

THE SOURCE
OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER
WRITTEN BY TED VANCE



I Fabbri, Chianti Classico

Never in our company's history have so many new growers converged on the market all at once as they will this October. After fifteen years of importing and the last seven years working with 98% direct imports without export agents, we've slowly pieced our puzzle together as great opportunities have appeared, and the layers are still wrapping around us.

This newsletter is an abridged version of what I want to release, but the breadth of material I have for all the new growers would fill an issue of Rolling Stone. We'll have to break it up into many chapters, so this month we'll start with a preface.

ITALIA

NEW SOURCE ADDITION

MILLI LITRI

PIEMONTESE DIALECT IN LITERS

(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN ALL U.S. STATES)



Before we make our way to the highest levels of Chianti Classico with I Fabbri, our Nizza revolutionaries at Sette have thrown us all a bone: two different one-liter bottlings of table wine, called Milli Litri. The first is a juicy red built with Barbera as the backbone; the second, a remarkably lifted and utterly poundable white of Arneis and Moscato. These are a complete no-brainer. Some have had concerns about Moscato, but in my opinion, having had enough wines by the glass in

restaurant programs, it's hard to get a proper smell out of them with four to six ounces poured in the glass all at once. That's not a problem here. Once people get ahold of either of these two wines, they will order a second. The challenge is that we could sell ten times the amount we've been given. Oh, and the labels ...

NEW SOURCE GROWER
I FABBRI
CHIANTI CLASSICO IN THE CLOUDS
(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN CA, NY & SELECT STATES)



Central Italy is filling out our list. Many new growers will arrive in the first quarter of next year, strengthening our line from Etna to Alto Piemonte. The short list: Colle Florido, Abruzzo; Edoardo Dottori, Castelli di Jesi; Sàgona, high-altitude Toscana; and Ribelà, Rome. But none of the new growers are as significant to the mainstream fine wine market as I Fabbri.

As the wine in Italy's backwater appellations improved in recent decades, many new Italian-focused restaurants made a point of leaving Chianti and Chianti Classico off their lists almost entirely, if not entirely. Not because they didn't sell. On the contrary: they sold too easily. Cases flowed torrentially while many of the other Italian bottles sat half-full on the hot back bar like tombstones, likely headed for the drain. Then, finally, Chianti and Chianti Classico were invited back to the party and started to find their well-deserved place again on the lists of those who championed backwater Italian wines. We've toyed with some great Chianti Classico growers in various markets, most

notably Cianferoni (Caparsa), Le Cinciole and Riecine. But I couldn't be prouder for us to represent Susanna Grassi's head-in-the-clouds, high-altitude range of spirited and aromatically mesmerizing I Fabbri Chianti Classicos from vines in what seems an improbable rooting in Lamole's sand at some of the highest elevations in Chianti Classico, in Greve in Chianti's *frazione* of Lamole, "The ceiling of Chianti Classico."



The wines landing in both New York and California were lined up at the cantina in May on the ancient and rebuilt castle terrace with Susanna and her brilliantly witty son, Vittorio. With my wife and my friend, Gino Della Porta, winegrower and founder of Nizza Monferrato's Sette, at the table with Susanna and Vittorio, the world could've ended, and, speaking for myself, I would've been at the summit of my life; I would've accepted those wines accompanied by my wife, a great friend, generous company, and a simple but perfect meal as my last supper. Susanna kept things moving

through dinner, but I wanted to continue sniffing and drinking them until the sun rose. On my way back to the room, I was physically sober but happy and spiritually drunk.

Not every wine can be fully understood on its own, and Susanna's range of Chianti Classicos embodies vinous beauty in the absolute. Likely lost on seekers of powerful Chianti Classico, her range is like a collection of albums from a great musician, where each one builds upon the last. Alone, they deliver; but together, in a genre of finesse, they are an unbeatable catalog.

The range moves fluidly from pure Sangiovese planted high in Lamole's siliceous sands to old mixed vineyards surrounded by wild, indigenous forest, with Sangiovese, Canaiolo and the traditional white grapes of Chianti, some planted as far back as 1965. The wines are naturally fermented and handled gently, with concrete doing much of the work. Older 500L French tonneaux are introduced as the range gains depth and strength through Terra di Lamole, Riserva and the tiny production of Gran Selezione. The latter comes from a single 1965 vineyard and is made only in the best vintages. She created her white, Casole, because she couldn't use as many of the old vineyards' white grapes in her Chianti Classicos as she had in the past, bringing Trebbiano Toscano, Malvasia Lunga and San Colombano together on their own. Across the range, the winemaking is remarkably simple and deliberately unforced, so the sand, altitude, cooler weather and ancient Sangiovese selections do most of the talking.



