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SEPTEMBER 14, 2004

CAMPANIA

A Southern Seduction

Serpico Connects Italy's Ancient Past with its Future

When Robert Parker published his 100-point review of 1985 Sassicaia in February 1987, it was a turning point in the history of Italian wine. It gave impetus not only to the Super Tuscan movement but also to the insurgency that was just around the corner in Piedmont. With newfound market acceptance, Italy had gone from being a remote viticultural outpost to a country full of promise.

Today, 17 years later, Italy's winemaking revolution seems poised to take another turn: a move beyond the mainstream respectability of Tuscany and Piedmont into forgotten zones and neglected grape varieties. And again *The Wine Advocate*, now in the person of Daniel Thomases, is playing a critical role.

Thomases has shown himself a champion of winemakers who produce "modern" wines of power and character from obscure ancient varieties. Since taking over Italy from Parker a year ago, he has rated only five wines 97 points or higher; four were made from indigenous varieties in Campania, Puglia or Umbria. Figuring prominently in this group is Feudi di San Gregorio's 2001 Serpico—100% Aglianico—rated 98 points in the latest issue.



Before its eruption in 79 AD, Mount Vesuvius had grapevines on its slopes. Today, its ash nurtures the vines at nearby Feudi di San Gregorio.

Fourteen Centuries

The Feudi di San Gregorio estate was created 18 years ago in Campania, resurrecting what are reputed to be Italy's oldest working vineyards—planted to Fiano di Avellino, Greco di Tufo and Aglianico and dating back over 1400 years. But Feudi's birthright is even more ancient; by the first century A.D., Virgil, Columella and Pliny had all extolled Campania as the source of Italy's greatest wines.

However, the estate's mission has not been simply to dust off an old winemaking tradition or to capitalize on the volcanic ash in its soil from nearby Mount Vesuvius. From the beginning, the estate has been a cauldron of spare-no-expense creativity. There have been countless experimental blends, the vinification is decidedly state of the art, vineyard management is meticulous and low-yield, and dense new vineyards (5,000 plants to the hectare) adjoin century-old parcels with fewer than 1,000.

Of the dozen or so wines made at Feudi, the quintessential cuvée is Serpico, produced from the estate's best Aglianico vines, many planted before Phylloxera. It is with this wine that enologist Riccardo Cottarella proves that he is just as skilled working with indigenous

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CAMPANIA

2001 Serpico

Continued from Page One

grapes as with Cabernet and Merlot. Made only since 1995, Serpico has, with its 2001 vintage, clearly shown that Campania is capable of producing monumental red wines.

Having purchased a parcel of 2001 Serpico before Thomases' review appeared, we are pleased to offer this important wine at a well-below-market price. We are also excited to be able to offer rare sizes, from magnum to *imperiale*. Quantities at these prices are limited, however.



2001 Serpico

98 Daniel Thomases

\$59.95 bottle \$125.00 magnum

Daniel Thomases in *The Wine Advocate*: "The 2001 Serpico, impenetrable and inky, staggeringly rich in both aroma and flavor, offers ultra-ripe but perfectly fresh berry fruit, cloves, cinnamon and chocolate and mouth-coating, deep-pile tactile sensations which combine iron power and an enveloping, voluptuous texture, infinitely deep and long. I would be amazed if this wine did not last thirty years."

Also Available:

Double Magnum (3L): \$275.00

Imperiale (6L): \$695.00

An Emerging White Burgundy Star

It's an old story. For years a grower with superstar potential is hidden from the world, as his juice disappears into a negociant's blending vat.

The Jouard brothers, Vincent and François, are a case in point. Until a decade ago, they sold all the production from their 11 hectares to a well-known negociant. Then gradually they began to separate out their best juice for domaine bottling; by 1999, they were bottling most of their production, lowering yields to make dramatically rich whites.

Since their release in 2001, the Jouard's brilliant 1999's have essentially vanished from the marketplace. Thus, the following are extremely limited.

1999 Jouard Chassagne-Montrachet "Morgeot" 39.95

Burghound: "92 rating ... 100% from the subclimat of Les Fairendes ... an outstanding effort with intense limestone notes and full-blown, rich flavors that retain a fine sense of underlying balance. **This approaches the size and intensity of a grand cru** ... Highly recommended."

1999 Jouard Bâtard-Montrachet 89.95

Burghound: "93 rating ... two thirds of the fruit came from vines planted in 1941 ... Big, rich and muscular ... with explosive fruit and luxuriant, sappy, dense flavors of uncommon complexity. The finish just offers wave after wave of mouthwatering extract ... **A Bâtard worthy of the name.**"

Chapoutier's 100-point White Hermitage

The 2000 Ermitage Blanc "Cuvée de l'Orée" is one of the greatest wines to emerge from the Chapoutier Renaissance that began in 1989.

