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News from Les Caves

Gain in Spain

Just hitting our shores a couple of interesting Spanish grapes. La Mar from Bodega Terras Gauda in Rias Baixas, advertised in previous newsletter, is 85% **Caino Blanco**, the remainder being Albarino. One of the most complex whites from Spain that we have tasted. In a different vein we will be shipping Barranco Oscuro's Blancas Nobles which includes the rarely spotted **Vigiriega** grape. Whilst we are collecting indigenous oddities we now have a pure **Moristel** from Bodegas Pirineos, a lovely red with real freshness.

2009 La Mar, Bodegas Terras Gauda

2008 Blancas Nobles, Barranco Oscuro

2009 Moristel, Bodegas Pirineos

Argy-Bargy



The wines of Bodega Cecchin are certainly artisan. Chemicals have never been used in the vineyard and the close-planted vines necessitate working with horses rather than tractors. Viticulture is completely organic with a small vineyard given over to biodynamic practices. Wild yeast ferment "for the true expression of our terroir" is done in cement vats to achieve a natural flavour and gentle extraction.

BODEGA CECCHIN, Mendoza

2007 Carignan

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

2008 Malbec sin sulfiti

Grape of the week - Mirefleurien

Mirefleurien - native to the Auvergne and actually native to the village of Mirefleure. Seen in blends with the Gamay d'Auvergne, most notably in Jean Maupertuis' Pierres Noires. Further information welcome as this variety does not have a muscular presence in books or the internet.

Thought for the day - what's the point of points?

A quick thought. As you know I'm not a pointillist (is that an infantalist who believes that scoring wines has a point?), but I read other people's shabby ranking systems and go hmm – if they can chuck numbers around willy-nilly and proclaim top dogs and mangy curs then why shouldn't I convert my qualified praise into digital delight? So for one night I'm relenting and giving you the scores as they stand on the doors.

If you had to characterise me I'm grouchy marks. When I'm on panels, an infrequent happening, points have to be dragged from me literally kicking and screaming. I am a self-styled Rhadamanthus, the demonic anti-Parker because, for me, the bigger they are – and they are usually big - the harder (my grades) fall. Since so much wine is morbidly dull I set my bar for mediocrity very low (or do I mean high) and to garner even a reasonable mark, therefore, the liquid in the glass has to talk eloquently to me. I am deaf to the hallelujahs and hosannas of noisy wines, ie those that usually go on to win gold medals in competition. Out of 20 my grudging 16s are occasionally sighted, my blood-out-of-a-stone 17s are rare birds indeed, and it is rumoured that I've coaxed 18 once or twice out of my stony soul. It is a completely different story In the comfort of my home where my appraisals become natural and generous, not that my critical backbone has suddenly been filleted and discarded, but that I choose wines that I think I would love to drink rather than being given wines that I am forced to judge.

Although I drink lots of different things throughout the year about 70% of the wines quaffed are what may be described as natural (ie low sulphur) wines, whilst the remainder are almost invariably organic or biodynamic, and wines from small producers. 98% of what I drink is French or Italian – apologies New World – and is always accompanied by food– this not only amplifies the pleasure of the wine but also helps me to relate to it. A bottle might last me two or three days, which also provides an excellent opportunity to witness how it develops.

Here are twenty wines that gave me enormous pleasure over the last six months (most, alas, now sold out). The points are uncritical, they reflect the timbre of the epiphany.

1997 Hermitage Rouge, Dard et Ribo

This was a revelation. It possessed a rugged, feral, yet hauntingly fragile beauty that was completely captivating. 99 points

2005 Vin de Paille, Domaine Ganevat

Quintessential sweet purity, distillation of autumn fruits and chestnuts. Words don't do this justice. 99 points

1874 El Tresillo Amontillado Viejo, Bodega Emilio Hidalgo

Mahogany-brown viscous wine smells of toffee cream, toasted walnuts, old polished furniture warming in the autumn sunshine pouring through the windows of a stately home, a spice box of cinnamon and cloves, some dried fruits. Intense nuttiness and poignant freshness makes this a wine that lasts for several minutes on the palate. A meditation wine. 99 points

1985 & 1988 Cahors, Clos de Gamot

Two vintages of an utterly traditional Cahors, pale, delicate, expressive and with loads of life left. (98 points for both)

