



The Wine and Cheese Cask

407 Washington Street • Somerville, Massachusetts 02143

(617) 623-8656

February 18, 2025 – March 17, 2025

Sud by Sud-Ouest

This month we wander from the Pyrenees to Provence, drinking and eating our way through the lower half of viticultural France.

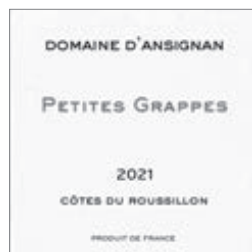
Les Contours

2021 Collines Rhodaniennes Blanc ‘Les Contours de Mairlant’ (François Villard)
Sale Price \$14.99 – \$152.90 case of twelve



White Rhônes are a rare treat. François Villard is famed for his Condrieu, but also makes this great value blend of Marsanne and Roussanne. Its golden color indicates sweet, but on the palate it is crisp, minerally, and dry. A great match for scallops.

Small Bunches



2021 Côtes du Roussillon ‘Petites Grappes’ (Domaine d’Ansignan)
Sale Price \$19.99 – \$203.90 case of twelve
This wine estate is brand new to the Massachusetts market and is a welcome addition. Roussillon, in the far southwest of France’s Mediterranean coast, is a rugged, mountainous landscape with plenty of old

vines. Here the blend of 50/50 Carignan & Grenache is sourced from vines averaging 50 years old, with some over 100, which are dry farmed and in transition to organic viticulture. The altitude of the vineyards plus a carefully timed harvest help keep the alcohol levels at a moderate 12.5%. Whole-cluster fermentation tames Carignan’s rustic tannins, but leaves juiciness, texture, and spice, while the Grenache brings cherry and strawberry fruit. This fresh and lively red will be a good choice for grilled chicken and roasted vegetables.

Tenacious Tannat

2017 Madiran (Château Bouscassé)
Sale Price \$24.99 – \$254.90 case of twelve
Madiran was nearly extinct in the 1950s and it wasn’t until the 1970s that the revived Tannat grape variety brought it back to commercial viability. Back in the 80s, one exuberant scribe referred to these dark wines as “no country boy, but a courtier of character.” But most Madiran needs at least five years of bottle age. Luckily, we just happen to have one here. The 2017 Château Bouscassé has the ripe tannins of Tannat but is provided with grace and perfume by Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. This is a beauty of a wine when paired with cassoulet, confit de canard, and a hearty slab of roquefort.



En Terrasses...

2022 Ventoux ‘En Terrasses’ (Domaine Durieu)
Sale Price \$14.99 – \$152.90 case of twelve

Like its next-door neighbor Gigondas, Ventoux was a breakaway subregion of the Côtes du Rhône appellation that eventually received its own AOC status. While both received their classification in the early 1970s, Gigondas quickly outpaced Ventoux in both reputation and price. But in recent years, Ventoux’s high altitude and micro-climatic diversity has encouraged investment and fresh talent to continue the winemaking tradition that can be traced back to the 1st century. For now, wines from Ventoux are ridiculously affordable with Domaine Durieu’s En Terrasses as a prime example. It’s a Grenache (70%) and Syrah blend that exemplifies the juicy freshness of Ventoux. Plum-scented with black cherry fruit, this red has a charming spicy finish with whispers of licorice. At its easy price, you can add a cup into your braised short ribs and drink the rest with the dish.

Saint-Damien



2022 Gigondas ‘Vieilles Vignes’ (Saint-Damien)
Sale Price \$41.99 – \$428.30 case of twelve
Wine has been made in Gigondas since Roman times. The name of the village derives

from the Latin *Jocunditas*, denoting a ‘merry city.’ Sounds like a pleasant place to spend a few centuries. Gigondas was once one of the Southern Rhône’s best values, but as the wines became better known and better made, prices have risen. One producer whose wines have not skyrocketed in price is Saint-Damien. Their Vieilles Vignes blend of Grenache and Mourvèdre is a benchmark Gigondas. The 2022 is sturdy yet graceful with lovely aromas of wild herbs and a stony, dry finish. Great with a steaming skillet of shepherd’s pie.

