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19th Century
Madeiras

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Four Sought-After
Burgundies

The Appearance

Tuscany's Legendary Il Caberlot Finally Comes to America

For the past decade, one Tuscan wine has existed in name only for American wine lovers. Bottled exclusively in magnum, an average of just 1,000 magnums have been made in each of 13 vintages—each one personally, and painfully, allocated. Only two *enotecas* (out of a thousand or more) in Tuscany get even one of these prized magnums.

Of the few restaurants that are blessed, one is Paris' 3-star L'Ambroisie, where it remains the only Italian wine on their list. One-third of the production goes to Florence's elite private club, Teatro del Sale, whose members are allocated one magnum per year, a privilege that is handed down from generation to generation. The United States has never seen a magnum, as the producer hadn't, until recently, found an importer she was comfortable working with.

A Rare Clone

The wine is Il Caberlot, and its fascinating story doesn't end with its scarcity and desirability. It, and its second label Carnasciale, are the only wines in the world made from a unique clone, Caberlot, discovered in the 1960s in a vineyard near Verona. Caberlot's grapes combine



"One of those rare wines capable of stimulating genuine excitement ... the only defect is scarcity"
Gambero Rosso

characteristics of Cabernet and Merlot—hence its name and its reputation for producing wines that rival the best of Pomerol and Graves.

Its discoverer—an agronomist named Remigio Bordini—planted the mysterious grapevine in his Emilia-Romagna nursery and for 20 years refused all requests for the vine. It was not until

1986 that he consented to having it planted elsewhere. That was the year that the great enologist Vittorio Fiore introduced Bordini to Wolf and Bettina Rogosky, whose Tuscan estate, Il Carnasciale, offered a providential setting for Caberlot's future.

The Rogoskys' site—an ancient olive grove overlooking the Arno River—was less than an acre, southfacing, 420m above sea level and very stony. For Bordini, it was the perfect site to test his discovery's potential.

A Bottle of Sassicaia

With an eerie sense of their new wine's future, the Rogoskys planted a bottle of Sassicaia under the very first vine planted at Carnasciale. Under Fiore's supervision, the spacing was a then-revolutionary 10,000 vines per hectare. To further ▶



TUSCANY

Il Caberlot

▶ limit yields, the vines were pruned to five clusters.

While waiting for the vines to mature, Bordini permitted the Rogoskys to use fruit from the vines in his nursery to launch Il Caberlot. The first vintage, the 1988, showed flashes of greatness; it was described by France's *Degustation* as "a very important wine with every chance for a brilliant future." Most of this vintage, and the next, went to Florence's renowned restaurant, Il Cibreo.

By 1990, Carnasciale yielded its first crop, but it was entirely eaten by the *cinghiali* (wild boar) that roam the hillsides. In 1991 and 1992, Il Caberlot was a blend of fruit from the nursery and the new vineyard, while from 1993 on, Il Caberlot has been made only from estate fruit.

The Wine

We visited Il Carnasciale in November 2004, meeting Bettina Rogosky and her winemaker Peter Schilling. We soon learned that Il Caberlot's cult following in Europe had much to do with Signora Rogosky's personality and vision. Her husband died in 1996, before the project had hit its stride, and she is largely responsible for the wine's Holy Grail stature.



At left, Peter Schilling & Bettina Rogosky at Carnasciale. At right, the original Caberlot vineyard.



The attention to detail at the estate is amazing. Not only are the vineyards (two more parcels have now been planted) meticulously farmed, but the methods in the cellar reflect the tiny production. Each magnum continues to be bottled by hand and is aged for a further two years before release. *Élevage* is 18 months in new French *barrique*. Labels are hand-numbered.

Our 2004 visit featured a vertical tasting of Il Caberlot back to 1996. We were struck by the wine's consistent beauty and elegance, as well as the depth of nuance that unfolds from each vintage. Il Caberlot is an utterly singular wine, well deserving its lofty reputation.

