**



Parker: “The 2003 Flor de Pingus exhibits an exuberant, expressive nose of creme de cassis, graphite, licorice, smoke, espresso roast, and aged beef-like characteristics. A superb texture, sweet tannin, and an opulent, voluptuous mid-palate and finish suggest this 2003 can be drunk now and over the next 7-10 years.”

## RED BURGUNDY

# Virtuosity

## *Joseph Roty Produces Glorious 2003s in an Extreme Vintage*

The historic weather in 2003 presented unprecedented challenges to Burgundy's *vignerons*, and it's a measure of how artisanal the region is that the wines vary so in character.

Mediocre growers gave the heat the upper hand, making largely unbalanced wines. But the perfectionists in their midst often excelled, producing wines potentially of 1947-like richness, boasting admirable structure, minerality and typicity.

Joseph and Philippe Roty are the latter group's quintessence. Their highly skilled and personal winemaking, as well as their four-season vineyard work, paid off handsomely in 2003's extreme conditions.

Their vines benefitted from a double pruning in the spring, giving a later flowering but also higher acidity in the grapes. As Tanzer quotes Philippe Roty: "When we pick at the same time as others, we have less sugar ripeness and more acidity, and in 2003 this helped us



avoid *surmaturité* and make more primary wines." According to Tanzer, Roty also "de-leafed early in 2003 on the north and west side of the vines, thus getting the grapes used to the sun."

### Great Poise & Richness

Roty's average 2003 alcohol degree was 13.3%—lower than at many estates. And the wines have a marvelous balance of fruit, acidity and tannins, their impending opulence even more apparent than usual. And so, while Roty's *grand crus* normally require 15+ years to reveal all their glory, the 2003's will be superb earlier, yet they'll age beautifully.

As usual, our offer focuses on two sets of wines. The first is the monumental *grand crus*, including the ultra-rare Mazis- and Griottes-Chambertin. We are also blessed with Roty's three top Marsannays—among Burgundy's most brilliant cult reds. April arrival.

### The Grand Crus

#### **2003 Charmes Chambertin Tres Vieilles Vignes\* 189.95**

*Burghound:* "Extremely ripe aromas of plum jam, mocha, underbrush and wood spice lead to full-bodied, intense and completely mouth coating flavors and the level of dry extract here is exceptional ... for fans of very ripe, powerful burgs, this will not disappoint."

Tanzer: "... nose hints at violet, licorice, bitter chocolate and new oak. The tightest and most intense of these 2003s, with powerful, very ripe flavors of blackberry and licorice."

#### **2003 Mazis Chambertin\* ..... 199.95**

*Burghound:* "A high toast nose with distinct cigarette ash notes fight with rustic, earthy and very ripe musky fruit aromas yet the flavors are exceptionally pure and wonderfully complex with an abundantly sappy, exuberant and generous finish that goes on and on."

Tanzer: "... lovely dark berry, licorice and mineral flavors. Supple, sweet and very long, finishing with substantial tannins."

#### **2003 Griottes Chambertin\* ..... 235.00**

*Burghound:* "... complex, refined and mouth coating flavors that deliver plenty of punch and length."

Tanzer: "... sappy black cherry, flowers, iron and licorice, ... very generous. Slow-building, superripe finish features substantial but thoroughly ripe tannins."

### The Marsannay Crus

#### **2003 Marsannay "En Ouzelois"\* ..... 39.95**

*Burghound:* "(from 80+ year old vines). Another notch up in terms of aromatic elegance as this is higher-toned with notes of violet and black berries leading to supple, rich and dense flavors of lovely complexity & good finishing punch."

Tanzer: "... aromas of cherry, licorice and spices. Supple, rich and floral, with a musky, sweet-oaky element."

#### **2003 Marsannay "Boivin"\* ..... 39.95**

Tanzer: "Wild dark berries, game and bitter chocolate on the nose. Sweet, fat and fruit-driven; supple and sweet but with firm, edgy acids giving shape to the flavors. This has a rather glyceric palate feel, no doubt owing to the nearly 70-year-old vines, which withstood the heat well ... From poor, reddish soil with a high chalk content ... this should develop in bottle for several years but will also be drinkable early ...."

