

Selections



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Enfin!

We have returned from three very successful weeks in French wine country and are ready to provide you with more information about Arthur's Cellar Wine Club and to make our first wine offering.

We found exactly what we were looking for – small wineries producing wonderful wines for reasonable prices (Wines. With Spirit!). We have signed exclusive agency agreements with sixteen producers (you can see who they are at www.arthursellers.com) to represent their wines in Ontario and are currently completing discussions with several more. We have also established a close relationship with a very knowledgeable and experienced industry source in Provence who is prepared to recommend many additional wineries.



A vineyard in winter - the Luberon

The Wine Makers

Our producers tend to have much in common. All of them are passionate about and absolutely committed to their craft. Their vines are thirty, forty, fifty years and older. They have invested heavily in new equipment and technology. They prefer to use organic fertilizers and natural disease and pest control techniques, eschewing chemicals whenever possible. Their winemakers are veritable magicians who coax the maximum from the grapes that for the most part are grown on the wineries' properties. They make wines that respect the character of their land, climates and conditions (terroir). They are small to medium-sized family run operations that look for long-term, personal relationships with their distributors and ultimate clients.

The Wine Club

The main purpose of the wine club is to provide our members with very special wines that they cannot get at LCBO retail outlets – wines that provide the maximum in value and pleasure. There are many reasons why the LCBO doesn't carry our wines – they are not aware of them; the wines are produced in insufficient quantity to satisfy LCBO volume requirements, or; the producers do not want their wines to be mass marketed.

We decided to start the club because we love sharing special wines with good friends and have always wanted to be involved in the wine business. We have found that wine grapes are very fortunate. They grow where the weather is fair, the scenery is breathtaking and the people charming, sincere and hospitable. Over the past decade we have traveled and tasted extensively in southern France. I can't count the number of times we said, "Isn't it too bad we can't get this wine back home". Now we can!

The Wines

At the outset we are going to focus on the wines of southern France with a few from Spain, Italy and other areas of France. Why? Because we know them best and believe there is extraordinary value and pleasure in these old world wines for every wine consumer. As we progress, we will add wines from other parts of the world, letting the membership's views be our guide.

We will offer wines that appeal to a wide range of tastes and pocketbooks. There will be vins de pays that will sell for \$10 or less, wines for everyday drinking in the \$10 to \$20 range and more serious, expensive wines for those with cellars.

Most of the wines have won several awards (including some 90+ ratings by Robert Parker) and several are only available in very limited quantities.

We will usually feature two or more wines from the same producer in each offering. Most wineries make a range of wines, from inexpensive everyday drinking wines to high-end special cuvées, so there should be something of interest for most members in each offering. Further, in order to minimize shipping costs, we need pallet-sized orders - 50 cases of twelve 750 ml bottles – so offering several different wines from the same producer will improve our chances of quickly attaining this minimum order quantity.

Our club will be somewhat like a virtual wine store. Assuming you like the wines you have ordered, you will be able to order them again and again (assuming the winery still has them – although there will always be the next vintage).

We had originally intended to hold tasting events before placing our initial orders, but the cost of shipping samples by air freight is exorbitant. Instead, we'll order additional cases with each sea/land shipment placed for our members and use these for special events.

How it Works

Many members have asked us to start offering our wines right now.

Unfortunately, there is no 'Running a Wine Club in Ontario for Dummies' to follow so in the early stages things are going to be a bit primitive and somewhat by trial and error. Further, we are still working on our website but at least it is beyond the Luddite stage. We appreciate your patience and pioneering spirit!

The LCBO controls virtually every aspect of our activities other than product selection. Along with their governing body, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, they grant the required licenses. The LCBO sets the retail price for each wine, manages shipping and importation, performs laboratory analyses on the wines and limits the quantity of wine the agent can maintain in inventory.

