

ANSONIA NOTEBOOK

FEBRUARY 2017





I. Notes from Harpswell

MARK WILCOX

A monthly dispatch from the wintery coast of Maine.



II. Have you heard about?

A list of things, culinary and otherwise, that we think you'll like.



III. Vigneron Profile: Nicolas Maillet

TOM WILCOX

A in-depth profile of our newest source in the Maconnais.



IV. Notebook Sale: Bin Ends / Back Vintages

A handful of clearance wines from our cellar, 25-50% off.



V. Depot Journal

ISAIAH WYNER

Depot Manager Isaiah Wyner discusses winterime in the vineyards.



NOTES FROM HARPSWELL

February 2017 | Mark Wilcox

Winter in Harpswell has its own rhythm. Up and down the Sound the boats are gone and the docks hauled up. The front yards of lobstermen hold mountains of empty traps. Ospreys and Eiders have left for warmer weather, leaving the Bald Eagle and the Buffleheads behind. Our experiment in aquaculture (bags of oysters, scallops, and quahogs) has been put to bed for the winter, below any ice it might bring. Days are short here near 44 North Latitude, so in late December the lights go on around four o'clock; but after New Year, the days begin to lengthen perceptibly.

With neither lobster traps to haul nor oysters to tend, we turn to other activities. There's cross-country skiing nearby, and when mild weather spoils the snow, we





turn to our local trails for hiking. There is usually a fire in the fireplace. And though we don't have the summer's bounty of vegetables from local farms, there's plenty of do in the kitchen with meats, root vegetables, and baked goods ranging from breads to pies to rugelach.

For *après-ski*, we have discovered another Maine winter activity: time in the hot tub. Ours sits outdoors, on the deck above the Sound. For sixty-somethings who continue to ski and hike, it offers a valuable restorative for aching muscles and creaky joints. There's nothing quite like a soak in 104 degree water with the wind blowing foam off the white caps on the Sound. When the temperature goes negative or nearly so, it can be brisk; but that's why they make wool hats, which work just as well in the tub as they do in a snow bank. In fact, we enjoy the hot tub most in the coldest months.

Cassoulet may be winter's greatest culinary gift. One of the best things about winter, in Maine or elsewhere, is the opportunity to serve this wonderfully rich concoction of beans, breadcrumbs, duck confit and other meats. We first encountered the dish near Carcassonne, an ancient walled city in Southwest France, on one of the many road trips during our year abroad. We were a little bit lost, having booked rooms in an old Chateau whose name loosely translated to "Chateau Ugly Mountain." The light had long since faded, and no one could help us find the place. (If France, when you ask for directions to a local place, a negative response is more likely to be "*ça n'existe pas*" than "I don't know"). When we finally pulled into the courtyard we rushed in to ask if the kitchen was closed. No problem, our host assured us. The Chevaliers of something or other were meeting there that evening. Cassoulet was on the menu and it would be a simple thing to prepare the dish for us as well.

The Chevaliers were well into their evening (about to the drinking song stage) as we were shown past them to our own small dining room in the underground cellars; and the kids' eyes widened as we passed the door and saw men in tights wearing what might have been armor. We ordered some wine ("we'll have what they're having") and when the Cassoulet came we were delighted. The next day in Carcassonne we went searching for the recipe, and so bought "Goose Fat and Garlic," a collection of country recipes from Southwest France that has become a standby at our house. Cassoulet doesn't require a lot of skill but there are plenty of steps to prepare the beans, sausages, pork, confit and other elements. We think it's well worth the work, and try to make it at least once every winter.

As for the wine to pour with this dish, opinions vary. Many recommend a simple and fruity red, given the dish's extravagant medley of flavors. We think this works fine, and are happy to reach for a Côtes du Rhône from the Domaine les Goubert, or a Cru Beaujolais from Monnet or Perrachon. The Mas Foulaquier's wines also suit nicely, and have the virtue of hailing from the same neighborhood as Cassoulet. But if you want to open a nice Burgundy on the full-bodied side, go for it. To advance the research on this weighty question, we served Cassoulet to friends this week and poured both categories -- simpler reds from the Rhône then a pretty fancy Burgundy from Nuits St. Georges. The diners offered lavish praise for the Rhône, then sent us back to the cellar for more Burgundy. The bottom line? Make the dish, put a fire in the fireplace, seat a companionable group at the table, and the wine (and winter) will take care of itself.

