

ANSONIA FUTURES

January 2016



JANUARY 2016

Table of Contents



Domaine Gérard Thomas

crisp, classic chardonnay

WHITE BURGUNDY



Domaine de l'Arlot

earthy, traditional pinot noir

RED BURGUNDY



Domaine Saint Clair

pure, spicy syrah

NORTHERN RHÔNE



Mas Foulaquier

organic, earthy, southern blends

LANGUEDOC



Domaine Mersiol

stony, floral whites

ALSACE



Chateau Léhoull

classic cab/merlot blend

BORDEAUX



Fattoria Poggerino

pure, elegant sangiovese

TUSCANY, ITALY



Winter has finally arrived in New England. On Harpswell Sound, the surest sign of winter is the arrival of the Bufflehead ducks, a study in black and white whose appearance is so improbable as to inspire smiles. Indeed, nature seems to have had a sense of humor in the whole matter of duck construction, as did the humans who provided them with names (consider also Canvasback, Shoveler, Gadwall, Wigeon, Merganser, Harlequin and Fulvous Whistler). Our heralds of winter have begun cruising up and down in front of the house; and farther out in the Sound they are drawing hunters trailing strings of decoys and looking pretty chilly lying in camo on low floats.

For Ansonia Wines adherents, January means the annual Italian opportunity. We time it around the bottling of Poggerino's Tuscan Olive Oil, one of Italy's great gustatory gifts (the wine is awfully good this year, too). As for



France, we get around quite a bit in this offering, so there should be something for everyone. There is grand cru white from the Alsace, red and white Burgundy, red and white from the Northern Rhône, red from Pic St. Loup in the northern hills of the Languedoc; and we even make a stop in Bordeaux. There are also some opportunities to buy in magnums, something more and more of you have been finding attractive.

The deadline to place orders
from this issue is

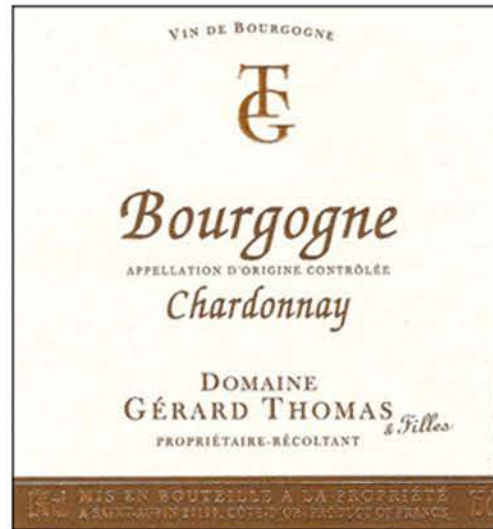
Sunday, January 24

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Domaine Gérard Thomas | St-Aubin, Burgundy



DOMAINE GÉRARD THOMAS



VIGNERONS: Isabel Humbert, Gérard Thomas

LOCATION: St-Aubin, Burgundy

GRAPES: chardonnay

PRICE RANGE: \$15 – \$34.58

PAIRINGS: chicken in cream, roasted white fish

In the Côte d'Or, a small valley stretches out to the west between the two great white wine villages of Chassagne-Montrachet and Puligny-Montrachet. It leads to the town of St. Aubin, a Côte d'Or village that is a bit less celebrated than its neighbors, but whose wines show similar class and breeding. Many wine experts (among them Rajat Parr) say the village produces some of the world's best white wine values. For many years, Gérard Thomas and his two daughters have been supplying Ansonia readers with well made white Burgundy at a very reasonable price. We're pleased to report that with the 2014 vintage, the Thomas domaine has turned in another excellent performance.

The **Thomas Bourgogne 2014** is, as always, eminently drinkable. The 2014 vintage was a bit riper than the 2013, so while there's enough acidity to supply freshness and a bit of a backbone, the wine shows an attractive roundness and is very drinkable today. In the nose, there's oak along with the citrus; the wine fills the mouth nicely and finishes fresh. This is genuine white Burgundy at an everyday price – the house chardonnay at various

restaurants and in many extended family wine cellars as well.

