



Welcome to the CellarHand newsletter for May 2018. Here's a little taste of what's going on this month...

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DOMESTIC

RHÔNE PROJECT REDUX

It's a shining example of a legend not living on former glories, an historic estate looking to the future. And it's much more than a bright idea, as the ringing endorsement from **Mike Bennie** of



The Wine Front testifies.

Marli Russell, the project named for Dr John Middleton's wife, got its first airing last year, with wines from the 2014 and '15 vintage. The vines were planted in 2008 and '09 by Dr John's son David, and the project since nurtured at the deft hand of his children, Sam and Claire. Its genesis was part response to climate change, part a pioneer's natural desire to push boundaries. The Middletons thus diversified beyond the traditional Burgundy and Bordeaux plantings on which the Yarra's fame – and indeed Mount Mary's own formidable reputation – had been built.

And so to the Rhône. The wines are named RP1 and RP2 for white and red respectively, the initials standing for Rhône Project. “I love it,” said Sam Middleton, reflecting on the initiative in the wake of the news that James Halliday had named the estate 2018 Winery of the Year. “It’s thrown up more surprises than I thought it would. With the Grenache in particular we’ve been able to get that riper than I expected, which is good. I think the reds are going to keep improving but I think we’re making some great white Rhône blends from those varieties.”

Indeed you are, Sam. The warm, dry 2016 season in the Yarra was ideal for these grapes, and the wines have turned out a treat.

2016 Marli Russell RP1 RRP \$53

40% Marsanne, 40% Roussanne, 20% Clairette

Shows quince and lemon, lime leaf and blossom, puffs of fragrant talc too. It's lean and focussed, trim and precise in the palate, drives with energy across a scintillating length. Compact wine of high refreshment factor but undoubted pedigree. This is a fantastic, understated yet elegant wine. And drinkability is through the roof. 94 points. Mike Bennie, The Wine Front May 2018

2016 Marli Russell RP2 RRP \$66

50% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, 20% Shiraz, 10% Cinsault

Floral perfume, rose hip and strawberry scents, touches of green herbs and pepper. Lovely perfume. Has a softness to taste, supple, very long, very pretty in its just-ripe fruit characters and set on sheets of lively acidity and faint peppery spice. There's touches of tomato leaf and rhubarb too, but well set into the wine, lending complexity and savoury touches. Lots of charm, sleekness, drinkability. 93 points. Mike Bennie, The Wine Front May 2018

2015 Marli Russell RP2 RRP \$76

65% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, 15% Shiraz

Lighter, but brighter colour than the '14; bursts into song, reflecting the great vintage and the inclusion of the mourvèdre. The bouquet is fragrant, with red fruits joining the fray, the tannins superfine, the finish long, the aftertaste fresh. 95 points. James Halliday, Halliday Wine Companion 2018

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BOWING TO BISHOP

“From a blind tasting of some 60-odd Barossa Shiraz, it felt like 2016 was a great year for more structured, slightly more reserved Shiraz styles,” wrote **Mike Bennie** of **The Wine Front** in the intro to his review for Amon-Ra. Those words confirm what Ben Glaetzer said from the outset about this harvest among the pretty darn ancient vines that produce his grapes. The Glaetzer quartet of reds is in the rudest of health – and here are the first reviews of the Bishop Shiraz and it’s Grenache-infused baby brother Wallace, to reinforce the message.

2016 Glaetzer Wallace Shiraz Grenache RRP \$23

Juicy and plush, with creamy and ripe black cherry, raspberry and pomegranate flavors that really sing against



the details of cedar, spearmint and milk chocolate, in a harmonious mix. Drink now through 2028. 89 points. *MaryAnn Worobiec, Wine Spectator* April 2018

2016 Glaetzer Bishop Shiraz RRP \$36

Deftly balanced, with wild blackberry and blueberry notes that are concentrated and dense, offset by sophisticated details of chai tea, gingerbread and cinnamon. A juicy thread keeps the flavors bright and precise. Drink now through 2028. 91 points. *MaryAnn Worobiec, Wine Spectator* April 2018