MW



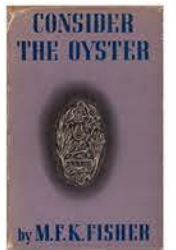


What we're watching: Black Mirror (Netflix)

Black Mirror is a smart and terrifying science fiction show set in the not-so-distant-future. Each episode is standalone, set in a dystopian future where today's technologies – social networks, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, online bullying – are taken several steps further, often to disruptive ends.

What we're reading: BBR, Punch, Fisher

Jasper Morris's excellent **State of the Union** of sorts for winemaking in Burgundy; John Bonné's two beautifully written articles in Punch Magazine, one on the **Northern Rhône's** increasing popularity, and another on the world's "Fading Love Affair with France"; finally MFK Fisher's delightful and amusing treatise on bivalves, "Consider the Oyster."



What we're listening to: Longform Podcast

Longform Podcast is an excellent weekly interview with non-fiction writers and performers working today. Particularly good episodes include Ira Glass, David Remnick, Terry Gross, Kelly McEvers, and Krista Tippett.

What we're cooking: Schnitzel, Chicken or Pork

"Schnitzel" is a recent favorite preparation for Pork, Chicken, and Veal -- make sure your oil is hot and deep enough, be sure to use panko bread crumbs, and spoon some of the oil onto the side facing up while you're browning. Finish in the oven, serve with a degalzed cream sauce, or quick pickles. [Link here.](#)





NICOLAS MAILLET

Vigneron Profile | Tom Wilcox

In 1998, during our year living in Burgundy, we discovered an excellent source for Maconnais in a small village called Quintaine. That entirely organic and biodynamic domaine makes a single wine: a dry white Maconnais of exceptional purity and complexity. Over the years we continued to buy from them, but mostly for our personal cellar – their existing importing relationship meant we couldn't sell it through Ansonia.

During a morning tasting a few years ago, lamenting our inability to represent them officially, we asked if they knew anyone making wine in a similar style. They directed us to a young winemaker a few towns away, equally committed

to low-intervention winemaking. They said he was little-known but unlikely to remain so.

We thanked them and waved goodbye around 11:45am, and hurried to our car, address and phone number hastily scribbled on a paper scrap. (From long experience in France, we knew that an unannounced visit after noon would be met with a closed door.) As we raced the lunchtime deadline, our phone calls went unanswered, and with no address we nearly called off the search and went to lunch ourselves. But with the ringing endorsement of old friends in our ears, we decided to try our luck.

We're awfully glad we did.

Nicolas Maillet is a jovial thirtysomething Frenchman with intense eyes and a ready smile. He's built like a rugby player, often dressed in flip flops and shorts. (In fact rugby is Maillet's sport of choice: on a recent visit during the Euro Cup soccer tournament, we wished "*les Bleus*" luck in their game. Maillet smiled and shrugged, explaining his team's World Cup wasn't until 2019.)

Nicolas grew up in winemaking, following his father Gérard into the business. He studied both agriculture and viticulture, and apprenticed at vineyards in Argentina, Spain, and the US before returning to take over the domaine in 1999. His family's land is in Verzé, one of a handful of towns scattered across the countryside between Cluny and Macon.

Maillet is as passionate and animated as any winemaker we work with. As with many excellent winemakers, his enthusiasm begins in the vines. Maillet is a diligent farmer, keenly aware of the soil content, slope, and clone type of his vineyards. He's in the process, plot by plot, of transitioning to fully organic farming, something he believes in with near-religious devotion.





During a visit in 2015, Maillet asked whether we'd be interested in a quick tour of his vines. When we agreed he ushered us into his jeep and sped off along a bumpy dirt track between the rows of vines. As we mounted the hill the valley spread before us, a gentle landscape blanketed in a patchwork of wheat and vines. Maillet explained the subtle differences in slope and how this affected ripeness and harvest time. His explanations are always patient and extensive, complete with quick gesticulations and long pauses to make sure we've understood every detail.

But it's perhaps in the cellar that Maillet sets himself apart, displaying a willingness to take risks in the pursuit of strikingly good wine. Primary fermentation in winemaking usually takes a week or so to complete, and secondary (malolactic) can take a month or two, depending on conditions. Cold weather can slow the process, and it's common practice for winemakers to heat their cellars to encourage the conversion. Not Maillet. In 2014 his wines underwent an 8-month long fermentation, gaining extraordinary complexity, while leaving everyone, including Nicolas, baffled.