As one might expect, the village **St. Aubin “Champ Tirant”** shows more refinement. The oak is a touch less prominent in the nose, and while the weight of the wine is similar to the Bourgogne, there’s much more going on in the mouth. At the premier cru level, the **St. Aubin 1er cru “Murgers des Dents de Chien”** is particularly nice in the 2014 vintage. (The name means “Walls of Dog’s Teeth,” and comes from the shape of the pointed stones scattered through the soil). This wine shows a depth and intensity that one might expect from a village Puligny or Chassagne. There’s a measure of



elegance and finesse here that distinguishes it from both the village St-Aubin and the Bourgogne. “Murgers” 2014 finishes particularly well, and with some time in the bottle should get even better.

For those interested in wine from the golden slope itself, Thomas offers a Puligny 1er cru from “La Garenne” and a Meursault 1er cru from “Blagny.” Both are from the upper part of the slope, and so tend to offer plenty of energy. They’re similar in style, although the characteristics of their villages are apparent; and in any given year one usually seems to best the other by just a bit. This year, our favorite is **La Garenne**. There’s an attractive touch of mint or menthol in the nose of this classic Puligny-Montrachet, and the aromas stayed very interesting as the wine opened in the glass over the course of an hour. In addition, like the Murgers,



the Puligny showed unusual length in the mouth. For those partial to **Meursault**, Thomas’s 1er cru is an excellent high-slope example, with lots of freshness to back up the classic Meursault roundness. Today it’s noticeably rounder in the mouth than the Puligny, and might serve better for early drinking. We thought the Puligny outshone the Meursault by a nose this year, but both will be lovely.

WINE	CASE PRICE
Bourgogne blanc 2014	\$180
St-Aubin 2014	\$240
St-Aubin 1er cru 2014	\$295
Puligny-Montrachet 1er cru “Garenne” 2014	\$415
Meursault 1er cru “Blagny” 2014	\$415

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Domaine de l'Arlot | Nuits-St-Georges, Burgundy



