

Selections



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Château RIVES-BLANQUES

Introducing the Soaring Whites from Château Rives-Blanques

On a clear day you can see ... the Pyrenees – from the vineyards of Château Rives-Blanques. But unfortunately it was foggy on the day we visited, so we had to take Jan and Caryl Panman's word for it.



We had departed early in the morning from near Avignon about three hours to the west. The last few kilometres took us around the medieval citadel of Carcassonne, then south past the enchanting town of Limoux and finally up to the estate located on a 350 metre high plateau ideally suited for premium grape-growing. Bruno, the Panman's irrepressible little Irish Spaniel greeted us with an impressive array of

antics and endearing tricks. He was soon dubbed "Bruno – the wonder dog".

Hélène and I first met Jan and Caryl in 2006 at a trade show in Cannes. We loved their white and sparkling wines at first sip. A year later we were reintroduced by our mutual friend and their neighbour Graham Nutter, owner of Château Saint Jacques d'Albas. The memory of those wonderful wines and the Panman's engaging personalities prompted us to visit them on our next trip to France.

The Panmans lived and worked in a dozen countries on four continents before being seduced by Limoux's wines and its beautiful countryside. They acquired their 30 hectare estate of which now 22 are under vine in 2001 and are involved in every stage of the wine-making miracle. But, their facility with languages has condemned them to being primarily in charge of sales (which are happily quite brisk).



Bruno with Caryl, Jan and Jim as a backdrop

After Bruno had completed his astonishing repertoire, Jan took us on a tour of the impeccably maintained vineyards. Château Rives-Blanques was the first winery in the region to experiment with cultivating clover between the rows of vines, which not only adds nitrogen to the soil but also keeps weeds down. This has proved so successful that they are now doing it throughout the vineyard. Their policy is to allow the land to work itself, naturally - and in doing so, a natural habitat has been provided for all sorts of wildlife ... and Bruno.

Rives-Blanques has long been known for its environment-friendly practices and was amongst the first vineyards in France to be given the 'Agriculture Raisonnée' accreditation by the Ministry of Agriculture, confirming the ecological honesty and integrity of the way they grow their grapes and manage their lands. A happy combination of altitude and brisk summer winds lends a helping hand by keeping unwanted pests at bay - naturally. They never use chemical fertilizers, and all vine cuttings, grape pips and skins left over from the pressing are ploughed back into the soil.

AOC Limoux

For centuries Limoux has produced white wines that sparkle naturally after a second fermentation. They became known as Blanquette de Limoux, Blanquette meaning simply 'white' in Occitan. Locals claim that fermentation in the bottle was developed here long before it was consciously practised in Champagne; dating the production of cork-stoppered sparkling wines at the Abbey of St.-Hilaire from 1531 (Limoux is just north of Catalonia, a home of cork oak.)



The order at the Abbey of St.-Hilaire was Benedictine. Dom (Pierre) Perignon (1638-1715), who according to myth invented the *méthode Champenoise*, was a Benedictine monk and speculation has it that members of the order brought the secret with them when they migrated north. There is much debate over which area makes the best bubbly, but there can be no argument about which produces the best marketers ... a bottle of the delicious Blanquette de Limoux from Château Rives-Blanques is \$27.00, while a bottle of Moët & Chandon Dom Perignon currently sells for \$208.00 at the LCBO!

In 1993 the AOC Limoux appellation was revised to include Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay in addition to the traditional Mauzac. Unusually, vinification in oak is mandatory. The region's vineyards are so much higher, cooler and further from the Mediterranean influence than any other Languedoc appellation that the INAO authorities classify it as part of the Atlantic-influenced South West France rather than as part of Languedoc-Roussillon. The traditional grape variety is the Mauzac, locally called Blanquette, but increasing amounts of Chardonnay and, to a lesser extent, Chenin Blanc have been planted.

The Château Rives-Blanques Team

Jan and Caryl are ably assisted in the vineyards and chais by a number of experienced and talented individuals. Mark Van Tong, a hard-working soft-spoken Laotian is foreman and has come to know every vine, stone and peculiarity of the microclimate like the back of his hand.



Eric Vialade (Manager) is a third-generation wine-maker of the respected Languedoc wine-growing family. Schooled in Bordeaux, winner of more medals than he can count and official taster for the Guide Hachette, Eric has run the property with a safe and sure hand for twenty years, and is an acknowledged pioneer in environmentally friendly viticultural practices.