2007 Sancerre Skeveldra, Seb Riffault

Carafed for two hours and served cool but not fridge cold this was a staggering wine loaded with secondary and tertiary aromatics. It tasted like a great old Chenin crossed with an Amontillado and then in the background was the gunflint minerality that bolted the ensemble together. A wine that would terrify any wine educator or master of wine. 98 points

2004 Barbaresco Asili, AA Roagna

Although it is infanticide to drink the Asili at this stage the wine has an elegant come-hither quality. The texture of the wine is so fine you find yourself teasing the liquid across every taste bud, nibbling the tannins, sucking the minerals... 98 points Asili/97 points Paje

2009 Bourgogne Rouge Auguste Domaine des Vignes du Maynes

When I first smelled this I went « whoof » as if I'd been belted in the solar plexus. These vineyards used during the Roman period are just being reclaimed now. This is terroir, bright and beautiful, the wine literally singing through the stone. 98 points

2008 Tankadeddu Rosso, Panevino

All the Panevino wines would make my top 20 of the year. This young vines Cannonau supplemented by Monica and Carignano was fresh, mineral and oozed the confidence of youth. 97 points The Vigne Vecchie (97) was equally outstanding; one of the greatest examples of booming Cannonau I've ever tasted – powerful but not heavy.

2008 Cotes du Rhone Sierra du Sud, Domaine Gramenon

My default red wine when I see it on a wine list this wonderfully expressive Syrah has bags of fruit, seasoned with garrigue herbs, liquorice finishing with a delicious freshness that elevates it above most other Cotes du Rhones. 97 points

2007 Montevervine Rosso, Montevervine

Drunk and loved on three occasions. It is which I call a confident wine, immaculately turned out but without any pretensions. What Sangiovese could be all about – 97 points

2006 Maremma Bianco, Massa Vecchia

Amber Vermentino meets Malvasia and various other grapes in a fabulous melange. Like other natural wines this wouldn't sit still in the glass and evolved from restrained floral aromas into full-flavoured, complex, warm, spicy number with flavours of honey-dipped chestnuts and the exotic notes of the orient. 97 points

2008 Irouléguay Blanc, Hegoxuri, Domaine Arretxea

This wine doesn't always deliver but on three occasions this year it would be the wow factor. Explosive fresh tropical fruit, roast pineapples, passionfruit, mango and rich secondary flavours of marzipan cake carried by thrilling ripe citrus acidity and crunchy minerality. 95-97 points

2007 Crozes-Hermitage Blanc « Karrière », Dard et Ribo

A wine that you could easily miss, Karrière is Marsanne from a specific clay terroir that has subtle aromatic flavours that go on for minutes in the mouth. 96 points

2008 Anjou Blanc BB, René Mosse

Luscious gobsmacker that impressed me at France Under One Roof. The next time I tried it was at the IWC dinner when all the wines on the table tasted flat. This shone! 96 points

2007 Fiano Don Chisciotte, Il Tufiello

Fum fo fi fee –ano, I smell the blood of a natural wine. In the game of natural wine poker yeasts are wild. Yet for all waltzing yeastiness there is apple and medlar fruit, soothing cool climate freshness and lickety-split minerality. Fantastic stuff – 96 points

2006 Riesling Kaiton, Peter Pliger

A wine that never sought one's approval or to charm the palate finally relented. Gripping in every sense. - 96 points

2008 Morgon, Cote du Py, Jean Foillard – magnum

Out of the magnum into the glass the wine was singing immediately, the fruit of the Gamay given beautiful definition by the minerality of the terroir. 95 points

2008 Buisson Pouilleux Vieilles Vignes, Thierry Puzelat – magnum

Yellow veering to amber old vines Sauvignon – a wine that provoked and challenged and changed with every mouthful. 95 points

Mad for biodynamics



<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2011/feb/09/natural-biodynamic-wine>

What is it that gets relatively articulate people steaming under the collar? Biodynamics must be valid since it can only be obscure astral forces that have driven sane and rational people into becoming raving nutters. Above is an article that got a load of John Bulls careering around the china shop.