Wicked Old Vines

2022 Châteauneuf-du-Pape ‘Cuvée Impériale’ (Domaine Raymond Usseglio)
Sale Price \$84.99 – \$866.90 case of twelve

The Usseglios are old timers in Châteauneuf-du-Pape and so are their vines. Father Raymond has turned over the reins to son Stéphane, whose name adorns his Lirac. This month we grabbed a few cases of their stupendous Cuvée Impériale. Only made in the best vintages from vines that are now 120 years old, this Châteauneuf-du-Pape is rich in plum and cherry fruit and powerful in tannin, yielding an incredible long finish. Keep for a decade, or, if you want to enjoy it in its youth, decant for a couple of hours and serve with a roast leg of lamb.



Chiroubles

2020 Chiroubles (Arnaud Combiér)

Sale Price \$24.99 – \$254.90 case of twelve



Of the 10 Beaujolais Crus, Chiroubles claims the highest elevation. This leads to a later harvest than the other Crus and a surprisingly delicate yet complex expression of Gamay. Arnaud Combiér captured plenty of charm and perfume in his 2020 Chiroubles, with raspberry, blood orange, and an ever-so-slight earthy funk. The fine dusty tannins become rounded and

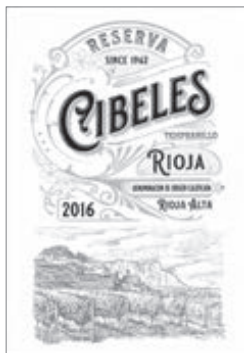
silky by the second glass as it continues to evolve and allure. Gorgeous with a slight chill alongside a *tarte à la tomate*.

Rioja

2016 Rioja Reserva ‘Cibeles’ (Bodegas Sonsierra)

Sale Price \$17.99 – \$183.50 case of twelve

It’s no coincidence that our favorite Rioja producers all seem to be located in the western part of Rioja, in a high altitude region fittingly named Rioja Alta. Here the climate is relatively cooler and the growing season shorter, resulting in bright and elegant wines that age well. Because Bodegas Sonsierra is a cooperative, their Cibeles Reserva, despite its esteemed pedigree, is available for under \$20. Even more impressive is the fact that this Rioja is a Reserva, a designation that requires the wine to be aged a minimum of three years with at least a year in expensive oak barrels. At nearly a decade old, this Tempranillo has had plenty of time to integrate its tannins with its dark-berried fruit. We cannot find a Rioja Reserva that is as rich and deep for this price. It’s perfect as a glass at the end of the night or with a blue cheese lamb burger.



Rebholz

2021 Pinot Blanc ‘Vom Muschelkalk’ (Rebholz)

Sale Price \$39.99 – \$407.90 case of twelve

Rebholz is a thoroughly uncompromising organic and biodynamic winery in the Pfalz region of Germany. Almost all their wines are completely dry, a style line that runs throughout their portfolio. Their key is analyzing the grapes’ condition in each vintage and



harvesting by hand only the ripest and healthiest bunches. This could mean that a wine may vary in weight from vintage to vintage, but it will still be in the Rebholz dry style. As much as we like Rebholz’s Rieslings, it is their Pinot Blancs that we consume more of. This month we negotiated a better price for this amazing mineral-driven Pinot Blanc. The 2021

Vom Muschelkalk is a wine that rivals fine French White Burgundy. Grown on a chalky soil, its subtle but persistent orchard fruit leads to a salty crispness and a long, cool, dry, flinty finish. A terrific wine for crab cakes and aioli.

