

A close-up photograph of a grapevine shoot. The central focus is a cluster of small, round buds, some green and some with a reddish tint, arranged in a dense, elongated pattern. The buds are attached to a green stem. In the background, there are several large, light green leaves with serrated edges, some showing signs of insect damage or disease. The overall lighting is bright and natural, highlighting the textures of the buds and leaves.

ANSONIA NOTEBOOK

APRIL 2016



I. Notes from Harpswell

MARK WILCOX

A monthly dispatch from the rocky coast of Maine; April's column covers sourdough bread baking, in particular its routines and pleasures.



II. 25% Off Shelf: March 2016

This month's shelf includes ten wines – ranging from a fresh Alsatian rosé to Grand Cru Red Burgundy, with everything from Chianti to crémant between.



III. Have you heard about?

A list of things we've discovered recently that we think you'll enjoy; April's list includes articles on Aligoté, and books on baking and Julia Child.



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: organics and biodynamics.





NOTES FROM HARPSWELL

April 2016 | Mark Wilcox

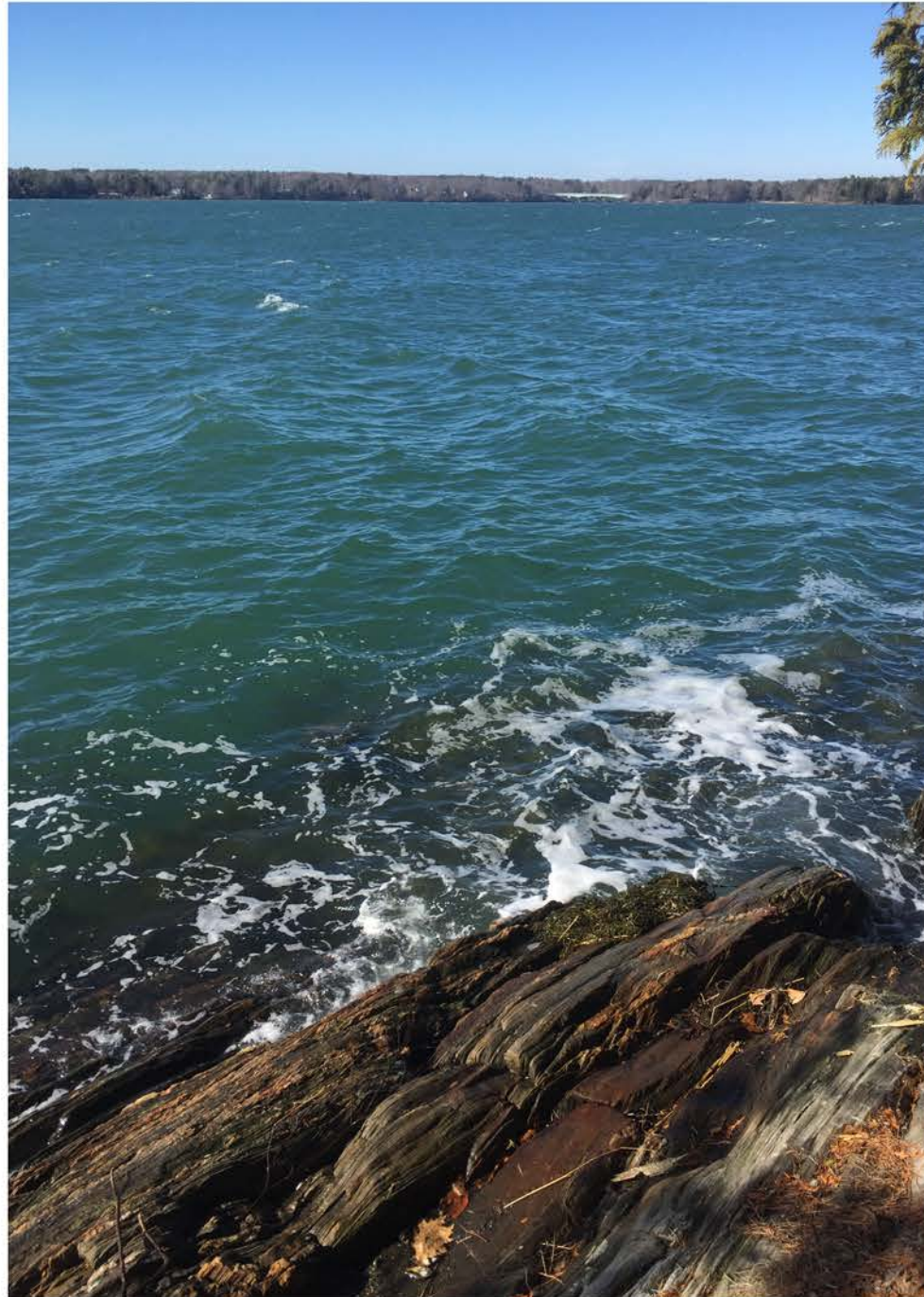
It was perhaps inevitable that breadmaking would join our list of minor obsessions. Bread and wine have far more in common than the ecclesiastical: both are the product of fermentation; both mix art and science; and both reward success with sensory delight.