“My colleagues told me I was crazy,” he explained to us. “They said I’d ruin the vintage entirely. But I simply told them the wine wasn’t ready – the fermentation would happen at its own pace.” Maillet’s dedication to low-intervention winemaking has proven itself time and time again. He subscribes to the Burgundian belief of letting the wine make itself.

His style is simplicity itself. He neither fines nor filters, and except for the Pouilly-Fuissé, raises his whites only in stainless steel. With no oak to obscure the fruit, these are some of the purest expressions of Chardonnay we know. The wines leap from the glass, sporting notes of green tea, honeysuckle, melon, mango, and apricot. They’re honest, pure, and brilliant – as engaging and vibrant as their maker.

For us Maillet’s wines recall the bucolic year we spent traipsing about the Burgundian countryside nearly twenty years ago. But they’re meaningful for others as well. “Every time I drink a bottle from Maillet,” a customer told us recently, “it’s the best one from him I’ve had. And then you go and bring in another.”





Maillet's latest addition to our lineup is his Pouilly-Fuissé, an opulent, luxurious wine that supports its careful oaking with an unusually dense body of intense chardonnay fruit. This might be his most proper wine – trading a bit of the carefree exuberance of his Macons for a seductive polish and class. But it's still Maillet – vibrant and lively to the core.

We sometimes find our eyes quietly rolling at the theatrics surrounding biodynamics, and some of it seems as much voodoo as science. But through some alchemy, organic or otherwise, Maillet manages to distill everything around him – his effervescent spirit, passion for his craft, purity of fruit, and charming pastoral homeland – into every bottle of wine. When the wines taste like Maillet's, it doesn't really matter how he gets there. We'll keep coming back.

TW



Click below
to browse
Maillet's wines.

MAILLET

FEBRUARY NOTEBOOK SALE

free East Coast shipping on
any 24 bottles

limited quantities

to place orders, email
orders@ansonawines.com

35% OFF

MURÉ Crémant d'Alsace NV (\$24)	\$15.6
MURÉ Pinot Noir 2015 (\$22)	\$14.3
FOULAQUIER Gran'Tonillieres 10 (\$38)	\$24.7
MESTRE Châteauneuf blanc 15 (\$34)	\$22.1
BONNEFOND Côte Rôtie 2013 (\$54)	\$35.1
POINT DU JOUR Fleurie 2009 (\$24)	\$15.6
BONNEFOND Viognier 2015 (\$22)	\$16.25
FOULAQUIER Calades 2012 (\$38)	\$24.7

25% OFF

RAVAUT Ladoix "Royer" 2013 (\$38)	\$28.5
VOIGNY Sauternes 2012 (\$32)	\$24
BELLAND Santenay 1er red 2014 (\$40)	\$30
PRUNIER Chorey-les-Beaune 2011 (\$40)	\$30
AMIOT Morey-St-Denis 1er 2013 (\$84)	\$63
GROS Nuits-St-Georges 2013 (\$66)	\$49.5

50% OFF

MURÉ Riesling 2013 (\$24)	\$12
ACCOLES Chapelle 2014 (\$24)	\$12
FOULAQUIER Rollier 2010 (\$24)	\$12
ACCOLES Cab des Acolytes 14 (\$18)	\$9
PRUNIER Auxey-Duresses VV 2013 (\$42)	\$21
DAHM Riesling Feinherb 2010 (\$18)	\$9



