

France

Italy

**DOMAINE PAUL LOUIS EUGÈNE –
ICONOCLASM IN THE LANGUEDOC**

The Languedoc, in the south of France, is one of the country's most prolific regions. Blessed with a climate quite amenable to viticulture, it is most associated today with value-priced wines from international varietals like Chardonnay, Syrah, Cabernet, etc. This being the case, it's sometimes easy to forget that it's also home to some of France's most distinctive wines and traditional appellations of origin.

Upon recently encountering the extraordinary wines of **Domaine Paul Louis Eugène**, we were reminded of this in a big way. Once described as a "peasant philosopher" by prominent French-wine authority Andrew Jefford, proprietor Paul Durand is devoted to the heritage of the Languedoc, but at the same time not above making wines from non-traditional varieties if he believes they have a statement to make about his terroirs. In fact, Durand was one of the first producers in France to deliberately shun the Appellation Contrôlée system and make only *Vins de Table* (hence no vintage is legally permitted on the bottle). Despite cultivating an almost occult secrecy about how he makes his wines and having notoriously little affection for the *dog and pony show* side of the wine business, his wines have nonetheless developed quite a cult following amongst a small band of cognoscenti. After tasting these astonishing wines, we now count ourselves among them—you will, too, upon tasting them.

**DOMAINE PAUL LOUIS EUGENE (2005)
VIN BLANC \$NEW! CHECK WEB**

From a unique blend of Marsanne, Sauvignon Blanc, and Grenache Blanc, this unique white resembles a Bandol Blanc crossed with a Sancerre, with perhaps a dollop of Chateauneuf du Pape Blanc added just to confuse you. While its pale color belies its origin in the 2005 vintage (which cannot, of course, be stated on the label), it is resolutely stony and dry, fresh and incredibly nuanced - orchard fruits, citrus, and herbs work beautifully in concert. And with just a touch of musk and nuttiness from cask aging lending complexity and nuance, this is a formidable wine that will actually improve with another 2-5 years in bottle, although it shows beautifully now. **Limited quantity.**

**DOMAINE PAUL LOUIS EUGENE (2004)
CANTO PEBRE \$NEW! CHECK WEB**

The name of this wine is classically Paul in its puckish play on "Cantausse!", the name of a neighbouring domaine in the Minervois. But the wine inside the bottle is no joke at all - from 100% Carignan, it demonstrates once and for all to doubters that Carignan has the potential for real nobility in the Languedoc. Perhaps the suggestiveness of the name contributes to the pepperiness of the nose, but, whatever the source, peppery it is. In the mouth, the wine shows the classic briary tones of Carignan, allied to a sweet and supple texture that makes it all too easy to swallow, leaving a haunting memory behind. Truly beautiful and original wine, and an exceptional value. **Very limited quantity.**

BRESSAN MASTRI VINAI: RE-DISCOVERING TRADITION IN FRIULI

"These are wine drinkers' wines." This comment came from John Downing, our long-time Italian wine buyer, upon recently encountering this astonishing line-up from Friuli's **Bressan Mastri Vinai**. Our staff, immediately smitten, recognized instinctively what he meant: to say the very least, these superb wines are traditionally-crafted, absolutely singular in terroir expression, and quite unlike anything else from Friuli, or Italy for that matter. Almost more evocative, if you can believe it, of the great wines from Rioja's *R. Lopez de Heredia Viña Tondonia* or France's greatly-missed *Didier Dagueneau*, these astonishing wines belong to a certain arch-traditional, hyper-naturalist, and anachronistic school of wine-making that vehemently resists things like technological innovation, international style, and, well, anything *other* than what they've done, quite successfully, since 1726.