2016 Glaetzer Amon-Ra Shiraz RRP \$100

Here's a good release. Spicy, peppery stuff over black currants, choc-liquorice, clovey oak. Palate is silky with succulent tannins but has some bright acidity underlying. Quite tight in its style, elegant, svelte, long in flavour, destined for long sleeps in cellars. Blackberries, pepper, dusty tannins, sinewy feel though there's a dense concentration of fruit-oak slurry underlying. Like this, even though reserved – beautiful. 94 points. *Mike Bennie, The Wine Front* February 2018

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TIMMSY TIME

Alistair Timms is having a great time at Shadowfax – which is brill, because we all miss his mate and long-term collaborator Matt Harrop. It's softened the blow that Al is absolutely killing it among the high, cool Macedon vineyards the two of them worked so hard to identify and improve.



Even better news is that cruelly diminished yields of 2016 – which led to the rapid depletion of the perennially popular Chardonnay and Pinot Noir – are now behind us, with a larger crop of stunning quality ripening coolly and calmly on the vines in '17. We've already welcomed the Chardonnay into the fold – perhaps the best rendition yet of this regional blend – and now it's the turn of the Pinot Noir.

While we're at it, we've talked a fair bit about how the Little Hampton vineyard is on its way to becoming an icon of Australia's cool-climate promise. There's still a bit of '16 Pinot from this extraordinary site for anyone wishing to check the veracity of this claim!

2017 Shadowfax Macedon Ranges Chardonnay RRP \$35

Beautiful lifted nose of grilled hazelnut, white flowers and subtle honeycomb notes – yells Chardonnay! Palate is medium- to full-bodied with a leesy texture. Flavours of spiced pear, peach, cashew and fig, all with a wicked citrus-like acidity that holds the palate fresh and in total check. Class written all over this release. - *Gabriel Soltys, CellarHand*

2017 Shadowfax Macedon Ranges Pinot Noir RRP \$37

Great to see a constant evolution of this wine since Shadowfax really announced itself in Macedon. Each vintage expressing itself in a different way which is what you want to see. There's a coolness to the nose

and an almost alpine, hedgerow savouriness. Smells serious - not in a brooding way but more layered complexity. There's also brightness and a lovely perfume to the fruit too with an almost chalky redcurrant, spiced cranberry twist perhaps. There's a sense of space in the mouth with the tannins being cleaned up with some wonderful fresh, cool, unforced acidity. It's pretty and autumnal, at once savoury while teaming up with super-fresh, spicy fruit. An alluring moreish drink that's right in the zone for splashing around straight out the traps, but with heaps of potential for drinking down the tracks too.

Michael Jappy, CellarHand

2016 Shadowfax Little Hampton Pinot Noir RRP \$62

Belter of a pinot noir. Lashed with spice, dressed with anise and sweet-sour cherry, laced with woodsmoke, long and sinewy. Intriguing, exciting, silken and just plain enjoyable. It should mature handsomely. 94+ points. *Campbell Mattinson, The Wine Front*

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NERO HERO

Nero d'Avola is a grape that the Chalmers family, champions of vine diversity, have long favoured. As **Max Allen** wrote of this current release: "The Chalmers family were the first to bring Nero d'Avola cuttings into Australia through their nursery business at the turn of the millennium. They now produce one of the best examples of the variety: dark, juicy, grippy, dangerously approachable."

There are various ways to go about this grape, but Kim and Tennille Chalmers have made clear from the outset that "mimicking" Italian styles is not their thing. They're viticulturists first and foremost, and that means observing the vines in their habitat and plotting the wine's path from there.

Their observations led them in 2015 to use only stainless steel and bottle earlier, bringing out the vibrancy of the grape allied to the minerality of the red Cambrian soils of Heathcote. It was a masterstroke to let the grape and soil shine in this transparent, immediately pleasurable style. 2017 - the third release in the Burgundy bottle that denoted the stylistic shift - is the finest to date.

2017 Chalmers Nero d'Avola RRP \$27

Chalmers Wines have been pioneering alternative grape varieties for years, and this nero d'Avola from Central Victoria shows their mastery. It is medium-bodied, with succulent balance and fragrant raspberryish flavours, ahead of a soft but tangy finish. Screwcap; 13% alcohol. 90 points. *Ralph Kyte-Powell, The Age* May 2018

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IRREWARRA WARRIOR

Irrewarra has been a happy hunting ground for Nick Farr. The name comes from a local Aboriginal term meaning “long spear throw”, and denotes the Nick’s venture in Victoria’s Western district, out near Colac. He’s enjoyed unleashing his immense talent in a new realm of regionality and flavour. “The wines proved to me how different a concisely moist environment like Colac can be texturally,” he says. “The Chardonnay has had great feedback from the start, perhaps because of its slippery moreishness. The Pinot was a slow burner but then really opened up, showcasing its damp-earth elegance.”