Pecorino Biologico

2023 Terre di Chieti Pecorino (Jasci)

Sale Price \$14.99 – \$152.90 case of twelve

Italy is awash in grape varieties like Pecorino: ancient and indigenous, then abandoned in favor of more productive varieties, and nearly lost completely before being revived by a small, dedicated group of vigneroni. But not every grape with a similar



early trajectory has succeeded as much as Pecorino, which now enjoys widespread plantings within Italy’s regions of Marche and Abruzzo. Like many grapes, it does best when planted in hilly areas, which can be found in

Abruzzo’s Terre di Chieti. The Jasci family, early converts to organic viticulture (one of the first 10 to be officially certified in Italy, in fact) make a very fresh, pleasant, and bright Pecorino. Its gentle floral aromatics and herbal, citrusy, and salty palate make it lovely alongside a seafood pasta.

Saar

2021 Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Kabinett (Dr. Fischer)

Sale Price \$19.99 – \$203.90 case of twelve

Look closely at this label and you’ll see a familiar name at the bottom: Hofstätter, the Alto Adige vigneroni that we have featured multiple times in the last year.



Looking to branch out, and inspired by a love for Riesling, they purchased and revived the Mosel’s historic Dr. Fischer estate in 2014. The Bockstein vineyard in the village of Ockfen produces aromatic and

spicy Riesling with pronounced minerality thanks to the rocky blue slate soils. In the case of this delicious 2021 Kabinett, floral notes accompany the lush palate of orchard fruit and spice. The medium sweetness is quickly resolved by brisk acidity. Delicious with a spicy Thai shrimp curry.

Dolcetto

2022 Langhe Dolcetto (Anna Maria Abbona)

Sale Price \$14.99 – \$152.90 case of twelve

It’s no secret we love Dolcetto here. Much can be said about the high potential for the grape when given proper attention. That is, when it’s not treated as an afterthought next to Nebbiolo and Barbera; indeed it is often only planted in the sites where the more finicky—but also much more prized—Nebbiolo won’t ripen. While Anna Maria Abbona’s Dogliani, a DOCG unequivocally regarded as Dolcetto’s best expression, makes the case for serious, structured, and complex Dolcetto, this Langhe Dolcetto reminds us of the immense pleasures that can be found in humble and inexpensive wines made from Dolcetto. With its juicy plum fruit, violet aromas, gentle tannins, and earthy finish, it’s a great choice for just about any meal, but particularly mushroom pizza.



The Fat Sheep

2023 Muscadet Sèvre et Maine 'Les Gras Moutons'

(La Pépière)

Sale Price \$21.99 –
\$224.30 case of twelve

We remember Marc Ollivier describing the Gras Moutons vineyard as being cold. We later learned that he meant that the Melon grapes in this vineyard took a little longer to ripen. Given the recent warm growing seasons, this has become a plus for Les Gras Moutons. The last few vintages have been delightfully energetic and crisp. The 2023 is a wonderful Muscadet with aromas of quince and mint. The finish is long and lean with a nice suggestion of sea spray. Have with oysters if you've got them, but superb with anything from the sea.



Rosé Liter

2024 Navarra Rosado (Azul y Garanza)

Sale Price \$14.99 per Liter – \$152.90 case of twelve

This precocious 2024 rosé is fresh as can be, and a great value to boot given the Liter format. From the Spanish region of Navarra in the northeast (near Rioja), Azul Y Garanza is a certified-organic blend of 50% Garnacha, 30% Tempranillo, and 20% Merlot. Lively and crisp with strawberry fruit and a dry, peppery finish, it will be great alongside fish tacos. Bring on the spring and summer.



Specialty Foods

Fondue for Two

They'll be here soon... it's okay, I can do this. It's just fondue, for two. No big deal, right? Now, slice the garlic in half and rub it on the inside of the pot. Wait, just rub it on? Does this even do anything? I'm sure it's in the recipe for a reason, so I'd better just do it.

Alright, here goes. Set the stove to medium heat and add the butter. Wow, why does melting butter always smell so good? I'll just add the flour here and—oh god, is it supposed to clump like that?! Did I mess this up already? No, just keep whisking, we're fine, everything's fine. It's getting smoother and starting to bubble a little. How about that, I made a roux and it looks pretty good! It's not so hard, I bet I could make all kinds of stuff with this. Cream sauce, stews, gravy... maybe next time, if tonight goes well. For now, stay focused and don't let it burn.

