



AURIC PACIFIC

“selling wine with passion!”

Auric Pacific Fine Wines

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Written by Andy Tan

Hi winos,

The Good Year

As much as I enjoy wine, I am equally fanatical about good movie. Movie allows you to walk into someone's life, going through the experience, sharing all the emotions, and without needing to deal with the "real" ending. I admire work of such directors like **Guisepppe Tornatore** (Malèna, Cinema Paradiso), **Bernardo Bertolucci** (The Last Emperor, Stealing Beauty, The Dreamers), **Richard Donner** (16 Blocks, Lethal Weapon series, The Omen), **Joel Schumacher** (Phone Booth, The Client, Flatliners, The Lost Boys, St. Elmo's Fire), **Oliver Stone** (World Trade Centre, Any Given Sunday, Natural Born Killers, JFK, U-turn, Wall Street, The Doors, Platoon) **Steven Soderbergh** (Traffic, Erin Brockovich), **Jonathan Demme** (The Manchurian Candidate, Philadelphia, The Silence of the Lambs), **Michael Mann** (Miami Vice, Collateral, Heat, The Insider, The Last of the Mohicans), **Woody Allen** (Match Point), **Martin Scorsese** (The Age of Innocence, Cape Fear, Goodfellas, The Color of Money), **Robert Redford** (A River Runs Through It, Quiz Show) and the last, but not least, the brother Scotts - **Tony Scott** (Déjà Vu, Domino, Spy Game, Enemy of State, Crimson Tide) and **Ridley Scott** (Black Hawk Down, Hannibal, Gladiator, Thelma & Louise, Black Rain, Alien, Blade Runner). Yes, granted, is all over the place. Like wine, I love diversities in movies.

Ridley Scott latest movie, **The Good Year** will certainly produce another demand of the already famous holiday designation, the Mediterranean influence of Provence. The previous wine related movie, **Sideways**, which has already created such an impact on the sale for **Pinot Noir** in States, and responsible for the recent decreased in both sale and production for **Merlot** (the movie least favorite wine), even at their most flourish land of Washington State. Many vintners have uproot their previous Merlot vineyard and give way to the current more trendy grape varieties such as Petit Verdot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc. All that, for the sake of one single movie (one should never undermined the influenced of motion picture).



Crowe's holding the "Le Coin Perdu" with Cotillard

The Good Year, which is the only drama/comedy movie to date for Scott that was previously known for his epic works of such masterpiece like Gladiator, Black Hawk Down, Kingdom of Heaven (ok, agreed, this movie was less successful in the box office due primary to the wrong selection of led actor - Orlando Bloom). This latest movie took set at the beauty countryside of Provence, which is also known for their production of excellent rosé. The merciless London banker, Max Skinner, which was played by Russell

Crowe inherited a vineyard property in Provence by his late uncle Henry. His immediate intention was to sell off this property and get back to his ruthless, battlefield life. However, little did he expect that, ahead of him, was a romance waiting and as the story developed, Crowe was drawn by the beauty of the French lady, Fanny Chenal (played by Marion Cotillard). As he got involved with his new found relationship and daily life of South of France. His childhood memories of Château La Siroque, which he thought was long lost, were recollected, and later, he found a new appreciation of his uncle Henry's philosophy on life, more so, the life in Provence.

Southern France, which generally referred to areas such as **Provence** (on the east) and **Languedoc-Roussillon** (on the west) are regions that skirt around the Mediterranean Sea. In the southern end of Côte du Roussillon, **Rivesaltes** (famous for their sun-dried sweet Muscat) and **Banyuls** (world's famous sweet red wine), separated by Pyrenees Mountains, where the world's largest grape-vine planting country - Spain is located. The direct continuation from Vallée de la Rhône is Provence. After the station of **Ville d'Orange**, which is heart of all Côte du Rhône village vineyards, you will arrive in **Avignon**, the town that where the famous Pope Clement V reside (in 1309) and thus, the new pope castle, **Châteauneuf du Pape** name derives. This is where, Provence begin. Between Avignon and **Marseille**, the most famous wine village of Provence are **Aix-en-Provence**, where some of the French finest rosé, and definitely the most expensive are being made here. Among the most noticeable must be **Château de Selle** by **Domaine Ott**. Also, let don't forget, **Domaine de Trevallon** (blend of Cabernet Sauvignon & Syrah) in **Les Baux-de-Provence**, where one of the region most innovative wine is from. Outside Marseille, just before **Toulon**, where **Bandol** is, some of the best Mourvèdre-grape France can offer are from here. Try **Domaine Tempier** or **Mas de la Rouvière**.

