



PLUMPJACK

WINES

WINE CLUB

March 2006

The world of wine is so vast and diverse it never ceases to amaze me. While both wines featured this month come from islands, their distinctive grape varieties, climate and geography, coupled with the talent and dedication of their producers, result in two of the most exciting wines I have tasted recently (since last month's selections)! These wines offer such a wonderful array of flavors and texture that I feel compelled to have a constant supply on hand to share with my friends. They are both immediately enjoyable but will

continue to improve in the bottle over the next few years. The problem is, our supply is extremely limited, and they will sell out quickly. Pull the corks and let your organoleptic receptors run wild as they traverse the hills of Central Otago and discover the wonders of Niellucciu.

Vines were first planted in New Zealand in 1819, but it took more than 150 years for New Zealanders to discover that their country's cool maritime climate was suitable for high-quality wine production. New Zealand wine is largely produced in ten major winegrowing regions, extending 1,000 miles, and spanning a wider range of latitudes than all the vineyards of France. Climatic conditions vary considerably from the north of North Island, where it is very warm, to the stony-soiled south of South Island, with its distinctly cool climate. Central Otago is the southernmost wine region in New Zealand, in fact, the southernmost wine region in the world. It lies in the south-east of the South Island and measures approximately 12,350 miles, making it the second-largest region in New Zealand. Nestled in the mountains, the climate is different than almost anywhere else in New Zealand, with greater seasonal temperature variation. Vineyards, reminiscent of those in Germany's Mosel (one of the northernmost growing regions,) are perched on hillsides with an exposure designed to take advantage of every bit of solar radiation possible. The dramatic scenery of this region has also become world-renowned in recent times thanks to 'The Lord of the Rings' trilogy which has used Central Otago as its backdrop in several scenes. Amisfield Farm is located 3 miles north of Lowburn, near the shores of Lake Dunstan in Central Otago. Originally a high-country sheep station nestled between Amisfield and Parkburn streams, planting of vines commenced in 1999, and now consists of 150 acres of Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc. The vines are closely planted on a range of alluvial and glacial schist at the foot of the Pisa Range. Yields are kept low to provide concentrated fruit flavor with complexity derived from the varying sites within the vineyard. The fruit for the 2005 Pinot Gris is 100% estate-grown and comes from blocks 3 & 4. It was hand-harvested over a range of ripeness levels. The first pick was made when the fruit showed pear and gummy bear characteristics. The second pick occurred when the flavors evolved into more developed stone fruit characters. The third was made when the berries started to dehydrate, concentrating the flavors and enhancing the rich texture. The grapes were whole-bunch pressed, and then 80% of the juice was fermented in stainless steel tanks with the remaining 20% going into 600 liter French Demis Muis barrels. Once fermentation was complete, the wine was left sur lie for 5 months to develop a silky texture. The subtle nuances of baking spices complement the

*2005 Amisfield
Pinot Gris
Central Otago
Queenstown, New Zealand*
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*2004 Domaine Leccia
Vin de Table Rouge
Poggio d'Oletta, Corsica*



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concentrated stone fruit and pear characters of the 2005 Pinot Gris. The palate is full-bodied and rounded while retaining a good acid backbone. The wine has tremendous depth of flavor and pairs well with richly textured dishes such as terrines, smoked meats, and grilled vegetables.

The 2005 Amisfield Pinot Gris is \$18.99/bottle, \$205.10/case.



Corsica, despite its French heritage, actually lies off the coast of Italy. With 5,500 square miles, Corsica is the third largest island in the western Mediterranean. Its coastline extends to over 600 miles and it rises to nearly 9,000 feet - the highest island in the Mediterranean. Geologically, Corsica is part of the continental alpine system and is broadly divided into two parts - the larger western part, formed of crystalline rocks (granite, gneiss, diorite), and the eastern part formed of sedimentary rock (schist, slate and shale). There are three distinct climatic zones: coastal Mediterranean up to 500 meters, mountain Mediterranean between 500 and 1500 meters, and alpine above 1500 meters, each zone having distinctly differing vegetation. The identity of Corsican wine is one of variety and quality. These attributes are the result of a selection of native grape varieties, principally Sciaccarellu, Niellucciu and Vermentinu, and of imported ones, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Grenache, Syrah, and Chardonnay, as well as of a variety of natural conditions (soil, relief and climate). The AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) wines are determined by the localization and proportion of the native grape varieties and by the specialized nature of each producing region. There are nine appellations at three levels: Corse, Village and Cru. The Appellation Corse is applied to the whole of the island, but mainly concerns the east coast and the Golo valley. The Appellation Corse-Village is given to five regions: Calvi, Cap Corse, Figari, Porto Vecchio and Sartène. The Appellation Cru is applied to two regions: Ajaccio and Patrimonio. Sciaccarellu is the predominant variety in the former, while Niellucciu characterizes the latter. Patrimonio was the first region in Corsica to attain AC status in 1968. Domaine Leccia is situated in the heart of the Patrimonio appellation in the commune of Poggio d'Oletta, just a mile away from the sea. The estate, which dates back to 1850, is now run by Yves and Annette Leccia. Their property consists of 54 acres that are situated on the slopes of the hills and in the valleys near the Gulf of Saint-Florent. Domaine Leccia combines the experience of tradition while taking advantage of modern technology. They recently constructed a new winery that allows them to control temperatures during fermentation and eliminate any hygiene problems that have plagued producers in the past. Domaine Leccia's 2004 Vin de Table Rouge is an unfiltered blend that Yves Leccia and importer Kermit Lynch created. It is a combination of 80% Grenache and 20% Niellucciu. It therefore cannot be labeled as Patrimonia AC, which requires Niellucciu to be 95% of the blend. Niellucciu is the grape variety that gives the wines of Patrimonio their renown. It produces a full-bodied wine of a deep red color, supple and rich, said to have "un nez de fourrure de lièvre et de réglisse": a nose of "hare-skin" (a term used to describe its subtle, gamey bouquet) and licorice. Kermit says, "The cuvée of pure Grenache...wow, one of the most terroir-influenced Grenache cuvées of my life. Loaded! It is big and dark and it delivers. Intense and expressive! The 20% Niellucciu we added gives it just the right kind of tannin and intriguing tinge of bitterness in the finish." The combination of red berries, violets, and spices results in a wine that will pair well with a variety of dishes, such as PlumpJack Café's organic poussin "under a brick" with sautéed rainbow Swiss chard, and truffled mashed potatoes, or pan-seared halibut with herb-roasted chanterelle mushrooms, potato-tarragon gnocchi, and English peas.

The 2004 Domaine Leccia Vin de Table Rouge is \$18.99/bottle, \$205.10/case.