#### **2003 Marsannay "Clos de Jeu"\* ..... 39.95**

*Burghound:* "... 80+ year old vines ... dense and serious with dark berry fruit aromas, warm and ripe earth notes ... powerful and more structured flavors that offer fine length all wrapped in chewy tannins ... ample flavor authority and punch."

Tanzer: "Superripe, high-pitched aromas of roasted berry, red cherry and violet ... Large-scaled, broad and ripe, with liqueur-like flavors of red cherry and leather."

## CALIFORNIA

# Hudson, Hyde & Ritchie

## Ramey's Sensational 2003 Single-Vineyard Chardonnays

David Ramey is known for making Chardonnays that combine New World richness with the refinement and complexity of *premier* or *grand cru* white Burgundy. Several Ramey cuvées have contributed to this reputation; but the greatest credit must go to his vineyard-designate bottlings: Hyde, Hudson and Ritchie.



*The Hudson Vineyard.*

facing. Ritchie is from the heart of the Russian River Valley: a low-yield, 33-year-old vineyard planted to the Wente clone. Hyde was first made in 1996, Hudson in 1997 and Ritchie in 2002. In vintage after vintage, each has performed brilliantly.

Ramey's Hyde and Hudson Chardonnays are from neighboring sites in Carneros, both cool but south-

It's an honor to be able to offer these uniquely compelling Chardonnays in both bottle and magnum.

### 2003 Ramey Chardonnay "Hyde Vineyard"

**94 Parker**

**\$54.95** *bt.* **\$115.00** *mag.*

Parker: "... a stunning wine of great individuality, with wonderful minerality, sweet lemon oil, honeysuckle, white currant, and floral notes intermixed with a crushed rock-like note, and a long, heady, full-bodied finish. This beautiful, pure Chardonnay should age nicely for 5-7 years."

### 2003 Ramey Chardonnay "Hudson Vineyard"

**92 Parker**

**\$54.95** *bt.* **\$115.00** *mag.*

Parker: "The 2003 Chardonnay Hudson exhibits notes of tropical fruits, lemons, oranges, and tangerines, medium to full body, and a lusty, heady, extroverted style that is unmistakably California in orientation."

### 2003 Ramey Chardonnay "Ritchie Vineyard"

**95 Parker**

**\$54.95** *bt.* **\$115.00** *mag.*

Parker: "... shows opulent levels of tropical fruit intermixed with beeswax and orange skin/nectarine notes. It is full-bodied, with superb purity, terrific acidity, and a long, heady finish." *Very limited.*

# 2003 Terra di Lavoro

*"This unexpected miracle ... appeared out of nowhere in 1994 and has not ceased to amaze ever since." Daniel Thomases*

*To many*, Terra di Lavoro is an apparition. With tiny production and stratospheric ratings, recent vintages have crept past the \$200 mark, with \$300 sometimes seen. But the real challenge is to find a bottle.

Made since 1994 by Ricardo Cotarella in northwestern Campania, Terra di Lavoro is an 80/20 blend of Aglianico and Piediroso. The wine's concentration and richness must be experienced to be comprehended.

Benefitting from the year's unprecedented warmth, the 2003 Terra di Lavoro promises to be yet another stunning example. In fact, its price is on the rise, with retail prices already approaching \$200.

We were fortunate, however, to find a parcel late last fall at a seriously below-market place. *Very limited.*

### 2003 Terra di Lavoro\*

**97 Daniel Thomases**

**\$110.00**



Daniel Thomases in *Veronelli*: "A single question is possible this year: which is better, the 2003 or the 2001 Terra di Lavoro? Perhaps the first is more potent, while at the moment the second is more fragrant and complex. Slow and steady wins the race; we will have to wait until 2020 to see."

## SAUTERNES

# Prizes from Rieussec's Library

... including fulls (not halves) of the marvelous 1978 for \$49.95!