From the village of Farra di Isonzo in the heart of Italy's Collio and Isonzo D.O.C, Bressan Mastri Vinai was founded in 1726 and has been family-owned and operated for ten generations. Often mentioned in the same breath as cult, reactionary producers Josko Gravner and Stanko Radikon, Bressan typifies the ultra-old-school approach to Friulian winemaking. The following is an abridgement of their extraordinary manifesto:

- **Everything** is done by hand – vine selection, harvest, cultivation, **even labeling**
- **Everything** is done naturally – no herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, or synthetic chemical substances of any kind
- No sulphur used in the wine-making process
- Only natural, indigenous yeasts
- Preferential use of indigenous grape varieties
- No filtration, no irrigation
- No new oak – only un-toasted Slavonian large casks, tonneaux, barriques
- Old vines – many of the vines on the estate are over 100-years-old, and no vine may produce wine until at least seven years old
- No wine is released until it's **ready**. Some wines are held back as long as ten years before release.

In short, Bressan is one of the most-exciting discoveries we've made in quite a while, but certainly something that must be tasted to be believed and understood – in fact, we invite you to do so **at the wine bar on Tuesday, September 21st**, as part of our \$10 Tuesdays series, with Bressan representative George Pavlov.

BRESSAN MASTRI VINAI 2003 VERDUZZO FRIULANO \$21.98 [#380049]

Closely-related to the Verduzzo Giallo used in Friuli's great sweet wine, Ramandolo, this wine, from Verduzzo Friulano, is completely dry. Offering up an incredibly complex bouquet of apricots, paraffin, citrus zest, lanolin, sea-salt and oyster shell supported by a nuanced touch of almond oil and sandalwood from a little time in old Slavonian casks, this is a white *vin de garde* that will actually improve for another 10-15 years in the bottle. Quite unlike the squeaky-clean, stainless-steel fermented whites that Friuli has become known for, this is a monumental example of the old-style approach. Try it with a dish of sautéed scallops or a few slices of Prosciutto di San Daniele. **Limited.**

BRESSAN MASTRI VINAI 2004 SCHIOPPETTINO \$33.98 [#380050]

Also known as Ribolla Nera, this grape variety is notoriously difficult to ferment properly. In the old days, wine that hadn't completed its fermentation would begin to re-ferment in the bottle once the weather warmed up, causing bottles to explode with the pressure from carbon dioxide. This is how the grape gained its nickname, *Schioppettino*, or "little rifle." And this wine is an absolutely remarkable example of Schioppettino – with an incredibly complex nose of tobacco, black pepper, leather, and black raspberries supported by notes of sea-salt, musk, and sandalwood; this wine delivers all this plus more – miso, green tea, dark chocolate, etc. – on the remarkably long, satisfying and impeccably-balanced palate. A truly remarkable discovery. Try it with roasted duck or a hunk of Reggiano right off the wheel. **Limited.**

BRESSAN MASTRI VINAI 2003 PINOT NERO \$33.98 [#380051]

Pinot Noir has been grown on this estate since 1726. And this example, from very old vines grown on a remarkably complex, ferrous soil called *ferrettizzato*, shows a side of Pinot Noir quite unlike anything else in the world. Rich, full-bodied, and laden with dark, brooding spice tones, this wine delivers an intense nose of stony wild raspberries, Sarawak peppercorns, porcini powder, and a dark earthiness that transforms in the glass into a complex perfume of dried roses, oolong tea, and toasted herbs, finishing finally with a mysterious umami savoriness. Extremely complex, and something for the Pinot fan who thinks he's tried everything. Excellent with game or roasted lamb. **Limited.**

BRESSAN MASTRI VINAI 1998 PIGNOL \$59.98 [#380052]

The world's slowest-fermenting grape variety, Pignolo is something of a specialty of the area and a rarity, with prices to match. Sought after by connoisseurs, Pignolo can produce intensely complex, age-worthy wines that sell for prices well into the triple digits. This example, already twelve years old (Bressan never releases their Pignolo until it is at least ten years old), can compete with the best of them. Offering up a mind-numbingly complex bouquet of black plums, heirloom tomato, and somewhat juicier, rounder fruit than the Schioppettino, the palate is supported by subtle notes of black-strap molasses, more black plums, and a high, lifted acidity. Finishing with a mysterious, smoky/savory minerality, this wine is something to wonder at. And while it performs beautifully now, this wine will improve for decades. **Extremely limited.**

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