

April, 2018

Tim's Wine Market



2016 Chateau Petit Freylon Bordeaux Blanc (\$18)

Most customers are surprised to learn that until the early 1980's more white wine was produced in Bordeaux than red. We often think of the wines of Bordeaux as being mostly red because the big name estates; Chateaus Mouton-Rothschild, Lafite-Rothschild, Latour, Haut-Brion, Margaux, Petrus and Cheval-Blanc, just to name a few, produce almost exclusively red wine. It is important to remember that Bordeaux is the largest wine producing region in the world, and the vast majority of the bottles produced are private label wines produced by negotiants. These are producers who buy wine made by the small properties in the region, then blend it together and bottle under their own name, or those for clients. The vast majority of these wines comes an area called the Entre-deux-Mers, or *between the seas*. This area lies between the Garonne and Dordogne rivers, on the expansive rolling hills east of the city of Bordeaux. Until the climate began to change a couple of decades ago, this area was too cool for red grape vines to consistently ripen. So producers in this area grew mostly grapes for white wine, Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon.

Château Petit-Freylon is located in Saint Genis-du-Bois, a small village twenty miles from the city of Bordeaux, and just south of the village of Frontenac, in the heart of the Entre-deux-Mers. The estate belonged to the Lagrange family for generations until it was purchased by La Société PESA in 2011. The new owners have invested heavily in the château's wine-making facilities, purchasing new tanks, barrels, and thermo-vinification systems. They also hired respected oenologist Gregory Dalla Longa to direct the winemaking. As a result, the wines have moved to the next level, with optimal ripeness for the grapes and better fruit and tannin extraction. This attention to detail has earned the wines several medals at prestigious competitions, such as the Concours Agricole in Paris and the Concours de Bordeaux.

The vineyard covers 75 acres, 50 of which are Bordeaux Supérieur soils. The soils are clay and limestone, with some spots covered with gravel as well. The vineyards used to be planted mostly white grapes, but the new owners are rapidly converting the vines to red varieties. Today they produce this one white wine, and three reds.

Their Bordeaux Blanc is 100% Sauvignon Blanc, fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks. Dalla Longa's vision for this wine is a straightforward expression of the terroir. To that end, the fermentation is not done too cold, and yeasts are not used that accentuate certain aromatic qualities. They also rack this wine off the lees very quickly after fermentation, working to preserve qualities of terroir.

When you open this wine, you may want to decant it for a few minutes before serving and let it warm up a few degrees from refrigerator temperature. This wine reminds me of old school Sauvignon Blanc from the 1990's, showing notes of fresh cut grass, white grapefruit peel, caped gooseberries, magnolia blossoms and chalkboard dust. In the mouth this wine is sharp and precise, with the moderate fruit framed by both crisp acidity and minerality. Drink this wine over the next year, maybe two, with a goat cheese and leek tart or oysters Rockefeller.

2016 Chateau Cornut Costieres de Nimes (\$16)

If you have been an Explorer club member for more than a few months you understand that I try to feature wines that represent very special places. Grapes grow in almost every climate, but there are precious few areas where the wines are distinctive and memorable. The producers of this wine, the Cornut family, farm such a unique microclimate. While the wine is not expensive, it delivers a level of quality that you will likely remember for a long time.

The Chateau Cornut is located in the French appellation of Costieres de Nimes. This area boasts a long winemaking history, first established by the Greeks in the 8th century BC. Later the area was conquered by Julius Caesar and was settled by the veterans of his Egyptian campaign. The growers of this area still recognize this as their symbol is a crocodile chained to a palm tree. Later this area would be the prime source of wine for the Pope during his residence in Avignon. It is ironic that it is called a "poor man's Chateauneuf-du-Pape" (which means New House of the Pope) when records indicate that the popes may have preferred those from Costieres de Nimes.

Another interesting thing about this region is that it was considered part of the Languedoc until 2004 when it was reclassified as part of the Rhone Valley. It was a logical change as the soil is consistent with the Rhone Valley, particularly do to the large, round rocks called *galets rous* that dominate the landscape. It is this similarity that is why many consider Costieres de Nimes to be the poor man's Chateauneuf-du-Pape. While this wine may not quite boast the size it certainly has the character.