DOMAINE DE L'ARLOT



VIGNERON: Geraldine Godot

LOCATION: Nuits-St-Georges, Burgundy

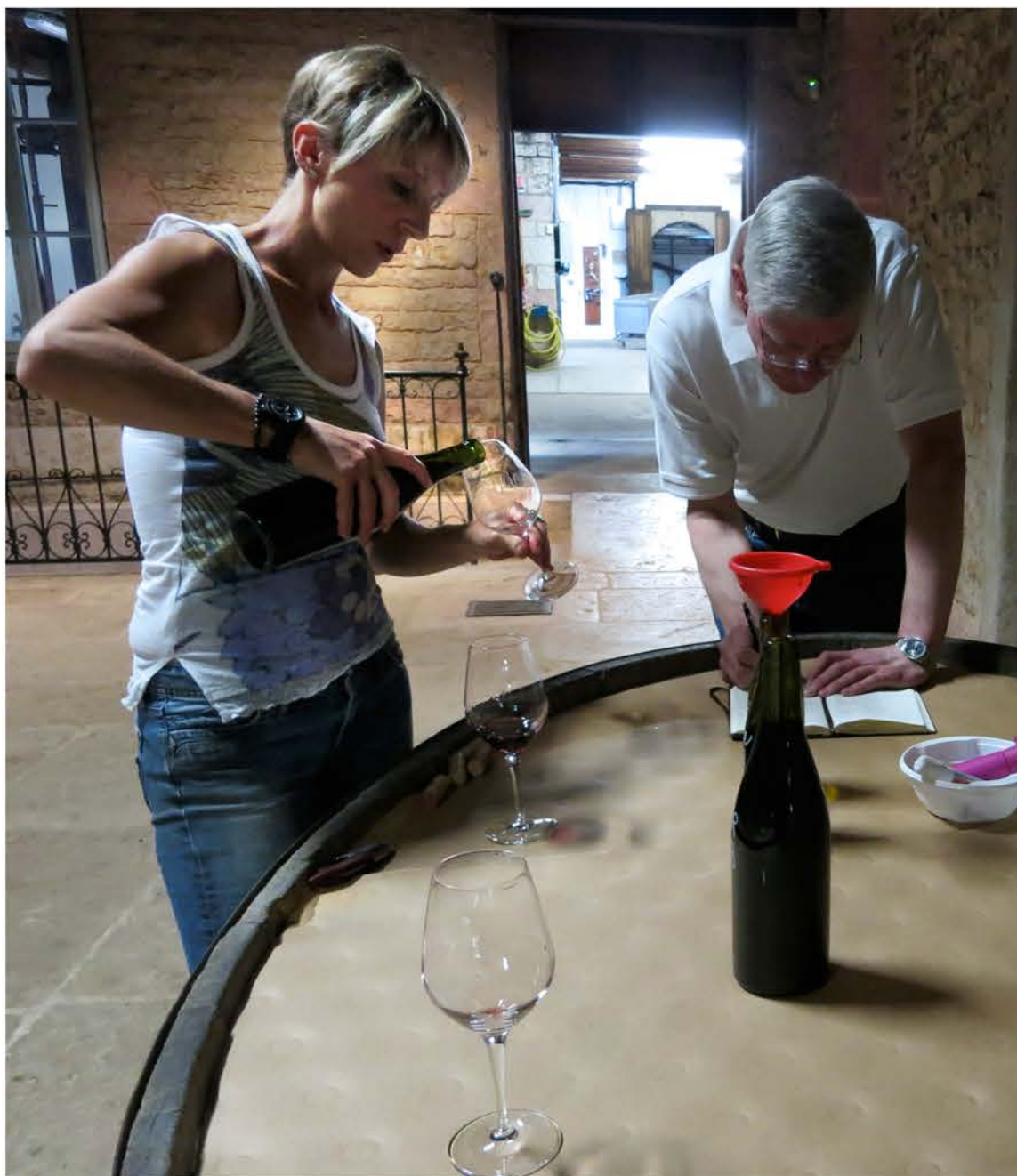
GRAPES: pinot noir

PRICE RANGE: \$65

PAIRINGS: game, poultry

The Domaine de l'Arlot is different from our other Burgundy producers in that it's owned by a large French insurance company. Such ownership means plenty of capital for tractors and the best oak barrels, but it also can mean less human continuity. The domaine now has its fourth winemaker in a decade, and though we expect continued first-rate stewardship of the property's superb terroir, the different ownership structure makes for occasional disruptions: among them, our allocation of wine from the tiny 2013 vintage. This year we will be limited to the flagship wine, the **Clos des Forêts St. Georges**.

Forêts St. Georges is a 15+ acre premier cru monopole, huge by Burgundy standards. It supplies the grapes for both Les Petits Plets and the Clos des Forêts St. Georges, the latter coming exclusively from vines planted in the 1950s. The 2013 vintage, you will recall, is expected to be particularly terroir-transparent. Allen Meadows ("Burghound") loves the vintage, and he thought Arlot's results were particularly



exciting. He called the Clos des Forêts St, Georges “terrific and well worth your attention,” with “excellent size, weight, punch and muscle to the broad-shouldered flavors that are very Nuits in character.” In the mouth Meadows extolled the “powerful yet velvety and palate-coating finish.”

Translating a bit, this is very big wine. Our tasting notes from June reflect a dense, silky wine with a very bright future ahead. Nuits St. Georges tends to produce meaty, powerful wines, and the delicious Forêts St. Georges 2013 carries on this tradition. While 2013 is generally judged to be an early-maturing vintage, we’d be inclined to put this wine at the back of the cellar for a while. We think it will be at its best in the second half of its first decade. Fans of classic red Burgundy with some room in their *cave* should take note.

WINE

CASE PRICE

Nuits-St-Georges 1er cru M monopole
“Clos des Forets St Georges” 2013

\$780

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Domaine Saint Clair | Crozes-Hermitage, Northern Rhône



DOMAINE SAINT CLAIR



VIGNERONS: Denis Basset

LOCATION: Crozes-Hermitage, Northern Rhône

GRAPES: syrah, marsanne, roussanne

PRICE RANGE: \$15 – \$19.17

PAIRINGS: lamb, roasts, spiced foods

Denis Basset in Crozes-Hermitage continues to offer Northern Rhône Syrah at very attractive prices. We're pleased to report that this year for the first time we have been able to pry out a small allocation of his excellent Crozes-Hermitages blanc, which is usually reserved for restaurants in the area.