This Offer

Following our visit last year, we were appointed the first American importer for Il Caberlot and Carnasciale. Signora Rogosky gave us an allocation for the current Il Caberlot vintage, 2001, and to make things even more interesting, supplied a few magnums of 1999 and 2000. She also gave us a tiny bit of 2000 Carnasciale, the second wine (\$49.95, *please inquire*.)

Given the small production and the intense demand in Europe, quantities available are tiny. So, hurry.

2001 IL CABERLOT

\$235.00 magnum

\$495.00 double magnum

One of the great Il Caberlots, about which *Gambero Rosso* writes: "... a great wine ... It offers a kaleidoscope of sensations on the nose, from instant coffee to pepper and oriental spices, all over a base of clear, ripe blackberry fruit. The palate is full flavored and dense, elegant yet full of energy, with excellently crafted, close-knit tannins and great length. This is a wine that demands attention ... it is one of those rare wines capable of stimulating genuine excitement." *2-magnum limit*.



2000 IL CABERLOT

\$235.00 magnum

Gambero Rosso: "As usual superb. A red of character, this is not one of your easy drinkers. The nose is a broad, complex concentration of oriental spices, cocoa and black fruit. Despite its youth, the palate is remarkable for its grip, concentration and length." *1-magnum limit*.

1999 IL CABERLOT

\$235.00 magnum

The fantastic 1999 offers a window into how Il Caberlot evolves. The bouquet reveals scents of ripe blackcurrant, spring flowers and white pepper. On the palate, the wine has put on considerable weight since release—acquiring the texture of liquid velvet, while the finish has lengthened. The amazing focus (a characteristic of both the variety and the site) continues to give the wine its superb balance, and its uncanny resemblance to a top Pomerol. *1-magnum limit*.

Voices from the Past

Monumental 19th-century Madeiras from Cama do Lobos

The vanishing of great old Madeiras has been well chronicled of late—in this newsletter, in the press and in internet chatrooms.

No one knows this reality better than we do, having been, for the past 15 years, the one dedicated source in America for old Madeira. Gone are the British merchants' cellars that were rich in Madeira until the 1980's. And the island itself is being depleted of its remaining stocks, leaving just a few families with their priceless old barrels of Madeira's ethereal nectar.

Our annual visits to Madeira since the late 1980s have yielded their share of great discoveries. But none was more exciting than the 2002 unearthing of the spectacular 1953 Bual and 1913 Malvasia from the Afonso family estate in Cama do Lobos. The wines were stunning in their richness and complexity.

Yet, there was more to the story: some 19th-century wine. At the time they agreed to sell the 1953 and 1913 vintages, they weren't yet ready to part with their oldest treasures. But the older Afonso soon retired, and his son was slightly less "attached" to the



At left, the view of Cama do Lobos from the Afonso estate. At right, the barrels of 1885. Below them were the demijohns of 1886 and 1898.

wines. Eventually a deal was struck, and we secured three unbelievable Madeiras: 1885 and 1886 Malvasias and an 1898 Sercial.

Glass versus Wood

Like the 1953 and 1913, the three wines had never left the estate, having been made from grapes grown there. The 1885 Malvasia

was still in barrel. There were three barrels of it, but each was less than one-third full, due to evaporation. While this deprived us of precious wine, the evaporation greatly enhanced the wine's concentration.

The 1886 Malvasia and 1898 Sercial, on the other hand, were in glass demijohns—the result of the Afonsos having decided some years ago that further wood aging wasn't needed. There were nine demijohns of the 1886 and seven of the 1898.

The wines were bottled by Barbeito in late 2002, but given their age at bottling, we decided to let them rest a couple of years before selling them. This is, therefore, the first offering ever of these three profound Madeiras. Because of the tiny amount available to us, we must limit orders to a bottle of each wine.

1885 Malvasia

\$295.00

Cama do Lobos is legendary for its rich Malmseys, so it doesn't surprise us that this wine is spectacular. The color is a beautiful glowing amber. The honeyed, chocolatey, toffee nose is deep and explosive, and on the palate there is noble richness, lavish sweetness, penetrating acidity, and fabulous length. Its 120 years of aging have produced a masterpiece for lovers of great Madeira.