The Cornut family, Sylvia and François along with sons Alexis and Numa, farm this estate with is almost 280 acres of planted vineyards. Sylvia and Francois met in oenology school and although they each came from a family winery, they purchased this one together in 1976 to establish their own legacy. It is an ideal site to grow grapes, squeezed between the Cévennes Mountains to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the south and the Alpilles to the east. This area between Provence and the Languedoc is typically very hot in the summer, but their location is not due to the cool Mediterranean breezes that blow north and are trapped between the mountains. As the result, the grapes retain great acidity even in warmer than normal years. Such perfect conditions create an environment favorable to sustainable farming, and the Cornuts are very committed, replacing the use of synthetic herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers with organic treatments.

When you open this wine, decant it for a half hour before serving. When you do, it opens to reveal a deep nose of dried black figs, dark chocolate, dried red plums, herbs de Provence, cassia buds and cardamom. On the palate, it is really dense

and rich, with a thick wave of fruit framed by soft but noticeable tannins and a finish that shows the dried herb, porcini mushroom and stoniness that is the hallmark of great Rhone wines. Drink this wine over the next two to three years with braised lamb dishes or a mushroom galette.

Oysters Rockefeller

The origin of this dish is from Antoine's, a New Orleans landmark since 1840. This recipe was created in late 1800's and at the time, was considered so rich that it was fit only for John D. Rockefeller, the wealthiest man in the world. This version is a good example that cuts out a little of the fat. Serve this with the Petit Freylon, which will cut through the richness and work nicely with the herb dressing.

- 1 garlic clove**
- 2 cups loosely packed fresh spinach**
- 1 bunch watercress, stems trimmed**
Parsley is a good substitute
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions**
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature**
- 1/2 cup dry breadcrumbs**
- 2 tablespoons Pernod or other anise-flavored liqueur**
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, ground**
- 1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce**
- 1 pound (about) rock salt**
- 24 fresh oysters, shucked, shells reserved**
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese**

1. Position rack in top third of oven and preheat to 450°F. Finely chop garlic in processor. Add spinach, watercress and green onions to garlic. Process, using on/off turns, until mixture is finely chopped. Transfer mixture to medium bowl.

2. Combine butter, breadcrumbs, Pernod, fennel and hot sauce in processor. Process until well blended. Return spinach mixture to processor. Process, using on/off turns, just until mixtures are blended. Season with salt and pepper. (Can be made 8 hours ahead. Cover; chill.)

3. Sprinkle rock salt over large baking sheet to depth of 1/2 inch. Arrange oysters in half shells atop rock salt. Top each oyster with 1 tablespoon spinach mixture. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake until spinach mixture browns on top, about 8 minutes.

Chicken Scaloppini with Mushrooms and Peppers

While this breaks the "rule" of white meat, white wine; red meat, red wine, the dish works well with the Cornut Costieres de Nimes, or any Cotes du Rhone type wine. It is a classic combination of Provençal flavors; mushroom, peppers, capers and herbs. The only trick to this dish is to make sure the butter is ice cold, so when you whisk it into the sauce it thickens instead of separates.

- 3 (6- to 8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed**
- Salt and pepper**
- 6 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 8 ounces white mushrooms, trimmed and quartered**
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into thin matchsticks**
- 1 shallot, sliced thin**
- 1/4 cup capers, rinsed**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 1/4 cups chicken broth**
- 3/4 cup white wine**
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour**
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 3 pieces**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley**

1. Working with 1 breast at a time, starting on thick side, cut breasts in half horizontally. Using meat pounder, gently pound each cutlet into even 1/2-inch thickness between 2 pieces of plastic wrap. Pat cutlets dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper; set aside.

2. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add mushrooms, bell pepper, shallot, and 1/4 teaspoon salt and cook until liquid has evaporated and vegetables begin to brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add capers and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add broth and wine and bring to boil, scraping up any browned bits. Cook until slightly thickened and mixture is reduced to 2 cups (measured with vegetables), about 8 minutes. Set aside in measuring cup. Wipe out skillet with paper towels.

3. Spread flour in shallow dish. Working with 1 cutlet at a time, dredge cutlets in flour, shaking off excess, and transfer to plate. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in now-empty skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add 3 cutlets and cook until golden and

cooked through, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to platter and tent loosely with aluminum foil. Repeat with remaining 3 cutlets and remaining 2 tablespoons oil.

4. Discard any oil remaining in skillet. Return sauce to now-empty skillet and bring to boil. Once boiling, remove skillet from heat and whisk in butter. Stir in any accumulated juices from platter. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Spoon sauce and vegetables over chicken. Sprinkle with parsley