The **white Crozes** is barrel-fermented, with 75% Marsanne and 25% Roussanne, which makes for a rich, round wine. The noticeable oak blends nicely with plenty of exotic fruit in the nose. Crozes-Hermitage blanc is unctuous wine, and one that charmed us over an outdoor dinner along the Rhône on a summer evening last year. It provides a welcome break from the usual roster of whites, and will be attractive both at table and by itself as an aperitif.

The Syrah for Basset's **Crozes-Hermitage "Etincelle"** ripened beautifully in the 2014 growing season, and we expect the wine to drink well from the start. It has the characteristic dark fruit and peppery notes of Northern Rhône syrah. The oak, while



present, is muted, reflecting Basset’s move to fewer new barrels. The wine will be a beautiful match for a roasted rack of lamb; the dark, rich notes make this well suited for winter, but the low alcohol and excellent balance make this popular in our house year round..

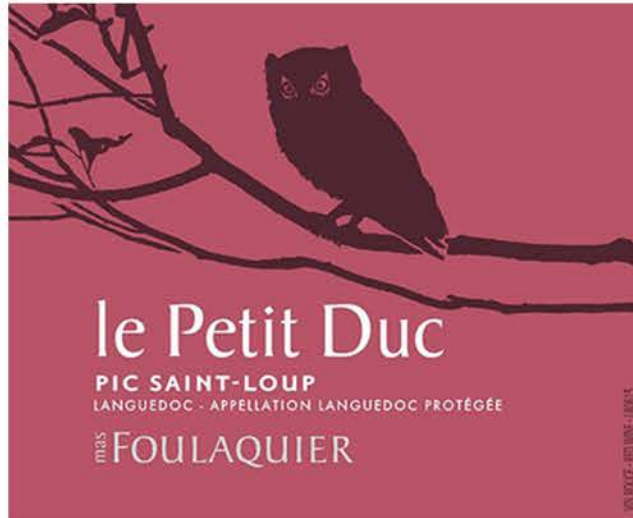
Basset’s tiny parcel in **St. Joseph** also produced delicious wine in this vintage. Named Abimes d’Enfer (“depths of hell”) after the vertiginous Northern Rhône slopes from which the grapes come, this shows a meatier, more concentrated side of syrah. “Abimes” is a bit bigger and denser than the Crozes-Hermitage, and so usually hits its stride a bit later. But it’s a lovely glass, and if the earlier vintages are any indication, will be drinking beautifully before long at all.

WINE	CASE PRICE
Crozes-Hermitage blanc 2014	\$185
Crozes-Hermitage “Etincelles” 2014	\$180
St-Joseph “Abimes d’Enfer” 2014	\$230

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Mas Foulaquier | Pic-St-Loup, Languedoc



MAS FOULAQUIER



VIGNERONS: Blandine Chauchat, Pierre Jequier

LOCATION: Pic-St-Loup, Languedoc

GRAPES: grenache, syrah, carignan

PRICE RANGE: \$15 – \$45.83

PAIRINGS: stews, grilled meats, roasts

Our friends at the Mas Foulaquier own some of the finest terroir in the Languedoc. Most vines in the vast region are planted on landscapes more akin to Iowa farmland than vineyards; but along the northern edge, where the terrain rises into hills and the elevation cools the atmosphere, there is terroir capable of producing very fine wine. Pierre Jequier and Blandine Chauchat have owned the Mas for more than a decade now. (The term “mas” means “farm” in the dialect of the region, and the locals pronounce the “s,” though Parisians tend not to). It’s a second act for both -- Pierre is a retired architect, and Blandine is a former legislator -- and they are fully committed to organic and biodynamic viticulture.

We’ve just tasted through the wines now on offer, and a trio in particular shows what makes these “natural” wines attractive: juicy fruit mixes with other elements like smoked meat and earth. Simply put, there’s a lot going on in the glass.

“Les Calades” is a majority syrah wine raised in demi-muids – oak barrels about twice the size

of those in Burgundy. The barrels help with microoxygenation and contribute faint wood notes to the wine. The just released 2013 shows a beautifully floral nose of violets and pepper, much like a Northern Rhône syrah. In the mouth it is elegant, without a touch of heaviness or heat. Right now the structure is apparent on the finish, but the wine rounds out in the glass, and a few more months will continue to add roundness to this excellent effort.

