



PLUMPJACK
WINES

PlumpJack Wine Club

March 2007

Oz Clarke has written. "The wines of France are imitated on a world scale. All the internationally recognized classic wine types originate in France. All the greatest wine grape varieties are French. All the methods of winemaking now accepted worldwide as textbook procedures for production of great wine are based on French tradition. And if there is one thing which to me exemplifies the French wine style, it is balance. This is the result of almost 20 centuries of trial and error, experimentation and refinement which began with the Romans and still continues today."

Two thousand years of practice have resulted in winemakers perfectly matching grape varieties to

their optimum soils and climate, and our wines this month reflect that success. From the slopes of the French Alps to the wind-swept hills of Provence, these wines reflect their terroir and send us on an organoleptic journey that transports us to their land of origin.

*2005 Domaine Jean-Pierre et Jean-François
Quénard
Chignin Anne de la Biguerne
Chignin, France*



*2005 Domaine La Martinelle
Côtes du Ventoux
Lafare, France*



Savoie lies in the foothills of the Alps, mostly between Lake Geneva and Chambéry, and was annexed to the French from Torino in Northern Italy in 1860. Savoie's wine industry is small. In 1889, there were more than 13,000 ha (32,100 acres) of vines in Savoie, but after the outbreak of phylloxéra, that number dropped to 8,940 acres, and today, the Savoie vineyards only cover about 1,500 ha (3,700 acres). Because Savoie's dramatic countryside is so popular with visitors for both winter sports and summer relaxation, only a small amount of its wine ever leaves the region. Wine educator and writer, Wink Lorch, writes: "Let's destroy the myths first: 1) These are cool climate wines. Wrong! The French Alps could justly be described as the start of southern France, and the steep, sunny exposure of many vineyards ensures good ripening in most years. 2) These are high altitude wines. Wrong again! Whereas a few vineyards are above 500m, most are at altitudes not dissimilar to those in Alsace or the Côte d'Or, and only rarely does snow cover the vineyards. 3) The wines are all rather neutral dry whites. Partly true: roughly two-thirds of the region's wines could be described like this, but the rest are a revelation!" If you are a fan of obscure grape varieties, look no further. White wines account for 70% of production in Savoie, and of that, more than two-thirds are from *Jacquère*, a low sugar grape, which produces delicate, ethereal whites. Other varietals include Roussette (also known as Altesse), Chasselas, and Bergeron (also known as Roussanne) for the whites, and Mondeuse (the king of red grapes in the Alps), Pinot Noir and Gamay for the reds. *Vin de Savoie* is the appellation for all of the villages running the 38-mile trek from Lake Geneva to Mont Granier. There are 17 crus (vineyards) that may be specified on a wine label in addition to the general *Vin de Savoie* appellation. For *Jacquère*, the crus *Chignin*, *Cruet* and *Jongieux*, are recognized as having a better quality level. Domaine Jean-Pierre et Jean-François Quénard own 15 hectares (37 acres) of vineyard around the village of Chignin, a village that features four ruined towers in spectacular scenery. Jean-Francois Quénard took over for his

father Jean-Pierre in 1987. He studied winemaking in Burgundy with Yves Chéron from Domaine du Grand Montmirail in Gigondas, and has worked in Bordeaux and California. Their domaine lies in one of the most beautiful spots of Chignin, next to the Tour Villard (part of the ruined Château de Chignin). Their vineyards, which are mostly composed of clay and limestone, line the side of the mountain, face south and southwest, and are planted at about 3900 ft. elevation. The 2005 Chignin Anne de la Biguerne is made from 65-year-old vines, grown on chalk and limestone soils. Anne de la Biguerne is the name of one of the old proprietors of a château on the property, of which only one tower now remains. Some of the vines for this cuvée come from just beneath the tower. After being harvested by hand, the grapes undergo a long fermentation in stainless-steel tanks, and then full malolactic fermentation follows. The lees are stirred in the tank for two months to give the wine additional richness and complexity. Only 600 cases were produced. This is a refreshing white wine with a subtle mineral and citrus nose, crisp acidity and a combination of mineral and apple-skin flavors. It is perfect with chicken salads, sole filets, shellfish, cheeses (raclette, emmental, gruyère, tomme de Savoie) and, of course, fondue.

The 2005 Domaine Jean-Pierre et Jean-François Quénard Chignin Anne de la Biguerne is \$15.99/bottle, \$172.70/case.



The appellation of Côtes du Ventoux is situated in the southeastern fringes of the southern Rhône Valley between Coteaux du Tricastin and the Côtes du Luberon. Perched on the southwestern side of Mount Ventoux, one of the most famous mountains in France (6300ft), it marks the gate between Rhône and Provence. The weather in Côtes du Ventoux is very hot in the summer, but cold and windy in the winter, with the "mistral" blowing almost all the time. The appellation is spread among fifty-one villages between the towns of Vaison La Romaine and Apt. Domaine La Martinelle is the family property of Corina Kruse, whose husband Thierry Faravel owns and makes wine at the elite Gigondas estate Domaine La Bouissière. Her property is situated just on the other side of the Dentelles de Montmirail, the tooth-shaped mountains that dominate the skyline, close to the village of Gigondas in the southern Rhône. Though they are of similar altitude, the terroir of Domaine La Martinelle is different from that of Bouissière. Martinelle's vines grow on the eastern face of these mountains in soil that is riddled with stone, shell, and limestone. The grapes are picked at extreme ripeness levels, usually at the end of September or the beginning of October, and are destemmed before vinification. This wine is made without any influence of wood. It is fermented in epoxy-lined concrete tanks, aged for 7 months, then bottled unfinned and unfiltered to preserve every drop of fruit flavor. The result is a warm, spicy wine that emphasizes dark berry flavors, a nose infused with lavender, and a finish with the silky texture of grapes picked at perfect ripeness. The blend is 68% Grenache, 27% Syrah, 4% Cinsault, and 1% Carignan. The combination of warm climate, high altitude, and soils with concentrated mineral content results in a wine with ripe flavors and complexity. The following excerpt sums up the greatness of this wine from an overlooked appellation: "As expected, with this family behind it, this is opaque purple in color, right to the rim. WOW, what a nose! The aromas jump from the glass. Pure, amazingly expressive aromas of jammy black cherries and ultra ripe black fruits of every type. Like a black cherry liqueur or black cherry jam. This is so pure with fruit. The French wine-makers call this aroma "MURE", meaning mature or ripe. The flavors follow with pure, luscious, jammy black fruits. The Ventoux region offers us that classic nuance of flavors that only it can give, called "Garrigue" - nuances of rosemary, thyme, basil, fennel, herbs de Provence and touches of white pepper. But it's the black fruits that cascade over my palate that take me back to the very best I've ever tasted here. This is smashing. Lush fruit, classic Garrigue, perfect crispness, total balance. Tastes like a high dollar Chateauneuf du Pape!" Try this wine with *Pissaladière*, a classic Provencal pizza with onions, anchovies, garlic and black olives, or braised lamb shanks with roasted potatoes.

The 2005 Domaine La Martinelle Cotes du Ventoux is \$15.99/bottle, \$172.70/case.