Steiner is the bogeyman of the pseudo scientific community. He laid out the tenets of biodynamie which has been adapted by farmers in every country of the world for fruit, vegetable and grape growing. What biodynamics has done (whether or not you believe that Steiner's theories amount to a hill of mung beans) is to encourage growers to find natural remedies to natural problems in the vineyard. In order for the vine to be healthy and resistant the soil ideally should contain high levels of humus and natural minerals to make conventional farming and spraying kills off the very

things that give life and nourishment to the vine. There is a further ethical dimension to biodynamics and that concerns biodiversity. Vineyards are now like factory farms - trees and scrub are cut down causing erosion, natural habitats are destroyed. Biodynamics encourages the grower to see the vine as part of the whole, not the whole itself.

Natural wine is what happens in the winery. Over 250 additions and subtractions can be made to wine. Natural wine posits the wine made from healthy grapes requires minimal manipulation. If we prefer not to have lots of additives in our food why should we accept them in wine. It should be remembered that the better the quality of the raw ingredients (in this case, grapes) the more "natural preservatives" the eventual wine will contain. Natural wines are made with small quantities or zero-added sulphur. The legal limits under EU regulations are ludicrously high. Given that an experienced taster can detect sulphur on a wine which has 50 mg/l it is not necessary to use it in the quantities that it is allowed. High sulphur in wines leads to health problems and exacerbates existing ones. But the use - and abuse - of sulphur is contentious. Most natural winemakers will put a micro quantity of sulphur at bottling to help stabilise the wine (although some vintages may not require) and a few rarely sulphur the wine at all. These last wines are generally meant to drunk in their youth and slightly chilled. However, there are more phenolic, high acid wines that will age 50 years or more.

What is clear is that for the scientific hoo-ha and blind prejudice that we don't really understand the ways wines develop. The interesting thing about biodynamics and natural wines, whatever your take on them is, is that the most highly regarded growers in the world have taken on board some of these methods in the vineyard and the winery. It is scientific in that it is do with keen observation rather than voodoo farming. And to be a good natural winemaker you have to be a brilliant winemaker because you can't rely on selected years, cold ferments in huge tanks, computerised temperature controls and a battery of other manipulations that can add or take flavour from the wine.

This is not about the burden of proof. It is, however, a fact that every year more and more estates are converting to biodynamic viticulture. As it is expensive and time consuming you would have to wonder why so many growers have become smitten with this crazy philosophy. The reason many of these growers put forward is that the discipline of biodynamics helps them to become better vigneron and to understand the natural processes more intimately.

Biodynamics is not absolutist. Whereas some growers work entirely by the calendar, others don't. Some use preparation 500 & 501 and not the remaining ones. Ask ten different growers about the way they work you'll get ten different answers with a single common thread: "respect for nature and the environment".

The important lesson of biodynamics is about encouraging life in the soil. Decades of chemical abuse have meant that the soil in many vineyards is, in effect, moribund. It takes probably ten years - and perhaps longer - to revitalise such a vineyard. Here is a simple analogy - are we better for being permanently dosed up with drugs, or are we better for weaned off them and living a healthy lifestyle.

The other reason, as has been mentioned, that vignerons prefer organic and biodynamic viticulture is that they seek the maximum expression of their terroir. Terroir is not an elitist concept; it is the mark of individuality of every vineyard and every vintage. Terroir has been embraced in every country in the world. The best way of expressing the innumerable unique terroirs is to minimise chemical interventions and manipulations. Healthy grapes have more matter to make more complex, nuanced wines.

A natural winemaker will take the grapes and vinify them without adding or subtracting anything. No enzymes, no acids, no chaptalisation, no reverse osmosis, no (or very light) filtration, no (or very light) fining, no (or very small) addition of sulphur.

It seems incredible that any of this is remotely controversial yet it obviously affronts quite a lot of people, who believe that proper wine can only be made with loads of additives. Fiona is right to cover natural wines precisely because it is an artisan movement and a refreshing alternative to the world of wine dominated by the supermarkets and their buying agendas. Globalism has created a dreary homogeneity where a cab sauv from one country can be indistinguishable from another. Supermarkets buy on price and quantity; they want dead perfection, no more, to adapt Tennyson. Whether you like them or not natural wines are the antidote to these mass-produced wines. Given that a lot of us prefer to eat artisan unpasteurised cheeses rather than the shrinkwrapped blocks of rubber cheddar in cold cabinets or drink unfiltered apple juice made from pressed apples rather than apple-flavoured concentrate, it is nice to have the choice to buy and drink wine made from grapes and nothing else. Ultimately, I want to taste the wine and where the wine comes from not a battery of winemaker tricks-and-tropes...