Susanna is the 11th generation of her family in Casole, dating to 1620. The family made wine and worked as blacksmiths, and her great-grandfather Olinto was already bottling wine from the property in the 1920s. The four Chianti Classicos are Susanna's life arc. Lamole: youthful, full of the

sun's energy and dreams, she grew up believing she would take care of the farm, but life led her to study economics, live abroad, and enter the fashion world. Terra di Lamole shows much greater depth of life experience outside Lamole. A consulting job brought her back to Casole at the end of the 1990s, where she found the family property "empty and sad, but still bewilderingly beautiful." In 2000, she got married, then pregnant, created I Fabbri, and started rebuilding the family history in one year: that's Riserva. Gran Selezione has it all: the refined but realized youthful dreams of Lamole; the becoming and strength of Terra; the fortitude and depth of Riserva. Gran Selezione is Susanna: wise, unshakeable, generous, joy-filled. Susanna's I Fabbri range hums a tune of deep emotion and a life lived with a ceaselessly lifted spirit. They are a gift.

IBERIA

AUGALEVADA

2024 RIBEIRO | THE CORNER JUST GOT TURNED

(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN ALL U.S. STATES)



I visited Iago Garrido this spring when the weather was still cold and rainy—typical Galicia. I was there to taste the fresh 2025s out of barrel and the recently finished 2024 vintage wines, and, of course, the always late-released Ollos de Roque, this year's release, the 2023.

Iago's sculptural wines are more Brâncuși, less Rodin. Tasting with him in his pitch-black, concrete cellar, with a single trouble light strung up and dangling as he thieves his barrels, casting black and white Nosferatu shadows on the walls, feels as much like entering his studio as a winery, with great pieces unresolved, metamorphosing into shape. The lines are clean, but there are also shadows and strange angles, characteristics we may not initially describe as beautiful, but given time, I sometimes find them utterly beautiful, beautiful aberrations in this corner of the peninsula. Iago's wines are of crystal clarity and unique contemporary beauty, always with something strange, individual and even something slightly unsettling coursing through them, at least at first.

We first met at a lunch around 2019 by the only restaurant near the granite-built Monasterio de San Clodio, the spiritual center of Galician wines, with the Cume do Avia brothers playing matchmaker. In a corner of my own with three Galicians staring at me with each swirl, sniff and taste, Iago's devilish smile emerged, and he said, as I squirmed, that his wines are his "freaky."



They *were* freaky: mutations of what I knew of wine (a classicist at heart, indeed) twisting my understanding like rock strata crushed and contorted under severe tectonic pressure, doubling back on themselves into impossible shapes. But then Iago's "freaky" starts straightening, like a Cirque du Soleil contortionist twisting through frightening, sometimes grotesque positions before somehow emerging statuesque and beautiful—like perfect human symmetry and form. The form eventually concedes to function. Strange angles straighten into clean lines, and what at first can feel almost disorienting emerges from the dark and uncomfortable space into pleasure, exhalation, relief, reward, admiration. Within thirty minutes of that first tasting, Iago's camino was impossible to pass on, and here we are six years later.

I've been with Iago since fairly early on in his journey, starting with the 2018 vintage, just five seasons after he made the jump from professional futbolista to wine sculptor. That day next to San Clodio, I made a big bet on him and put both my feet in the Ribeiro's three rivers. He hasn't won every match, but in 2024, he won the Champions League.

Investing in unknown talent is our company's truest calling. I'm always looking for new players, like a scout scouring the minors. Sometimes I search the professional ranks for an established player—Burgundy, Wachau, Barolo—whom we can add to the roster to help us win our internal company championships. But no single player can be the spiritual core of this collection of mostly first-generation trailblazers. When on the hunt, I can spot the talent of the environment, the talent of the person. The first wines may not strike. They're often a decade away from their first major milestone, yet I can see who that person is and where they might go with their discipline, their ideas, and their vision. Sometimes they just need an importer with a high tolerance for taking risks on great terroirs yet to be realized, someone who believes as much in them as people as in the wines themselves. Sometimes that belief helps inspire the wines. We are a company of underdogs, and theirs are the dreams we work tirelessly to build.

After tasting through a series of barrels, we went upstairs to dig into the 2024s and the 2023 Ollos de Roque—named after his firstborn son, Roque; ollos is Galego for eyes. After the first two 2024 wines, I couldn't hold back my smile. They were the Ollos Branco and the Parcela Eiravera, the latter an impossibly racy, salivating Albariño from Salnés, grand cru country for Albariño. We moved on to his Monterrei Dona Branca, then the 2023 Ollos de Roque, the first vintage that distanced itself from Treixadura, toward Agudelo (Chenin Blanc) and Lado, the latter a mineral-and-acid bomber. After so many years of experimentation, something had happened. Iago had arrived at an entirely new level. Freaky is still in them, still Iago, but now nothing seems to get in the way of the pleasure: form and function firing as one from first taste.



Iago and I have talked about this moment for years. It's the little details. The little nuances. That extra inch in sport that wins the game. The tiny weakness identified and worked on until suddenly the high-level professional becomes something else.

