



**PLUMPJACK**  
WINES

PlumpJack Wine Club

## May 2008

As wine enthusiasts and drinkers, we are constantly faced with an enormous number of choices of what to drink. It may be difficult enough to decide what country a wine should originate from, but maybe even more challenging is deciding what type of grape we should pick. How many choices are there?

Ampelographers (scientists who study wine grapes and their origins) estimate that there are as many as 10,000 different varieties in the grape species *Vitis vinifera* (wine grapes) alone. And that doesn't even include the nonvinifera grapes, such as the Concord. I don't know if it is possible to sample all 10,000 grape

varietals in our lifetimes, but we've got to start somewhere. From an organoleptic point of view, discovering and sampling wines that are less familiar result in a greater appreciation for the diversity of what's out there. It can also make for interesting conversation when awkward silences occur at the dinner table. Chances are that when you go to a local wine shop your choices for Roussanne and Lagrein will be extremely limited, compared to Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Fortunately, as wine club members, you have the opportunity to ascertain and taste incredibly delicious examples of these lesser-known varietals. Our supply of both these wines is extremely limited, so don't wait to taste these wines and add a few extra bottles to your collection. And don't despair, there are only about 9,998 more varietals to explore, but if they are all as good as these, what a fun journey it will be.



Jean-Marie Guffens, the uncontested champion of the Mâcon, the king of Chardonnay, and one of the hardest-working folks in the wine business, is on a personal mission that only he could construct. He is bullish on the south of France, where he has a major venture underway in the Luberon, having recently purchased the Château des Tourettes. Guffens is scarcely just another French wine-maker seeking fame and profit in the sunny south. For one thing, his reputation rests on his work with white grapes, rather than the reds most often associated with southern France. For another, he elected to stake his claim not in the by-now popular Provence or Languedoc, but in a viticulturally obscure mountainous area thirty miles east-southeast of Chateauneuf du Pape. "The Luberon has always attracted people more for rest than for winemaking," says Guffens. "Winemakers preferred the Languedoc. That is probably the biggest reason why I went to the Luberon: to be alone and to do things my way." The Guffens way, as established at Domaine Guffens-Heynen in Mâcon and at the Burgundy house Verget, is painstaking, labor-intensive, and hyper-critical. At an altitude of 1200 feet, the soils at Tourettes are composed of calcareous marl, lime, sand and gravel. With the combination of sunny, breezy days and cool nights, this site creates a fabulous terroir. One could scarcely set oneself a more arduous task than that of reviving a vineyard ravaged by forty years of over-cropping, machine-harvesting and inundation by herbicides. Once inferior grape varieties had been pulled, Guffens immediately began the task of replanting. White vines include Viognier, Marsanne, Chardonnay propagated from Domaine Guffens-Heynen, and Roussanne selected from the famous old plot at Beaucastel. So the heritage of Tourette's raw material is impressive, and following the ultra-traditional, non-interventionist methods Guffens

*2005 Château des Tourettes  
Roussanne  
"Coteau de l'Aigle"  
Apt, France*



*2004 Bottega Vinaia  
Lagrein, DOC  
Trento, Italy*

employs at his Domaine Guffens-Heynen in Mâcon, the emphasis is on growing the best fruit. The wines of Château Tourettes are dazzling, and challenge the very best of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Northern Rhône appellations. The fruit for the 2005 Château Tourettes Roussanne 'Coteau d'Aigle' comes from a high-altitude vineyard (roughly translated into 'Eagle's Hill') in the heart of the Luberon. The grapes are hand-harvested, and Guffens follows his traditional white Burgundy vinification methods, utilizing low-temperature fermentation, barrique aging, and extended lees contact. Guffens has produced a noble, stunningly complex Roussanne with notes of melon vibrantly charged with citrus zest. Ginger and peach flavors intermingle with subtle oak nuances. The wine is rich on entry but finishes with bright acidity and lingering fruit flavors. This is a beautiful wine to pair with scallops, lobster, chicken or salmon.

**The 2005 Château des Tourettes Roussanne “Coteau de l’Aigle” is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.**



Trentino-Alto Adige, a mountainous area covering 5,258 square miles, is situated in the northeastern corner of Italy and combines two autonomous provinces, each with distinct climates. There are 32,000 acres of vineyards planted, and the region is bordered by Lombardy on the west, the Veneto on the east, and Austria on the north. The southern Trentino, bordering Lake Garda and the Veneto, is more Mediterranean in climate and Italian in character, while to the north, Alto Adige (Südtirol) is more like the Mosel region of Germany, and very continental in climate. Over 75% of the total wine production of Trentino-Alto Adige is DOC wine - the highest percentage of Italy's twenty wine-producing regions. The Bottega Vinaia winery is the result of the shared vision of Giacinto Giacomini and Anselmo Martini, two leading figures in the northern Italian wine industry who, starting in the early 1990s, sought to highlight the potential of a handful of extraordinary vineyards in Italy's Trentino region. As managing director and chief winemaker, respectively, at Trentino's internationally recognized and highly successful Cavit winery, Giacomini and Martini were in an advantageous position from which to pursue their dream and transform it into reality. Their first step was to pinpoint specific vineyards within Trentino's picturesque landscape of mountains, lakes, apple orchards and medieval castles from which to source their fruit. With unrivaled access to Trentino's finest vineyards (thanks to Cavit's long-standing affiliations with 5,000 growers, representing 70% of the Trentino production), Giacomini and Martini enjoyed a unique vantage point from which to assess and access those sites that year after year consistently produce the highest-quality grapes. On selected rocky-calcareous soil at mid-altitude in the Valle dei Laghi (Valley of Lakes), Lagrein finds the perfect growing conditions. With good sun exposure and aeration, the warm breeze from Lake Garda keeps the berries dry--an important condition for a varietal that may have budding difficulties resulting from humidity. The Lagrein grape is probably indigenous to the Lagrina Valley in the Trentino region, and there is mention of it in the 17th-century records of a Benedictine monastery near Bolzano. Lagrein, with its high tannins and color, is often used in blending to augment less-assertive grapes. Made as a varietal wine, Lagrein has great character and is reminiscent of the dark, juicy qualities of Grenache or Dolcetto. The 2004 Bottega Vinaia Lagrein was fermented at warm temperatures (80°-82°F) with a long maceration period on the lees in small stainless-steel vats to extract maximum flavors and color. Malolactic fermentation took place in barriques, where the wine aged for about 12 months. It was then transferred into small oak casks to rest for six months until bottling. This wine is very dark reddish-purple, almost black in the glass. Complex aromas focus on black plums and earth. Ripe, juicy fruit seems almost sweet on the first taste impression, but crisp acidity enters on the mid-palate and turns the flavor steely and bone-dry. Ripe plums and a citric snap persist in a very long finish. This is an excellent wine that demonstrates Lagrein's potential to rank among the big-name grape varieties. The wine is full-bodied and rich enough to stand up to red meat, but subtle enough to work and play well with more delicate fare. The 2004 Lagrein shows well with a variety of Trentino-Alto Adige's regional foods. Wursts, cabbages, sauerkraut, potatoes, rye bread and dumplings share the table with pizza, pastas and polenta dishes which often take on more Alpine characteristics with the addition of butter, cheeses, game and wild mushrooms.

**The 2004 Bottega Vinaia Lagrein is \$20.99/bottle, \$226.70/case.**