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1997 Barolo

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Hot Aussies

RHONE VALLEY

# Northern Lights

## *The Outstanding 1998 and 1999 Northern Rhône*

*Finally*, lovers of Hermitage and Côte Rôtie have cause for celebration: a pair of superb back-to-back vintages in 1998 and 1999.

After a string of excellent harvests between 1988 and 1991, the Northern Rhône's luck seemed to run out in the 1990s. There were certainly some good years, but nothing to excite true Syrah lovers—not until word of the 1998's and 1999's began to leak out. In fact, both of these years promise to give us Côte Rôties and Hermitages that rival the best of 1989 and 1990.

As for the vintages themselves, due to a spring frost,

1998 produced a small crop of intensely concentrated wines. Consequently, while the quality can be very high, the availability of the best wines is sharply restricted. Robert Parker calls the 1998 Hermitages "stunning."

Meanwhile, 1999 is of equal quality or better throughout the Northern Rhône. This is particularly the case for Côte Rôtie, which Parker says may be the finest young Côte Rôtie vintage he has ever tasted.

Production of most of the wines in this offer was tiny—frequently just a few hundred cases. Hence, quantities generally are extremely limited.

## *1998 Hermitage*

1998 Marc Sorrel Hermitage Le Gréal ..... 135.00

Parker: "95+ rating ... undoubtedly the finest Sorrel has made during his helmsmanship at this estate. His father fashioned two wines of this caliber (1978 and 1979) ... The concentration and multi-layered texture are both fabulous ... As the 1998 Hermitage Le Gréal sat in the glass, it took on the character of a first-growth Pauillac or super-second St.-Julien such as Leoville-Barton."

1998 Chave Hermitage Red ..... 125.00

Parker: "93+ rating ... a tannic, backward, large-scaled, dense ruby/purple-colored wine with high tannin, sensational extract, and formidable power and length ... Anticipated maturity: 2007-2030."

1998 Chave Hermitage White ..... 89.95

Parker: "92+ rating ... may be a modern day clone of the 1988 or 1983. Structured, powerful, and super-concentrated, but less flattering to drink at present, it is a full-bodied, long, intense effort revealing notes of liquid minerals, peaches, acacia flowers, and honey."

1998 Jaboulet Hermitage

"La Chapelle" \*

96 *Wine Spectator*

\$79.95 bottle \$165.00 magnum

*Wine Spectator*: "What a great red wine. Full-bodied, with crushed berry, smoke and grilled aromas, all presented quite subtly. Stands out for its natural, down-to-earth taste of clean, pure, shining fruit. A pleasure to drink." #16 in the *Wine Spectator's* top 100 wines of 2000

# NORTHERN RHONE

## *The Great 1998's of Delas Frères*

*"As majestic as Côte Rôtie, Hermitage ... can be." Parker*

1998 Côte Rôtie "La Landonne" \*  
95+ Parker  
\$95.00

Parker: "500 cases ... vanillin, espresso bean, licorice, blackberry, and cassis scents and flavors ... Extremely full-bodied, tannic, and monstrous on the palate, it possesses huge ripeness and extraction ... profound!"

1998 Hermitage "Les Bessards" \*  
96+ Parker  
\$95.00

Parker: The 500-case luxury cuvée of Hermitage Les Bessards comes from a 70-year-old Syrah section of that famed Hermitage hill vineyard ... One of the great Hermitages of the vintage (which was stunning in that appellation), it will be at its peak between 2007-2035."

1998 Côte Rôtie "Seigneur de Maugiron" \* ..... 45.00

Parker: "91 rating ... boasts a black/purple color, aromas and flavors of tapenade, licorice, bacon fat, black raspberry and blackberry liqueur ... Stylistically, it is reminiscent of Chapoutier's Côte Rôtie La Mordorée."

1998 Hermitage "Marquis la Tourette" \* ..... 48.00

Parker: "92+ rating ... a remarkably huge, chewy mid-palate as well as formidable persistence ... Some toasty new oak is present, but the primary characteristic is the layers of black fruits intertwined with minerals."