Indeed, the first wines, from 2016 and '15 respectively, really took off. **Ralph Kyte-Powell**'s note summed up that Pinot's allure perfectly: “Perfumed with floral scents, plum, cherry, spice and a hint of hoisin, it’s silky and intense, with delicious balance of ripe fruit, zesty acidity and superfine tannins. Lovely.” Meanwhile **Mike Bennie** captured the spirit of the Chardonnay: “The palate has a good feel, etched with fine chalky fringes, concentrated with leaner fruit character, driving with assertion across the palate to a fine, mineral-laden finish. It’s got so much going for it, deliciousness the important takeaway message. Really fine feel. A touch of class here.” Now the next set is ready to go. “The new releases are very similar in structure as the first release, yet the Chardonnay has a little more finesse from the 2017 vintage,” says Nick. “The Pinot, meanwhile, has a little more intensity, richness and gaminess of the 2016 vintage compared to 2015.”

2017 Irrewarra Chardonnay RRP \$66

2016 Irrewarra Pinot Noir RRP \$66

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SHANDY’S SHIRAZ

Tim Shand hasn’t put a foot wrong at Punt Road, and he’s clearly enjoying the freedom to push boundaries with the backing of a dynamic team. He really announced his arrival in 2015 when he made some of the best wines of his life, including *that Shiraz* – the one that stole the show at the **Royal Melbourne Wine Awards**.

We think he’s now gone one better. “2017 had many of the hallmarks of the 2015 season, with mild days and cold nights,” says Shandy. “It was an elongated ripening period (which is our preference), and we did not harvest our old Shiraz block until 17th March, as the leaves began to senesce.” Shandy points out that ’17 was a little cooler and wetter than ’15, so there is a touch less weight but more fragrance – and those who’ve experienced the Gamay and Pinot Noir will have been beguiled by the perfume



and sleek acid line. “We held back on the proportion of whole bunches in the ferments - it would be closer to 10% in this wine,” Shandy picks up. “The same for the Viognier co-ferment, which was minimal in 2017 (less than 2%).”

One last observation on the season: Punt Road had particularly marked seed ripeness in its '17 Shiraz grapes, and thus decided to leave the wine on skins post-ferment for a longer period of 10 days. The resulting intensity and savoury edge are another reason to love this wine.

2017 Punt Road Shiraz RRP \$32

We pressed to old puncheons (third and fourth use) for MLF in oak. The wine then rested on its lees for 6 months un sulphured, at which point it had one rack and return. We took the wine out of oak again in January, to have an extended élevage in tank (four months), integrating tannin and maintaining freshness. No finings were done. Minimal SO2 was added prior to a coarse filtration and bottling in April 2018. - Tim Shand, Punt Road

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ONANNON ON SONG



Bit of breaking news: these two single-site Pinots are looking sublime. Nothing much else to report; the young men behind them – Sam Middleton, Kaspar Hermann and Will Byron – are, mercifully, in fine form, enjoying life and kicking goals in their vinous pursuits. But what has happened is that these two wines, which always looked as smart and distinctive as their labels, have really come into their own. As Gippsland fruit becomes more elusive, the Leongatha is a great celebration of the region’s earthiness, energy and tang – and the Red Hill – a bolder, bunchier style – is as compelling, measured and downright exhilarating as any Peninsula Pinot could dare to be.