Petit Duc 2013 comes from old Grenache vines, and shows an intensity and depth characteristic of low-yield vines with some age. The nose shows exquisite dark black cherry, with cool, clean fruit and hints of spice and bacon. This is mouthfilling and full of structure, which should carry it for several years into the future. We suggest decanting, or serving with a hearty wintery meal.

Third, there's the **Gran'Tonillieres (Gran'T) 2011**, the estate's flagship wine, which is equal parts old vine Carignan and old vine Grenache. These vines were planted after the extraordinary freeze of the mid-1950s that killed every vine in the village, and the unique contribution of old



vines comes through in the glass. Gran'T is the domaine's most elegant wine, with the nose dominated by a delightful combination of fruit and flowers. In the mouth it is smooth and refined, with earthy, meaty notes supporting the aromas of daffodils and raspberries. The 2011 vintage is drinking beautifully right now.

Orphée, vat-raised from equal parts of Syrah and Grenache, has always been a wine for everyday drinking rather than cellaring. The 2014 is showing its youth right now, with noticeable tannin and lots of energy on the finish. We're confident that the rough edges will come off before long, and recommend plenty of time in a carafe when you open your first bottles.

We're excited to be able to offer three of Foulaquier's wines in magnum this year as well. Double bottles are festive and lots of fun; they also age more leisurely because of the higher wine-to-air ratio. Calades and Petit Duc are available in 2013, and Gran'T in 2011. We served the Gran'T from magnums at Tom's rehearsal dinner back in 2014, to much enthusiasm.



WINE	CASE PRICE
Les Calades 2013	\$235
Les Calades 2013 (6x 1.5L)	\$250
Petit Duc 2013	\$250
Petit Duc 2013 (6x 1.5L)	\$275
Gran'Tonillieres 2011	\$250
Gran'Tonillieres 2011 (6x 1.5L)	\$275
Orphée 2014	\$180

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Domaine Mersioli | Dambach-la-Ville, Alsace



The Domaine Mersiol has a lot of new friends in the US following Christophe Mersiol's visits to Boston and Philadelphia last year for winemaker events at Cambridge's Craigie on Main, Brookline's Fairsted Kitchen, and Philadelphia's Fork. The Mersiol family makes a wide range of wine in Dambach-la-Ville, an ancient town in the middle of the endlessly picturesque parade of villages along the edge of the Vosges plateau. We have picked four that we think will be of particular interest.

DOMAINE MERSIOL



VIGNERON: Christophe Mersiol

LOCATION: Dambach-la-Ville, Alsace

GRAPES: riesling, pinot gris, pinot auxerrois
gewurztraminer

PRICE RANGE: \$10.83 – \$16.67

PAIRINGS: sausages, asian cuisine

The first, **Auxerrois**, is from a grape you don't see everywhere. It is a cousin of Pinot Blanc, and got its name from the city of Auxerre. Today the Alsace is the last bastion of Pinot Auxerrois, but most of the plantings there get blended with Pinot Blanc and bottled under the latter's name. The Auxerrois from Mersiol, however, is worthy of bottling with its own name. Like Pinot Blanc, the nose shows pleasant stone-fruit and pear, but it finishes with just a hint of grape skin, a pleasant herbal note that adds much interest to the wine. This is one of our favorites for sipping on the deck as the weather warms, but in the wintertime we happily press it into service with



shrimp or crabmeat appetizers, or with oysters and clams. We go through more of this wine at our house every year.

The Grand Cru Frankstein vineyard is a particularly attractive piece of terroir. Not only do its heavily granite soils contribute an attractive stoniness to its wines, the micro-climate is particularly low on precipitation -- the result of geology on the Vosges plateau above it that diverts the rain clouds to the north and south. The meager amount of rain intensifies the mineral elements in wine from Frankstein.

We love the Mersiols' **Riesling Frankstein Grand Cru 2013**. It is dry wine, racy and brisk, with beautiful mineral elements completely in sync with the citrusy fruit. There's a purity and clarity throughout that makes it an excellent foil for all kinds of food. Seafood, of course, but also a fine match for an Alsace choucroute of boiled meat and sausages; or an American cousin, sausages on the grill. (Whether your store is Whole Foods or Hannaford, supermarkets these days offer a wide variety of fresh sausages, chicken or pork, in all

sorts of ethnic dress -- Chorizo, Sriracha, Feta, Asiago, you name it. Toss a few of these on the grill this winter and serve them alongside Mersiols' Frankstein Reisling, and you are likely to have a new regular meal.)