As I tasted through the wines, I just kept smiling at him. At the end, I said something to the effect of, "I don't know if you agree, but this year is a completely different level than any year before. And you know I've loved your wines in the past, but these are different. Are they that different to you?" He looked at me, smiled, "Yes. They are a different level."

I've said for years that Iago will become one of the most respected winegrowers in Galicia and in Spain, though his style isn't for everyone. But for those who seek that purity, that intensity, that laser-beam focus, that sculpture that invites you to think outside your metrics for beauty and form, with precisely defined, pinpoint details, he's got it. And maybe that's where the art finally becomes inseparable from the terroir. We understand the authenticity of the mind and the hand behind it, but the hand is less apparent. The people who get it really get it. Others have understood it but have been waiting for that corner to be turned. That corner just got turned.



And then there were the reds: 'Ollos,' 'Ollos de Maia' (named after his daughter), and a new Merenzao (Trousseau) from Monterrei, 'Area de Rei.'

Insert the metal fitting into the buckle and pull the loose end of the strap to tighten ...

IBERIAN SNEAK PEEK

In Iberia, we nabbed Marc Isart, a Gredos grower, co-founder of Comando G and a longtime winemaker for Bernabeleva. He has a new project called Salvajes de Gredos and owns a project southeast of Madrid called Cinco Leguas that offers extraordinary prices for wine made on a small scale. I've admired Marc from afar for many years, and finally called him at what seemed like the perfect moment. I couldn't visit him on such short notice, so he drove to my Catalonia residence for two days of eating and drinking, having previously only met over the phone! It was an immediate personality and stylistic wine match, and now we're off to the races. I'm extremely happy and even more humbled that he's now on our team. I have so much more to say about Marc and his wines, so keep an eye out for a rather long essay, hopefully before the end of the year.

NEW SOURCE GROWER
VIZINHO VINHATEIRO
A NEW DAO IN DÃO
(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN ALL U.S. STATES)



Further west into Portugal, I've been shopping Dão, where many technically sound and compelling quintas are budding with global interest. But none have struck me so emotionally as Vizinho Vinhateiro. This French transplant project is growing a Bénétière-esque Côte-Rôtie-styled red, called **'TINTO,'** and other reds in a very different but natural way—let's say, a gorgeous Beaujolais/Spanish Clarete-style dreamy red, called **'CLARETE,'** and a Dão red, labeled **'LAGAR'** with hauntingly lifted pale

red nuances and scrumptious sweet forest greens and wild fruits. There's so much x-factor and so much to discover from one taste to the next. Deep cultural sponges, Paul and Charlotte live simply but eat extraordinarily (Paul is dangerous in the kitchen), and the drink is just as good as the fabulous food. Oh, and the labels ... Let's just say that the wines rise to the level of the gorgeously authentic packaging.



Born into the famous Hugel family in Alsace's Riquewihr, the wine world was always in the cards for Charlotte Hugel; for Paul Chevreux, a Jura native, the calling was both happenstance and seemingly inevitable. After mechanical engineering, art, and finally viticulture school in Beaune, Paul met Charlotte at Graham's Port house, where wine (and Charlotte) turned into an obsession. After working in the Côte d'Or, his fate was sealed. Young and thinking about where they wanted to live out their days, they settled into a rustic and nature-friendly, neighbor-friendly life in Portugal's Dão region, close to Viseu. Their ancient granite and Portuguese-tiled house is surrounded by vines, animals and horses (that Charlotte trains professionally), and nights are filled with Paul's rustic wood-fired kitchen alchemy of local raw products with a French touch—of which their *vizinhos* (neighbors) must be a little jealous. They farm their 2.5 ha of vineyards organically, though uncertified, mostly on sandy granite at around 400 meters, with mostly massale selections. Paul wants the wines to recall the old Dão, sometimes reflecting them completely. Portuguese locals tell him their wines remind them of making wine with their grandfathers. The reds can transport us to an alternate universe of the almost mythical lands from Beaujolais down through Côte-Rôtie. These wines are made by very good cooks in both the kitchen and the cellar: whole clusters are trodden by foot in old granite lagar before the wine is fermented and aged in old French oak.



I'll be writing many more stories about Paul and Charlotte's project. I've talked with him a dozen times, and we've had a few meals together, but I've only visited their vineyards and winery once. I need to go back before I lay out the deep Dão dive. Hopefully, this will also arrive before the end of this year.

FRANCE

In France, several growers have taken center stage, particularly in Burgundy. When we started our company in California more than fifteen years ago, we worked with several importers and exporters before parting ways with them after the 2017 vintage and the onslaught of hot-climate wines that hardly spoke the local terroir language—and we didn't blame the growers. But their products hit the allocation papers with even higher prices than before. Beyond our two main Côte d'Or growers that seem to manage the heat with excellent results, we're reentering the golden slope now. I didn't expect 2023 to be as fabulous as it is, and with 2024 and 2025 to follow, we're recharging at what appears to be a better moment, despite how hard 2026 was for everyone in France. On the docket today, starting with 2023, we have vintages I can relate to and appreciate as I did those prior to 2018. (Of course, there's good wine between 2018 and 2022, but we can admit it's a challenging bunch one way or the other.)

