



**PLUMPJACK**  
WINES

PlumpJack Wine Club

May 2009

A glass of wine can be the road on which we allow our organoleptic senses to be a guiding vehicle, taking us to new and exciting enological experiences. If you close your eyes and swirl, smell, then taste a wine in a glass, you can use these senses to identify fruit, oak, and most importantly, a sense of place. (You've heard this before.) Terroir is what makes one wine different from another. The combination of soil and climate dramatically affect the flavors and quality of grapes. One of the thrills of being a wine drinker (aside from the positive health benefits when used in moderation) is when you put your nose to a glass of wine and immediately recognize its origins. Our two

wines this month have very distinctive styles, aromas and flavors that are representative of their places of origin. Because of the increase in quality of their regions, and the unique characteristics these wines display, Colli Orientali has achieved DOC status, and Pic Saint-Loup is on the verge of becoming its own appellation.

The ancient Greeks called Italy "Oenotria" (wine-land) and today its inhabitants are as passionate about their wines as ever. With this passion goes an intense commitment to local styles, and as a result, Italy produces a wider, more fascinating range of individual, and even idiosyncratic, wines than anywhere else in the world. Situated in the northeastern region of Italy, bordering Austria and Slovenia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia is a region that specializes in white wine varietals. Many of its wine zones benefit from the interaction between mountain air and warm sea currents—an environment of rare moderation in which the grapes develop rich fruit flavors while retaining their incisive acidity. No other region throughout Italy possesses the breadth of Friuli's white varietal offerings, mostly comprised of principal indigenous varietals: Tocai Friulano, Malvasia Istriana, Ribolla Gialla, and Picolit, as well as international varietals. While Friuli-Venezia Giulia is known best for its comprehensive array of white grapes, the region also enjoys success with the Bordeaux varietals as well as its indigenous varietals—Refosco, Pignolo, and Schioppettino. Friuli-Venezia Giulia's ideal terroir is considered to be the provenance of the zone's premier regions, Collio and Colli Orientali, which feature soils comprised of limestone, marl, and sandstone, and vineyards situated at high elevations. The Colli Orientali del Friuli is a DOC located in the province of Udine and is sub-divided into three main sections—Ramandolo in the north, followed by Cialla, and then Corno di Rosazzo. With a family history in winemaking, dating back to the early 1960's in the eastern hills of the Colli Orientali del Friuli wine district, Livio Zorzettig, along with his wife Gabriella, purchased nearly 99 acres of land, of which 57.5 acres were planted mostly to grape vines native to the region. The small quantities of wine bottled at the time were sold on the local market to private clients and to small, local osterias to accompany the local dishes. A few months after the purchase, Livio passed away, leaving Gabriella and two sons (14 year old Massimo and 12 year old Marco) to run the business. Once he finished school, the very young Massimo began to oversee the vineyards and cellar, moving into sales, marketing and the business end when brother Marco joined him, showing an interest and talent for vineyard management. In the early 1990's, under the direction of Massimo and Marco, the estate was reinvigorated. The oldest vineyards were

*2007 Azienda La Tunella  
"Biancosesto"  
Colli Orientali del Friuli, DOC  
Ippolis, Italia*



*2007 Domaine de Mortié  
Pic Saint-Loup  
Coteaux du Languedoc, AC  
St. Jean-de-Cuculles, France*