1886 Malvasia

\$295.00

From the same vines as the 1885, but the next harvest, the aromas and flavors are incredibly similar: a feast of butterscotch, chocolate, with even a hint of truffle. But the palate is silkier, more refined, and, if anything, even longer, owing to the time in glass. A wine of majestic beauty, and profound complexity—and *always* leaving us unable to decide which vintage we prefer.

1898 Sercial

\$240.00

Nineteenth-century Sercials are rare, yet when you find them they can be wonderful. This 1898 spent at least 80 years in wood before going into demijohn, resulting in slightly more sugar concentration. Golden color, and a beautifully pungent Sercial nose of fudge and hazelnuts. The palate is quintessentially elegant: subtle sweetness, lemony acidity and a long, crisp finish. A classic.

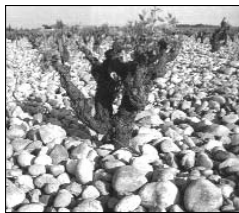
A note on serving old Madeiras. All old Madeiras benefit from being decanted several hours before drinking. Breathing allows them to open up, enhancing their complexity and richness. Decanting the day before will often impart even greater volume. And what's left in the bottle will keep for months, with little or no loss of quality.

CHATEAUNEUF DU PAPE

A Classical Essence

Bois de Boursan's Prodigious "Cuvée des Felix"

Like few other regions today, Châteauneuf-du-Pape is a vortex of styles, ranging from squeaky-clean modern to wines that are the soul of the earth. The latter end of the spectrum certainly produces the most compelling wines; and, of these, one of the greatest is Bois de Boursan's "Cuvée des Felix."



*Magical vines
and terroir*

The estate is owned by the Versino family, whose vineyard holdings include 40 acres of varying soil types and a high percentage of old vines. From these, they produce their superb Grenache-dominated and traditionally styled regular Châteauneuf.

But the estate's claim to fame is its luxury *cuvée*, Felix, made in small quantities since 1998. This remarkable Châteauneuf contains more Mourvèdre than the normal *cuvée* and is aged in barrels ranging in age from second to fifth year. Felix is made from the same five-hectare parcel each vintage and is one of the most expressive, sensual wines ever to emerge from the rock-strewn soil of Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

We are pleased to offer the three finest vintages to date of Cuvée des Felix: the 2001, 2000 and 1998. Quantities are very limited.

2000 Cuvée des Felix
96 Parker
\$79.95

Parker: "... profound ... fabulous ... like an open air Provençal marketplace with notes of dried herbs, saddle leather, fennel, licorice, black cherries, cassis, blackberries, and tapenade. With tremendous concentration and purity ... this stunning effort represents the nectar of old vines"



1998 Cuvée des Felix
97 Parker
\$125.00

Parker: "... extraordinary concentration, loads of glycerin ... Enormously endowed and majestic, it possesses a huge mid-palate as well as a blockbuster finish ... thrilling, classic Châteauneuf du Pape"

2001 Cuvée des Felix
95 Parker
\$69.95

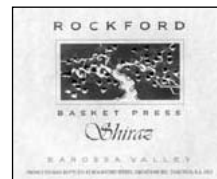
Parker: "... noble, elegant, complex ... a classy perfume of graphite, crushed stones, blueberries, acacia flowers, and plums ... a wine with vigorous richness, excellent elegance, tremendous precision, and significant flavor authority allied with both power and finesse."

An Australian Rarity at a Bargain Price

In reviewing Robert O'Callaghan's 2001 Rockford Basket Press Shiraz last October, Robert Parker wrote that O'Callaghan is "one of the pioneers as well as current reigning deans of old vine Barossa Shiraz." He added that "virtually all of his wines are sold to a loyal following directly from the winery door, so I am surprised any of it gets exported to the United States. I was even more surprised that I was lucky enough to find bottles at retail."

We were lucky to pick up this cult Shiraz at a shockingly low price. Grab it while you can.