NEW SOURCE GROWER
CHANTAL LESCURE
2023 CÔTE D'OR REDS & WHITES
(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN ALL U.S. STATES)



When established Burgundy domaines change hands through a generational handoff or an outside purchase, it's exciting to see where things go. But when someone like Éric Rousseau of Domaine Armand Rousseau acquires a new domaine, any Burgundy lover will find it hard to ignore.

Éric Rousseau and his business partner, Jean-Philippe Girard, acquired this longtime organic and biodynamic domaine, 19 hectares spread across some important areas of Burgundy. Cooler exposures and deeper soils that might once have been seen as liabilities don't look quite so bad anymore, and these are among the domaine's strengths.

Many of the holdings sit in Pommard and Nuits-Saint-Georges, appellations that are increasingly more interesting as climate change opens and softens what were once often known as harder wines. But Éric hasn't come in trying to make another Armand Rousseau; he's appointed Fabrice Groussin, a former Monthélie-based régisseur at Domaine Changarnier, and given him considerable freedom in the vineyards and cellar, and they share an ambition for wines of finesse and elegance. Fabrice grew up in a farming family in Charentes and studied viticulture and oenology in Bordeaux, but today his cellar collaboration with Éric intentionally leans toward a gentle approach.



Éric Rousseau & Fabrice Groussin

The whites are made in a very straightforward way, and the reds (post-2023) see about 15 to 25% whole-cluster, infusion-style extractions, longer macerations to move away from too much upfront fruit, and increasingly less new wood than their predecessor to highlight terroir nuances. They have wonderful holdings throughout the range, heavier in Pommard and Nuits-Saint-Georges, including the famous village lieux-dits, **POMMARD “LES VIGNOTS”** and **NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES “LES DAMODES,”** as well as blue-chip sites like Vosne-Romanée 1er Cru Suchots and the **GRAND CRU, CLOS VOUGEOT**. Their largest vineyard holding is above the north hill of Beaune. It’s called **TOPES BIZOT** and sits around 350 meters of altitude and is surrounded by forest. They have many more wines, and they’ll come in due time.



Nuits-Saint-Georges 1er Cru Les Vallerots

This is an exciting domaine to watch. I plan to visit the vineyards again this November, do more research on the lesser-known *climats*, and release a Jasper Morris-level discovery that highlights their terroirs as clearly as any five to ten times the price, and what to expect from them. After all, terroir is terroir, no matter the price or prestige, and Pommard and Nuits-Saint-Georges, thanks to their massive combes (the former watercourses separating the appellations), are beneficiaries of a little more heat than other more famous communes. All contain worthwhile stories, and I plan to bring them to you.

ANOTHER NEWISH SOURCE GROWER
JEAN-MARC & HUGUES PAVELOT
2024 SAVIGNY-LÈS-BEAUNE
(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN CALIFORNIA)



Jean-Marc and Hugues Pavelot have returned to The Source in California. Big changes there. They were organic-certified in 2024, and I tasted pretty much the full range of 2022s, 2023s, and 2024s with Hugues, and everything showed fabulously—not one miss in more than sixty wines. It was hard to make any completely coherent choice in this flood of beauties overflowing with deliciousness. Even the Savigny-lès-Beaune appellation red raised my eyebrow, sent an involuntary wink toward my wife, and activated my zygomaticus major until we hit the outskirts of Beaune and its sore-thumb commercial center between Savigny and Beaune's historical center.

The Pavelots have always led their commune, and they continue to stand beside the best of this underrated and overlooked appellation. Indeed, Simon Bize remains a longtime favorite after the decade we imported them to California, under the late Patrick Bize's hand. Now that they're under Chisa Bize, I've probably had their wines with more regularity than any Burgundy grower. I'm very proud of Hugues for rising to a level similar to Bize, and I'm thrilled to offer them to our many restaurants looking for price-friendly Burgundy that delivers upon opening for all comers.



After studying viticulture and enology in Beaune and spending time in Australia, Hugues returned to the cellar; he eventually took the reins from his father, Jean-Marc, who remains his most important teacher. The Pavelots have been in Savigny-lès-Beaune for generations, and Hugues came into his own during the pretty miserable 2011 to 2014 stretch. Constant frost, hail, and seemingly every other vineyard calamity imaginable tested the growers' mettle. This forced Hugues to mature quickly and under pressure. Today, their roughly 13 hectares are certified organic (as of the 2024 vintage) and spread across an unusually complete collection of Savigny-lès-Beaune Premier Cru terroirs and village wines. Though sometimes only a short walk separates the two opposing hills, the variability between the crus (caused by combes, expositions, altitudes, topsoil, and bedrock) makes this commune an undeniably interesting and *more* affordable university for Côte d'Or terroir studies.