### Hermitage

1999 de Vallouit Hermitage  
Les Greffieres\*  
91-95 Parker  
\$59.95



The fabulous sequel to the 1998 Greffieres featured two issues ago. Parker: "91-95 rating ... approximately 350 cases produced ... a blockbuster effort ... the essence of blackberry liqueur infused with liquid minerals, smoke and licorice. Thick and intense, it coats the palate, fills the mouth, and should prove to be an awesome Hermitage ..."

### Côte Rôtie

1999 Tardieu-Laurent  
Côte Rôtie\*  
95-97 Parker  
\$125.00



Parker: "Unctuously-textured, unbelievably fat and dense, with a texture and richness not dissimilar from some of the profound 1947 Pomerols ... so rich, concentrated, and pure it should provide head-turning levels of pleasure and joy for 20-25 years."

1999 Jasmin Côte Rôtie ..... 45.00

1999 Jasmin Côte Rôtie *Magnum* ..... 95.00

Parker: "91-94 rating ... may be the greatest Jasmin offering since the prodigious 1978 ... Deep, with terrific fruit intensity ... this unfiltered effort represents the resurrection of the Jasmin estate."

1999 Bernard Burgaud Côte Rôtie ..... 39.95

Parker: "91-92+ rating ... immensely impressive, tannic, powerful, behemoth ... a candidate for 25 years of aging ... a primordial richness and energy, with huge, muscular flavors, and admirable purity, density, and thickness ..."

1998 Rene Rostaing Côte Rôtie Côte Blonde .. 149.95

Parker: "98 rating ... soaring aromas ... velvety-textured and full, with layers of glycerin, extract, and concentrated fruit, superb richness, impressive purity, and a finish that lasts 40+ seconds."

### Condrieu

1999 Guigal Condrieu  
"La Doriane"  
94 Parker  
\$59.95

Parker: "... from Guigal's own vineyard, which he crop-thinned twice to lower yields. A stunning Condrieu, it offers intense aromas of peaches, apricots, and bananas, as well as a long, multilayered, rich, full-bodied palate with exquisite purity and intensity."

# “Simply Brilliant”

## *Arnaldo-Caprai Continues its Run of Compelling Vintages*

*Umbria*, just east of Tuscany, has been the setting of one of Italy's most dramatic success stories: that of Arnaldo-Caprai. Young Marco Caprai and his enologist Attilio Pagli, have not only made Caprai one of the hottest names in Italian wine. They have also restored the luster of one of Italy's most historic winegrowing areas, Montefalco.

The key to their success has been an obsessive perfectionism—applying the best of modern enology, but with a rare devotion to tradition. While most of their Tuscan neighbors are at least dabbling with Cabernet and Merlot, Caprai and Pagli have been true to the indigenous varieties of Sangiovese and Sagrantino (the latter unique to Montefalco). In fact, only Sagrantino is used in their two top wines: the **25 Anni** luxury cuvée and the flagship **Sagrantino di Montefalco**. With these wines, Caprai and Pagli have shown why centuries of believers considered Sagrantino one of the great varieties of Italy.

### A Unique Portfolio

Regular readers of this newsletter know the 25 Anni cuvée well, as we have made annual offerings since the first vintage in 1994. This limited-production wine—made from an ancient clone of Sagrantino—has been called “**Italy's single best red wine in the 1990's**” by Daniel Thomases, writing in Steve Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*. Each vintage has also received *tre bicchieri* from *Gambero Rosso*.

But the 25 Anni is only the tip of a very fascinating iceberg. The Sagrantino di Montefalco (also aged in barrique) approaches the power and richness of 25 Anni. Meanwhile, Caprai's Montefalco Rosso Riserva—made from Sangiovese and Sagrantino—is ripe, concentrated and complex. And for dessert, Caprai's luscious Passito—made from dried Sagrantino grapes—is simply delicious.