Biodynamic treatments are backed up by soil analysis, measurement of worm and bug activity, measurement of the efficiency of the vine in terms of production and requirements for manures etc. The Marie Thun calendar is the result of 60 years of observation and experiment - it is used by gardeners in every country in Europe. As I have said before biodynamics is a proactive approach in the vineyard, it is not a religion. There are some bizarre facets of it, but just because people don't understand how and why things work doesn't mean that there is no scientific basis for them. For example, a natural remedy for infestation of spiders is osage oranges - it seems to work - or should I hit them over the head with a frying pan or spray them with a toxic insect repellent?

Even in Bordeaux, the last conservative bastion against change, major domaines are switching to organic viticulture as a first step. I think one of the first growers has been experimenting with biodynamics. This is the result of careful scientific study, not mass hysteria. They may not end up burying cows' horns stuffed with organic manure in every vineyard, but they will seek alternatives to chemical sprays and mineral fertilisers. It's an eminently sensible move, kinder to the soil and kinder to the environment in general.

It doesn't help to take Steiner's loonier utterances to discredit a way of life or a system of farming. And I am talking about a system of farming - not theosophy. In any case philosophies and religions change over time as people adapt them to their specific needs. Steiner didn't make wine, farmers make wine and they use some of

the ideas to create a system to work within. Steiner's influence is less about cow horns and more about the way we need to search for "natural remedies" to problems and his original Koberwitz lectures addressed the problems of diseased crops and unhealthy livestock in regions where chemical fertilisers had been heavily used.

One has to admit that the more lurid nomenclature of biodynamics does not help to explain things which are often common sense. There is, however, so much about the natural world that we do not understand (more things in heaven and earth, indeed) and commentators and critics want to calibrate and dissect. Just because certain things are currently mysterious, doesn't mean that there is no rationale behind them.

I think that some growers take farming methods on faith; if the results are great you continue to do it unthinkingly. Some highly thoughtful and educated growers such as Andre Ostertag experimented with BD and were surprised that the vines under BD improved their productive efficiency. He couldn't explain why. No two vineyards are identical, no two people are identical – where biodynamics scores is that it is prescient and proactive – it is not the one-size-fits-all-solution of conventional farming.

The question that might be raised is more straightforward: for all this effort are biodynamic wines better than conventional wines? Since the assessment of quality is a subjective one, this issue will never be satisfactorily resolved. On the plus side the vineyard should be healthy, the vines more resistant and yielding better quality fruit with more material to convert into interesting wine. The caveat is the winemaker can still destroy the flavour of the wine by clumsy winemaking.

Natural Wine masterclass at Vagabond Wines

I have done three natural wine master-classes/seminars - call them what you will – over the last couple of weeks. It feels odd to be cast as a pontifical spokesman; although I have written extensively about and argued passionately for the wines I love to drink and the growers I admire, I still feel like a *dilettante*.

What is really strange is that we could just be talking about the finer points of vinification and how mg/litre of sulphur is a necessary or desirable addition to a wine. Instead one is constantly being diverted down anfractuous conversational lanes eventually exploring the philosophical origins of taste. Or having a verbal stramash about a point of nomenclature.

Natural wine challenges orthodoxy or ortho-dozy, as I sometimes call it. The movement combines, on the one hand, the forensic standards of Jules Chauvet, and, on the other, a jazz-punk irreverent sensibility and a nose-thumbing attitude to bureaucratic authority. Not for nothing are the ferments called wild yeast! The sense of freedom and lack of control is liberating in a world that insists on conformity. It is easy to understand why people are attracted to the bohemian mixture of seriousness-and-faux-seriousness. The growers possess passion and energy; they put their life into the wine and a crazy two-fingers-to-you label on the bottle.

Natural wine is akin to a new artistic movement, a pot of paint thrown in the face of those who believe in precious hierarchies. If the conventional hierarchy purports to

be reason, then natural wine is a critique of reason. Think of it as a youthful reaction to being told what to do and how to think. When I studied English literature at school we were inculcated to believe in the great English tradition, an inevitable lineage of writers whose work could be aesthetically linked down the generations. Such certainties! The world turns and opinions change. I soon discovered textual analysis, structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxism and various other critical approaches and my views on art and literature began to change; I began to question what was considered right or reasonable.

