

ANSONIA NOTEBOOK

MAY 2016





I. Notes from Harpswell

MARK WILCOX

A monthly dispatch from the rocky coast of Maine; May's column covers the dock, and its existence between sea and shore.



II. 25% Off Shelf: May 2016

This month's shelf includes fifteen wines, including 07 Chateauneuf, Côte Rotie, everyday white Burgundy, 12-year-old red Burgundy, and 19-year-old dessert wine.



III. Have you heard about?

A list of things we've discovered recently that we think you'll enjoy; May's list includes links to singer Jason Isbell, Kombucha, and the Jura.



IV. Depot Journal

ISAIAH WYNER

Our Warehouse Manager Isaiah Wyner discusses topics that come up during our Saturday open hours in Newton, Mass. This month: Pinot Noir





Chassagne-Montrachet, France

NOTES FROM HARPSWELL

May 2016 | Mark Wilcox

More than anything else, our dock anchors us to the place we live. To sit on a dock is to exist between land and water. Carry a steaming mug of morning coffee down the ramp and sit with the rising sun at the back of your head: you feel the water all around you and sense the life below its surface; you hear the seals and seabirds out on the rocks ahead; yet you feel connected to the spit of ledge at your back. We have just one acre of land, but in ways that elude description the dock connects us to the many acres of water that surround us.

Turning from the mystical to the practical reveals other wonders. On the float's land side and all along the shore lie carpets of





rockweed. Exposed at low tide and floating at high, they offer protection to mussels, quahogs and barnacles in the intertidal zone, drawing in Eider ducks and the occasional seagull. The mussels we find there make a rich and delicious broth, but because they grow into relative old age they often have many tiny pearls. Better, we have found, to buy our eating mussels from the store up the road.

The dock makes it easy to forage for seaweed. Our corner store sells a seaweed salad we love (like the bright green *hiyashi wakame* on your Sushi menu) and we've been looking for a way duplicate it. We have begun our experiments with the huge kelp fronds that occasionally drift past the dock in the Spring. We'd have tried them earlier, but they're brown and the seaweed in the store's salad is distinctly green. However, a bit of research revealed that blanching the brown stuff turns it a brilliant green, so we're continuing our trials. So far our *wakame* doesn't resemble the corner store salad as much as it does those green bits that float in your *miso* soup, but we'll keep looking for the best ways to prepare it. Stay tuned.

Because the Harpswell tides fall more than nine feet from high to low, the dock has three parts: a weathered wooden structure pinned into the rock

ledge at the margin of the land; a thirty-five foot ramp with a pivot at each end; and a wooden float at the end of the ramp. At the highest tides you can pretty much walk straight out onto the float, but at the lowest the ramp nears 35 degrees and you need the rails to pull your way back up.

A contraption like this is at risk to winter ice in years when the Sound freezes, so come November we need to take it apart. Three brawny guys show up and slowly wrestle the ramp back from the water. Then they ride the float to a spot along the shore and winch it up to a large tree, where it lives for the winter. In the Spring, aided by gravity and a couple of iron bars, the Ansonia Wines team assembles and nudges the float (and the extension acquired last year to accommodate our growing fleet of watercraft) back into the water. This is a simple business at high tide on a calm day, but a whole lot more complicated if it's breezy. This year in mid-March, we were sipping coffee out on the deck when we realized that a spring tide had peaked and the Sound was like plate glass. We hustled down to the water's edge and before the morning was out our dock was bobbing gently in the tidal flow. Of course it got snowed on a few times before the cold finally left, but having it in place turned our focus toward Spring and made us yearn for trees to begin leafing out.