Philadelphia's Metropolitan Bakery is on a surprisingly short list of things we miss about trading life in the city for life on the coast. That's not to say that no good bread is to be had here; in fact Portland's Standard Baking Company makes bread of comparable quality, and our local shop in Brunswick brings in Standard's bread every day. But Metropolitan's baguettes combine a crunchy crust with a savory crumb in a way that is unexcelled in our experience (which includes a very large number of French baguettes). We asked once about the yeast they use, and were told that all of their breads use sourdough, but at varied stages of

ripeness. This fact lay filed away until recently, when inspiration arrived in the form of a yen to try our hand at the ancient culinary exercise of breadmaking.

Our adventure relies heavily on [Tartine Bread](#), a book by Chad Robertson. He's a San Francisco baker whose obsession with bread led him through successive apprenticeships in the Berkshires, Provence and the Savoie before his return to the States to open a bakery in Point Reyes. His style relies on traditional French bread making techniques, all of which use a wild yeast leaven (sourdough). This yeast doesn't come from the store; it comes from the air, from your hands, from the place you live.

We're lovers of terroir, so this sounded great. Our Harpswell starter began with equal parts wheat and white flour mixed with local water by the fledgling breadmaker's



own hands. After about three days' gestation we were the proud owners of a living thing with a yeasty, boozy smell wafting up from the surface. Now we feed it every day, discarding most of what's there and offering the beast more flour and water.

As the yeasts do their work, they generate lactic and acetic acid. Acetic acid gives sourdough its sourness, and it arrives later in the fermentation process than the lactic. This permits the baker to manipulate flavor by using younger leaven, extending the rise of the dough, or both.

The ingredients of sourdough bread are simple – flour, water, salt, and yeast. The character of the bread comes from the way it is made to rise and the way it is baked. The key to the Tartine loaf is a long, slow rise. To have a loaf just out of the oven for dinner, we start the leaven (flour and water plus starter) around





bedtime the evening before. The starter yeast populates the leaven overnight if the temperature is about 65 degrees, and by morning a spoonful of the leaven will float in water.

You who have visited our house will recall that rooms as warm as 65 degrees are few and far between, and that the 80 degrees or so needed for the next phase -- dough rising leisurely over about 8 hours -- is nowhere to be found. Our solution is much like the one used by our colonial forebears: a wooden box (they called it a dough tray) where the dough can rise unaffected by the ambient temperature of the room. Being wine merchants, we cobbled ours together from two wooden wine cases (from our favorite Burgundy producer, of course). At first we put a pot of hot water in a corner of the box to raise the temperature; but this is a world where Amazon will have anything at your door in 48 hours, so we soon replaced the water with a light bulb for heat and a digital temperature control made somewhere in China. Now we can punch up whatever temperature we want and go off for a hike or a nap without worrying whether the proof box is too hot or too cold.

A good crust is essential to any loaf of bread, and it is here that many home bread makers come a cropper. Commercial bakers inject

steam into their ovens in the early part of the baking process and that steam creates the leathery skin that eventually browns into crust. The bakers at Tartine solved this problem for us with a Dutch oven -- all you need is a deep skillet and matching lid as the baking vessel (at Tartine's suggestion we use the Lodge cast iron Combo Cooker). The lid stays on for half the cooking process, trapping the steam coming from the loaf as it bakes inside. We were skeptical, but in fact the technique produces a crunchy crust that is all we could ask for.

We have been shocked by just how good the Tartine



bread can be. There is little quite like the aroma of a fresh loaf coming out of the oven or the crunch of warm crust as you bite into it. Homemade bread provides a great excuse to buy and use first class butter and excellent olive oil. And of course, it provides a delicious accompaniment for a glass of wine. Breadmaking on Lombos Hole is a work in progress, and we have yet to venture into the world of baguettes. But like opening a bottle of wine at just the right moment with just the right dish, tucking into a well-browned loaf from our own oven is enormously satisfying. And as in the world of wine, there's always more to try and more to learn.

MW



25% OFF

Our Monthly Sale Shelf

FREE EAST COAST SHIPPING
ON ANY 12 BOTTLES

MURÉ Rosé 2014

Crisp, dry rosé from Alsace. Notes of strawberries and lemon rind.

~~\$17~~
\$12.75/bot

PICAMELOT Rosé NV

Dry, sparkling, crisp rosé; notes of strawberries and crème brûlée.