Sitting next door to Yquem, at the appellation's highest elevation, Ch. Rieussec has long been one of the elite estates of Sauternes. But never in its long history has it enjoyed more prestige than it has over the past 35 years.

The 1971 purchase by Albert Vuillier brought vast improvements to the cellars and vineyards, while the 1984 acquisition by Lafite-Rothschild brought still more investment, along with the uncompromising hand of *regisseur* Charles Chevalier. As is evidenced

### **The Importance of "Ex-Château"**

*When buying older Bordeaux, the closest thing to a promise of perfection are bottles that have spent their entire life at the château. It's just as true for Sauternes as it is for the region's great reds. And when the wine is direct from an elite château, and the price is compelling, that's a home run.*

by the transcendent 2001, Rieussec is today at the top of its game.

The Vuillier and Lafite regimes represent important epochs in the history of this great estate. Thus, we were delighted a few weeks ago to

be offered—as reward for our ongoing support of Rieussec—superb examples of both regimes from the château's library. It is indeed rare today to find either of these wines in the marketplace, let alone with this provenance and at prices so low.

### **1989 Ch. Rieussec\***

**Ex-Château**

**93 Parker**

**\$44.50 half bt. \$79.95 bottle**



### **1978 Ch. Rieussec\***

**Ex-Château**

**★★★★ Michael Broadbent**

**\$49.95 bt. \$599.00 cs.**



Parker *Bordeaux*: "A synthesis in style between the more delicate, elegant, nuanced, almost restrained 1988 and the muscular, blockbuster 1990 ... The big, smoky, earthy nose offers up notes of crème brûlée, honeysuckle, ripe pineapples and other tropical fruits. The wine is quite full bodied, with low acidity, very sweet and luxuriously rich, with a viscous texture and a huge, concentrated finish. This wine seems to continue to put on weight and become even more impressive, much like the 1990."

Broadbent: "Deep amber, as usual; vanilla, crème brûlée nose, sweet, excellent counter-balancing acidity. Attractive, *à point*. At the Domaines de Rothschild dinner at Brooks's Club, London in November 2000."

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## *Silex ... Dagueneau's Crown Jewel at a Great Price*

As profiled in this newsletter last June, Didier Dagueneau single-handedly proved that the Loire Valley could produce dry whites that are the qualitative equal of Burgundy's best. And the wine that most advanced his argument was the iconic Cuvée Silex.

Silex is made from parcels of 50+ year-old vines in soil with a high percentage of *silex* (flint), vinified and aged in new Bordeaux barrels. A wine of awesome richness, the Executive Wine Seminar's note



on the 2000 Silex was "like Barry Bonds on steroids." Its structure and *grand cru*-level complexity begs for aging.

As Dagueneau's following continues to expand, we have watched the price of Silex soar in recent months. But we just picked up a small parcel of the superb 2004 that we can offer at a truly compelling price. Don't miss out.

**2004 Didier Dagueneau Silex\* ..... 79.95**

# Super Session

*"A brilliant Syrah." Robert Parker on Piedrasassi*

A few months ago, we heard about an intriguing new project on California's Central Coast: Piedrasassi. The fact that the focus was Syrah—a grape whose potential in California is only just beginning to be understood—would have been enough to grab, and hold, our attention.

But the most extraordinary thing about Piedrasassi was its concept: four of the Central Coast's hottest wine talents getting together to handcraft their dream wine. It reminded us of nothing less than Rock & Roll's Super Session in 1968, when, for the first time, several of rock's hottest musicians buried their egos to create something enduring that reflected their collective passions.

