

Clos des Goisses Champagne 1991 Philipponnat

5 Apr 2004 by JR

Easter's coming up. It's my mother's birthday today. This is the year our youngest was born and it's difficult to find significant wines carrying this vintage (other than such red burgundies as remain on the market). Take your pick of reasons why this is the right time to splash out on a fascinating, fairly- priced, top quality, mature, single- vineyard champagne.

As you know, much is made of the fact that champagne is a blend but, boy, is it interesting when we are allowed to taste the (well made) produce of a single spot on the Champagne map. Clos de Mesnil is hardly scraping the barrel, after all, and this is a very particular vineyard too, just 5.5 hectares (13 acres) of walled, very steep, pure chalk slope facing south above the river Marne in Mareuil- sur- Ay on the southern flank of the Montagne de Reims. The temperature here is generally 1.5 deg C higher than in the surrounding area, and the vines, low- yielding on these shallow soils, usually ripen a full week ahead of neighbouring vines (yet another reminder that there is no essential virtue in late picking).

The grape blend is about two- thirds Pinot Noir to one third Chardonnay. Up to 30 per cent of the wine is made in old oak barrels and malolactic fermentation is deliberately suppressed - which helps to explain why such a relatively old wine tastes so fresh. It also tastes extremely dense and interesting, with clear terroir- driven mineral character and a certain creaminess as well. Luxurious, extremely distinctive wine by any measure - and the house of Philipponnat say they select only the best 20,000 bottles' worth of wine out of a possible total of 55,000 to be sold as Clos des Goisses.

This is not a widely available wine, therefore, but by complete coincidence, the one place in mainland Britain that is offering this wine retail for £54 a bottle is Cellar Door in Overton, the place where I recently compared ports v. their Australian counterparts. As with other merchants mentioned in these pages, you can find full details in the [directory](#), and the price is far from rapacious for a luxury wine with such bottle age.

The French online retailer Rouge & Blanc (see the directory for details) sells it for 86.90 euros a bottle, plus 12.99 for postage within France and 29.99 to the UK.

The following information on importers of this wine has been supplied by Philipponnat.

USA: Frederick Ek, Ex Cellars Wine Agenices, 9 Francis Avenue, MA 02 138, Cambridge, Tel + 1 617 876 5105, Fax : + 1 617 576 1713

Sweden: Spendrup's Vin, Box 34102, 100 26, Stockholm, Tel + 46 8 672 77 00 Fax : + 46 8 618 35 60 www.vin.spendrups.se

Germany : Hawesko, Hamburgerstrasse 14-20, 25 436 Tornesch bei hamburg, Tel Fax: + 49 4122 504-9 216, www.hawesko.de

Italy: Moon Import, via Argone 1,2, 16145 Genova, Tel : + 39 010 314 250; Fax : +39 010 317 044, moonimport@tin.it

Spain: Talisman Iberica, c/ Nil Fabra, 34 en 2, 08012 Barcelona, + 34 93 414 53 11, Fax : + 34 93 414 26 30

Norway: Red & White AS, Holsfjordveien 10, Sylling 3410 ; Tel + 47 32 84 25 68; Fax + 47 32 84 25 38

Belgium: Maison Pirard Espace Vin, rue de Glabais 1, 1470 Genappe, Tel +32 67 77 31 01; Fax +32 67 77 11 99 www.espacevin.com

Luxembourg: La Cave Rommes, 54 rue des jardins, 4151 Esch sur Alzette, Tel + 352 54 05 91, Fax + 352 39 91 79

Ireland: Chapeau Wines Ltd, 53 Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Tel + 353 1 660 40 68; + 353 1 663 10 26

Japan: ANA Trading Company, Shiodome City Center 9F; 1-5-2 Higashi Shinbashi minato- ku, 105-7109 Tokyo, Tel : + 81 3 6735 5026,20 Fax : + 81 3 6735 50 39 www.anatc.com

Canada- Ontario : Lorac Wines, 160 Tycos drive, NB0 3, Toronto, Ontario M6B 1W8; Tel +1 416 783 2516; Fax : +1 416 781 3280

Danemark : Logimose, Nordre Toldbod 16, 1259 Kobenhavn, Tel + 45 7444 96 32, Fax + 45 7444 96 33

Hong- Kong : Sinolink Fine Wines Ltd, Unit 4112, 41/ FL, 223 Hing Fong Road, Hong Kong, tel : + 852 2408 3090; Fax + 852 2408 3102 [www.sinolinkfw.com/ eng/](http://www.sinolinkfw.com/)

Netherlands : Vinites, Kenaupark 4, 2011 MS Haarlem, Tel + 31 23 553 9090; Fax : 31 23 553 9070 www.vinites.com

Switzerland: Baur au Lac Wein, Spitalstrasse 71, 8902 Urdorf, Tel + 41 1 777 0505, Fax + 41 1 734 2909 [http:// www.bauraulacwein.ch](http://www.bauraulacwein.ch)