2016 Onannon Single Site Leongatha Pinot Noir RRP \$62

It's a shimmering bright garnet with a purple hue, a core of

*beautiful ripe fruit, subtle with fine tannins, refreshing acidity and a savoury overlay that keeps this in the moreish spectrum. 96 points. **Halliday Wine Companion 2018***

*Gorgeous pinot noir. Strength of purpose. Twigs, herbs, mint and woodsmoke notes, yes, but a power of dry, macerated cherry flavour. It's a wine with an urge to it, an irresistible momentum. It's not a wine of fireworks but sparks fly around a tightly-drawn fuse. 94 points. **Campbell Mattinson, The Wine Front***

2016 Onannon Single Site Red Hill Pinot Noir RRP \$62

*It's exquisitely tuned with a core of tangy-tart cherry fruit, judicious use of whole-bunches and oak, really earthy all damp autumn leaves and wood spices. Sapid with shapely, raw silk tannins and satisfying with a denser structure compared with the Gippsland single vineyard wine. 96 points. **Halliday Wine Companion 2016***



Rosehip, cranberry, raspberry, vanilla, green herbs. Light and lean in the palate, good sweetness of fruit, fine structure, firm, tense and long in flavour. Length and drive. Class. 94 points. *Mike Bennie, The Wine Front*

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FLATTERING RÉFLEXION

Mount Mary's quest for perfection means that there's always some aspect – be it a block, a replanted rootstock, a better clone, a health-boosting practice – that's being tinkered with and improved upon. A side effect of this, as the Middletons compose the best-possible version of Triolet, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Quintet, is that some first-rate juice won't be called upon in its entirety to make up the blend.

In 2016 the vineyard once again yielded more Sauvignon Blanc than was required for the Triolet, so this 100% barrel-fermented parcel became a wine in its own right. On the Chardonnay front, not all of the south-facing young-parcel (Mendoza and 277 clones planted in 2008) was enlisted to add youthful verve to Mount Mary Chardonnay. Instead, a 100% barrel-fermented (10%ish new oak) parcel has become a ripper of a Réflexion.

These super classy, approachable releases are a lip-smacking opportunity to jump into Mount Mary at a moderate price point.

2016 Réflexion Fumé Blanc RRP \$46

Oyster shells, citrus, citrus blossom, whiffs of vanilla. Comely perfume here. Fine and bright in the palate, quite slinky but also has a neat chalky edge. Very long too – pristine in flavours with just a hint of nutty savouriness. A delight. Totally. 94 points. *Mike Bennie, The Wine Front* May 2018

2016 Réflexion Chardonnay RRP \$50

Light golden colour. Whiffs of pecan, honey-butter, ripe citrus and green apple. Right on. Has some flesh in palate but remains crisp and lively despite the apparent width. Indeed, it rips along the palate on chalky, fine acidity and drives long to its mouthwatering conclusion. Sense of 'minerality' through and through too. Delicious. 93+ points. *Mike Bennie, The Wine Front* May 2018



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IMPORTS

CHAMPAGNE SUPER KNOWHOW

We've been through a long, fruitless search for another top-flight grower Champagne to complement the outstanding Jacquesson wines in our portfolio. It was a blessing, then, to stumble upon the superb wares of Jean-Marc & Oriane Sélèque during a trip to the region in late 2017. Jean-Marc's grandfather Henri planted his first vines in Pierry in 1965, a tradition taken up when father Richard began bottling his grower Champagne in the '70s. Jean-Marc himself took over

duties in 2008 and began transforming this into the very model of an A-list grower it is today. Pierry itself is a premier cru village just outside Épernay, known as prime terroir for distinguished Meunier. A further six villages within a tiny radius account for the rest of the fruit. These are: Moussy and Épernay (situated, like Pierry, on the Coteaux Sud d'Épernay); Dizy, Mardeuil and Boursault in the Vallée de la Marne; and Vertus in the Côte des Blancs. Like their CellarHand stablemates the Chiquet brothers, every step chez Jean-Marc and Oriane has been chosen at the expense of myriad alternatives rejected because they've been shown to yield something less than the best wine possible.

The result here is Champagnes that are precise in their expression of fruit and soil, and where – once you've shaken off the distraction of sheer pleasure and try to pick apart the elements – you find seamless harmony and elegant structure. These delicious and utterly confident wines are borne of intricately thought out practices, strictly adhered to. They're as natural, effortless and full of personality as you could wish them to be - and they're here, now.



