



# PLUMPJACK

WINES

WINE CLUB

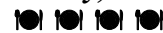
February 2006

I recently read an excerpt by Hugh Johnson I found very interesting. He wrote, "Most good, even great wine is wasted. It flows over tongues and down throats of people who are not attuned to it; not receptive to what it has to offer. They are preoccupied or deep in conversation; they have just drunk strong spirits which numb the sense of taste, or taken a mouthful of vinegary salad which overwhelms it; or are simply unaware of where the difference between plain wine and great wine lies. Nothing the winemaker can do dispenses with the need

for a sensitive and interested drinker." Well Hugh, I think you underestimate the wine-drinking population, and especially those who subscribe to the PlumpJack Wine Club. (We are sensitive and interested pilgrims on an enological trek in search of organoleptic euphoria!) As you sample the wine selections this month I think you will appreciate the efforts of these winemakers who have created delicious wines unique to their region. Let your senses guide you, and you will recognize that these are more than just "plain wines."

Wine has been produced in the Rhône Valley for over 500 years. The 125-mile Rhône Valley wine region, which follows the Rhône River from Vienne to just below Avignon, is actually two distinct regions, the North and South. These two regions, with different climates, soil conditions and grape varieties, cover an area of more than 100,000 acres, and include 16 specific appellations. The Northern Rhône wine region includes the appellations of Côte Rôtie, Condrieu and Saint Joseph. Saint Joseph is composed of Rorschach-shaped splotches of vineyards stretching out over a length of 35 miles and never very far from the snaking river. About 2,350 acres are currently planted, with two very distinct halves defining its production. Its birthplace is in the southern part of the appellation near the towns of Mauves and Tournon. The northern, and much newer portion, is bordered by the towns of Chavanay and Limony. The appellation is influenced by a continental climate, with hard winters and summers whose influence on the grapes can be exaggerated by the steep slopes to which many of the better northern Rhône vineyards cling. Red wine accounts for 94% of total wine production in Saint Joseph. Philippe Fauray took over his family business, which spans four generations, in 1979. At the time the domaine owned only 6 acres but it now owns approximately 27 acres producing Côte Rôtie, Condrieu, Saint Joseph Blanc and Saint Joseph Rouge. The domaine is located just outside of Chavanay, in a village that goes by the same name as the vineyard the Saint Joseph Blanc comes from, Ribaudy. The 2004 Saint Joseph Blanc is a blend of 80% Marsanne and 20% Rousanne. The vines, which cover 3 acres, are between 5 and 15-years-old, and are grown in soil that is predominately granite. The grapes were hand-harvested, and 70% of the wine was fermented in stainless steel, while the remainder was barrel-fermented in 2-to 5-year-old oak casks. The wine was aged for 11 months before being bottled. Oz Clarke writes, "At their best, Saint Joseph whites have an astonishing flavour half-way between the peach and apricot headiness of a Condrieu and the buttery richness of a good Meursault." That being said, the 2004 Saint Joseph Blanc from Domaine Philippe Fauray falls into the "best" category. The wine is rich but at the

*2004 Domaine Philippe Fauray  
Saint Joseph Blanc  
Rhône Valley  
Chavanay, France*



*2004 Bodegas Vizcarra Ramos  
Vizcarra Roble  
Ribera del Duero  
Burgos, Spain*



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same time elegant. It has a subtle bouquet with aromas of stone fruits and minerals. On the palate, the wine is medium-bodied with citrus and flinty-like flavors, and finishes fresh and clean. This is a wine that will pair nicely with any seafood dish. Try having it with Jack Falstaff's olive oil slow-poached Mahi Mahi with braised fennel, artichokes and cardoons, baby green garlic, Peruvian purple potatoes, and lemon-olive oil jus.

The 2004 Domaine Philippe Faury Saint Joseph Blanc is \$20.99/bottle, \$226.70/case.



Spain's best red wines have long been based on a single grape, Tempranillo. But for too long, careless viticulture and tradition-bound winemaking techniques yielded inconsistent wines that made little impact on the international market. Though its origins are obscure, Tempranillo became prominent as the principal grape of Rioja. Its name means "early," as in ripening, a crucial virtue in the region's severe Continental climate. In the 1980s, a new school of Tempranillo emerged in the region of Ribera del Duero where the grape was called Tinto de Pais ("the local red"), and is also known as Tinto Fino. Ribera del Duero means 'the banks of the Duero', and lies halfway between Madrid and Santander. It spans the broad valley of the river Duero (known as the Douro in Portugal) east of the city of Valladolid. For centuries, the region was known, not for growing grapes, but for sugar beets and a variety of vegetables. The Duero valley averages about 2600 ft. above sea level, and is subject to a relatively short growing season. Temperatures reach extremes during the season, with very hot summer days up to 104°, but they fall sharply at night. It is widely believed that these conditions combine with the mountain air of the Duero to help Tinto Fino retain more acidity than Tempranillo-based wines from other parts of Spain, and thereby provide the resulting wines with great structure and longevity. Spain has a similar classification system to France and Italy, with all classified wine regions regulated under the *Denominación de Origen* (DO) system. Ribera del Duero did not gain official status until 1982, and prior to this there were not a lot of quality producers in the region. Juan Carlos Vizcarra is a native of Ribera del Duero, and inherited a vineyard of old Tempranillo vines from his grandfather. After completing his studies at the school of viticulture and enology of Logroño, Rioja in 1991, he founded Bodegas Vizcarra Ramos. The winery is located in the town of Mambrilla de Castrejon, south of Burgos, next to Pesquera del Duero. Their 64 acres of vineyards, planted around the towns Mambrilla and Roa, are composed of clay and limestone in its topsoil and gravel in its subsoil. This soil profile provides good levels of fertility, organic material, and water storage. In order to offset the high fertility levels of these soils, Juan Carlos minimizes yields from 20 clusters to 8 clusters of grapes per vine and also plants green foliage around the vines to spread the water and soil nutrients among a greater number of recipients. The vigor and yields of each vine is reduced, maximizing the fruit concentration per grape to a higher degree. The 2004 Vizcarra Roble is 100% Tempranillo. The grapes come from the Senda del Oro vineyard, which covers 25 acres at an altitude of 1,850 feet, and has vines that are 10-to 15-years-old. After fermentation was completed in stainless steel, the wine was aged 6 months in French oak barrels, and 3,000 cases were produced. Robert Parker recently tasted the 2004 Vizcarra Roble and wrote, "The 2004 Roble displays elegance as well as dramatic aromatics with scents of flowers, cherries, and berries. The vintage's high acidity provides a crisp, attractive elegance along with a medium-bodied, nicely concentrated style. Drink it over the next 2-3 years." This wine pairs nicely with PlumpJack Café Squaw Valley's bison short ribs with garlic potato puree, baby vegetables, and horseradish gremolata. (It's ok to substitute pork or beef.)

The 2004 Bodegas Vizcarra Ramos Vizcarra Roble is \$17.99/bottle, \$194.30/case