



# PLUMPJACK

WINES

WINE CLUB

September 2006

When it comes to wine, France and Italy are in a league of their own. No other country can rival them in terms of quality and diversity. While many of their regions produce wines that are as rare, and nearly as expensive, as gold, there are just as many obscurities and values to discover from little-known appellations throughout these countries. These lesser-known regional wines often reflect the terroir or character of their origin, influenced by the local cuisine. With the advent of modern technology and equipment in the winery, coupled with advances in viticulture, high-quality wines are being produced in areas never before deemed worthy of consideration.

The producers of this month's selections have received numerous accolades for creating wines that take quality to its highest level. Their wines are considered to be some of the best of their appellations. Don't wait too long to try these. Our supply of both is extremely limited.

Lugana is a small, limited-production area, just a little over 1,482 acres, next to the southern shores of Lake Garda, in the province of Brescia, which straddles the regions of Lombardy and Veneto. From Desenzano, it encompasses Sirmione and Peschiera and continues inland up to Pozzolengo and Lonato. Lugana DOC is a white wine made from the Trebbiano di Lugana grape. Oz Clarke writes, "How do the good folk of Lugana turn out decently characterful, floral, appley, nutty wines when the grape is the uninspiring Trebbiano, king of neutrality? I would like to believe that their Trebbiano di Lugana clone is a different variety mis-named, but people who know about these things say otherwise." Trebbiano di Lugana is so different from other vines of the Trebbiano family that some admirers would prefer to have it called simply Lugana. This clone of Trebbiano seems to have evolved to fit the conditions of the Garda basin with its soils of calcareous clay on a bed of glacial moraine. One of the most recognized producers of Trebbiano di Lugana is Cà dei Frati. The first reference to Cà dei Frati dates back to documents from 1782, which referred to today's winery as *il luogo dei frati*, or house of the monks. In 1939 Domenico Dal Cero and his son, Felice, moved from more general farming activities in Montecchia di Crosara in Verona to Sirmione, where they started to cultivate vines. Thirty years later, Pietro Dal Cero produced and bottled the entire production under the name Cà dei Frati. Today the whole family, Pietro and Santina, and their children Igino, Gian Franco & Anna-Maria, run the winery and vineyards. The winery has 173 acres of land, 151 of which are planted with vines trained using the Guyot system. Cà dei Frati's goal is to produce the best and most typical wines possible, using only local grapes grown in the southern part of Lake Garda. With the help of the Centro di Vitivinicoltura Sperimentale di Brescia, they have begun to understand how certain clones of Lugana flourish in the specific microclimate of this area and the influence of the lake on the vines. They have identified micro-zones within the vineyards, taking into account the different altitudes, landforms and site exposure of each vineyard. "I Frati" is the flagship wine of Cà dei Frati. Its production reflects the value they place on local traditions and practices. It is made from grapes grown on 10-to 35-year-old vines from 6 different vineyards, planted on calcareous and clay soil. Once harvested, the grapes were fermented in temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks, and 80% of the wine went

**2004 Cà dei Frati  
"I Frati", Lugana DOC  
Sirmione, Italy**



**2004 S.C.V. Castelmaure  
Corbières "Grande Cuvée"  
Embres- et-Castelmaure, France**



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through malolactic fermentation. The wine was aged sur lie in stainless steel for 6 months followed by 2 months of bottle age. The nose is clean, delicate and fragrant, with aromas of fresh flowers, nectarines and apricots. It pairs well with fresh-water fish, especially, bass, pike and trout, a full range of hors d'oeuvres and traditional cheeses. Stuffed, grilled or raw vegetables and salads are other fine choices with the "I Frati."

The 2004 Cà dei Frati "I Frati" is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.



Corbières is the fourth largest appellation in France, and one of the best-known appellations in the Languedoc. It extends west and south of Narbonne, as far as the vineyards of Roussillon, sandwiching itself between Fitou-Maritime and the sea, and partly enveloping Fitou de Hautes-Corbières. The appellation is subdivided into eleven terroirs. The four most prominent are: Sigean - coastal clay and limestone terroir; Durban - inland of Sigean, to the south, a region of poor, stony soils; Fontfroide - also inland of Sigean, to the north; and Lagrasse - a central terroir of red limestone. The AOC Corbières was created in 1985 and measures 23,000 hectares (56,810 acres). The appellation requires a minimum of two grapes in a wine blend. The wines are traditionally Carignan (maximum 50%, recently reduced from 60%) with the remainder Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre and Cinsault. S.C.V. Castelmaure is a co-operative and was founded in the 1920's. It is located in Embres-et-Castelmaure, a small village in the Aude, on the unofficial Corbières cru site of Durban. Like many co-operatives in the Languedoc, Castelmaure once focused on quantity more than quality. Today, there are just ninety members with 320 hectares (790 acres) of vineyards, although just twelve of these members account for over 90% of the co-operative's output. Nevertheless, the co-operative still utilizes over 760 separate parcels of vines. Each parcel is inspected individually and their characteristics are recorded on computer by a technician who dedicates his time solely to this task. This close involvement of a small, leading group of vigneron has facilitated recent improvements at Castelmaure. They have re-learned to prune, plough, check yields, sort, and select, with a permanent focus on respecting the environment. In the cellar, hygiene, temperature control, and ultramodern equipment contribute to producing wines with a better expression of terroir. In recent years the president of the co-operative, Patrick de Marien, has initiated further improvements with the aid of Michel Tardieu of Tardieu-Laurent. Tardieu-Laurent is a négociant firm concentrating on the wines of the Rhone Valley but also of the Languedoc and Provence. It was formed with the coming together of Michel Tardieu, who owns a winery in Luberon, and Dominique Laurent, a renowned Burgundy winemaker. In the early 1990's, Castelmaure began experimenting with a Prestige Cuvée of Corbières. This wine has become known as "Grande Cuvée". The 2004 is a blend of 50% Syrah and 50% Grenache. The grapes were hand-harvested, and after fermentation, the wine was aged in 90% French and 10% American oak barrels for 12 months. The barrels used were 1/3 new oak, 1/3 one-year-old, and 1/3 two-year-old. In the nose, the 2004 "Grande Cuvée" offers dark jammy fruit such as black currants, blackberries and raspberries, mixed with black pepper and licorice. These combine with toasted barrel aromas of cocoa and coffee. In the mouth, those same ripe fruit flavors provide a rich, opulent mouth feel, but the wine has ample acidity and tannin to give it excellent balance and length. Local dishes such as duck with cherries or olives, pork with prunes, grilled pork ribs with caramel and spices, blood sausage with apples, and steak in red wine sauce are perfect accompaniments to this Corbières.

The 2004 Castelmaure Corbières "Grande Cuvée" is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case