Produced from the famous Le Méal section of the Hermitage hill, Cuvée de L'Orée is aged in 650-liter *demi-muids*, emerging as an outlandishly rich, powerful, honeyed white with decades of aging potential. Parker has consistently given earlier vintages of Cuvée de L'Orée ratings in the high nineties, but the 2000 is the first vintage to achieve perfection.

The 2000 Cuvée de L'Orée normally sells for *more than* \$200 a bottle. Don't miss it at our amazing price.

2000 Ermitage Blanc

"Cuvée de l'Orée"

100 Parker

\$159.95



Robert Parker: "... made from exceedingly low yields of 12-15 hectoliters per hectare ... It boasts an amazing nose of licorice, minerals, acacia flowers, honeysuckle, and a hint of butter. Unctuously-textured and full-bodied, with great intensity and purity, yet remarkably light on its feet ... it will last for 40-50 years. **\$200-\$300.**"

Pla del Rei

One of the Great Young Syrahs of Southern France

A couple of months ago, Peter Sisseck (of Pingus) called to tell us about an incredible Syrah he had just tasted. The wine, made by a small grower just across the border in France, had surreal depth of color, with an amazing sweetness and texture on the palate. So rich, the wine had taken an astonishing 18 months to finish its alcoholic fermentation.

What Peter didn't know was that the grower was an old friend of ours, Etienne Montès of Domaine de la Casenove, and that a pallet of the wine was already awaiting shipment to us.

Pla del Rei

The wine in question is 2000 Pla del Rei, and it is one of the most amazing young Syrahs we've ever tasted. Its size, richness and velvet texture suggest the New World, yet the aromatics are very much of the South of France, with a *terroir*-driven infusion of *garrigue* complementing the more varietal black fruits and animal notes. It is a fabulous wine.

Etienne Montès cannot hide his emotion when talking about Pla del Rei. First leased by Etienne in 1996, Pla del Rei is an historic property: the French King

“A big, intense, profound wine that is black in color ... mature tannins that are dense and compact, supporting the wine's profound, rich and unctuous texture. Excellent aging potential. 9/10.”

*Michel Bettane
on 2000 Pla del Rei*

camped here while preparing to invade nearby Catalonia. When Etienne found the site, its Syrah vines were already 25 years old —“ancient” for southwestern France. Yet, for the first four vintages, he chose to sell the fruit to Jean-Luc Colombo.

But so astonishing was the fruit in 2000, selling it was not an option. He writes that it was “the deepest, most powerful, ‘oriental’ and brooding Syrah I ever tasted around here.”

But to experience the finished wine required patience. The wine took a full year to finish its malolactic fermentation and a further six months for the last of the sugar to ferment dry. But of the finished wine, Etienne wonders if he “will ever have the chance to make a wine like this again.”

Just four hundred cases of this phenomenal wine were made. We were honored to get a bit of it. Please don't miss it.

2000 Pla del Rei

Domaine Saint Luc

\$59.95 *bt.* \$129.95 *mag.*



Before retiring to his family home at Casenove in 1987, Etienne Montès was an award-winning photojournalist. Here are two of his marvelous images from the 2000 vintage of Pla del Rei.

One of the most remarkable young red wines we have ever tasted from southwestern France. Impenetrable in color, with a brooding nose of ripe black fruits, *garrigue*, smoked meat and licorice, the wine's palate is stunningly rich, thick and long. On a recent evening we resisted the urge to finish the decanter, leaving just an inch in the bottom to see what would happen. Two days later there still wasn't a hint of oxidation, and the palate was nearly as sweet and lush as when the bottle was first opened. While there is the chance that the wine will close down at some point, up to now it seems one of those small miracles: a massive red that is fabulous to drink young, yet capable of decades of aging. You can bet a case is going into our cellar.

CHABLIS

William Fèvre 2002's

"Today's Fèvre wines rank with those of Raveneau and Vincent Dauvissat among the best of the region ... the best of them are outstanding by any measure and should age slowly and gracefully in bottle." Steve Tanzer

The 2002 vintage produced some of the finest Chablis ever—the most compelling wines having been made by elite producers from grand cru vineyards. William Fèvre's Grand Crus are not

only some of the vintage's stars ... they are among the great Chablis of our lifetimes. We are pleased to offer Fèvre's four top cuvées at spectacularly low prices.