replanted, new land was acquired, new varieties were introduced, the winery building and cellar were completely rebuilt and a new welcoming showroom and tasting area were created. It was during this period that Massimo, Marco, and matriarch Gabriella hired a young, knowledgeable and enthusiastic winemaker, Luigino Zamparo, and charged him with creating a distinct personality for the wines that would make them more interesting and desirable for the national and world market. La Tunella's "Biancosesto" is a blend of 50% Friulano and 50% Ribolla Gialla. The whole grapes are lightly pressed and then a fermentation stock, prepared previously from the selected best grapes of the same varieties, is added to the resulting clear, whole must. The must then ferments slowly at a precisely-controlled temperature in 3,000-litre Slavonian oak barrels. Once fermentation is completed, the wine is matured further in stainless-steel vats (again, at a controlled temperature), during which time the lees are stirred many times (batonnage) until shortly before bottling. The 2007 "Biancosesto" opens with a honey and apricot bouquet. The Ribolla contributes notes of stone fruit, with tropical overtones, while the Friulano adds a whiff of acacia and a delightful note of almond. On the palate, the wine is full-bodied, smooth, creamy, and well-balanced, with delicious honeydew melon, honey, spice, and mineral flavors. The finish is dry and has good length. Try this wine with mussels, pancetta-wrapped prawns, chicken piccata, or soft mild cheeses.

**The 2007 La Tunella "Biancosesto" is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.**

The Coteaux du Languedoc is home to the oldest vineyard in France; it existed when the Greeks arrived in 5 BC. The region encompasses 168 communes that stretch the length of the Mediterranean coastline from Narbonne in the west to Nimes in the east, ranging inland right up to the slopes of the Black Mountain and the Cevennes. Situated some 10 miles inland from Montpellier, the Pic St-Loup Mountain is a high limestone ridge peak that overlooks the vineyards of the eponymous subregion in the Coteaux du Languedoc appellation. Just 7 miles long and 1.5 miles wide, there are 12 separate communes around the Pic, with about 13,000 acres of vineyards. The landscape here is quite dramatic, with garrigue-like scrubland (the *haut garrigue*) dominated by two distinctive peaks – the Montagne de l'Hortus and the Pic St-Loup itself. Because the immediate region is the transition point from the coastal plain to the higher, inland plateau, its climate is noticeably cooler than many other Languedoc wine growing regions. There is also a range of different microclimates in close proximity, making it possible to ripen the heat-loving Mourvèdre grape in one vineyard area while using the cooler sites to produce elegant, northern-Rhône-like Syrah. The profile of Pic St-Loup as a wine region has changed dramatically in the last twenty years. In the mid-1980s the co-operative of St. Mathieu-de-Treviers dominated the production of the area, but since then there has been an incredible surge of new producers, as newcomers have arrived in the area and land has changed hands or been withdrawn from the co-operative. Today Pic St-Loup is one of the most energetic crus of the sprawling Coteaux du Languedoc and is in the process of establishing its own independent appellation. Domaine de Mortiers is situated in a charming, remote spot on the slopes of Pic St-Loup Mountain. The vineyard property, 52 acres, all south-facing, was created by falling limestone from the mountain that mixed with the dark black soil and an abundance of oyster shells; evidence that this area was once under the sea. In 1993, production in the domaine was re-launched, having been in decline for the previous decade. Over the course of a few years, the vineyards were restructured and the winery expanded. Today, Mortiers has 57 acres of vines, all of which are suitable for producing appellation wine. 2008 saw the arrival of new wine makers to the domaine, the Guiraudon and Moustiés families. Respect for nature is their guiding principle, so they introduced a biodynamic approach to vineyard management, diversification (olives, truffles), a careful increase in the production area and the planting of old non-cloned grape varieties. The 2007 Domaine de Mortiers Pic St-Loup is a blend of 40% Syrah, 25% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache, 5% Carignan. After manual harvest, grapes are de-stemmed and traditional vinification proceeds with only indigenous yeast in glass-lined concrete tanks over the course of 25 to 30 days. The wine is then held in concrete tanks for approximately 24 months before being bottled. This wine has an intoxicating aroma of blackberry jam, gorgeously layered with a mix of Herbes de Provence, garrigue and a seductive finish of deep, black cherry. It exemplifies the appeal of the red wines from this region—lots of color, good concentration and beautiful spicy, meaty, earthy complexity. It pairs beautifully with grilled lamb chops, braised short ribs, strong hard cheeses, or your favorite pizza.

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