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For 2019 I am using the club selections as a way to show what happens each year in the cycle of winemaking from vine to bottle. Following the patterns of the northern hemisphere, the first quarter I am focusing on the conditions that effect the wine absent of man's intervention, or the very definition of *terroir*. I write about this often so I do not feel the need to define the concept again, but rather this quarter I will demonstrate how important *terroir* is in the way it shapes how the wine regions of France have evolved since the middle ages, when the concept of *terroir* was developed. Although some regions in other parts of the world established regulations on wine production before the establishment of the *appellation* system in France, it was the French who established the system that the rest of Europe now uses. For this quarter we will look at the three of the most important wine producing regions in France for red wine, and see what makes them different, and the same.

In all wine regions we begin the discussion of what makes them unique with the combination of soil and exposition of the site. In the case of France, the foundation of the topsoil began during the Jurassic period, when the entire country was covered by ocean. During this time the sea was filled with tiny creatures with high levels of calcium in their shells, who, upon their expiration, sank to the bottom and eventually created a thick layer of what is today limestone. Then, roughly 65 million years ago, the sea receded and exposed the ocean bottom. 25 million years ago plate tectonics lifted the Central Massif, which is a plateau that forms much of central France. At this time it also caused many "ripples" in the geography, the technical term is an *escarpment*, which created many hills and valleys. Since then a combination of weathering and the effects of the ice age have eroded, shifted and readjusted many of the slopes, creating a complex matrix of soil types across the country. With our selections this quarter we will look at how soil and exposition effect the final products in the bottle.

My first selection, the **2016 Domaine Glantenay Volnay "Les Broulliards" Premier Cru (\$89)** is a Burgundy, which, although not the first area to have defined appellation rules, is certainly one of the oldest. The history of winemaking in Burgundy traces to Roman times. After the fall of Rome, in the dark ages, much of the region was under the control of the Citeaux Abbey, located in the city of Dijon, which forms the historic capital of the Burgundy region. During the dark ages the abbey controlled the land around them, or took their tithe in the form of wine, from the local land owners. Until the French revolution, when the property was taken from the church and sold, the Cistercian monks took great care in categorizing parcels of vines on the hillsides we today call the Cote d'Or, or the "golden slope." This period of observation lasted almost a thousand years and today is the foundation for the differences between village wines and those classified as Premier and Grand Cru.

Although the categorization of Burgundy can be very complex, it is not hard to understand what grapes are used to make the wine. Almost all of the red wines in Burgundy are produced from Pinot Noir, an early budding and ripening variety well suited to the short growing season of the region. The climate of Burgundy is generally considered continental, which means cold winters and hot summers, with the fall weather degrading quickly in late September to rain and cooler temperatures. Over the thousand years the monks were noting every detail of vineyards, they also recognized that only a few varieties thrive in the climate, hence Pinot Noir for the red wines and Chardonnay for the whites.

The village of Volnay lies a short drive south of the city of Beaune on one of the steepest, and most eastward facing hillsides in the Cote de Beaune. To add another layer of complexity to the categorizing of Burgundy, the Cote d'Or is divided into two sub-zones, with the city of Beaune being the dividing line. To the north, between Dijon and Beaune, lies the Cote de Nuits. From the south of Beaune to the village of Maranges is called the Cote de Beaune. You may remember a feature last year from this village. The village of Volnay covers roughly 500 acres of vineyards, almost equally divided between village and Premier Cru sites. There are no Grand Cru vineyards in Volnay. The location of the Premier Cru "Les Broulliards" lies on the south side of the appellation, near the border of Meursault.

Our feature this quarter is produced by a very old domaine, currently run by the brother and sister team of Guillaume and Sarah Glantenay. This domaine traces its roots to 1893, when it was established by their great-grandfather Georges, from an inheritance that originates in the 17th century. They own about nineteen acres, stretched across several appellations, but with the majority of their property in the village of Volnay. This is not uncommon for an old estate, as each generation added parcels through inheritance from the wife's family. All of their vineyards are farmed using sustainable practices and most parcels are planted to old vines. For this wine, which is one of their larger holdings at almost two-and-a-half acres, the vines are equally divided between twenty year old, and fifty year old plantings. In order to maximize site character all of the wines are fermented and aged the same way. All of the grapes are hand harvested and destemmed, then fermented in stainless steel tanks. Once dry they are racked to small barriques, of which twenty percent are new, and aged for eighteen months.

When you are ready to serve this wine, decant it for a half-hour before serving and try to chill to around sixty-five degrees. Then when you pour yourself a glass it will reveal a brooding nose of dried black figs, cooked blueberries and raspberries, black tea and a touch of vanilla extract. On the palate it is quite dense and muscular, with a nice initial pop of fruit framed by some fairly obvious mid-palate tannins. Despite this the wine still has good length and will evolve nicely for up to a decade. Serve with a seared duck breast with cherry sauce or seared tuna steak with a porcini mushroom crust.

For the second selection we return to Bordeaux, with the **2015 Ch. Laffite Carcasset St. Estephe (\$45)**. During my visit in March, 2018, this was one of the standouts in the commune of St. Estephe, and provides us with some interesting comparisons to the other two wines.