2002 Chablis Grand Cru "Les Clos" 95 Tanzer \$52.95 bottle



Steve Tanzer: "... soil-driven aromas of crushed stone, petrol and lime blossom ... already hinting at great incipient complexity, with notes of talc, citrus skin, white flowers and white pepper. Dense and fat with sheer extract; a real mouthful of liquid minerals. Superconcentrated, seamless and penetrating ... this should be an extraordinary wine with six or seven years of additional aging ..."



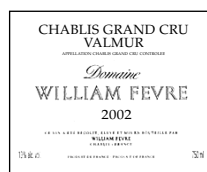
2002 Chablis Grand Cru Bougros "Côte Bouguerots" 92-95 Burghound \$45.00 bottle

Allen Meadows in *Burghound*: "... a huge step up in power and weight with a subtle hint of wood spice enveloping a wonderfully complex nose of minerals, white flowers and a hint of crushed oyster shells but otherwise, this is a bulldozer of a wine as it's muscular, powerful, deep and broad and blessed with simply unbelievable length and vibrancy. All I could do after tasting this was to shake my head in awe as it struck me as a hypothetical blend of Bâtard-like power and Chablis-like precision. A great effort."

2002 Chablis Grand Cru "Les Preuses" 93-95 Burghound \$49.95 bottle

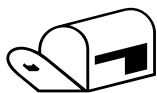


Allen Meadows in *Burghound*: "Extremely subtle smoke and wood spice blend with classic Chablis green apple and crushed oyster shell aromas that precede gorgeously complex, ripe, painfully intense flavors that are less angular than the Bouguerots ... a more complete and harmonious wine ... with top flight elegance and an unmistakably sense of class and grace. I very much like this as it's a bit more understated yet possesses great flavor authority and precision on the fantastically long finish."



2002 Chablis Grand Cru "Valmur" 94+ Tanzer \$54.95 bottle

Steve Tanzer: A great expression of grand cru soil on the nose: lime, chalk, iodine, mint, toast, smoke, wet stone, mineral salts and honey. Wonderfully rich and lush on the palate, with deep stone, floral and honey flavors given shape and grip by strong acidity. A wine of great texture, purity and persistence, revealing powerful extract on the back end. And a relative value for white Burgundy, as are all of these 2002s ..."



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AUSTRALIA

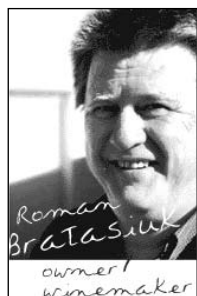
Astralis

A Rare Offering of Early Vintages

Robert Parker once wrote that if an Australian wine greater than Grange were ever made, it would likely be the work of Clarendon Hills' Roman Bratasiuk. Now that the first few vintages of Bratasiuk's great old-vine Syrah "Astralis" have some age on them, it appears that this prediction may have already been fulfilled.

An immigrant from the Ukraine in 1950, Bratasiuk is very much old-school in his winemaking, and more influenced by French practice than many of his Australian contemporaries.

He believes strongly in expressing individual site characteristics, and bottles all 19 of his vineyards separately. The bush vines are dry farmed, only indigenous yeasts are used and the maceration is long and warm, resulting in powerful wines of intense personality, with strong tannins and the capacity for long aging.



"Thankfully, there are people in the wine world like Roman Bratasiuk who make wines for future generations as opposed to those that offer immediate gratification."
Robert Parker

*Roman Bratasiuk
owner / winemaker*

Astralis

Bratasiuk's iconic cuvée is, of course, Astralis from the old Shiraz vineyard of the same name.

Since its first vintage in 1994, it has been one of the elite Shirazes of Australia—and one of the hardest to find. At current release, the wine sells for about \$200 a bottle, and thanks to consistent ratings from Parker of 96 points or more, prices go even higher.

The early vintages of Astralis have become rare and expensive. The going price today for the pre-1999 wines is

between \$250 and \$350 a bottle ... if you can find them. Thus, we were delighted recently to acquire a parcel including each vintage between 1995-1998. Merely finding these rarities is satisfying; but doing so at prices 20-30% below market is downright exciting.

If you love great Syrah, you won't want to let this opportunity pass you by.

1998 Astralis
98+ Parker
\$199.95



Parker: "The saturated blue/purple color offers up notes of ripe black fruits intermixed with graphite, vanilla, mineral, and spice. Extremely thick, with a viscous texture, good underlying tannin and acidity, and fabulous length (nearly 50 seconds), this is certainly a prodigious effort that is now living up to the fame and extraordinary quality of this vintage ... It is a majestic, multi-dimensional, individualistic wine that certainly is world-class and undoubtedly profound."