NV JmSélèque Solescence RRP \$82

MAGNUM RRP \$182 (base vintage 2013)

375ml RRP \$48 (base vintage 2014)

50% Chardonnay, 40% Meunier, 10% Pinot Noir. Fruit from seven crus on mostly flinty clay on chalky subsoil : Pierry, Moussy, Épernay, Mardeuil, Dizy, Boursault, Vertus. Base vintage 2015, with 50% of the blend from wines in perpetual reserve. 80% stainless steel tank and 20% oak barrels. No fining or filtration. Disgorged in November 2017. Dosage 3g/L.

NV JmSélèque Solescence Nature RRP \$96

50% Chardonnay, 40% Meunier, 10% Pinot Noir. Fruit from seven crus on mostly flinty clay on chalky subsoil: Pierry, Moussy, Épernay, Mardeuil, Dizy, Boursault, Vertus. Base vintage 2012, with 50% of the blend from wines in perpetual reserve. 80% stainless steel tank and 20% oak barrels. No fining or filtration. Disgorged in April 2017. Zero dosage.

*Based on 2012 with 50% reserve wines in the mix, this has an expressive spicy and savoury feel, with some almost peppery nuances. Smooth light pear and peach pastry on the palate. Texturally entrancing. Drink now. 93 points. **James Suckling**, jamesuckling.com*

NV JmSélèque Solescence Rosé RRP \$96

45% Chardonnay, 40% Meunier (of which 10% skin-contact) and 15% Pinot Noir of which 5% is red wine. Fruit from seven crus on mostly flinty clay on chalky subsoil: Pierry, Moussy, Épernay, Mardeuil, Dizy, Boursault, Vertus. Base vintage 2015, with 40% of the blend from wines in perpetual reserve. 70% stainless steel tank and 30% oak barrels. No fining or filtration. Disgorged in January 2018. Dosage 4g/L.

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HUBER DRIVER

“[Bernhard] Huber was already making some of the best Pinot Noirs in Germany, and now, his son Julian continues his work,” wrote **Stuart Pigott** of jamesuckling.com in an article last month of the now irresistible force that is world-class German Pinot Noir. Indeed, as the craze starts to spread it's worth remember that it's a full four years since **Michael Schmidt** of jancisrobinson.com commented, on the sad occasion of his passing, that Bernhard “was an absolute leader in Germany, but that he was a serious contender in the whole world of Pinot Noir”.

So we're celebrating with the top wines from the estate that started it all, and which continues to lead the way. Many have already enjoyed the 2014 village wine from Malterdingen; now's the time to unveil the Alte Reben and the Grosses Gewächs wines. This is the first season run entirely by Julian, who instantly shows wonderful touch and intuition for these sites. The wines, intensely fruited and immensely structured, benefit from a good rest in bottle and are drinking sublimely now.

2014 Bernhard Huber Malterdinger Pinot Noir RRP \$64

Love a German Pinot, there's something about them that really appeals to me. Has an earthy/lead pencil



*thing going on over dark and sour cherry, with a little spice and sap. It's medium-bodied, vigorous and energetic, with again that lead pencil stuff, and a slaty mineral feel. Perhaps some orange peel on the finish too, and a lick of kitten's tongue tannin to close. Lovely stuff. You can smash it, or contemplate it, but either way it's a fine glass of Pinot Noir. 93 points. **Gary Walsh**, *The Wine Front* February 2018*

2014 Bernhard Huber Pinot Noir Alte Reben RRP \$96

The step above is the Pinot Noir Alte Reben. In quality terms, this is Huber's equivalent of a Premier Cru. This Pinot comes from vines of up to 40 years old. Huber harvests the Alte Reben at 37 hl/ha. The

ferment contains 35 to 40% whole bunches, with some parcels from the Bienenberg vineyard also going into this. This wine is bottled unfiltered. It has complex, deep aromas of black cherry, dark chocolate and spice but also soft tannins, a frisky-elegant character with a fine echo.