On the south hill of Savigny-lès-Beaune with more easterly expositions, **DOMINODE** is their great *vin de garde*, while the ethereal and generous **PEUILLETS** is its near opposite. On the north hill with southerly exposures, **GRAVAINS**, centered below the Combe d'Orange, can be the all-around MVP for full-but-suave texture and seductive aromas; **LAVIÈRES**, a pretty and light but fleshier wine; **GUETTES**, the straight, mineral-and-iron terroir-shooter; and their upper sections of **SERPENTIÈRES**, a perfect

marriage of Guettes and Gravains. The Pavelots have always had a talent for weaving savory and earthy nuances without becoming overly rustic. Now there's more high-toned red fruit, more lift and early drinking charm. The whole range is more precise than ever and the Pavelots remain one of the Côte's elite growers, with prices that rewind the clock.

BURGUNDY SNEAK PEEK

Arnaud Balouzet, a remarkably talented new grower in the Hautes-Côtes, just a mountain fold west from Vosne-Romanée, next to the historic Abbaye de Saint-Vivant (name sound familiar?), under renovation by none other than Aubert de Villaine ... Arnaud has worked in the cellars of Romain Guiberteau and Henri Gouges, and his first vintage on his own in Curtil-Vergy was 2025, and it's a doozy—some of the most exciting reds I've tasted out of barrel from an unknown grower in a very long time. More to come later this year. He's with The Source for the whole U.S. market.

NEW SOURCE GROWER | U.S. DEBUT
HUNTER MCKIRDY
A REVOLUTIONARY SPARK IN ALSACE
(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN ALL U.S. STATES)



You say you want a revolution, well, you know ...

I've turned down so many great Alsace growers and haven't even wanted to look their way because it's such a hard fight. "Those new wines from Alsace are really great. Let me know when they go on closeout," a well-known retailer once said to me, laughing. But Hunter McKirdy changes all that. High-voltage whites and explosively aromatic, pale-colored reds, all with low alcohol and massive freshness (win numbers one, two, three and four), in Burgundy-shaped bottles (win number five), and, and, and ... oh, and the labels ... (win number six).



Wandering broke in Melbourne, a meandering young Scotsman who dabbled in political science, art, and wine, went into a bookstore and picked up Andrew Jefford's *The New France*, and his life changed in an instant. Paul McKirdy came to Alsace for what he thought would be only a year-long dive into biodynamics and the vinous dreamlife portrayed in the book. Then he changed his plan to go elsewhere after finding the famous Alsatian domaine Zind-Humbrecht.

In 2010, after completing her MSc in Viticulture and Oenology, the sharply focused South African Jolene Hunter also went to Zind-Humbrecht where, in retrospect, it seemed Paul had been waiting for her. More than a decade later they have a dog, a house, a domaine with Zellenberg limestone vineyards, an ancient rock cellar, gorgeous labels, and bottles unusual for Alsatian wines, full of mystery. Like Charles and Ray Eames, Paul and Jolene are a two-person revolutionary spark for change. Behind each of their fiery lightning whites and pale, tense reds is a missing Alsatian link that starts in Côte d'Or, passes through Jura and doglegs west through southern Champagne, Chablis, Sancerre and into Loire Valley Chenin Blanc country. The 4.4 hectares they work alone are a stamp of living limestone terroirs, liquid electricity sharpened in barrel, turned to lightning in a bottle and finally released into the glass. This is a revolution, folks.

I know, you gotta taste it to believe it. But you will believe it when you taste them.



More soon. Much more ... But first, they will be shown at our Inside Source tastings in New York and California. A full story will come out in November, sent to our mailing list and posted on the website.

FAMILLE GARON **CÔTE-RÔTIE & CONDRIEU**

(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN CA AND SELECT U.S. STATES)

There are many treacherous European vineyard areas, like the Mosel, Wachau, Douro, and Ribeira Sacra, to name just a few. What often looks like a 200-meter-high wave of rock frozen in time, draped in vines rising from the west side in the narrow gap of the Northern Rhône Valley just south of Lyon, Côte-Rôtie must be France's most memorable. It's an intimidating landscape, and the people who work it seem built differently—wiry with tendons like metal cables, or stout and hard like a bull. Year after year, they build and rebuild rock terrace walls that look less like the work of ordinary vigneron and more like something the Cyclopes made. No matter how many times I've passed it since I spent a week in the Condrieu campground in 2004 during a six-month European bike tour, I haven't lost my sense of awe.

We worked with a few Côte-Rôtie growers over the years through other suppliers under our umbrella in California—the mythological and elusive creature, Pierre Bénétière, and France’s humble and true original rockstar vigneron, Yves Gangloff—and we’re happy to have Kévin Garon and his family to fill part of the unfillable void in the absence of those two exceptional growers. But when I tasted the Garon wines a little more than a decade ago I didn’t see the fit. I tasted them again a few years ago and saw something that excited me.