2001 Rockford Shiraz
"Basket Press"*
94 Parker
\$49.95



Parker: "Stunning ... scents of loamy earth, blackberries, currants, pepper, and underbrush. The complex aromatics are matched by a savory, fleshy, structured, full-bodied palate possessing loads of earthy black fruits ... a beautifully intense, old vine Shiraz meant for long-term cellaring ... it promises to last for 15 or more years. **\$70 retail**"

BURGUNDY

Four Burgundy Prizes

Girardin's 2002 Chambertin Clos de Bèze

It took just two decades for Vincent Girardin to transform his family's modest domaine into an elite producer of red and white Burgundy. Now at age 45, Girardin is producing some of the region's most glorious *premier* and *grand cru* wines.

Girardin made a number of stunning reds in 2002, but his finest was the Chambertin Clos de Bèze, which—at 98 points—tied for the vintage's highest-rated red in *Wine Spectator*. We are pleased to offer this rarity at a compellingly low price.

**2002 Vincent Girardin
Chambertin Clos de Bèze**
98 Wine Spectator
\$129.95 bottle



Wine Spectator: "A brilliant red. Wild and feral yet refined, combining cherry, mineral, licorice, animal and underbrush notes with sweet, concentrated fruit and ripe, vibrant tannins. Shows an underlying energy, with a long, long finish ... 45 cases imported."

Bouchard's Fabulous Corton-Charlemagnes

With 3.25 hectares, Bouchard is the third most important landowner in Corton-Charlemagne, having purchased vines in this legendary *Grand Cru* vineyard a century ago. Their version is classic: a steely minerality

set against a soft, creamy background. A top vintage can age with ease for 15 to 20 years. Bouchard produced two of its greatest Corton-Charlemagnes ever in 2002 and 2003. Must-buys for lovers of great White Burgundy.

**2002 Bouchard
Corton Charlemagne**
94+ Tanzer
\$95.00 bottle



**2003 Bouchard
Corton Charlemagne**
93-96 Tanzer
\$89.95 bottle

Tanzer: "Steely aromas of lime, apple blossom, crushed stone and mint; has the almost metallic minerality of a top Chablis grand cru ... dense, penetrating and pure, with palate-saturating flavors of minerals and lemon ice ... Finishes smooth, extremely subtle and very long, with lemon and spice notes. My style of Burgundy"

Tanzer: "Exotic aromas of lime, apple, coconut and oak char. Wonderfully superripe yet racy, with terrific verve. The juicy, penetrating flavors of lime, apple and minerals get the salivary glands pumping. A wine of superb class and thrust, and yet there's also major underlying fat ... Finishes with palate-staining length and cut."

Rémi Jobard's 2002 Meursault Genevrières

Over the past four years, Rémi Jobard has become one of Meursault's hottest growers. With holdings in Genevrières, Charmes and Poruzots, his wines are a lesson in soil and climate. This is especially the case in 2002, a vintage in which—as he told *Burghound's* Allen Meadows—"it's all about minerality."

Jobard's 2002 Genevrières is fabulous. We were delighted to snag some at a *great* price. Don't miss out.

**2002 Rémi Jobard
Meursault Genevrières***
93 Tanzer 92 Burghound
\$69.95



Burghound: "...wonderfully pure flavors and racy acidity plus outstanding length. There is near perfect balance here with an edgy, limestone-infused finish ... this is very classy juice."
Tanzer: "Rich, dense and sweet, with very good breadth and healthy framing acidity. This offers volume and power"

CHAMPAGNE

A Treat for Champagne Lovers

Pristine 1973s from an English Cellar

The British have long led the world as connoisseurs of mature Champagne. In the 1890s, they convinced upper-crust Americans not only that Champagne should be Brut, but that it also needed a decade's age to be worth drinking. And to this day—apart from the producers' cellars—the best place to find well-cellared older Champagnes is the UK.



you can see from the photograph the bottles are pristine. And as for the condition of the wine, it is superb: near-perfect examples of two great Champagnes now entering their fourth decade.