1997 Astralis225.00

Parker: "98 rating. The essence of vineyard and the varietal ... the tell-tale Syrah characteristics of pepper, melted asphalt as well as a wealth of blackberry and creme de cassis fruit ... has surreal levels of richness and potential complexity."

1996 Astralis
97 Parker
\$195.00



Parker: "This wine remains a baby and in need of another ... 10 more years of cellaring. A mammoth, blockbuster wine with awesome layers of flavor extract, huge, high tannin, and magnificent, concentrated cassis fruit, this full-bodied wine shows beautifully integrated tannin, acidity, and alcohol, but still has a personality more like a barrel sample than a wine that is already five years old."

1995 Astralis235.00

Parker: "96 rating. Fabulous nose of blackberry liqueur intermixed with blackberry, smoke, a touch of bacon, and some floral notes, this wine reveals aromatic nuances. The wine is phenomenally thick, rich, and as good as Shiraz can be in either the New or the Old World."

A Feast of Riches

Tommaso Bussola's Groundbreaking 2000's

The world's most decadent red wines? A strong case can be made that they are the Amarones, Reciotos and Valpolicellas of a handful of Veneto producers—men who have tweaked an ancient winemaking tradition to produce modern wines that excite the senses as few others can.

These wines are so hedonistic that they've spawned rabid, worldwide cult followings, their ambrosial allure a hot topic in wine internet chat rooms.

A Holy Trinity

The idea of making such wines was first conceived in the 1970's by Giuseppe Quintarelli, who learned that the old Veneto practice of drying grapes over the winter could, if done with skill, produce red wines of size, depth and remarkable complexity.



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

In the 1980's, Romano Dal Forno expanded Quintarelli's idea—showing that by reducing yields, using new oak, and extending the drying time, wines of still greater opulence could be made.

And in the 1990's, Tommaso Bussola created a third expression—mirroring much of Dal Forno's work, but with an even deeper respect for the old, low-yielding clones still to be found in local vineyards. Bussola's wines boast comparable richness (but with less

new wood) and even greater complexity and polish.

This Offer

Tommaso Bussola is pushing the limits with his wines, achieving an impact on the palate that is hard to comprehend. This is no more evident than in his magnificent 2000's—wines that help redefine what is possible in wine. Quantities are limited.

2000 Bussola Amarone "Vigneto Alto" TB

\$129.95 *bt.* **\$265.00** *mag.*



Bussola's top Amarone and a worthy challenger to Dal Forno. Made from old vines and very low-yield grapes—and possessing unbelievable depth, richness and majesty—it is even more packed than the great 1997 Vigneto Alto (Parker 96). The nose exudes chocolate, black cherries and smoke, while the huge palate tests the boundaries between liquid and solid. A wine for the ages.

2000 Bussola Valpolicella TB

\$32.00 *bt.* **\$69.95** *mag.*
\$145 *3-liter* **\$275** *5-liter*



Rivalling Dal Forno's great Valpolicella, Bussola's is also made by *ripasso* (it is fermented on the skins from Amarone grapes). This gives the wine its rich, smoky chocolate and cherry aromatics, and the ravishing Amarone-like texture. But unlike Dal Forno's (now \$100), Bussola's Valpolicella is a screaming value. Don't miss it.



**2000 Bussola
Amarone TB**
\$89.95

Sheer hedonism ... the awesome black cherry fruit decadently nuanced with spice, mocha, and smoke. On the palate, this is a wine of great intensity and fabulous mouthfeel. The ample tannins promise long aging, but they are currently hidden by a wall of fruit and glycerin. A blockbuster Amarone.



2000 Bussola Recioto TB
97 Daniel Thomases
\$95.00 *500 ml*

With 30% more residual sugar (160 grams per liter!) and more dry extract than the now-legendary 1997 and 1998 (both rated "98" by Parker), this Recioto must be tasted to be believed. Its richness and profound complexity are difficult to put into words. Like the Amarones, we can imagine returning to this wine in 2050. A great achievement.

SAUTERNES

Two for the History Books

2001 Climens & Rieussec Scale New Heights

In 2001, Ch. Climens and Ch. Rieussec produced wines that are unquestionably two of the greatest Sauternes of the past half century.

And that's being conservative. In fact, when all is said and done, both of these majestic wines may end up casting a much longer shadow.