Consultant Georges Pauli is the latest addition to the team. An oenologist and agronomist, he is Technical Director of the renowned Chateau Gruaud Larose and is known throughout France for his work with the famous chateaux of Bordeaux. With clients scattered across the globe, he manages a visit to Rives-Blanques every two weeks to advise on even the smallest details of land management and wine making.



Many others make significant contributions to the creation of the multi award winning wines from Château Rives-Blanques including the 'Dream Team' of harvesters who hand pick each vintage and Catherine Tournié and Marc Dubernet of the Dubernet Laboratoire d'Oenologie, one of the world's leading oenological laboratories.

To find out more about the people, vineyards and wines Château Rives-Blanques, please visit www.rives-blanques.com.

The Wines of Château Rives-Blanques

After returning from the vineyards we settled in the modern tasting room to do what I like best ... sample the wines. It was just as I recalled from Cannes - the Panman's produce brilliant, world-class white wines. No wonder. Yields are low, the vineyards are meticulously maintained, everything is done by hand, the wine-making facilities are state-of-the-art and the estate is run by a team of dedicated professionals. They have won awards and earned citations far too numerous to cite. These are smashing wines for white wine lovers.

Their **Blanquette de Limoux** is as good as it gets; a most worthy sparkling wine for those festive occasions. **Le Chardonnay du Domaine** is simply delicious and a real bargain. The trilogy of AOC Limoux white varieties – **Dédicace** (Chenin Blanc); **Cuvée Occitania** (Mauzac), and; **Cuvée de l'Odysée** (Chardonnay) illustrate brilliantly the stunning product of this unique terroir.

The Blanquette comes in six-bottle cases while Le Chardonnay du Domaine and the three AOC Limoux varieties come in twelve-bottle cases. Don't forget to use our 'Share a Case' feature if twelve bottles are too much of a good thing or if you would like to create a mixed case of all these grand wines.

The prices below include our one dollar per bottle handling charge. We plan to take our Château Rives-Blanques order to the LCBO on **Thursday, May 22nd**.

2006 Blanquette de Limoux – (12.5% Alc. by Vol.)

\$27.00



90% Mauzac and 10% Chardonnay/Chenin Blanc
45 hl/ha

The world's oldest sparkler is still made to this very day only in Limoux, under the strictest AOC rules. Blanquette de Limoux is the oldest appellation in Languedoc-Roussillon (declared in 1938), and one of the first in France. It has the lowest permitted maximum yield of any sparkling wine in the country, and is made exclusively from hand harvested grapes. It is a beautiful luminous light yellow colour with frothy, persistent bubbles. The deep nose mixes fruity notes and lightly toasted touches of vanilla. The mouth is seductively round, full and deep. It goes wonderfully with pan fried trout, shellfish and oriental cuisine. It has won numerous medals and awards and has been a huge success at our various dinners and tastings.

2007 Le Chardonnay du Domaine – (13.5% Alc. by Vol.)

\$17.00



Chardonnay with a touch of Chenin Blanc
45 hl/ha

This little beauty is the work horse of the Château Rives-Blanques stable. It is an intense straw-gold colour with aromas of spring blossoms, white peaches, laurel and nectarines. In the mouth there is also an impression of mint along with garden herbs and peaches. There is a different but nice spicy kick in a finish full of fruit. It is great as a sipper and goes beautifully with grilled white fish or roast chicken. Silver Medal – Concours Mondial de Bruxelles; Best Buy – Brussels Wine Expo.

2006 Dédicace - Chenin Blanc – (13.8% Alc. by Vol.)

\$24.00



100% Chardonnay
40 hl/ha

Fermented and matured for six months in 8% new French oak barrels.

Dédicace is a "modern style of wine" that has been made with great dedication from 20 year old vines. Until recently it was the only Chenin Blanc with appellation status in the whole of the South of France. It has distinguished itself as one of the most interesting white wines from the region. It is pale gold with green highlights. Its aromas are intense and in the mouth it is big and aromatic, quite typically chenin (honey, lime-blossom). You will be conquered by the depth, the elegance and the balance of this wine with its long and fresh finish, lifted by an agreeable touch of bitter.