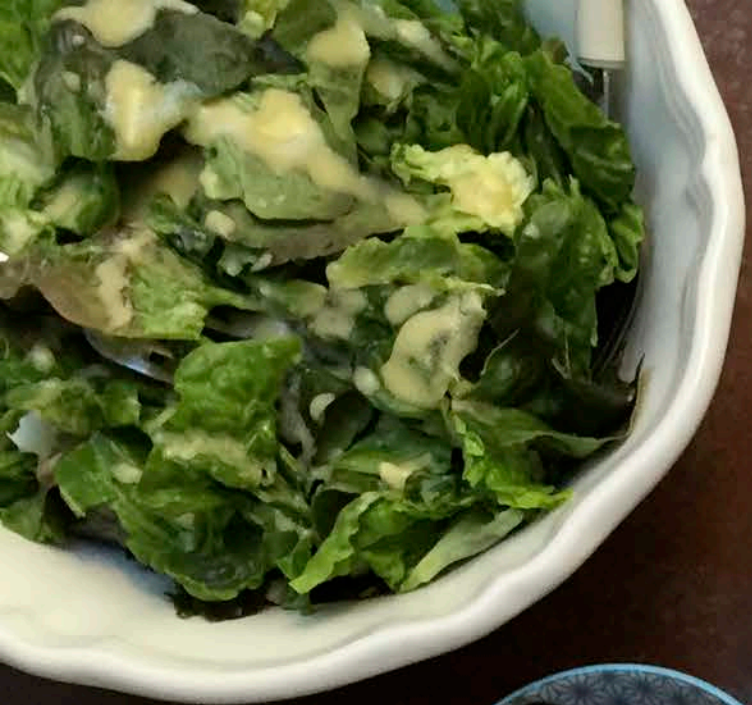
At nearly 44 degrees North Latitude, the buds all break a bit later than they did in our old haunts, but now that May





is here the process seems well and truly underway. We're learning to recognize the Maine coast's true markers of Spring: nesting Eiders here in full force; Buffleheads departing for their summer homes on Hudson Bay; Surf Scoters stopping in on their way from elsewhere to elsewhere. Our complement of seals is up to three or so pairs from the lone scout who arrived a month ago. And while the fresh diver scallops have disappeared from the case at Gurnet Trading, the lobster prices are coming down. All we need now is to convince a Striped Bass or two to cruise by the dock, and we'll consider the season to have changed.

MW



25% OFF

Our Monthly Sale Shelf

FREE EAST COAST SHIPPING
ON ANY 12 BOTTLES

FONT DU LOUP Côtes du Rhone 14

Classic, smooth Côtes du Rhône from our producer in Chateauneuf du Pape. Plum jam and cherries.

~~\$22~~
\$16.5/bot

THOMAS Bourgogne 12

Perfect everyday white Burgundy; notes of almond and baked lemons.

~~\$24~~
\$18/bot

AUTARD Chateauneuf 07

Classic CDP from the best vintage in recent memory. Notes of rosemary, pan dripping, and strawberry jam.

~~\$78~~
\$58.5/bot

BONNEFOND Viognier 2014

Floral, aromatic white from the Northern Rhône. Look for gardenia, melon, and peach.

~~\$24~~
\$18/bot

BELLAND Volnay 1er cru 2009

Ripe, juicy Volnay with a silky texture. Notes of stewed cherries and delicate minerality.

~~\$66~~
\$49.5/bot

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ST-CLAIR Crozes-Hermitage 13

Pure, inky syrah from the Northern Rhône.
Notes of blackberries and black pepper.

~~\$26~~
\$19.5/bot

GROS Nuits-St-Georges 1er 04

Classic red Burgundy from a famous house, now
with 12 years in the bottle. Cherries, forest, and smoke.

~~\$110~~
\$82.5/bot

PICAMELOT Crémant Chazot

Pure sparkling Pinot Noir from Burgundy;
gently sparkling, notes of plum and lime.

~~\$30~~
\$24/bot

MERSIOL Gewurztraminer 12

Grand Cru Alsatian Gewurztraminer, grown organically.
Off-dry, notes of flowers, pineapple, and melon.

~~\$30~~
\$22.5/bot

MOULIN TOUCHAIS Coteaux-du-Layon 1997

Rare, 19-year-old Loire Valley dessert wine.
Soft and sweet, notes of white flowers and mango.

~~\$56~~
\$42/bot

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PRUNIER Crémant NV

Sparkling wine from Burgundy; crisp and dry, notes of lemon and toast.