Now where'd I put the wine... ah here it is. Two cups for the fondue doesn't leave much to drink, I'm glad I got a second bottle. I'll just pour that in with the Kirsch and... hmm. It didn't really sizzle up like it does on TV, I guess it's not really meant to be that hot. Sure smells nice though. Maybe I should taste it... yeah, still tastes pretty boozy. I guess I'll let it simmer for a couple more minutes and make sure everything is set. Toasted bread? Check.

Roasted potatoes and Brussels sprouts? Check. Candles? Hmm... maybe too much, dial it back.

To the task at hand: it seems like the alcohol is gone so I guess I'm ready for cheese. I'm glad I remembered to shred it earlier. Add one handful at a time, stay patient, we're almost done. Stir slowly in a figure-eight, no quick motions. It's actually kind of mesmerizing, beautiful really. If I wasn't so nervous it might even be relaxing. That's the last of the cheese, it seems to be thickening up nicely. I could probably taste it now, make sure it's good. Oh man, it *is* good, but are we done? I feel like I'm forgetting something.... Ah I need to season it! It seems salty enough already, but a couple twists from the pepper mill and—wait, what do I do with a whole nutmeg?! Is that what this side of the cheese grater with all the spikes is for? Well, it worked fine so I guess it is. One more taste. That's it, it slaps. The nutmeg really highlights the savory cheese. Glad I didn't skip it.

That wasn't too hard; a couple little tricks here and there but pretty straightforward. This is going to be great. They should be here any minute too. On second thought, I am going to get those candles and just put them on the table, then I'll say we should light them just as, like, a joke and see how it lands...

12 month Gruyère by Michael Spycher – \$28 per pound

L'Etivaz by Beillevaire – \$32 per pound

Gallus Grand Cru by Hardegger – \$18 per pound

L'Emmental Français by Paysan Breton – \$12 per pound

Official Wine Cask Fondue Recipe

- 1 sliver of garlic
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp flour (1 tbsp cornstarch for gluten-free)
- 2 cups dry, unoaked white wine
- 1.5+ lb grated alpine cheese
- Salt, pepper, nutmeg
- 1.5 oz kirsch

Sale Dates

**The First Quarterly Sale of the Year
will last two full weeks.**

**The Sale begins Friday February 21st and runs
through Sunday March 9th**

Details: 10% off six bottles; 20% off twelve bottles.
Wines of the Month (back page), fortified wines (Port, Sherry, Vermouth, etc.) and sparkling wines may be included for a 10% discount. Blue tagged (NET) wines and jug wines (1.5L and 3L) are excluded.

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407 Washington Street
Somerville, Massachusetts 02143
email: wine@thewineandcheesecask.com
phone: (617) 623-8656

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Wines of the Month – February 18, 2025 through March 17, 2025

2024 Chenin Blanc ‘Petit’ (Ken Forrester)

Sale Price \$10.99 – \$118.70 case of twelve

Forrester’s 2024 Petit is bigger in body and richer in taste than previous vintages. Its peachy fruit is balanced by its dry finish. Fine for roasted salmon and curried vegetables.



2023 Montepulciano d’Abruzzo (Pietrame)

Sale Price \$9.99 – \$107.89 case of twelve

Pietrame’s Montepulciano is an extreme bargain. Have this strong, earthy red with spicy foods.



2023 Toscana Rosso (Ciacci Piccolomini d’Aragona)

Sale Price \$11.99 – \$129.49 case of twelve

Ciacci is a Brunello producer who also makes a great value Tuscan red. The 2023 is a powerful and fresh Sangiovese (mostly) for roasted meats and bean stews.



2023 Rioja Blanco (El Coto)

Sale Price \$9.99 – \$107.89 case of twelve

Whites from Rioja are severely underrated. El Coto’s Viura is crisp and dry with good weight and subtle fruit. Fine for a seafood and rice platter.