Kévin Garon in Côte-Rôtie

I visited Kévin for the first time last winter, and we discussed where they’ve been and where they’re going. We share a predilection for wines of finesse. We’re the same age, and I understood well the Rhône world he grew up in when he and his brother came back: Robert Parker’s Rhône world. When I revisited a few wines a couple of years ago, there was more lift and, perhaps, a better incorporation of newer wood in the range, though it’s not a massive amount, at 10-15%. To be fair, it was a series of hot seasons between 2017 and 2020 for the Northern Rhône and just about anywhere in France, and it was hard to get a proper read on any grower’s wines during that time. But I did understand that their 2021 and even 2022 vintages had finesse and a softer touch with wood compared with many of Côte-Rôtie’s growers, whose top ranges today are often over-polished and seemingly with too strong a charge of cut oak or some derivative of vanillin.

The range itself becomes a geological walk through the Northern Rhône. It begins on the deeper alluvial terraces before climbing into the crystalline gneiss, schist and granite hillsides. The **CÔTES-DU-RHÔNE ROUGE ‘LA PART DES VIVANTS’** begins on the Rhône’s deeper alluvial terraces of rolled pebbles,

silty gravel, clay, and glacial moraine. The **LES GRANDES PARCELLES SYRAH** marks the transition to terraces of these ancient rocks with vines planted on shallow sandy soils over gneiss and schist. Although Seyssuel lies only a few kilometers north of Côte-Rôtie and shares much of the same ancient crystalline geology, the landscape changes subtly. The pinch of the windy river valley opens to the north like one end of an hourglass. The slopes become less continuous and less dramatic than the rock tongues of Côte-Rôtie covered in soldier-like vines saluting the river below, flowing downhill and stopping just at the small flood-plain embankment. Côte-Rôtie remained one of France's celebrated vineyard landscapes through the hardships of the last hundred and fifty years, while Seyssuel was largely abandoned after phylloxera and industrialization. Only in recent decades have growers remembered that Seyssuel can produce Syrah with Côte-Rôtie-level finesse, structural mineral and metal textures, and as much aromatic lift. Today, more than a dozen top growers work these hills.



Côte-Rôtie

Garon's **SYRAH DE SEYSSUEL 'JARDINS DE ROME'** is harvested from steep terraced slopes of schist and mica schist bedrock with shallow topsoil of sand, small rocks, and some clay derived from the parent rock. This is one of the most special wines in the entire range. It's raw and wildly aromatic, with loads of garrigue and purple forest fruits, lacquered on the palate with mineral and metal stains. The expectation is freer here than in Côte-Rôtie, and the Garons let it burst out of the gates, unbridled. **CÔTE-RÔTIE 'SYBARINE'** is harvested from 100% Syrah across seven Côte-Rôtie lieux-dits. The vines are planted on predominantly southeast-facing, steep terraced slopes of gneiss and granite bedrock

with veins of mica schist and shallow topsoil of sand, small rocks, and some clay derived from the parent rock.

CÔTE-RÔTIE “LA TRIOTE” is harvested from a single cadastral lieu-dit of 100% Syrah. La Triote is the smallest fully registered lieu-dit in Côte-Rôtie, covering 1.768 hectares. The vines are planted on predominantly south- and southeast-facing, steep terraced slopes of gneiss bedrock with veins of mica schist and shallow, highly acidic topsoil of sand and small rocks with only a little clay, derived from the parent rock.



The white wines follow a similar progression, from the gentler granitic slopes of Les Grandes Parcelles to the steeper terraced granites of **CONDRIEU “LA VIEILLE MAISON.”** “La Vieille Maison” is harvested from three plots of 100% Viognier on a predominantly south-facing, moderate- to steep terraced slope of granite bedrock with moderately deep topsoil of sand and small granite-derived pebbles. **COLLINES RHODANIENNES VIOGNIER “LES GRANDES PARCELLES”** is harvested from two plots of 100% Viognier on a predominantly south-facing, gentle- to moderate slope of granite bedrock with moderately deep topsoil of sand and small granite-derived pebbles.

There’s more story to come on the Garons and their wines. A full report will be issued sometime in October or November.

ÖSTERREICH

VEYDER-MALBERG

2024 WACHAU RIESLING & GRÜNER VELTLINER

(AVAILABLE FROM THE SOURCE IN CA & OTHER SELECT STATES)



Great winegrowers are often most proud of their most difficult vintages. It's where they're tested and where they perform their best—bucking the odds, bucking the doubters, bucking everything the season threw at them.

Sometimes the easy years don't make the best wines. What do you do when the fruit is perfect? Almost nothing, and maybe that's the Achilles' heel of supposed "great vintages." Sure, wines from difficult years don't have everything everybody wants, but any drinker can feel their earnestness. You can sense the hard work, the amount of energy and thought, and that can make them extremely compelling. They don't always deliver, but when you have talent in the terroir and in the cellar, and a grower who smiles at adversity, it's going to be all right.