## A Who's Who

Piedrasassi is a virtual who's who of Central Coast stars. The winemakers are cult figures for followers of Central Coast Syrah: Sashi Moorman and Peter Hunken; their resumes include Stolpman, Holus Bolus and Red Car, while Sashi put a magical five years in at Ojai. The viticulturalists are Jeff Newton and Larry Finkle, who between them have made their mark on Stolpman, Honea, Fiddlehead and Clos Pepe. We don't have room here to explore every aspect of

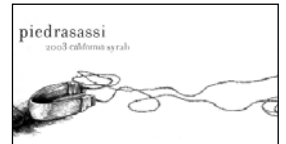


Sashi Moorman  
& Peter Hunken.

this group's brilliantly creative work. But highlights include blending from three extraordinary cool-climate, high-density, low-yield Santa Barbara County vineyards; double hand sorting; barrel-fermentation and 18-months aging in 350-liter Hennessy Cognac barrels. The wine-making reflects what Sashi terms a "synthesis between traditional and modern winemaking." The high-level Italian influence is inescapable, as Luciano Sandrone and Romano Dal Forno have been greater influences than anyone from the Rhône.

With just 450 cases made, it's only a matter of time before Piedrasassi because one of the hottest cult wines from California. Be there first.

**2003 Piedrasassi Syrah**  
**93 Parker**  
**\$49.95**



Parker: "... a brilliant Syrah ... The wine boasts a saturated ruby/purple color along with a floral and black fruit-dominated nose with hints of plums, cassis, blueberries, and exotic fruits. Opulent, with superb intensity, a multilayered, impressive texture, and fine purity, it is impossible to resist, yet should last for 7-8 years."

## A Big League Pomerol at an Incredible Price

Wedged between Pétrus and Vieux Ch. Certan, Certan de May has, for nearly a century, towered above most Pomerol estates. In fact, since World War I, Cocks & Feret has ranked only Pétrus, Vieux Ch. Certan, Lafleur, L'Evangile and La Conseillante higher.

While *always* prestigious and expensive, Certan de May has had its ups and downs over the years. But when everything clicks, the estate makes, in the words of Robert Parker, "remarkably rich, concentrated Pomerols that make Certan de May one of this appellation's most interesting wines."

A recent high spot was the 2001, possibly Certan de May's finest wine since the 1980's—and rated by

Clive Coates even higher than the outstanding 2000. On release it was priced above \$75 a bottle; however, we have acquired a parcel that was just shipped from Bordeaux, and the price is simply incredible.

**2001 Certan de May**  
**\$43.95 bt. \$499.00 cs.**



Clive Coates: "Ripe and plump and lush on the nose. Lovely ripe fruit and very good acidity. This has very good depth and definition. After a few years of underachievement this is back in the top division .... Long, positive and elegant. Fine."

# Stars from Down Under

## 2003 Kilikanoon "Oracle"\*

98 Parker

\$79.95



Parker: "... even better than the 2002 ... even more powerful, dense, and long ... this monster effort is well-balanced in spite of its great intensity and blockbuster size. This is the type of wine that can only be produced from old vine Australian vineyards. It is capable of evolving for two decades or more."

## R.L. Buller "Calliope" Rare Tokay\*

100 Parker

\$75.00 half bottle

Parker: "... prodigious, dark amber-colored ... colossal aromatics and flavors of melted caramels, coffee, toffee, candied fruits marinated in cognac, magnificent richness, and a huge finish that lasts over 70 seconds ... must be tasted to be believed ... among the world's most profound after-dinner fortified wines."

## 2004 Glaetzer Barossa Shiraz\*

96 Parker

\$59.95



Parker: "... from 80- to 150-year-old dry farmed vineyards ... larger-than-life ... A wine of amazing extract, richness, and full-bodied power, with great purity as well as balance, this stunning offering should age effortlessly for 15 or more years ... a tour de force ..."

## 2004 Two Hands Shiraz

"Angel's Share"\*

95 Parker

\$27.95

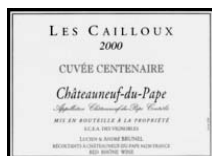
Parker: "... a hedonistic effort ... a gorgeously complex nose of lead pencil shavings, charcoal, blackberries, and cassis ... the tell-tale opulence and voluptuous texture this estate's wines all seem to possess, it should be enjoyed over the next 7-8 years."