In the movie of **The Good Year**, a mysterious, legendary vin de garage, which fetched high-price, called, **Le Coin Perdu** (the lost corner) was mentioned, and that is exactly what was developed over the years in **Languedoc-Roussillon**. Many new emerging star producers such as **Château de la Négly** (consulted by oenologist Claude Gros, which clients also include Château La Fleur Morange (St.-Emilion), Bouscat (Bordeaux Supérieur)), **Château Puech-Haut** (made by Michel Rolland & Claude Gros), **Bertrand-Berge** (by Claude Gros) which are frequently demand for such a lofty price tag (often cost more than US\$100), that I am always skeptical about those developments. Quality aside, the whole concept of those vin de garage look to be coming from the same franchise-joined of what Parker/Rolland did on those St.-Emilion's garagiste (extreme low-yield, limited production, using burgundy's winemaking technique - *pigeage*, malolactic in barrel, aging on its lees. What else is new?). I continue to look upon producer such as **Mas de Daumas Gassac** (L'Hérault) for reference, and recently, Jean-Luc Thunevin (Valandraud in St.-Emilion) and Jean-Roger Calvet has partnered and ventured into this area, releasing their Vin de Pays d'Oc red called, **Les Dentelles**. Made from old vine Grenache and Carignan from a steep hillside of Côte du Roussillon. The wine is intense and rich, with immensely sweet, mouth caressing texture. Also not to be miss is the debut release of Ron Laughton of **Jasper Hill** and Michel **Chapoutier** joint efforts Côte du Roussillon called, **Agly Brothers** (not to be mistaken as being referred to those two folks, but was in fact, the ugly duckling Carignan, pairing with Syrah and Grenache). To me, this has the charm and elegance that was missing in Calvet-Thunevin. Nonetheless, both wines are excellent in value and for practical consumption. Don't miss!

2002 Calvet-Thunevin "Les Dentelles" at 50.00 nett - Wine Spectator's 90 points
2003 Agly Brothers at 59.00 nett

To end this week newsletter, I pleased to introduce to you the following **Hot** release.

"...the finest South African red I have tasted...a partnership between **Bruno Prats** (former proprietor of Château Cos d'Estournel), **Hubert de Bouïard de Laforest** (Château L'Angelus) and Lowell Jooste of **Klein Constantia** Estate. This debut release, the 2005, a blend of 37% Syrah and the balance Cabernet Sauvignon, is world class stuff as one might expect from people behind it. There are 42,000 bottles available from the first release. Imminent...exceptional wine" - **Robert Parker**

Anwilka vineyard is located at the prime site of Helderberg, in the region of Stellenbosch, which is area famous for their cool-climate Cabernet Sauvignon (7km from the ocean). The neglected vineyards was extensively replanted in 1998 with 40 hectares planted with 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot and 24% Syrah. Only the finest fruits are used for Anwilka. The remaining grapes will be used for Klein Constantia for their export-brands. Yields in the vineyards are kept at 5.5 tons per hectares in order to achieve the optimum concentration. Each vineyard block is vinified separately in eleven temperature-controlled, small (7000-litre) stainless steel tanks. All stages of the wine upbringing are supervised by the expert eye of Prats and de Boüard. The wine is subsequently blend and aged 9 month in French oak barrel, in which, 75% is new. The goal for the team is to produce, wine that reflects the sunny and warm climate of South Africa, and at the same time, maintain the elegance, freshness and balance of a great Bordeaux.