2014 Bernhard Huber Pinot Noir Bienenberg Grosses Gewächs RRP \$132

*Calling it the spice girl of Spätburgunders does not insinuate that the Bienenberg is shallow, but the choice of barrique has resulted in an extremely spicy fragrance. Cloves and nutmeg also dominate the palate, giving the fruit a hard time at this early stage. Fortunately, minerality refuses to be suppressed and makes its presence felt with a pronounced salty tang. There can be no doubt about the underlying substance, but a little more fruit will be welcome, if and when it emerges. 17/20 **Michael Schmidt**, jancisrobinson.com August 2016*

2014 Bernhard Huber Pinot Noir Schlossberg Grosses Gewächs RRP \$164

Deep ruby. Still very undeveloped, but the complexity of the chocolate, earthy and herbal notes is already very impressive. On the palate, there's a stunning harmony of almost perfect ripeness and

elegant dry tannins that make this stand out as the Spätburgunder of the vintage in Germany. 96 points. *Stuart Pigott, jamessuckling.com* October 2016

2014 Bernhard Huber Pinot Noir Wildenstein Grosses Gewächs RRP \$371

MAGNUM RRP \$74

From an iron-rich, shell limestone soil, the 2014 Malterdinger Bienenberg Spätburgunder GG Wildenstein offers a subtle, very refined and coolish bouquet. It is aristocratic, fresh and elegant, with red fruits, vegetative flavors (nettles) and some dashes of lime juice; it also has floral and very discreet oak aromas. Just perfect in its distinguished flavors. Round, fresh and elegant on the generous, but elegant palate, this has nice grip, but some harsher and mealy oak tannins in the finish. This is a promising wine with tension, freshness, grip and refreshing lemon flavors in the finish. 91-93 points. *Stephan Reinhardt, Wine Advocate* August 2016

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MORE MORIC

He's a bit of an enigma, Roland Velich. Definitely serious – hardcore – but with flashes of wit and warmth. Seems like he's always a step ahead of you. Of everyone. And he probably is. Perhaps that knowingness comes from the fact he's actually conjured – and will continue conjuring – some of the best wines any of us will ever taste. It's an unlikely source, you'd have to admit, places like "spectacularly unspectacular" Lutzmannsburg, whose 80- to 110-year-old vines produce a wine to match the best of Barolo. ("Shame on you if you're not curious enough to taste the wine world's next big thing," quipped **Stephan Reinhardt** of **Wine Advocate** of the '13.)

Enjoy these, then for the mad joy/deadly seriousness they offer.

2016 Moric Hausmarke Weiß RRP \$46

Blend of Grüner Veltiner (the largest portion) with Chardonnay and Riesling, these last two harvested together. Very slow pressing, but that's the only skin contact. Partly fermented in stainless steel. Scents of white-fleshed fruit, honey and pollen, and has that typical waxy texture on a palate that is extremely fresh, with lovely honeysuckle and chamomile floral notes coming through on a sustained finish. What marks it out, though, against previous years, is a little more fruit presence – white peach and grapefruit – through the palate. Very good. – *Ed Merrison - CellarHand*



2016 Moric Burgenland Blaufränkisch RRP \$46

Roland had frost in spring but then the season was memorable for its beautiful autumn. The wines have great acidity, he says – a long-term keeper. Here we have about 20-25% whole bunches in the ferment – with, says Roland, very careful maceration of the whole clusters. It's apparent on an extremely floral nose (violets) with bramble fruit. It's a juicy, flowing entry with herbal whole-bunch notes chiming in with the fruit. Gathers spice and gravelly mineral input as it goes, then with lovely fresh cut from the tannins and acid. – *Ed Merrison, CellarHand*

2015 Moric Reserve Blaufränkisch RRP \$82

Limestone dominates the soils where this is grown. There are three steps to the selection for this: sorting in the vineyard and on reception; then after one year in the barrel on lees; and again as the blend is readied for bottling. Spends four weeks on skins all up. Extremely northern Rhône on the nose and palate; exceptionally velvety in the mouth, too. Slow build, but build it does – impressively - in flavour intensity, complexity and structure. Ripe fruit with earthy minerals and spice. Deep and penetrating. – *Ed Merrison, CellarHand*

2012 Moric Lutzmannsburg Alte Reben RRP \$206

Deep ruby with violet highlights. Quintessential Blaufränkisch aromas of blackberry, minerals and roasted pine nuts, plus a hint of coconut. Delicate, stylish and seamless, with its power currently hidden behind sweet fruit that seems to melt over the entire length of the palate. The subtle oak is effortlessly integrated, with blueberry and sweet cherry notes lingering impressively on the spicy aftertaste. The Lutzmannsburg has perhaps more finesse, but I put Neckenmarkt at the same level of quality in 2012. 93 points. *Joel B. Payne, Vinous Media* February 2015