If you're looking some something less dry, consider the Mersiols' off-dry **Pinot Gris Grand Cru** from the Frankstein vineyard. There's enough residual sugar in the wine to show up as softness on the palate (13 grams vs

38 in the Gewurztraminer below), but the wine is not cloying. The notes tend more toward yellow fruit (think peaches) than to citrus, and the mineral elements remain in play. This wine is very nice accompanied by prosciutto, smoked trout, or cheese. The Mersiols are still offering the 2011 vintage of this wine, which already has many fans in this group.

Finally, if you're looking for a sweet wine,

consider the Frankstein **Gewurtztraminer 2012**. This wine has about 38 grams of residual sugar, and it is noticeably sweet (though less than much dessert wine, which often exceeds 100 grams). Gewurtztraminer's unique spicy aromas flow out of the glass, and Frankstein's minerality provides additional interest. You needn't confine this wine to after-dinner; it would provide a very nice foil for spicy Asian or Mexican fare.

WINE

CASE PRICE

Auxerrois 2014	\$130
Riesling Grand Cru Frankstein 2013	\$190
Pinot Gris Grand Cru Frankstein 2011	\$195
Gewurztraminer Grand Cru Frankstein 2012	\$200

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Château Léhou

Chateau Léhou | Graves, Bordeaux





CHATEAU LEHOUL



VIGNERON: Eric Fonta

LOCATION: Graves, Bordeaux

GRAPES: merlot, cabernet franc, cab. sauvignon

PRICE RANGE: \$12.08 – \$14.16

PAIRINGS: steak, tenderloin

Eric Fonta makes consistently delicious wine in a quiet corner of Graves, employing vineyards that have been in his family for more than 200 years. Though Graves was once the cradle of Bordeaux winemaking (vineyards here date back more than 2,000 years), modern-day Bordeaux is huge (ten times the size of Burgundy) and dominated by the famous; so it is difficult for a small Graves winemaker, no matter how skilled, to get notice. Which is why we were delighted to pick up the July edition of Decanter Magazine and find **Chateau Léhoul rouge 2012** ranked first in a tasting of 62 Graves reds from that vintage. Decanter's panel praised the appellation as one offering unusually good value, and the vintage as one in which "the best reds offer firm, ripe fruit," for drinking "now and until 2025." About Chateau Léhoul, which they reckoned as scoring 90+ points on a 100 point scale, they said; "floral and fruity aromas that have sweetness and texture to them. Ripe black fruits and touches of smoky peat. The tannins are forthright but should integrate with time – or an hour in



a carafe.” We couldn’t have said it better ourselves.

Léhoul’s **white Graves** is like many other Bordetaux whites: though dominated by Sauvignon blanc, there’s also some Semillon to add roundness (in the case of Léhoul, 10%). This allows the minerality a bit more prominence than the pure sauvignon wines of Sancerre and Pouilly Fumé, in which the fruit predominates. White Graves is an excellent

food wine, a superb accompaniment to fish or chicken dishes. We loved the bottle of 2014 Graves blanc that Eric sent us, but he has unfortunately already sold out. He proposes instead the 2015, in the bottle but days, which he adds is “de qualité supérieure.” We’re inclined to believe him, but feel duty-bound to let you know that you’ll be buying it on his recommendation rather than ours. At twelve bucks a bottle, the downside is limited.

WINE

CASE PRICE

Graves rouge 2012

\$170

Graves blanc 2015

\$145

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Fattoria Poggerino | Radda-in-Chianti, Tuscany, Italy



FATTORIA POGGERINO



VIGNERON: Pierro Lanza

LOCATION: Radda-in-Chianti, Italy

GRAPES: sangiovese

PRICE RANGE: \$12.08 – \$26.66

PAIRINGS: pizza, tomato sauce

We're delighted to report that we have the full complement of Poggerino offerings this year. Piero Lanza made no Riserva in the 2011 vintage, nor any olive oil at all last year. Such interruptions are the price we pay for Piero's remarkably high standards. We don't know about your household, but we will be delighted to say goodbye to quotas on the use of his wonderful olive oil, and to have some Poggerino Riserva in the cellar once again.