*“One of the best-kept secrets in Italian wine: Marco Caprai's dedication to quality is absolute and uncompromising, and the work of his winemaker, Attilio Pagli, is simply brilliant.”*

Daniel Thomases in  
Steve Tanzer's  
*International Wine Cellar*

### This Offering

As in Tuscany, Umbria enjoyed an historic year in 1997. Consequently, the anticipation for Caprai's '97's has been building for months. Last November, we offered you the chance to buy the 25 Anni on a pre-arrival basis. That offering quickly sold out; but we have since obtained a small additional amount of this exceptional wine.

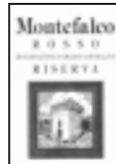
As for Caprai's other top '97's, the moment has arrived. Quantities are limited.

### 1997 Sagrantino di Montefalco

\$29.95 bottle \$330.00 case



*Gambero Rosso*: “Almost as good (as the 25 anni). Full, elegant, stylish and complex.”



### 1997 Montefalco Rosso Riserva

\$24.95 bottle \$270.00 case

*Gambero Rosso*: “Excellent ... Broad on the nose with notes of mulberry, apple and black pepper, it is full bodied and elegant ...”

### 1997 “25 Anni” Riserva

\$69.95 bottle



*Gambero Rosso*: “*Tre bicchieri* ... the nose is intense and powerful ... The palate is rich and long... ” Daniel Thomases writing in the *International Wine Cellar*. “Leaves one straining for adjectives.”



### 1997 Passito

\$19.95 500 ml bottle

From its exotic nose of blackberry and ripe pear, to its sweet, luscious palate, Caprai's Passito is a delight. Very limited.

SPAIN

# 1998 Olivares “Dulce”

## *The New Vintage of a Stunning Dessert Wine Bargain*

*Late last year*, we introduced Bodegas Olivares’ fabulously rich, exotically scented *Dulce Monastrell*, made from ungrafted Mourvèdre vines, some dating back to the 1870’s.

The wine comes from Spain’s Jumilla region—one of the few places on earth with significant acreage of vineyards planted on their own roots. Like Noval’s “Nacional” vineyard and Bollinger’s “Vignes Françaises,” Jumilla was spared during the Phylloxera epidemic of the late 1800’s. To this day, Jumilla can boast thousands of acres of ungrafted vines, some dating back more than a century. This viticultural Eden is also blessed with hot days and cool nights in the summer, along with the potential for *botrytis* to form in the fall.

While most Jumilla growers have yet to awaken to their land’s awesome potential, Olivares’ Paco Selva has. With vineyards in the coolest part of the appellation—in La Hoya de Santa Ana—he leaves a few acres of vines to hang late into the fall. Even in normal vintages, these late-harvested vines achieve spectacular ripeness. But in favored years, morning fogs cause *botrytis* to form, concentrating and intensifying the sugars, while giving the juice a honeyed richness. The final wine has approximately 16% alcohol, 10%+ residual sugar, and amazing richness.



*Olivares’ prized ungrafted Mourvèdre vines.*

*Dulce Monastrell* has just been made twice—in 1996 and 1998—and shows all the depth and intensity of great Port, yet carries its alcohol much more naturally. It is a subtly *botrytised* marriage of dark fruits and Mediterranean spices, with great lusciousness and old-vine density. A perfect partner to chocolate and blue-veined cheeses, it has caused a sensation in Spain, with top restaurants like El Bulli, Arzak and Bersatagui rushing to feature it. Lovers of Port and other dessert wines should not miss it.

1998 Olivares  
Dulce Monastrell  
92+ *Tanzer*

\$19.95 500 ml \$235.00 cs.



*Tanzer*: “Full ruby color. Outrageous nose combines maple syrup, golden raisin, blueberry, beefsteak tomato, basil, spices and strong balsamic character; hints at noble rot. Hugely sweet, thick and chewy; salty extract gives this an almost solid texture. The wine’s extreme sweetness and faint pruney quality are leavened by solid acidity, giving it an almost miraculous balance. Finishes with even tannins and impressive palate-staining persistence.”