So-called "off vintages" don't have the grand cru, fully tanned beach bod, and perfectly spherical and cut muscles. But they're often stripped down to what we wait an eternity for the beach bods to develop into: something more linear, more straight, more precise, more clean, less fluff, more truth;

something that builds on the assets and works around the liabilities, allowing the terroir to control the narrative rather than the sunshine and manipulation in the cellar. Sometimes colder vintages create a more unidimensional wine, but with an even greater clarity of terroir, one that isn't so impacted by the sun blurring the lines with so much ripe fruit and upfront plush weight.



2024 in the Wachau was difficult, and in the Spitzer Graben, where Peter Veyder-Malberg makes his icy-stare, Iceman wines, it was even colder and more intense—no room for error beyond what nature threw against the protocol. After so many seasons, though, Peter's got a grip on it. He's been growing and making wine for over thirty years, with his first vintage in the Wachau in 2008 after time in the Weinviertel. Peter has learned that these are the vintages he's proudest of, and he's said so on numerous occasions. The joke is that the best wines are the ones that are currently for sale, but that's not Peter's M.O. He gives me a hard time when I ask him to send me wines from top

vintages for my personal cellar in Spain, but with underdog years, he asks me to really look at them and is ready to fire them off immediately upon request. I think vintages like 2024 drive him more than the universally great ones, and I think that translates into the wines.

When the 2024s were freshly bottled, they were so light and ethereal, almost spare, that it was easy to overlook the material. After bottling, it's like they go on a sort of extreme diet, where they're snug and unforgiving and don't say much. But after some time, that shell loosens and the minerally, subtle notes slowly start to flow the way they do in *Gymnopédie No. 1*. The 2024s are soft but the chords are piano-string taut, unadulterated by the sun's shine and the heat of some of the great years. These are moonlight reflections off the Spitzer Graben's micaschist on a quiet night, the hush of the powerful Danube nearby and the cold air rustling through the forests above the vines.

In 2024, Peter didn't make all of his usual wines. Quantities were so small that he declassified some of the Riesling, including the Schöner Riesling and fruit from what he calls one of his grand cru sites, Buschenberg, where he felt there simply wasn't enough wine to justify the expectations that he and probably all of his customers have for a bottle carrying that price, richness and grandeur. And that's where Riesling Blümchen comes in.

The 2024s are arriving mid-October and will just barely miss our Inside Source Tastings. However, Peter will finally make an appearance in California in early 2027. Date pending.

PETER ON 2024

"I'm convinced that ultimately, the experience and knowledge of the producers smooth out the extremes of vintages. At least in my case, I pay particular attention to the specific characteristics of the growing season. This is especially true for my harvesting and winemaking decisions. Therefore my wines are always my interpretation of a particular vintage from my respective vineyards.

2024 was once again quite atypical: very early bud break, then late frost at the end of April, with damage in lower elevations. Correspondingly early flowering. Partly intense heat and little rainfall, which could vary locally. As a result, the development was atypical—little photosynthesis/sugar increase; however, the reduction in acidity and the increase in pH continued. That prompted me to start the harvest earlier than usual (August 20th! Only in 2018 I started earlier—August 17th).

By mid-September, I was almost finished with the harvest when it rained for three days straight, starting on September 14th—a total of almost 400 mm fell during those days. Terrible for colleagues who still had a lot of vines out ...

The result of my young wines in the cellar really moved me: the alcohol levels were relatively low, the acidity crisp and firm; and in combination with the spice, the Grüner Veltliners reminded me more of Chenin Blanc."

GRÜNER VELTLINERS

Meaning "love you" in German, **LIEBEDICH** is the most ethereal and easygoing of the Grüner Veltliners. It comes from many different parcels planted in the 1950s to the 2010s between the far

eastern part of the Wachau around Loibenberg and the far west past Spitz and into the Spitzer Graben. The soil diversity includes gneiss and mica schist, but mostly the calcareous loess and river deposits lower on the slopes and abutting the Danube. With altitudes that range between 200-270m in all the different exposures, vine ages, genetic materials and more, it makes for a sort of Wachau snapshot Grüner Veltliner with a broad range of complexity without the particularities of a site-specific wine.



Peter's Viessling vineyard to the center left with a dark hail net covering

Peter's new **VISSLING GRÜNER VELTLINER** is brilliant. Planted a few years ago on an east face in the Spitzer Graben, pointed straight toward the famous cru, Brandstatt, it's everything one would expect from its position and the hands and mind that crafted it: crystalline spring freshness, pitch-perfect white pepper spice and loads of fine green herbal notes and a current of precisely chiseled mineral mouthfeel. While Liebedich greets all with a smile, casually talkative about the whole of the Wachau, from its warmer eastern stretches to the cooler mouth of the Spitzer Graben, Viessling is more stoic and whispers the striking nature of the valley. This is 100% cold climate Grüner made in an accessible way. Though its vines are only at their beginning, its expression is poised and tightly framed—a great example that disproves the notion that truly great wine can't come from young vines.