1973 Roederer Brut175.00

Beautiful medium gold color, classic Roederer nose of vanilla, almonds and butter, with rich toffee overtones from the wine's age. But it's on the long, lush palate that the wine shows its stuff: the freshness is amazing, with the mousse of a wine 15 years younger. Superb.

1973 Veuve Clicquot "Carte d'Or" Brut 175.00

Another fabulous example: Clicquot at its charming best, effusively scented and packed with rich, smoky, chocolatey flavors. Again, the condition is remarkable, with the mousse and finish of a much younger Champagne.

We started searching British cellars for old Champagne twenty years ago—when they were still full to the brim with it, and the rest of the world hadn't yet caught on to its magic. As time has gone on, we've found the going harder and harder, but still we keep trying. Occasionally, our persistence is rewarded.

This year's reward was this beautiful lot of 1973s that have been in the same London cellar since release. As

... and One More Gift

A Treasure Trove of 1999 Bussola Valpolicella Magnums

Alongside Romano Dal Forno, Tommaso Bussola makes the Veneto's best Valpolicella, a wine that could easily be mistaken for a top Amarone in a blind tasting.

It is made by *ripasso*, fermented on the skins from Amarone grapes. This gives the wine its rich chocolate and cherry aromatics, and the ravishing Amarone-like texture.

In fact, for us, Bussola's is the finest Valpolicella made. Its richness is comparable to that of Dal Forno's, but it has less new wood and even more complexity. And with Dal Forno's Valpolicella selling for \$100 per bottle, Bussola's Valpolicella TB is a screaming value.

This summer when we were putting together our lat-

"The sensation aroused by the wines of Bussola ... has crossed the Atlantic and created a cult that chases after—often futilely—the few bottles that make it to the USA." Daniel Thomases

est Bussola order, Tommaso told us that a European client had been forced to give up an order for 15 cases of **magnums** of the now-impossible-to-find 1999 Valpolicella TB. The wine was still in Tommaso's cellar, and we could have it at the original price. It has now arrived!

**1999 Bussola
Valpolicella TB
\$65.00 Magnum**



Parker: "A gorgeous perfume of cocoa, dried, sweet black cherry fruit, chocolate, herbs, and smoke is a perfect introduction to this medium to full-bodied, rich, concentrated offering."

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NORTHERN RHONE

The Golden Wine

An Incredible Offering of Chapoutier's 1989 & '90 Hermitage Blancs

Two centuries ago, Hermitage Blanc was the world's most revered white wine. Le Montrachet was famous, but it lagged far behind white Hermitage, in both prestige and price.

Thomas Jefferson called it "the first wine in the world without a single exception." Young vintages sold for twice the price of Montrachet, and mature vintages were nearly priceless.

Today, of course, things are different. Most wine lovers think of Hermitage only as a red wine. And, if it were not for the great whites of Chapoutier and Chave, they would be right.

Of course, Chapoutier has always been *the* white Hermitage specialist. With an astonishing 32 acres of Hermitage planted to Marsanne, today there are five different white Hermitage *cuvées*; but until 1991, there was normally just one: Chante-Alouette. Along with Chave's, it was the classic Hermitage Blanc—traditionally vinified and built for aging, achieving a honeyed richness with maturity.

This Offering

There's no better way to understand white Hermitage and how it ages than to drink superb examples when mature. Thus, we were delighted recently to buy the



Hermitage

fantastic 1989 Chante-Alouette—Chapoutier's *only* white Hermitage from this great vintage—at an incredible price. At the same time we acquired a few cases of the very fine 1990.

These were the last two vintages when all the best parcels went into this *cuvée*—even L'Ermité and Le Méal. And the bottles are pristine, having slumbered in Chapoutier's own cellars until this year. Very limited.

1989 Hermitage Blanc Chante-Alouette \$47.50



Parker: "... displays a rich, buttery, hazelnut-scented nose, deep, heady flavors, a lot of fatness in its chewy texture, and a long, large-scaled finish ... this is the type of white Hermitage that can evolve gracefully over two decades or more."