“If you can’t count on history what can you count on?” Fleishmann – Northern Exposure

Our feisty debate which took place at Vagabond Wines, an excellent wine shop in Fulham, (<http://www.vagabondwines.co.uk>) initially sparked around niggling definitions. Tempting as it is to define natural wine as a movement it does not serve our argument. Movements are made of individuals who have their own ideas and free will. Much as we may conveniently label them as impressionists, fauvists, modernists, constructivists etc no two artists from a movement paint in exactly the same way. You wouldn’t confuse a Dufy with a Matisse, or a Kandinsky with a Klee. The romantic poets, for example, were a completely amorphous bunch; even those who were the closest buddies and co-authored aesthetic manifestoes such as Wordsworth and Coleridge wrote very differently. What binds people in artistic endeavour are common aspirations and energies, the intrinsic desire for change or the need to push personal boundaries.

La Dive embodies something else - the anarchic spirit of natural wine. You might search in vain for a manifesto of golden rules amongst the growers present. One comment during the seminar was that the natural wine movement has spawned “Manichean street preachers”, a group of sommeliers and writers who implicitly believe that all non-natural wines are abhorrent. Those who see a cause to champion will champion the cause; and they articulate their case with intellectual fervour rather than unquestioning passion. I don’t, however, see the truth in this stereotype of the frothy hear-no-evil-taste-no-evil natural wine junkie. Wines, as we know, belong to a spectrum from the highly manipulated to the moderately manipulated through to the less interventionist and finally the zero-interventionist. Winemakers move back and forth along this spectrum. Natural winemakers may aspire to see themselves like the artist refining him/herself out of existence (“The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.”) leaving only the purest expression of fruit and terroir. For all the desire to be absent from the final creation or to make wine with the heart rather than the head, common sense is always at the back of winemaking. Intuition and experience are the main tools in the natural winemaker’s kit box; if the wine is working well the winemaker can leave well alone, if not it is the nature and extent of the interventions that distinguish him or her from the conventional winemaker.



Natural wine - not so much a movement as a party liable to break out at any time.

Our second main argument concerned typicality in wine. Typicality is regarded as the property of the status quo, the equivalent of stating “this wine is right and, contrariwise, this wine is wrong.” This is like saying that received pronunciation is the way we should all talk or that English spelling is inherently superior to American. I submit that what we currently accept as the flavour norm in wine is far removed from the original version, as wines have been gradually corrupted by modern farming techniques and radically altered by vinification methods designed to “clean up” the wine. We have noted the highly traditional use of extended skin contact for white wines to give colour and phenolics, wild yeast ferments at ambient temperatures which brings a further point of difference, the low use of sulphur and the absence of filtration – methods that both nourish the wines and give them a unique signature. I cited Sauvignon as a grape that has been diluted by poor farming practice (picked too early at high yields) and highly interventionist vinification (cultured yeast, temperature control, high sulphur, stopped malos) – no wonder it is difficult to discover examples that truly convey the sense of terroir and no wonder it is not perceived as a noble grape variety.

The taste of the wine can be understood in the history of farming and winemaking practice in a particular region. What we taste is one chapter in a continuing story; the Sancerre of gooseberries and grass cuttings is a snapshot of the way the wine is now, not the way the wine was, and not the way the wine could be. It takes the daring and dedication of a Sebastien Riffault, an Alexandre Bain or a Thierry Puzelat to rediscover the terroir potential of the grape variety.

Renaissance des Appellations and Slow Food have laid down charters to revise and revitalise the notion of typicality (or return to terroir as it is sometimes known). Only

by finding the truest expression of the soil and that can only be achieved by best practice farming methods, only by eliminating the multiple additions and subtraction that take place will we once again discover the essence of what the appellation system was meant to protect (and signally failed to).

The issue of flaws/faults excited the strongest exchanges. If one man's drink is another man's poison then it may be affirmed that there are the faults *qua* faults, and there are flaws which are comparative faults, as well as some flaws which can be manipulated to give the ultimate wine different and subtle nuances (one thinks of oxidation or reduction). By faults we were not discussing whether wines were corked or had become vinegar but those aromas and tastes that are regular by-products of fermentations.