# Châteauneuf's Elite at Great Prices

## 2000 Les Cailloux "Cuvée Centenaire"

96 Parker

\$149.95



Parker: "... one of the world's most compelling red wines ... primarily from a plot of ancient (planted in 1889) Grenache vines ... a knock-out bouquet ... this sexy, voluptuous, enormously concentrated 2000 possesses a huge, silky, seamless finish."

## 2001 Les Cailloux "Cuvée Centenaire" .....149.95

Parker: "96 rating. Fabulous ... a provocative perfume of incense, black tea, plums, figs, and kirsch liqueur ... notes of pepper, smoke, and balsam wood. Rich and voluptuous with great length, massive body ...."

## 2001 Clos du Caillou Reserve .....275.00

Parker: "100 rating ... one of the most monumental wines of this appellation I have ever tasted ... the last vintage the late Jean-Denis Vacheron produced ... awesome purity ... Spectacularly long ...."

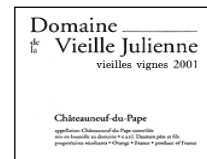
## 2000 Clos du Caillou Reserve .....225.00

Parker: "99 rating. Possibly the wine of the vintage ... A wealth of fruit, power, and balance, amazing purity, and a sumptuous, 65-second finish are the stuff of legends ... an enormous, well-delineated, superb wine."

## 2001 La Vieille Julienne "Vieilles Vignes"

96 Parker

\$135.00



Parker: "Will be the last vintage of this cuvée. A fabulous wine fashioned from 50-100-year old vines ... gorgeous aromas of blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, minerals, and kirsch ... unbridled power ... should result in something magical in about 7-10 years."

## 2001 La Vieille Julienne "Cuvée Réserve" .....295.00

Parker: "100 rating ... monumental ... awesome aromatics consisting of ground pepper, blueberry and blackberry jam, and kirsch liqueur ... a plot of 100-year old Grenache vines ...."

PIEDMONT

# 2001 Barolo

## Standouts in a Great Vintage

For lovers of Barolo, 2001 is shaping up to be an extraordinary vintage. In contrast to the effusively rich and utterly irresistible 2000s, the appeal of the 2001s is that so much of their potential lay beneath the surface. The wines are not only darker in color, and more intensely nuanced and structured than the 2000s, they clearly have more in reserve.

And because they are not as backward as the 1989 and 1996 Barolos were at this age, the best wines are already revealing stunning aromatics and beautiful texture.

We are pleased to offer this selection of some of the finest 2001s that have so far come onto the market. More are sure to follow.

**2001 Sebaste Barolo  
Monvigliero\***  
**96 Wine Spectator**  
**\$47.50 bt.**



**2001 La Spinetta  
Barolo Campé\***  
**97 Daniel Thomases**  
**\$95.00 bt.**



*Wine Spectator*: "A wonderful purity of fruit in this young Barolo with plums, cherries and raspberries. Full-bodied, with a fabulous concentration of fruit and velvety tannins. It reminds me of a top grand cru Burgundy, but with even better structure. Breathtaking. Best wine I have ever had from here. Best after 2009."

Historically based on the Langhe's eastern flank, far from Barolo, the Rivetti family's acquisition of vines in Barolo created a stir in 2000. In just its second vintage, however, Barolo Campé has made Rivetti an important *Barolista*. Writing in *Veronelli*, Daniel Thomases calls the '01 Campé "the finest wine in the history of this house."



**2001 Grimaldi  
Barolo Le Coste**  
**96 Wine Spectator**  
**\$59.95 bt. \$125.00 mag.**

*Wine Spectator*: "Wonderful aromas of plums, tobacco and Indian spices. Full-bodied, with a fabulous intensity of fruit and big, silky tannins. Goes on and on. Massive wine. This is superb. As great as 2000. Best after 2008. 300 cases made."



**2001 Luigi Pira  
Barolo Marenca\***  
**96 Daniel Thomases**  
**\$69.95 bt.**

Robert Parker has called Giampaolo Pira "one of Piedmont's new superstars" and his Barolos "wines of extraordinary complexity and breathtaking richness." The 2001 Marenca is one of the best ever from this famous estate.

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