HOCHRAIN is more substantial and deeply complex than Liebedich. It comes from Wösendorf on the western end of the Wachau on south-southwest-facing steep terraces between 260-290m. Though the bedrock is a mix of loess and decomposed paragneiss, Ried Hochrain expresses more Wachau typicity (though not Wachau cellar styling) for this variety in that its topsoil is predominantly loess. Grüner Veltliner is a high-maintenance grape and suffers too much in more spare, poor soils (at least for today's common clones, though perhaps not with old massale selections like Peter's Weitenberg?). Planted in 1987-1992, it's full-flavored, fuller-bodied and has the most thrust among

Peter's Grüner range, which may be partially due to the young middle age of the vines and even more the richer loess soil.

Peter's **WEITENBERG** is the most profound of the Grüner Veltliners. Harvested in Weissenkirchen from south-southwest-facing steep terraces at 320m, it was planted on orthogneiss and mica schist with ancient massale selection in the early 1950s. It offers the rare pleasure of a historic and now rare Grüner Veltliner grown entirely on the acidic bedrock usually set aside for Riesling. As mentioned, the variety doesn't like stress but prefers richer soils like those of the Danube's alluvium and the windblown calcareous loess. Weitenberg is salty and concentrated, deeper but also finer, and more angular than Hochrain, though not with sharp Riesling-like angles. It's led by more stone fruit notes and deep saltiness than the spice, white pepper, and citrus of Hochrain.



Spitzer Graben's Schön in the foreground and Bruck in the background

RIESLINGS

PETER ON BLÜMCHEN: "Blümchen Riesling came about as a result of the unique conditions of the 2024 vintage. It was a very early year in my vineyards, with early bud break, flowering and ripeness, and I began harvesting on August 20th. Seed maturity and pH levels were the deciding factors for starting so early. By September 14th, I had already finished picking all of the Grüner Veltliner and the majority of the Riesling, with only a large portion of the Buschenberg Riesling still unharvested.

Then, starting September 15th, a period of heavy rain set in, bringing nearly 400 mm of precipitation over three days. Fortunately, temperatures remained cool afterward, preventing the development of botrytis. The grapes did, however, absorb water, diluting both sugar and acidity. I decided to harvest the Buschenberg grapes but not to release a single-vineyard wine from them in 2024. Instead, I

blended this batch with some early pickings from my other Riesling vineyards to create a lighter Riesling, “Blümchen,” meaning “little flower,” as the aroma reminds me of one.

Given the early harvest and the associated higher pH levels, I did not use any skin contact or maceration for the Riesling, unlike in most years. The grapes were crushed and pressed immediately with the stems included. The must was allowed to oxidize overnight, then racked off the sediment and spontaneously fermented in stainless steel tanks. Due to the atypically high pH, caused by the water uptake during the rain, the Riesling underwent malolactic fermentation, a first for Riesling in my cellar. After aging on the lees, *sur lie*, 3,000 bottles were filled in May 2025.”

BRUCK is the tighter-framed Riesling in the range, not specifically because of the terroir but by Peter’s choice. It’s from an especially cold site on the Wachau’s coldest left bank area, the Spitzer Graben. It’s on south-facing, steep terraces at 350m with vines planted between 1987-2002. Because it’s the earliest Riesling picked for still wine, it receives more skin maceration time, leading to stronger phenolic palate textures than the other Riesling crus. Its aging in steel also leads to a straighter and more angular architecture compared to Peter’s other Rieslings aged in large-format wood barrels. Bruck’s meager topsoil is derived from the underlying acidic bedrock, mica schist. While the other Riesling crus may be more substantial and complex when one breaks out the complexity measuring stick, Bruck is the wine I crave most regularly because of its crystalline purity. Though it’s deeply ponderous, it also demands less of me and my attention than Peter’s other more robust dry Rieslings to get what I want from Bruck: emotional lift; a walk in the clouds.

A sort of firstborn, with all parental expectations on its shoulders, **BRANDSTATT** is Bruck’s older, more grounded sibling. Also in the Spitzer Graben on a south face, it’s podiomed high on extremely steep terraces a little further in the valley above Bruck at 440-480m. It was replanted in 1979 and the terraces repaired again by Peter starting in 2009 with new plantings from Buschenberg massale selections. Brandstatt’s naturally cutting structure due to its high altitude, spare mica schist topsoil, and cold and steep site benefits from its edges curbed by six to eight months of aging in old 300L oak barrels. In contrast with Bruck, this wine commands one’s focus to discover and feel its depth. If Bruck is my walk in the clouds, Brandstatt is a journey into a mountain with veins of precious metals, mineral-dense spring water, compression and meditative silence; a space to contemplate one of mankind’s oldest questions ... “What is the meaning of wine?”