~~\$24~~
\$18/bot

POGGERINO Labirinto 2011

Classic, pure Sangiovese from the Tuscan hillside. Notes of dried roses and black cherries.

~~\$19~~
\$14.25/bot

BONNEFOND Cote Rotie 13

Pure, dense syrah from a well-known source. Notes of bacon and briary blackberries.

~~\$56~~
\$42/bot

BELLAND Chassagne 1er rouge 2013

Pure Pinot Noir, an earthy and crackling red Burgundy. Notes of ripe wild cherries and violets.

~~\$50~~
\$37.5/bot

GROS Hautes-Côtes de Nuits blanc 09

Soft, rich, mouthfilling white Burgundy from a master winemaker. Notes of hazelnut and lemon.

~~\$35~~
\$26.25/bot

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Portland, Maine



What we're watching: The Americans (FX)

The Americans is a beautifully acted drama set in 1980s Washington DC. The story follows a family of Soviet spies living in secret in suburban America. It's well-written and full of suspense, as the couple dodges the CIA, their unaware American children, and the march of the capitalism and the West.

What we're reading: Jura, Bordeaux, Spices

In anticipation of our tasting trip to France next month, we're reading up French wine regions and searching for interesting new sources. We've come across two excellent articles on the new wave of winemakers in Bordeaux ([Eater](#)) and the current state of Jura winemaking ([Punch Magazine](#)). Finally an excellent primer on the [Science of Herbs and Spices](#) in Lucky Peach.



What we're listening to: Jason Isbell

Jason Isbell is among the best songwriters working today. His songs tell of his journey from addiction to sobriety, and are heartfelt, powerful, and hauntingly beautiful. He also plays a mean guitar. Check out JasonIsbell.com

What we're cooking: Homemade Kombucha

Kombucha is that fizzy stuff that has popped up at the checkout aisle in your local Whole Foods. It's a delicious fermented tea (>1% alcohol), and surprisingly easy to make at home. First step, [buy yourself a SCOBY](#).





DEPOT JOURNAL

May 2016 | Isaiah Wyner

Pinot Noir grows in a narrow latitudinal band around the world. In the northern hemisphere this includes regions such as Burgundy, Champagne, Jura, Oregon and California. The Southern Hemisphere's band includes New Zealand and Chile.

Pinot Noir is notoriously difficult to grow. Its thin skin makes it vulnerable to temperature fluctuations, and so it's best suited to cooler climates. These climates, however, can also mean unpredictable weather, and a late spring frost (like last month's in Burgundy) or a damaging hail storm can be catastrophic. Clives Coates MW, refers to Pinot Noir as "a gypsy of a grape," a reference to both its difficulty to grow, and unparalleled ability to express terroir.



This sensitivity to terroir translates to an extraordinarily wide spectrum of flavors, ranging from cranberry and red cherry in cool climates, to raspberry and black plum in warmer zones. In California, for instance, the maritime influences of the Pacific Ocean (cool breezes and fog) create a significant difference between wines grown in inland versus coastal vineyards. Pinot Noir from Sonoma's Russian River Valley tend towards dark cherry and raspberry, while those from the coastal plots show spiced raspberry, hibiscus punch, and cola.

Most consider Burgundy the place where Pinot Noir finds its greatest expression. The grape is responsible for all of the greatest red wines of Burgundy, and has been grown there since at least the 13th century. Pinot Noir is uniquely suited to convey the subtle microterroirs of Burgundy. The chalky and silt laden soils of the famous Grand Cru vineyard Le



Musigny produce a wine that Jancis Robinson describes as “a combination which leads to the exceptional grace and power of Le Musigny, an iron fist in a velvet glove.” Further south, Rajat Parr explains the differences between the lighter wines of Volnay and those of its darker and denser neighbour Pommard, writing, “The soils (of Volnay) have a higher degree of limestone and much less clay than Pommard’s, giving them a firm mineral edge that works as a support beam for all the lovely fruit.”

Pinot Noir’s ability to express terroir makes it difficult to pin down. But at its peak it reaches a level of sophistication and elegance that is unmatched in the wine world.

IW



Allagash Wilderness Waterway, Maine