There's a new label on **Il Labirinto** this year, but otherwise the 2014 vintage is much like its predecessors. This wine, you will recall, is 100% Sangiovese, from the younger vines (up to ten years old) in the vineyards from which the Chianti Classico comes. It's entirely vat-raised, making for a clean, precise wine that marries beautifully with simple pasta dishes or pizza. You can drink it early and often.

Poggerino's **Chianti Classico 2012** is another tour de force at a remarkable price. The 2010, you will recall, was placed at #18 in the Wine Spectator's list of the Top 100 Wines. While

we're skeptical of efforts to cull all the world's wines for the "100 best," the ranking was a well deserved affirmation of just how good Piero's wine is. We loved the 2012 vintage when we tasted it last Spring, with its dark fruit and expressive nose accompanied by notes of cedar. We promptly asked Piero to lay aside a quantity for us, and we expect that the wine will be even better with another half a year in the bottle. We only hope we reserved enough. Jancis Robinson also had plenty of praise for the 2012 Classico, finding it "savory yet perfumed," "mouthfilling yet poised with huge minerally impact," and having "wonderful balance."

We were if anything even more enthusiastic about the **2012 Riserva**, from the Bugialla vineyard's more than 40 year old vines. When we tasted it the 2012 was not yet released, as the wine spends more than two and a half



years in vat, barrel, and bottle before finding its way to the market. The nose showed cloves along with cedar, and the wine was gorgeous in the mouth: big, rich, and round. Decanter called this wine "elegant and well-balanced, a true classic in the glass." We'll be stocking up on this one for our own cellars.

Finally, there is **Olive Oil** again. If you've never had fine, fresh, Tuscan olive oil before, you should really give it a try. This is an entirely different food from the "Extra Virgin Olive Oil" you can put in your cart at the local supermarket -- reminds us of the difference between a Kraft® shaker of Parmesan cheese and gratings from a chunk of real Parmigiano Reggiano. (Growing up with only Kraft in a small town in northern Pennsylvania, the senior member of the Ansonia team spent years thinking he didn't like Parmesan at all). This is not oil for frying, where heat drives off the



the precious volatiles that give great olive oil its value. This is oil for dipping crusty bread with a sprinkle of good sea salt; or for dressing a salad (with or without fresh lemon juice); or for drizzling over an oven roasted whole fish. We keep this oil is the coolest, darkest part of the

wine cellar, and while we enjoy it greatly after a year or more, its finest moments come when it is at its freshest. We sold our entire allocation of the 750ml bottles after our introductory post last week, but fortunately have more 500ml tins reserved (available in lots of 3).

WINE

CASE PRICE

Labirinto 2014	\$145
Chianti Classico 2012	\$190
Chianti Classico Riserva 2012	\$320
Olive Oil 750 ml bottle	sold out
Olive Oil 500 ml tin	\$252

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HOW THE ANSONIA FUTURES PROGRAM WORKS

HOW TO ORDER

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Please submit completed order forms by email to:
info@ansoniiawines.com

The deadline to place orders from this Futures
issue is **Sunday, January 24.**

The next Futures issue will be released in March 2016.

Many thanks for your interest,



OPTIONS FOR PICKUP

Pick-up in Massachusetts.

We now store our inventory in a basement in Newton (437 Newtonville Ave), and open it up to the public on Saturday afternoons. Futures customers can pick up their orders here during Saturday open hours, or by appointment.

Pick-up in Delaware.

Many of those who aren't near Boston will choose to collect their wine in Delaware. For such people, we set times for pickup at a temporary storage location and the owners pick their wine up there over the course of the two or three weeks after it arrives.

Shipping and delivery elsewhere.

In some states we can arrange for shipping at an additional cost that varies by location (\$3.50 per bottle to the west; \$2.50 per bottle everywhere else). Some states require us to collect sales and/or excise tax. If shipping interests you, let us know the state and we will figure out if it can be done.



AnsoniaWines.com/Futures