“A  
*majestic  
Corton*”

*Pierre Rovani*

1999 Vincent Girardin  
Corton-Renardes\*  
93-95 *Rovani*

\$57.50 bottle \$630.00 case



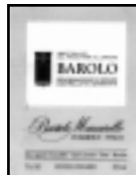
Pierre Rovani in *The Wine Advocate*: “The ... Corton-Renardes has a mouthwatering nose of jammy plums, violets, cookie dough, and sweet blackberries. This wine has magnificent depth, richness, and concentration ... This is a majestic Corton. Anticipated maturity: 2004-2014.”

# PIEDMONT

## 1997 Barolo

*"The opulent/exotic freaks of 1997, a vintage that bears little similarity to any previous year in Piedmont's history. The wines possess unprecedented levels of glycerin, sweetness of fruit, and over-the-top ripeness as well as richness. Old-timers compare it to 1947." Robert Parker*

1997 Bartolo Mascarello  
Barolo\*  
94 Parker  
\$59.95



Parker: "... an impressive, old style, heavyweight effort that will age for three decades. A dark plum/garnet color is accompanied by a striking bouquet of cinnamon, balsam wood, roses, tar, minerals, and cherry liqueur. There is good acidity for a 1997, a broad, full-bodied, super-concentrated palate ... Powerful and long ... a classic from the old school of Piedmontese winemaking."

1997 Bruno Ceretto  
Barolo "Prapo" \*  
95 Parker  
\$59.95



Parker: "Reminiscent of a right bank Pomerol from the late forties ... possesses aromas and flavors of singed leather, espresso, melted caramel, black cherries, smoke, and Christmas fruitcake. Atypical for a young Nebbiolo, it is succulent, fleshy, and undeniably compelling, rich, seamless, and concentrated."

1997 Aldo Conterno Barolo "Bussia Soprana" \* .....59.95

Parker: "91+ rating ... offers notions of earth, cherries, and balsam wood. Full-bodied, with good acidity (particularly for the vintage), moderately high tannin, and a firm finish, it possesses plenty of power ... Consume this outstanding effort between 2006-2020."



1997 Prunotto  
Barolo "Bussia" \*  
94 Parker  
\$65.00

Parker: "... profound ... boasts intense aromas of molasses, cherry liqueur, melted tar, licorice and toast. Dense and full bodied, with enormous quantities of glycerin and fat, this hedonistic, thick, viscous Barolo can be drunk now and over the next 15-16 years."

1997 Corino  
Barolo "Giachini" \*  
94 Parker  
\$49.95



Parker: "... offers a luxurious bouquet of black fruits, espresso, roasted herbs, and cherry liqueur. Full-bodied and lush, with layers of glycerin, multidimensional flavors, and great persistence on the palate, this is a fabulously concentrated, compelling offering ..."

### Rarest 2000 Bordeaux

Two of the scarcest and most sought-after 2000's —both are wines we have not offered before. Our prices for these rarities are below current market ... if you can find them at all.

2000 Ch. Peby Faugeres\* .....145.00

Parker: "95-98 rating. I had this wine on three occasions in March and rated it between 95 and 98+ ... prodigious ... this awesome St.-Emilion represents the essence of flavor, with an elegance, complexity, and overall symmetry that sets it apart from many of the so-called garage wines ... In the mouth, this seamless classic is full-bodied, layered, and intense, but neither heavy nor port-like with multiple dimensions, moderately high tannin, and a 50+ second finish."

2000 Ch. Magrez Fombrauge\* .....179.95

Parker: "94-96 rating. One of the superstars of the vintage, this micro-cuvée of 420 cases ... is a spectacular, unctuously textured blockbuster ... In the mouth, the wine exhibits terrific purity ... remarkable viscosity and intensity, full body and perfect balance. Great stuff ...."