2012 Moric Neckenmarkt Alte Reben RRP \$206

Dark ruby with violet highlights. Subtly complex nose melds intense blackberry fruit, lemon grass, clove and wild herbs. Delicately structured, with sweet flavors of dark forest berries perfectly balanced by harmonious acidity. The round, satiny tannins are perfectly embedded in the wine's elegant fruit and the finishing flavors of cassis and crushed pepper linger impressively. The 2012 Neckenmarkt does not have the immediate depth of the 2011, but considerably more elegance. 93 points. *Joel B. Payne, Vinous Media* February 2015

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KAB KING CORNELIUS

We went through the 2016s from Dönnhoff at a fair pelt, as is customary for this jewel in the Nahe crown. Just one of the usual suspects was missing from the initial shipment, the Kabinett



from the Leistenberg site in Dönnhoff's home village of Oberhausen. It's a steep, southeast-facing slope with grey, clay-slate soil with vines of 25 to 30 years of age. The grapes get to hang for a fair while here without getting overripe - making it a perfect Kabinett site according to Cornelius Dönnhoff. The morning sun dries the grapes, keeping them healthy, and the afternoon sun is somewhat indirect. Always so pure, spicy and balanced, it's a real fave.

2016 Dönnhoff Riesling Oberhäuser Leistenberg Kabinett RRP \$49

Bosc pear, lime, struck flint and wet stone on the nose anticipate the brightly juicy, snappy, strongly stone-inflected impression on a polished, buoyant palate. Here is an excellent example of density allied to levity and animation such as vintage 2016 is especially capable of delivering. This finishes with an impressive sense of energy and a striking, undulating interplay of fruit and mineral elements. It's likely to follow in a line of

Leistenberg Kabinetts that display stamina in bottle. 92 points. *David Schildknecht, Vinous Media* April 2018

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PINK PITTI

Gerhard Pittnauer, the biodynamic dynamo of Gols in Burgenland, is known affectionately to his friends as “Pitti”. Hence the name for the Blaufränkisch/Zweigelt red blend that has become a runaway success here in Australia. Matching that success has been the red’s sibling, a Blaufränkisch rosé that shares that shapely, fragrant, engaging appeal.

And so Gerhard and Brigitte decided to rechristen the rosé with the Pitti nickname. The first vintage of the rebadged wine is 2017, and it’s landed just as the red Pitti blend rolls to 2016.



2017 Pittnauer Pitti Blaufränkisch Rosé RRP \$26

Gerhard tells us the Pittnauers’ home village of Gols was known as Villa Gallus – “Roosterville” – in Roman times. The new label for this wine duly sports a cockerel. The juice is from Blaufränkisch grapes pressed as whole bunches in the early morning. Pronounced and fragrant nose. Very fresh and smooth on the palate, with intense red berries – cherry and cranberry – rich in flavour while retaining its usual delicacy of fruit and flow. *Ed Merrison, CellarHand*

2016 Pittnauer Pitti Blaufränkisch Zweigelt RRP \$26

Bright and fresh nose of cherry, blackcurrant, aniseed and dried herbs. Medium- to light-bodied with redcurrant, blackberry and some lovely savoury earthy notes on the finish. Ripe but in no way heavy. Delicious, and fun. - *Gabriel Soltys, CellarHand*

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SPÄTBURG-WUNDER

It’s been great to witness the rippling interest in the wines of Pfalz’s idiosyncratically spectacular Koehler-Ruprecht as it became a tidal wave of affection in the course of the past year. The Rieslings here have history and individuality to them, and Dominik Sona’s open-minded enthusiasm lends them an extra dimension.

And here’s another thing. As Pinot from the Palatinate starts to catch on, it emerges that Koehler-Ruprecht is again at the forefront. **David Schildknecht** of **Vinous Media** brought it up from his visit a couple of years back, writing: “It was especially interesting this year to taste two Koehler-Ruprecht Pinot Noirs, whose high quality seemed hard to reconcile with 2014’s rainy conditions.” He went on: “Sona seems to have had a welcome moderating influence on the Koehler-Ruprecht Pinot style.”