"Gorgeous ... an absolute delight" - Jane MacQuitty, London Times

"A distinguished chenin" - Guide Dussert-Gerber

"The finest chenin outside the Loire I have ever encountered" - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor

2007 Cuvée Occitania – Mauzac – (13.5% Alc. by Vol.)

\$24.00



100% Mauzac
37 hl/ha

Fermented and matured for six months in seasoned French oak barrels

Mauzac is a grape of the Renaissance, referred to in Antiquamareto's *Livre de Raison* of 1525, but although once widespread, it is grown today only in two appellations: Limoux and Gaillac. Cuvée Occitania is the only 100% barrel-vinified Mauzac in the appellation - and perhaps in the world. It is a golden colour with light nuances of green. The nose is fine, elegant and subtly buttery with notes of white flowers, apples, pears and ripe apricots. The mouth is complex, with a touch of honey in the finish. Pure pleasure! Cuvée Occitania has been included by *La Revue du Vin de France* in its roundup of the best wines of the millésime in France for the past four years in a row and awarded four stars by Decanter Magazine. The 2007 is the third vintage in a row to be chosen by KLM Royal Dutch Airlines for its World Business Class travelers.

2005 Cuvée de l'Odysée - Chardonnay – (14.0% Alc. by Vol.)

\$25.00



100% Chardonnay

45 hl/ha

Fermented in French oak barrels, followed by 6 months maturation in the barrel (1/3 new).

Only hand-selected grapes from the top Chardonnay fields, arguably amongst the best in Limoux are used in the production of this outstanding Chardonnay. It is a brilliant yellow gold with light straw-coloured reflections. The nose is intense and charming characterised by soft notes of vanilla, caramel and oak. The mouth is silky, full and marvellously textured. The freshness is carried by citrus and a touch of bitterness which gives structure to the wine. It is a handsome wine in a modern and technological style. Cuvée de l'Odysée has been listed amongst the best wines of the year in France for the past five years in a row by *La Revue du Vin de France* and was included in the dream wine list drawn up by three Best Sommelier in the World winners. The 2005 vintage of Cuvée de l'Odysée was selected by Aer Lingus for its Premier Class passengers. Winner of the prestigious Médaille d'Or 2007, Concours Mondial de Bruxelles and the Médaille d'Or 2007, Vinalies Internationales.

"Soft-edged, smooth, round ..." Oz Clarke

"This chardonnay charms the senses" 1,000 Vins du Monde selected by Oenologues de France

"An excellent cuvée of brilliant gold" Guide Hachette des Vins

Don't miss out on the truly spectacular wines from Château Rives-Blanches. You will be forever thankful you tried them and Bruno will be most appreciative.

You Can Try the Blanquette and Le Chardonnay at Jake's This Thursday!!



We will be hosting a wine tasting evening at Jake's Grill and Oyster Bar then. Jamie Myers, AKA the Big Oyster will be serving up his famous appetisers and Graham Nutter of Château Saint Jacques d'Albas will join in to present the latest vintages of his great Minervois wines.

O! France

O! France Would you like to visit the source of many of Arthur's Cellar wines? Does a relaxing week living on a luxurious Provençal country estate appeal? Do markets in quaint villages, visits to our vineyards, lunches in restaurants perched on hillsides or cantilevered over streams, gourmet dinners with a local flair and so much more sound tempting? It is all happening this fall. The week of September 13 to 20 is almost sold out – only the luxurious master suite remains. Please see www.ofrance.ca for all the delicious details.

Share a Case



Is a full case too much of a good thing? No problem. Just click beside the icon shown at the left as it appears on the "Wine Details" on our website and leave a note saying how many bottles you would like. For full details, see [Share a Case](#).

Soon to Emerge from Arthur's Cellar

Next will be some delightful Beaujolais from Domaine du Penlois followed by the terrific, value-priced Côtes-du-Rhône from Château Bosc la Croix and the return of many of your favourites including Domaine Roger Sabon, Domaine Palon and Château Saint Jacques d'Albas.

Member Feedback

Your feedback is greatly appreciated. It helps us improve our club and better respond to your requirements. Many of your suggestions have been implemented and we are working on several others. Thank you and please keep the comments coming (jaswalker@arthursellers.com).

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.

Thank you and cheers!

Hélène and Jim

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