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# CHAMPAGNE

## Jacquesson's Rising Star

*Quietly, methodically*, Jacquesson is emerging as one of the elite house of Champagne. The goal of this ambitious small house has been to challenge the likes of Krug, Salon and Bollinger for the transcendent quality of their wines. And according to France's most influential wine publication, *Revue du Vin de France*, they've achieved their objective.

It's no wonder. Jacquesson's methods are remarkably like both Krug and Bollinger, including fermentation in oak and releasing its wines much later than the norm. Even Jacquesson's non-vintage (NV) cuvées are aged longer than many producers' *vintage* wines.

But the real key to Jacquesson's ascendance lies in the soil. In recent years, Jacquesson has assembled vineyards that are the envy of the region—including key Pinot Noir *climats* around Aÿ, and some of the best Chardonnay sites of Avize and Dizy. And Jacquesson's Pinot Meunier holdings rival those of Krug.

 "Without a doubt, the finest set of wines tasted this year in Champagne."

*Revue du Vin de France, June 2001*

"Perfection"

The best measure of Jacquesson's progress is its superb NV Brut, *Perfection*. While most NV wines are blended from purchased fruit, *Perfection* is largely an estate-produced Champagne. Furthermore, the vineyards that make up the *Perfection* cuvée are essentially from a single *terroir*—the very heart of the Marne Valley. The soils in this area, combined with superb southern exposures, give *Perfection* not only great ripeness, but remarkable nuance.

It has been four years since the last cuvée of Jacquesson *Perfection* appeared in this newsletter. That wine, released in early 1997, was described by *The Underground Wine Journal* as "a stunning NV Champagne ... rich, full and creamy." But as good as it was, it didn't come close to the richness

and style of the current release. It is simply a stunning Champagne at an incredibly low price.

Jacquesson Perfection

\$24.95 bottle



## Jacquesson's Other Glories

### 1995 Avize

*"Here, the Chardonnay attains its finest and purest expression" Revue du Vin de France*



Only five times over the past 32 years has Jacquesson made a pure varietal Champagne from a single *grand cru*—their legendary vintage Avize Blanc de Blancs. And until recently, the 1969 had stood as the finest example.

But that all changed with the release last year of the extraordinary 1995 Avize. Harvested at very low yields in late September, this wine is the essence of Chardonnay—intensely flavored and magically perfumed. *A must buy.*

1995 Avize Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs ..... 39.95  
1995 Avize Grand Cru Bl. de Bl. *Magnum* .... 79.95

### 1990 Signature

*"Dense, concentrated and seductive ... a great future is assured" Revue du Vin de France*



Jacquesson's greatest wine is their luxury cuvée "Signature," one of only a handful of Champagnes still fermented entirely in barrel and exclusively from *grand cru* grapes.

The 1990 vintage, needless to say, is amazing—a Champagne of great power and complexity.

We have just received a few cases of 1990 Signature disgorged last year, having spent an extraordinary ten years on the lees. A fabulous *tête du cuvée* Champagne.

1990 Signature Brut .....54.95

## AUSTRALIA

# Red Hot Down Under

*Highest-Rated Aussies from the New Wine Advocate*

1998 D'Arenberg Shiraz  
"The Dead Arm" \*  
96 Parker  
\$59.95



Parker: "... from a vineyard planted prior to 1890 ... outrageously rich, spectacular stuff, the likes of which only Australia seems capable of making. Whiners may complain that it is too big, too rich, too flavorful, and too damn good, but this opaque purple-colored offering is loaded with blackberry liqueur, smoke, charcoal, pepper, cassis, and licorice. Unctuously-textured and full-bodied, but neither heavy nor overbearing, the wine's sweet tannin and low acidity are hidden in the cascade of fruit and glycerin that melt on the palate. This riveting, compelling effort can be drunk now, but promises to age well for two decades or more."

1996 Yalumba Shiraz  
Old Vine "The Octavius" \*  
95 Parker  
\$69.95

Parker: "... 600-case cuvée ... a basket-pressed Shiraz possessing huge power as well as massive, oozing, cedar and glycerin-imbued blackberry and cassis aromas and flavors. This superb effort is one of the great old vine Shiraz cuvées available in the marketplace. It should drink well for up to two decades."