60 bottles 2005 Anwilka, South Africa at 89.00 nett each
(price are final, regrettably, no discount will be given for this item)

The Lexus of Champagne – Jules Lassalle

Champagne has always been in association with celebration. As what the great connoisseur of Champagne, **André Simon** said, "No wine is more than an example and a celebration of this art than Champagne". Why not celebrate your coming festive with the following bubbly?



The History of Champagne

Champagne is both the name of a province and a wine. The name is derived from the Latin *campania*, which mean open, flat countryside (much like the **Campania** in Italy). It was once the major trade routes for Flanders (northern part of Belgium) and Switzerland, and as well as Paris to the Rhine. The official record of wine in Champagne dated back to the end of the fifth century. During then, a pinkish still wine (not sparkling) made from **Pinot Noir** were produced. During the French Revolution, the province of Champagne was divided into *départements* of **Ardennes, Marne, Aube, Haute-Marne** and parts **Aisne**.

The arrival of **Dom Pérignon** in the 17th century has dramatically improved the wine quality of Champagne. His Abbey of Hautvillers (above **Épernay**) has become the region's leading viticultural centre. During then, wines were cloudy, the criteria for greatness actually lies on supreme clarity in wine (not finesse, not complex depth of flavor in a bottle of wine), which explains the origin of the word claret derives (French for *clair*). **Bordeaux** at that time was a light red that achieved its clarity by blending white wines, hence the evolution of *clair* into claret. This is the myth behind how Dom Pérignon created a sparkling Champagne. His original goal was in fact to craft a clear wine, and along the line, a sparkling wine was accidentally made. To add to that story, we must also credit **Madame Clicquot** that has invented the riddling table (later evolved to the pupitres system for the *remuage* process) and eventually produce a Champagne that is free from those cloudy sediment.

How the bubbly liquid form?

Being the northern-most grape growing region. The fruits in Champagne are generally very high in acid. The cool winter often results in a slow and inefficient fermentation, whereby, the function of yeast can be disrupted and want into hibernation. Eventually, when the young wines were shipped during spring to

Paris or London (during then, young wines were more expensive and popular than aged wines), as the weather warm-up. A second fermentation occurred in the bottle, and result in a fizzy juice. No one knows exactly why this come and go fizziness. Since very often, the force of carbon dioxide gas could effortlessly explode a flimsy bottle. The English glassmakers eventually come out with a stronger glass bottle that can withstand the pressure from the second fermentation. Added to that, when [Jean-Antoine Chaptal](#) (the person who invented chaptalization) eventually learn the formation of carbonate gas was due to enclosed environment in the bottle before the fermentation was completed. And later, a young pharmacist from Châlons-sur-Marne, [André Francois](#) mastering the precise amount of sugar to induce a second fermentation in the bottle without bursting the bottle. The famous *méthode champenoise* or Champagne method was achieved. By adding additional yeast and sugar to the base wine and after, capped the bottle tightly with crown cap. The secondary fermentation took place in the bottle and since the carbon dioxide gas was unable to escape, it has dissolved back into the wine. The Champagne is further aged on lees, and the aging varies from house-to-house and according to the style of Champagne (like [Salon](#), which generally released some ten years after the vintage). The wine than undergo *riddling* (process involved overturning the bottle in riddling rack (pupitre), shaking and turning the bottle (*remuage*) to dislodging the deposit from the bottom into the neck. Subsequently *dégorged* (frozen the sediment from the neck of bottle and subsequently removed them) and added *liqueur d'expédition* (mixture of wine and sugar syrup) before bottling them. Some champagne house may choose not be added with the dosage (sugar), which the champagne will later labeled as **Extra Brut**. All Champagne that called themselves Brut, normally consist of 3-15 gram per litre of residual sugar.