Unlike the Cote d'Or, which lies almost entirely on a thin escarpment of limestone at the far west edge of France, Bordeaux lies on an expansive area in the southwest, bordering the Atlantic ocean. The entire region lies at the base of the Central Massif, at the confluence of two major rivers, the Dordogne and the Garonne, which form the Gironde River. During the ice age these rivers formed as glaciers were receding, and billions of gallons of water washed over the Central Massif. The water eroded everything in its path, including massive amounts of rock which tumbled for hundreds of miles. As a result the soils of Bordeaux are a mix of sedimentary components; primarily gravel, sand and clay, lying on top of the limestone from the Jurassic period. This is the perfect medium for grape vines as the poor, gravely soils support few other agricultural crops.

The other element of Bordeaux is the climate, which is heavily influenced by two large bodies of water, the Atlantic Ocean and the Gironde River. Although the climate should be cold, due to the proximity to the Atlantic ocean, Bordeaux is actually warmer than much of Europe. This is due to a portion of the gulf stream that terminates off its shores, keeping the Atlantic waters warmer than in other parts of Northern Europe. In addition, the Gironde River, which divides the region, is warm as well, and helps extend the growing season for vineyards nearby. At no point was this more evident than the horrific frosts of April 2017. Vineyards within a kilometer of the Gironde River suffered little damage, but just a few hundred meters farther away and the devastation was massive. This warmer climate also extends the growing season later into October, allowing for late ripening varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon to thrive.

Our example for this quarter, was established in 1781, by Monsieur Jean Laffitte, who was the legal council to King Louis XVI. The chateau lies in the middle of the St. Estephe appellation, on twenty-five acres that are a mix of both gravel and clay soils. Due to a long period of neglect in the early 19th century the property was not included in the Classification of 1855. In 1955 the property was purchased by viscount Pierre de Padirac, who modernized the vineyards and the winemaking facility, earning the Cru Bourgeois classification. For many years this property has been a sleeper of the commune, but well known among savvy collectors for its great value. In 2016 the property was purchased by Pierre Rousseau, who continues the tradition of modernization.

To make this wine the vineyards are farmed using certified sustainable practices. After the grapes are harvested they are destemmed and fermented in stainless steel tanks, with post-fermentation maceration lasting up to five weeks. The wine is then moved to barrique, 30% new, where it is aged for twelve months. The blend for this wine is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot and 3% Cabernet Franc.

The oak is relatively apparent as soon as you pull the cork and decant this wine. Let it breathe for a half-hour then when you pour the first glass you are greeted by a rich nose of baked cherry pie filling, creme de cassis, maduro cigar wrapper, espresso crema and Dutch chocolate. On the palate the fruit for this wine is expansive, with a moderate frame of acidity and tannins that rise up to the finish. Drink this wine over the next five to ten years with filet mignon with green peppercorn sauce or cocoa/coffee rubbed ribeye.

For my final selection this quarter we dive into the Southern Rhone valley, with the **2016 Chateau Guiot "Paulinette" (\$30)**. This wine comes to us from one of the old Kacher staple wineries, Mas de Guiot. For years we successfully sold the wines from Silvia and François Cornut and now their twin sons, Numa and Alexis have taken over the domaine. For those who keep score of such things, they are the 9th generation to run this fantastic estate. The sprawling 200 acre estate lies in the southernmost of the Rhone appellations, Costieres de Nimes. This appellation was classified as part of the Languedoc until 1986, when the producers successfully convinced the government that their growing conditions are more like the Rhone Valley.

Like Bordeaux, the primary geological features of the Rhone were formed during the ice age, as the same erosion happened on the western side of the Central Massif. This time the granite and volcanic bedrock of the area was tumbled for hundreds of miles, forming the incredible round rocks that are iconic to Chateauneuf-du-Pape. These rocks lie upon a thin layer of limestone, sand and occasionally clay, particularly as you move away from the river. Here the soils are not as fertile as those in Bordeaux, so the varieties that thrive are well suited to extreme conditions in both weather and soil.

Due to the proximity to the Mediterranean, this region enjoys a much warmer climate year round than much of France. In fact the official name for the climate is called Mediterranean. The differences between the regions is best explained by my first experience visiting France in 1993. My tour was in late January/early February, and while visiting Burgundy I wore a heavy jacket and long underwear under my clothes to combat the cold, wet, grey climate. When getting out of the van a few days later in Chateauneuf-du-Pape, I was greeted by weather in the mid-50s, under clear skies and bright sun. It is probably worth noting that you never meet anyone from the south who does not have a cheery disposition.

For this wine, the Cornut boys look to emulate Chateauneuf-du-Pape, of which the soils of this block of vines are very similar. The vines in this block are 95% Grenache and 5% Syrah which are 90-100 years old and yield only about a half ton of fruit per acre. All of the grapes are hand harvested and only half are destemmed before going into the fermentor. The portion that is not destemmed is also foot-trodded before fermentation. The wine is allowed to ferment slowly with a post fermentation maceration of a month. The wine is then aged for two years in used Stockinger foudre from Gaja. (These are the Rolls-Royce of barrels, very rare and expensive.)

When you are ready to serve this wine, decant it for a half-hour before serving. The nose shows notes of Southern Rhone charm, with notes of red apple peel, old leather book bindings, clove oil, bay leaves, baked cherries and cooked cranberry sauce. On the palate it is deep and concentrated, with superb length and firm, well integrated tannins. Drink this wine over the next five to ten years with a grilled rack of lamb or braised pork shoulder with bay leaves, orange and black olives.