Due to fluctuating currency exchange rates and variable shipping costs, we will not know the exact retail price of the wine at time of order. The price quoted will be a little higher than the ultimate price and we will credit the difference to you on a subsequent order.

Ordering is simple. Just go to <http://www.arthursellers.com> , click on "Arthur's Cellar" and follow the instructions. **Existing members will find their login ID and password on the e-mail that accompanied this newsletter. New members should enrol first before placing an order by selecting "New Member Registration" from the menu.**

Please note that there will be a \$1.00 per bottle "Handling Fee" to cover our administrative expenses. There will be no initiation or membership fees in 2006.

It is necessary to order by the case, usually twelve bottles, but high-end wines often come six to the case. If twelve bottles are too many, we suggest you share with a friend or two.

Once we have reached a full pallet for a given producer, we will prepare a master order with a list of each member's order attached and present it all to the LCBO. We will let you know when the order has been processed.

Then we wait six weeks to three months for the wine to arrive by ship and overland transport from Europe. The LCBO will let you know when your wine is ready to be picked up. Toronto residents will do so at the LCBO Private Ordering warehouse located at 33 Freeland Street in Toronto (right behind the big Queen's Quay liquor store). Members residing outside Toronto will pick up their orders at the LCBO outlet they specified on the order form. It is very important that you pick up your wine within 30 days of notification or the LCBO will apply a storage charge.

Then you can enjoy your wine, tell all your friends and order more!

Our First Offering – Featuring the 2005 Château Saint Jacques d’Albas Minervois Rosé

Wouldn’t you know it – our first recommendation comes from a winery owned by an English gentleman who is an ex-banker to boot! And, it is for a Rosé – not exactly everyone’s cup of tea, or glass of wine if you prefer! But don’t be put off, this is a delightful quaff. You will be thanking us for it throughout the hot summer months to come.

Château Saint Jacques d’Albas lies in the Minervois appellation of the Languedoc, situated some 15 kilometres to the north-east of Carcassonne, the historic and somewhat funky 13th century walled city in the department of Aude, France.

The Languedoc-Roussillon is the largest wine-growing area in the world, characterized by a reputation for “vin ordinaire” but within which one can find oases of wines of high quality and excellent value-for-money. The Minervois, an appellation within the Languedoc, is one source in particular for red wines and which was signaled by the ‘Wine Spectator’ last August. Attention to soil quality, low yields, hand-picking and temperature-controlled fermentation can produce wines that are highly expressive of fruit and are very food-friendly.

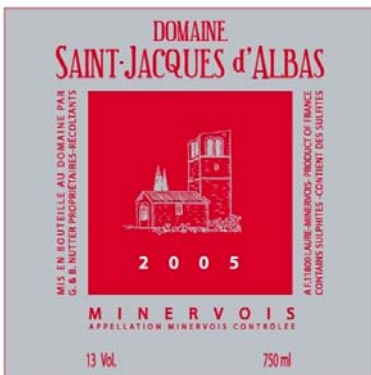
Graham and Beatrice Nutter became owners of Château Saint Jacques d’Albas in early 2001. Graham left a career in banking to pursue his vinous passion (hmmm, sounds vaguely familiar). The Nutters invested determinedly in their 65 acre vineyard and winery and are now making several delicious, award winning wines. To get an idea of why Graham decided to change professions, see their website – www.chateaustjacques.com.



Jim, Graham Nutter, Hélène, Marc Bonnavenc (vineyard manager and cellar master) and Paul Strang, author of ‘Languedoc-Roussillon: The Wines & Winemakers’ at Vinisud in Montpellier, France.

Other business takes Graham to Toronto on a regular basis. He would be delighted to join us at an Arthur’s Cellar Wine Club event. He also welcomes you to visit him at his domain – just drop him a line to let him know when you plan to drop in.