1998 Fox Creek  
Cabernet Reserve\*  
92+ Parker  
\$49.95



Parker: "Brilliant ... Opaque black/purple colored with an explosive nose of licorice, blackberry, cassis, tar and new oak, this huge, ripe wine (it was aged in 100% new French oak) is layered, thick, smoky, concentrated and a true blockbuster from this superb vintage."

1998 D'Arenberg Cabernet  
"The Coppermine Road" \*  
95+ Parker  
\$54.95



Parker: "... boasts a dense purple color as well as an exquisitely pure nose of cassis, oak, earth, cedar, and spice box. Full-bodied and powerful, with a seamless personality (because of the melted tannin), this large-scaled, classic southern Australian Cabernet Sauvignon can rival the world's finest Cabernet Sauvignons. Anticipated maturity: 2002-2025."



1998 Torbreck  
"Run Rig" \*  
99 Parker  
\$225.00

Parker: "... may be the most concentrated Run Rig to date ... the bouquet offers an exotic concoction of tropical fruit, blackberry liqueur, crème de cassis, smoke and honeysuckle notes. Once past the exhilarating fragrance, the wine is sumptuous and full bodied, with a skyscraper-like profile of fabulous concentration and length that builds in the mouth ... This luxurious, compelling gem displays a level of complexity and delineation that is rare in a wine of such size."

1998 Kay Brothers  
Shiraz "Block 6" \*  
98+ Parker  
\$145.00

Parker: "... nearly perfect ... made from 106-year-old vines cropped at 1.5-2 tons per acre ... impressively thick-looking, has formidable concentration, gorgeously pure, peppery, crème de cassis notes, intermixed with new saddle leather, incense, smoky charcoal and vanillin. Fabulously concentrated and unctuously textured ... if you can find it and afford it, don't hesitate!"

## WHITE BORDEAUX

# Royal Whites

## 2000 Yquem & Haut Brion Blanc En Primeur

As the final weeks of Bordeaux's 2000 *en primeur* campaign wound down, the world was given the chance to purchase the region's two *nonpareil* whites: Ch. Yquem and Haut Brion Blanc. The offer of Haut Brion's prized white wine was no surprise, since it is always sold *en primeur* just like the red.

But Yquem came as a total surprise, since the château *never* sells its coveted wine on a futures basis, always waiting until actual release. But given the unique stature of the 2000 vintage, the Comte Lur Saluces

decided to break with tradition.

Painfully Rare

How rare are these two wines? Just 500 cases were reportedly made of Haut Brion Blanc. And at Yquem, the quantity produced was *one-quarter* of normal. So, while there are typically 10,000 cases to satisfy the world, in 2000 only 2500 cases of Yquem were made. Not a bottle more.

Consider this fair warning.

### HAUT BRION BLANC



Because 2000 Haut Brion Blanc has the potential to be the vintage's most sought-after dry white wine, its *en primeur* offering four weeks ago was received with the same kind of impassioned mania as the release of the 2000 First Growths. Early reports are that it is a great Haut Brion Blanc.

With only five hundred cases made, 2000 Haut Brion Blanc is guaranteed to remain rare forever. Early 2003 arrival.

2000 Ch. Haut Brion Blanc\* .....225.00

### yquem



What would the Millennium Year be without a great Yquem? The Comte Lur Saluces took his duty seriously, assuring that there would indeed be such a wine—discarding 75% of the crop to produce a tiny amount of concentrated nectar.

With one-tenth the quantity of, say, 2000 Mouton, 2000 Yquem bears a high price, but will be valued more like gold in the future. Like the Haut Brion Blanc, if you want it, you'd better get it now. 2004-2005 arrival.

2000 Ch. d'Yquem\* .....330.00

2000 Ch. d'Yquem\* *Double Magnum* .....1395.00

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