The Style of Champagne

Champagne vineyards are spread over six major sub-communes, with [Montagne de Reims](#) (near the town of [Reims](#)) above the [Vallée de la Marne](#), [Côte de Blancs](#) lies underneath of [Épernay](#), [Côte de Sézanne](#) on the west and [Aube](#) in the east, but in fact closer to the [Chablis](#) of [Burgundy](#) rather than the main district of Champagne. Most vineyards in Champagne are from the slopes of the hills, as the flat land would not provide sufficient sunlight to ripen the grape as well as enough protection against wind and rain that brought by Atlantic breezes. Beside the harsh growing condition where grape struggled to ripen but in turn, gave high acidity that is essential for the making of a good bubbly. The thick, well drained chalk subsoil, which encourage the vine roots to dig deeper, avoiding the extreme climate above the ground and as well as retaining good humidity in the soil to further assist the grape ripening. Those are crucial elements that contribute Champagne for the making of world famous sparkling. **Montagne de Reims** is generally referred as the finest zone, where vineyards are well protected from rain and wind by the forested hilltops. In addition, there are some warm air currents running through this area, which explains why [Pinot Noir](#) ripen well here. Especially with ideal south facing *grand cru* vineyards like **Ambonnay & Bouzy**, where the best pinot noir are from. **Vallée de la Marne**, with the exception for south banks of Marne like [Aÿ](#), produced beautiful pinot noir fruit, the further west, toward Paris, where chalk turned thin, only the [pinot meunier](#) flourish. The best [chardonnay](#) vineyards are from **Côte des Blancs**, which was just outside [Épernay](#). The soils here are predominantly chalk, with occasionally thin layer of clay topsoil. All vineyards are east and south-east-facing slopes and the famous Blanc-de-Blancs (white wine from Blancs) vineyard of **Le Mesnil-sur-Oger** is from here, which produces the world-famous [Krug's Clos du Mesnil](#) and [Salon](#) Champagne. Other noticeable grand crus vineyard in [Côte de Blancs](#) also include, [Cramant](#), which is the principle fruit soured for [Perrier Jouët](#) and [Mumm](#) (Mumm de Cramant).

However, despite all the above communes and crus in Champagne, one should be aware that, all vineyards in Champagne are exposed to cold autumns and icy winters, which challenge the grape from ripening. Quality vary from year-to-year. Even for [Krug](#) or [Salon](#) to make their blanc de blancs from a single cru of [Mesnil-sur-Oger](#) every year is impossible. So, traditionally, Champagne has always been known for their "art of blending". Not only did they blend from various villages, but also from several vintages, which are legally permitted. The Champagne house may use up to 50 - 200 communes for their blend. In addition, they are also allowed to use between 10 and 50 per cent of what so called, *vins de réserve* from previous vintages in order to concoct their exclusive house-style. With the exception for some [Blanc de Blancs](#), [Blanc de Noirs](#) (made solely from pinot noir & pinot meunier. However, [Bollinger's Vieilles Vignes Françaises](#) is coming from 100% old vine pinot noir grown at [Aÿ](#) and [Bouzy](#)), which can come from sole vineyard source. Even for such **De Luxe Cuvée** like [Dom Pérignon](#), [Bollinger RD](#), [Pol](#)

Roger Sir Winston Churchill, *Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame*, they are rarely coming from one single source. As for **vintage Champagne**, which is generally only declared in an exceptional year with a minimum of 39 months old before it allow to release. However, apart from such great years like 1985, 1990, 1996, the quality for vintage Champagne vary from house-to-house.

To sum up the above, what matters in choosing a bottle of Champagne is that particular house-style you prefer, rather than which communes, crus they are from. Much like the way you chose a **Cognac** - nobody give a damn whether the cognac is coming from *Grande Champagne* or *Petite Champagne*! Obviously, here we are dealing with a more interesting "living" product, compared to a product, which will not improve with age (the level of alcohol found in cognac, can effortlessly killed all living microbes. Think about antiseptic!). In the franchise-movie of **James Bond**. You are well aware that they've switch to *Bollinger* from *Dom Pérignon*. However, how many of you actually notice that, Bond's Martini is no longer "shaken, not stirred", but rather "three measures of gin, one of vodka and half of kina Lillet (French vermouth)". Now, you get it?