DEPOT JOURNAL

February 2017 | Isaiah Wyner

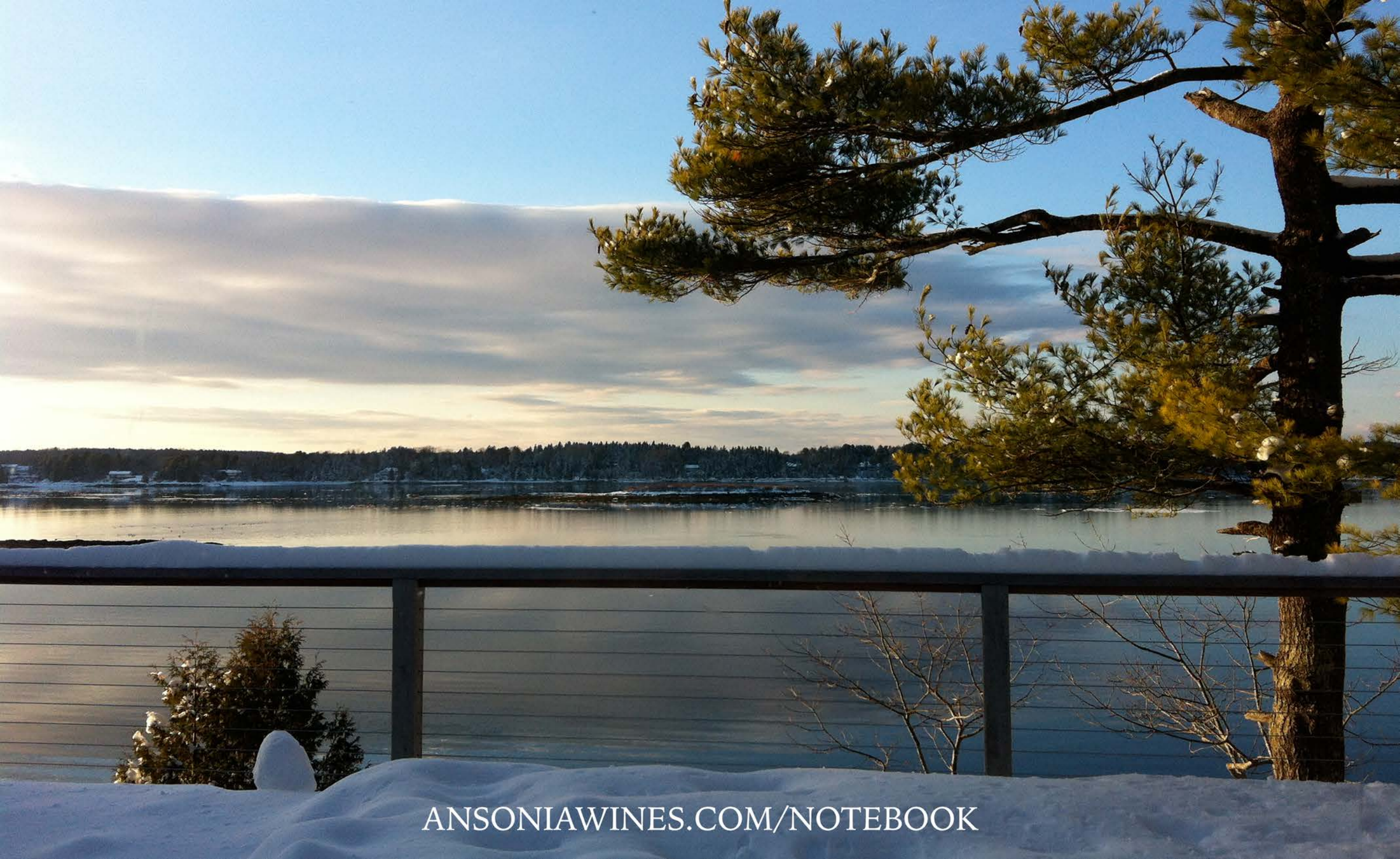
From the outside, winter might seem to be a quiet time for a winemaker. But in fact it is actually quite busy. The primary task for a vigneron during the winter months is maintenance of the vines. Winemakers spend the winter pruning their vines in order to produce new shoots in the spring. It's a painstaking and crucial process done entirely by hand -- the type and level of pruning determines how much fruit the vine will bear in the fall. Pruning can be done any time between leaf loss and bud break, although most of the work is done in

January when the canes are easiest to cut. In many vineyards, the cut canes are burned at the ends of the rows – serving both to dispose of them, and keep the workers warm.

Winter is also an important time in the cellar, as the two fermentations happen during these months. The initial fermentation transforms sugar into alcohol, using either ambient yeasts or those carefully selected and added to the juice. A secondary “malolactic” fermentation transforms malic acid found in the pressed juice into lactic acid. This process softens the acidity in the wine and enriches mouthfeel.

Many winemakers use winter to travel and promote their wines, attending trade shows, conferences, and wine dinners. A successful winemaker builds his business on relationships, and many continue the same relationships for generations. Full time winemaking is a remarkable commitment, one that keeps vigneron busy even through the depths of winter.





[ANSONIAWINES.COM/NOTEBOOK](https://ansonia wines.com/notebook)