Let's take 2001 Climens. Its 100-point rating from Parker makes it the *only* Sauternes of the 20th or 21st centuries to win his highest accolade. (Previously, his only "perfect" Sauternes were the 1811 and 1847 Ch. d'Yquem.)

As for 2001 Rieussec, Parker and the *Wine Spectator* agree not only that this is one of the greatest Sauternes ever, but that it is the finest Rieussec in their experience. In fact, the *Wine Spectator* states flatly: "The greatest Rieussec ever."

"This monumental effort is the stuff of legends."

Robert Parker
on 2001 Climens



Ch. Climens c. 1880

"The greatest Rieussec ever."

Wine Spectator
on 2001 Rieussec



Ch. Rieussec c. 1900

Buy Them Now

With two such potentially historic wines coming onto the market at one time, it is easy to be blasé about them. We urge you not to be. These are the kinds of wines that you will regret not buying while you had the chance. Each is sure to become highly coveted and very expensive in the years ahead.

Earlier this summer, we purchased both of these masterpieces at prices

that are now just a memory. (Soon after we made our purchase, Ch. Climens raised its wholesale price on the 2001 to \$205 a bottle.)

Consequently, we are able to make the spectacular offer that follows. It includes formats ranging from half bottle to *imperiale*, and the prices are as low as you will find anywhere. Quantities are very limited, so hurry.

2001 Ch. Climens*

100 Parker

\$165.00 *bt.* \$89.95 *half bt.*



Parker: "100 rating .. prodigious ... ethereal aromas of tropical fruits (primarily pineapple), honeysuckle and flowers ... monumental richness, extraordinary precision/delineation, great purity and moderate sweetness. The finish seemingly lasts forever. This monumental effort is the stuff of legends."

Wine Spectator: "97 rating. Loads of orange peel and dried apricot on the nose. Full bodied, wild and exciting on the palate ... Electrifying. Great class and elegance."

2001 Ch. Rieussec*

99 Parker - 100 Wine Spectator

\$95.00 *bt.* \$49.95 *half bt.*



Parker: "99 rating ... monumental ... a fabulous perfume of honeysuckle, smoky oak, caramelized tropical fruits, crème brûlée and Grand Marnier. The wine is massive ... this amazing Sauternes will be at its apogee between 2010-2035."

Wine Spectator: "100 rating ... the greatest Rieussec ever ... Like lemon curd on the nose that turns to honey and caramel. Full-bodied, very sweet with fantastic concentration of ripe and botrytized fruit, yet balanced and refined ... absolutely mind-blowing. This is the greatest young Sauternes I have ever tasted."

Also Available in Double Magnum

\$650.00 3-liter

Mags, Double Mags & Imperiales

\$210.00 1.5L \$420.00 3L \$850.00 6L

A Modernist Icon

Sandrone's 1997 Cannubi Boschis at an Amazing Price

Among the wines that have so far emerged from Piedmont's modernist movement, the Cannubi Boschis Barolos of Luciano Sandrone are the most widely admired—prized for their opulence, purity, poise and balance.



Luciano Sandrone

Prior to becoming a leader of Piedmont's *avant garde* in the 1980's, Luciano was the cellar master at the very traditional Marchesi di Barolo. Perhaps as a consequence of this, there has always been a classicism to the wines he has made on his own. While he, too, uses some new French barrels, you will rarely find the wood masking the nuances of the Nebbiolo grape. And, almost uniquely among the modernists, he says he has never used roto-fermenters to enrich his Barolos' color and extraction.

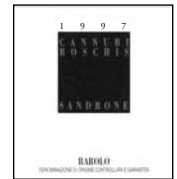
Luciano has made a number of legendary Barolos from the great Cannubi vineyard, including the 1985,

1989, 1990, 1996 and 1997. Of these, the 1997 stands apart as perhaps the most hedonistic—and irresistible—of the lot.

Since its release three years ago, the 1997 Cannubi Boschis has become extremely rare; today, it is nearly impossible to find this benchmark wine for under \$150 a bottle.

However, a friend of ours socked away a few cases on release that he let us have at a bargain price. Please don't miss it.

**1997 Sandrone Barolo
"Cannubi Boschis"
96 Parker
\$129.95**



Parker: "... prodigious ... The sweet nose of black fruits, minerals, scorched earth, smoke, dried herbs, and wet stones is stunning. Amazingly concentrated, with tremendous unctuousity yet superb delineation, this large-scaled as well as elegant Barolo possesses fabulous extract as well as a multidimensional mid-palate and finish ... will last for 25+ years. It is an amazing effort!"

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