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

RAVAUT Bourgogne 12

Classic, mouthfilling white Burgundy. Notes of lemon, hazelnut, and almond.

~~\$25~~
\$18.75/bot

MARTIN-LUNEAU Muscadet 2010

Simple, traditional, refreshing Muscadet from the Loire Valley. Notes of lime rind, minerals and salt air.

~~\$18~~
\$13.5/bot

QUIVY Gevrey 12

Bright and elegant red Burgundy. Notes of raspberries and a silky texture.

~~\$52~~
\$39/bot

CLICK TO
ORDER >



DEMOIS Chinon 14

Cool, earthy Cabernet Franc from the Loire. Notes of graphite and redcurrant.

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

POGGERINO Chianti Classico 11

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

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

MURÉ Anémones 13

A dry, floral Riesling-based blend from Alsace. Notes of mango, lemon, and pear.

~~\$18~~
\$13.5/bot

AMIOT Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru 2011

Beautiful, dense Grand Cru red Burgundy. Notes of blackberry jam and cinnamon.

~~\$130~~
\$97.5/bot

RAVAUT Ladoix 1er cru 06

Classic, earthy, 10 year old red Burgundy. Notes of dried cherries and violets.

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

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What we're watching: Narcos (Netflix)

Narcos is a brutal, well-acted, expertly shot drama set in 1980s Colombia. The story traces the rise of Pablo Escobar, and follows two FBI agents as they hunt the elusive drug kingpin. The blending in of archival footage reminds the viewer of the real-life, recent history on which the story draws.

What we're reading: Punch, "Provence, 1970"

In Punch Magazine, John Bonné has written three very enjoyable articles on [Muscadet](#), [Chablis](#), and [Aligoté](#), referring to the latter as "the Bernie Sanders of Burgundian grapes." Also recommended is Luke Barr's fascinating retelling of a collection of meals in the winter of 1970, where the guests are Paul and Julia Child, James Beard, MFK Fischer, and iconic American culinary figures.



POPULACE COFFEE

What we're brewing: Populace Coffee Co.

Based in Detroit, MI, Populace coffee is an excellent small batch roaster. In particular their "Burugndi Butezi" is delicious, combining floral notes with wild grassy honey. Free US shipping; visit Populace.coffee.

What we're cooking: Homemade Sourdough Bread

Inspired to take up bread baking on your own? (We highly recommend it.) Our suggestion is to begin with the purchase of [Tartine Bread](#), a well-written and extensive look at how to begin baking at home.





DEPOT JOURNAL

April 2016 | Isaiah Wyner

The topic of organic and biodynamic winemaking frequently comes up in conversation at the Depot, and I thought I'd take this opportunity to explore it in more detail.

The modern era of organic winemaking dates to the 1970s when winemakers began to realize that over-fertilization of vineyards was resulting in excessive crop production and poor quality. The excessive use of herbicides and pesticides contributed to a monoculture, making vines more vulnerable to disease and insect infestation.

Organic winemaking grew out of a rejection of these industrial and interventionist practices. Today organic winemakers limit the use of synthetic materials in winemaking, choosing instead to use ambient yeast from the vineyard, and homegrown compost as fertilizer. Many vignerons allow grasses and other plants to grow between the rows of vines promoting robust and fertile soils.



I like to think of biodynamic winemaking as organic winemaking on steroids. It embraces all of the tenants of organic practices, and adds a celestial component. Based on the teachings of Rudolph Steiner, biodynamic growers consider lunar and astrological influences when planting, and focus on soil preparation techniques that feed nutrients to the soil. One often highlighted (and ridiculed) example is 'Preparation #500,' which directs the vintner to place cow manure in a cow horn, bury it in the fall, and then redistribute the manure in the spring. While adherence to the letter of these preparations is varied, the results of biodynamic viticulture are often quite impressive. The improved vineyard health and resulting vibrant wines are proof enough for many.

Many winemakers today fall under a nebulous "natural wine" umbrella, adhering to the general principles of organics and biodynamics, if not all of



the specific techniques. These vigneronns make wine with as little intrusion or intervention as possible. They avoid cultured yeasts and limit the use of sulfur dioxide, which for centuries has been added to wine to prevent oxidation and bacterial growth. In many ways these techniques mimic the way wine was made 1000 years ago, and these wines often trade stability and consistency for purity and complexity.

There is considerable debate in the wine world about the impact of this range of techniques. While no one questions the benefits to vineyard health, the jury is out for many on the contents of the glass. Having enjoyed excellent wines from both natural and traditional sources, I prefer to avoid passing judgment. In the meantime I'll continue to seek wine made from quality grapes in the hands of a skilled winemaker.

IW