That was ’14, and it prompted us to have a look at what Dom did with the dream ’15 vintage. It

was eye-opening to say the least. We're pleased to offer this now – at great value, too – alongside this superb suite of dry Rieslings.

2016 Koehler-Ruprecht Riesling Kabinett Trocken RRP \$29

*Immediately I sipped the wine I thought 'great texture' and 'savoury' and, mea culpa, I drank a bit. It's a fantastic riesling, fresh-feeling yet full of character, exceptional length, vivacity. It smells of brown limes, ozone, faint grilled nuts, lemon curd. Flavours are bright, refreshing, and then there's that light chalkiness and a lick of almond going around. Sip by sip it builds. One of those 'buy a box and always have on hand' kind of wines. 91 points. **Mike Bennie, The Wine Front** February 2018*

2016 Koehler-Ruprecht Riesling Saumagen Auslese Trocken RRP \$114

It offers a quite spicy and refreshing nose of almond cream, dried flowers, coconut, gooseberry, herbs and white minerals. The wine intense, full of grip and yet at no point weighty on the palate. Bracing acidity eventually comes through and adds length and some power to this overall very delicate and highly elegant expression of dry Riesling. The finish is very pure and fully dry. This wine has immense potential,



*but will have to be cellared for a good decade to deliver upon it. 2026-2046. 96+ points. **Jean Fisch & David Rayer, Mosel Fine Wines** October 2017*

2009 Koehler-Ruprecht Riesling Saumagen Auslese Trocken 'R' RRP \$163

Clear and Baroque on the nose, the 2009 Saumagen Riesling Auslese trocken R starts with peanut brittle

*and caramel flavors (along with ripe and cooked apples) that lead to a full-bodied and elegant, tension-filled, clear and mineral palate that repeats the sweetish dessert flavors from the nose. However, the wine is pure, really dry, long, lingering salty and aromatically intense. I would decant it for several hours before I serve it but there is no hurry to get it out of your cellar. 93 points. **Stephan Reinhardt, Wine Advocate** May 2015*

2015 Koehler-Ruprecht Spätburgunder RRP \$35

*Woodsy, smoky nose with forest berries. Open-knit and fleshy on the palate, which is pleasingly even with enlivening acidity through the finish. The tannins frame it well – with a certain rusticity but no roughness to detract from a bright and natural-feeling, ripe and moreish Pinot Noir. **Ed Merrison, CellarHand***

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THERESA AUSLESE

Just a little note that this extremely handy wine – fairly sweet, utterly pure Riesling in all its ravishing Rheingauness – has just rolled vintage to '16. Theresa Breuer is doing such fine work from the family home in Rudesheim, and Australia's lucky to



have just about all of this Auslese to itself. That's worth a toast, surely!

2016 Georg Breuer Riesling Auslese 375ml RRP \$39

There are some years in which botrytis cinerea settles in various grapes in the Rheingau vineyards. This shrivels individual grapes producing concentrated sugar and aroma levels. Through stringent hand selection during harvest, individual grapes are separated. The complete healthy, ripe grapes are sorted out for the dry wines and the individual affected grapes go to elegant, sweet dessert wines such as this regional Riesling from Theresa Breuer.

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SACRO SANKT!



Thirtysomething Burgenland boy Hannes Schuster makes phenomenal wines at the top of the range, but we're here today to talk about the basic end of things. At this level, he makes - harvest permitting - varietal Rotburger, Blaufränkisch and Sankt Laurent. All three were made in '15, and the following comments across the trio give a sense of what's on offer. On the Rotburger: "It's a lovely pure and stimulating red that is better to quaff than to describe" (**Stephan Reinhardt**) or: "So even, so calm, yet so vibrant. It's pure-feeling, unadorned and utterly delicious" (**Mike Bennie**). On the Blaufränkisch: "This is a delicious drink, with a point of difference" (**Gary Walsh**). And on the Sankt Laurent: "Light and fresh, silky textured, very elegant, pure and salty red with a lovely grip and just 11% alcohol. Very stimulating" (**Reinhardt** again).

So you get the picture. Immediate, transparent wines that transport you. They don't leave you scratching your head; they leave you itching for more.

Here's another, then: Sankt Laurent from 2016, good to go.

2016 Rosi Schuster Sankt Laurent RRP \$39

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