Confessions of a Dangerous Mind

First, I would like to give credits to **Clive Coates** for his book, *an Encyclopedia of The Wines and Domaines of France*; **Jancis Robinson** for her book, *Oxford Company to Wine*; **Oz Clarke's Wine Atlas**; **Jay McInerney's Adventures in Wine** and **Matt Kramer's Making Sense of Wine** for assisting my above writing. However, I must confess, I am no expert in this area. I love Champagne for their liveliness and knife-cut acidity, and it has been my favorite drink when I hangout in a bar. Like me, anyone who is new to Champagne, chances are, you would prefer those raised partially or completely in wood, with more oxidative nutty, dried fruit qualities in the like of *Krug*, *Bollinger* or *Veuve Clicquot*. Also, the vintage Champagne, with its round, complex, rich textured can be equally appealing. Lately, I find myself drinking more and more the lighter weight Champagne like *Billecart-Salmon*, *Taittinger*, *Delamotte's Blanc de Blancs* and off course, my very own agency - **Jules Lassalle**. I like the brightness, raciness and details of those elegant Champagne. I increasingly find those wood/oxidative style Champagne to be heavy, especially after emptying the first one.



Jules Lassalle is a very fine, boutique Champagne house (annual output of just 6000 cases) from the 1er Cru vineyard of *Chigny-les-Roses* in *Montage de Reims*. After the passing of Jules Lassalle in 1982, the domaine is currently in the hand of his lovely daughter, *Chantal*. Everyone expects the quality to slide after the death of Jules Lassalle, but the highly devoted, talented *Chantal* has instead raised the reputation and quality for Lassalle at the highest level as evidenced by numerous of international accolades. Now the classic Champagne house, is consistently being compared to the very best name in the area and is considered by many connoisseurs as the hidden treasure of Champagne for their rarity and refinement.

NV Impérial Préférence at 78.00 nett (rated 88 points by Tanzer)

(From a blend of vintage 1998 and 1999 (both excellent years) with 60% Pinot Meunier, 25% Chardonnay and 15% Pinot Noir)

1999 Blanc de Blancs, 1er Cru at 116.50 nett

(IWC: vintage 1999 produced rich, thick, structured wines with broad shoulders)

1997 Spécial Club "Premier Cru" at 116.50 nett (rated 91 points by Tanzer)

(" if you like old Champagne, cellar the 1997 Brut. It is a beautiful *vin de garde* that will age as long as you like. I think it will match the 1959s and 1962s." - *Kermit Lynch*)

1996 Cuvée Angéline at 106.00 nett (rated 90 points by Tanzer)

(Made from 100% Pinot Noir. " vintage 1996, with its uncanny combination of high grape sugars and high acidity, it is in the same quality league as 1990 and 1985, which is to say that it's a five-star vintage." - *Stephen Tanzer*)

During this festive reason, we are offering the above Champagne at 15% discount for bottle purchase and 20% discount for case purchase (apply also to mixed case). Don't miss this opportunity those stock up those fine bubbly for Xmas & New Year.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity wishing everyone a Blessed and a Very Merry Christmas! - AT

"Champagne, with its amber hue, its éclat, its sparkle and its perfume, arouses the sense and produces a cheerfulness which flashes through the company like a spark of electricity. At the magic word champagne, the guests, dull and torpid with good feeding, awake at once. This lively, ethereal and charming beverage sets in motion the spirits of all; the phlegmatic, the grave and the philosophic are surprised to find themselves amiable; in the wink of an eye (or the pop of a cork) the whole banquet has changed its physiognomy."

Charles BAUDELAIRE, French poets and authors of DECADENT

"Champagne is the ONLY wine a woman can drink and still remain beautiful." - *Madame de POMPADOUR*

All prices quoted for per bottle in Singapore dollar. Prices indicated "in red" are inclusive of 5% GST.

Free delivery for purchases of S\$350 and above, otherwise S\$15 per delivery will apply.

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