It is a highly contentious point whether VA is good, bad or somewhere in-between. Some growers allow it to be part of the wine; their wines are highly successful so I assume they know what they are doing. Critics may or may not enjoy the wines – they are certainly not above them - and saying that something is a fault doesn't make it so – either to the winemaker or the consumer. There are countless examples (Cheval Blanc 1947 springs to mind) of wines with very high levels of VA that have garnered unequivocal critical acclaim. Winemaking presents different and extraordinary challenges; some of the most interesting wines I have ever tasted have been forged out of trying circumstance.

Unless something is very obviously wrong I am wary of dismissing certain wines out of hand. Wine is a living, mutating liquid – it alters in the bottle and has an arc of drinkability. We have seen numerous examples of where the VA becomes absorbed into the personality of the wine (Chateau Musar, Chateau Rayas, Bordeaux from certain vintages) and the wine gains complexity. Whether this is intentional is irrelevant; we are judging the wine not the winemaker. It is similar to aleatory music in a way – “determined (structured) in one way but depending on chance in detail”. (Werner Meyer-Eppler)

There are, of course thousands of people who drink and enjoy low sulphur wines every week in restaurants and wine bars around the world. Arbiters of taste might propose that this self-deception on a grand scale and that all of the people are wrong all of the time. The trouble is if you use the emperor's new clothes argument here you are entirely open to have your own sense of taste analysed. A great palate is not the result of making the grade in exams or a given by virtue of having been on the wine scene for a long period, but stems from an ability to understand flavours from many different points of view.

There is a comfort zone around the activity of tasting. Wines are no respecters of reputation and the taster is only as good as his or her response to a given wine. The five second snapshot judgement is useful and dangerous at the same time. One's instincts are a fair guide. But if one's palate is conditioned to expect (and appreciate) certain flavours in wine then aromas and flavours outside that spectrum will inevitably strike a discordant note and engender a negative reaction. Even the most experienced tasters need to confront their prejudices in order to recalibrate their palates. Not to like a wine is one thing, to dismiss it as faulty because you don't like it, is intellectually unsound, whilst to dismiss a whole group of wines on this basis is arrogant bovarism.

As there were many sommeliers present conversation then turned to price and whether the wines were rather expensive for what they were. To me the quality of the bottle is how much I want to drink of it. A spoofy £300 icon wine may exhaust my palate and patience after a single glass. Where's the value in that - although I may dine off my chronic iconic disappointment for years to come. The value of the wine is not the label, nor the Parker points, nor the money that has been spent on marketing the estate, but rather the love, care and attention that has been poured into the wine from tending the vines to nurturing the wine through its fermentation. Natural wines are often made in micro-quantities; a barrel here a barrel there – these are the true originals, sometimes made once and never again. Given that demand for natural wines is so high and quantities are so minuscule, given the sheer craftsmanship and bloody hard work that goes into these wines, it is a wonder that they are not more expensive. Making wines with little or no safety net is a dangerously uncommercial activity. So, expensive? Not at all!

Sommeliers use the perceived reluctance (and ignorance) of their customers as an excuse for being conservative with their wine choices. As a former sommelier myself I don't accept that there are no-go areas and that customers are not open to suggestion. If the wines won't sell off the list they need to be hand sold and isn't that, after all, the role of the sommelier? It is surely more rewarding to sell something artisan than a label that people recognise and gravitate towards as their default choice. If the sommelier is the conductor, the wine list is the musical score and natural wines are the challenging musical piece; the best conductors will always want to challenge themselves and excite their audience...

For all that a master-class is meant to make people think and to challenge cherished beliefs it should, through the wines themselves, discover areas of accord. The sheer diversity of styles (albeit all within the natural, low-intervention idiom) demonstrated that there is something for everyone in natural wine. If the wilder extremes of zero sulphur wine are not your bag of funk, there are beautifully eloquent and pure examples of fruit and terroir-expression to enjoy. I have said before that wine is liquid pride (the pride of the land and of the vine, the pride of the grower, the pride of the winemaker) and this should always come before the prejudice of the taster. Every wine, particularly natural wine, needs to be tasted and evaluated on the basis of what it is, not what we think it should be.