2005 Saint Jacques d'Albas Minervois Still Rosé - (13.5% Alc. by Vol.) \$12.95



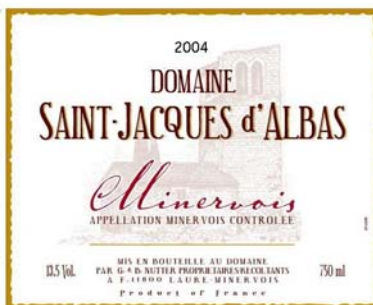
While the Domaine makes four excellent wines, we are featuring their 2005 Rosé because we enjoyed it immensely during tastings in both Cannes and Montpellier and the traditional season for Rosé is just around the corner (although we believe it can be consumed year round). It has a wonderful, vibrant colour and a beautiful fruity aroma. In the mouth there is a very pleasant note of red fruit, like strawberries and raspberries and it finishes with a nice, crisp aftertaste. This wine has all the right stuff a smashing Rosé should have. It is made of equal parts Syrah and Grenache. 4000 bottles were produced and Graham has set

aside one pallet - 600 bottles for our members. But, if we are quick and have sufficient orders, he might be able to find us a second pallet.

We recommend that you order now to get it in time for summer. This is a wine that can be enjoyed while sitting with friends in the back yard and is the perfect companion for ham, charcuterie and oriental dishes. And, its beautiful colour and attractive label make it a perfect host or hostess gift.

We were also very impressed with these other wines from the Domaine:

2004 Domaine Saint Jacques d'Albas Minervois Red – (13.5% Alc. by Vol.) \$14.95



Made of 20% Syrah, 40% Grenache and 40% Carignan, this wine has been traditionally fermented for over twenty days and the Syrah aged in barrels for more than six months. This is a very expressive, well balanced wine that is drinking nicely now and will keep quite happily for a year or two. With only 7000 bottles produced, it represents excellent value.

2003 Château Saint Jacques d'Albas Minervois Red - (13.5% Alc. by Vol.) \$21.95



This wine is 60% Syrah (in oak barrels for over twelve months) and 20% each of Grenache and Carignan. We tried this wine on two occasions and were greatly impressed both times. Acclaimed by the wine writer Jancis Robinson, this wine is deep ruby red with an aroma of fresh red berries, licorice and spices. It is a bit closed now, but still exhibits a fine balance of fruit and tannins with a hint of vanilla.

While pleasant to drink now, this wine will benefit from a couple of years in the cellar. 12,000 bottles were produced, so there is still plenty for everyone.

2003 La Chapelle Saint Jacques d'Albas Minervois Red - (13.5% Alc. by Vol.) \$32.95



This lovely, powerful, nicely oaked wine is comprised of 96% Syrah (barrel-aged for 18 months) and 4% Carignan. 2003 was an extremely hot vintage, producing spicy, perfumed wines.

Graham picked later than most of his neighbours, under the lower September night temperatures and some showers, which allowed him to capture natural acidities that provided a perfect balance to the high sugars. This wine requires at least four years in the cellar and will amaze and delight the most discerning collector.

Soon To Emerge From Arthur's Cellar

Our next 'Selections' newsletter will feature the value-priced wines of Cave de Lavilledieu du Temple that come from a grape growing region north-west of Toulouse that dates back to the time of Julius Caesar – the lad loved his wine.

We will then present the superb, moderately priced wines from Château Beauferan and the delightful Champagnes from Champagne Forget-Brimont followed by selections from our other fine houses.

Future 'Selections' newsletters will be much shorter – we promise. We welcome your thoughts, questions, ideas and, of course, your comments about our wines.

For the wine club to be successful, we need as many wine buying members as possible – please forward this newsletter to likely prospects and keep those referrals coming.

Our wines are also available for restaurants and other establishments that serve beverage alcohol by the glass – their prices will be a little lower because PST is not charged. If you know any that might be interested, please let us know.

We hope that this marks the start of many years of superb wine tasting experiences together.

Thank you and cheers,

Hélène and Jim

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