1990 Hermitage Blanc Chante-Alouette 45.00

Parker: "The nose displays the honeyed, hazelnut, stony, peach-like aromas of a top white Hermitage. In the mouth, there is superb extraction of flavor, combined with surprisingly crisp, high acidity. This is an extremely rich and intense white Hermitage for connoisseurs."

2002 Kobalt Cabernet

Among the more compelling new Cabernets of the past year has been Kevin Carriker's 2002 Kobalt. A 30-year veteran of the California wine business, Kevin asked Merus' Mark Herrold in 1998 to find him a great Cabernet vineyard with which to launch his own label. Mark came up with a site near Coombsville in southeastern Napa, and by the 2001 vintage, Kobalt was born.

The 2002 is a classic Mark Herrold Cabernet: rich, dense and balanced, delivering sensory fireworks with every sip. Just 221 cases were made in 2002, and the few remaining bottles in the market are selling for up to \$175 apiece. *2-bottle limit.*

2002 Kobalt Cabernet 94 Parker 95 Wine Spectator \$95.00



Parker: "... a big, sweet nose of blackberries, blueberries, and flowers (acacias and violets) ... an opulent, voluptuous texture as well as great fruit, purity, and density, this beauty can be drunk now and over the next 10-12 years."

Wine Spectator: "An ultraripe, rich and fleshy style, exhibiting plush plum, blackberry and wild berry fruit that pushes the envelope of ripeness yet maintains a fine equilibrium. The tannins are ripe and fine-grained and, despite some heat, the flavors gush through."

PIEDMONT

A Modernist Icon

Sandrone's 2000 Cannubi Boschis

Among the wines that have so far emerged from Piedmont's modernist movement, the Cannubi Boschis Barolos of Luciano Sandrone are the most universally admired.

There has been a stream of great Cannubi Boschises over the years: the 1988, 1989, 1990, 1996 and 1997. Each of these wines has been marked by enormous opulence, purity, poise and balance—establishing a standard at which other modernists aim.

We are now pleased to offer the latest great Cannubi Boschis, the 2000. If you've been hunting for this wine in recent months, you've surely seen it selling mostly in the \$130-\$150 range. Yet, we've managed to secure a



Luciano Sandrone

parcel that we can offer at a truly stunning price. Quantities at this price are very limited, however, so hurry.

**2000 Sandrone Barolo
"Cannubi Boschis"
97 Wine Spectator
\$99.95 bt. \$225.00 mag.**



Wine Spectator: "Solid and super-fruity ... with blackberries, raspberries and licorice character. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and a long finish. Focused and silky. Very refined indeed. One of the best Cannubis ever from here."

Lavish Praise for 1997 Monfortino

In the new *Wine Advocate*, Daniel Thomases celebrates the great *traditionalist* Barolos of Giacomo Conterno—particularly the 1997 Monfortino, which he calls Conterno's greatest Barolo in 50 years. We still have a small quantity of this legend-in-the-making, which we can offer at a fantastic price along with a few other classics.

**1997 Barolo Monfortino
98 Daniel Thomas
\$235.00**



Daniel Thomases: "The 1997 Barolo Riserva Monfortino might be considered **Giovanni Conterno's monument, the greatest ever made in a series which goes back all the way to the 1950s.** Enormously full and ripe, layered and textured with a richness which is almost indescribable ... it will undoubtedly be good for another quarter of a century."

2000 G. Conterno Barolo Cascina Francia 72.00

Thomases: "92 rating ... the nose is entrancing ... the length, continuity and intensity of the palate mesh beautifully with unusually polished tannins"

1999 G. Conterno Barolo Cascina Francia 75.00

Thomases: "92 rating ... substantial and enveloping ... the epitome of classic Barolo."

1995 G. Conterno Barolo Monfortino 199.95

Parker: "94-96 One of the great Barolo Monfortinos ... Significantly concentrated, it represents a tiny crop because of hail ... The wine reveals the essence of licorice, kirsch, smoke, red currant and cherries ..."

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