Marcel Deiss, Pinot d□Alsace 2010 Alsace

29 Nov 2012 by Jancis Robinson

From €12.90, £14.95, NZ$35, AU$29

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Putting together my collections of the finest wines of the year to be published over the next four Saturdays has been a horribly difficult task - especially cutting it down to just 25 in each category (fizz, reds, whites, strong/sweet) as required by the space limitations of the *Financial Times*. I'll be publishing longer lists here.

When assembling all the white wines that have impressed me most, I found a particularly high proportion of Alsace wines, with one producer outweighing the rest. Jean-Michel Deiss is one of those admirable if uncompromising wine producers who really have gone their own way - and succeeded. He now has 27 ha of traditionally tended vineyards, typically planted with a mixture of different grape varieties, as was the old way. Over the years I have had many a tussle with him over a tasting table asking for the varietal make-up of this wines when all he wanted to talk about was the terroir.

As you can see from his au courant website, he now clearly divides his wines into Terroir wines, Fruit wines and 'Time wines' (*Les vins de temps* - more elegant in French), late-harvest sweeter wines that demand ageing.

This delicious **Marcel Deiss, Pinot d'Alsace 2010 Alsace** is a blend of different Pinots - or at least the different mutations of Pinot such as Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, as we explain in *Wine Grapes*. The reduced yields of vintage 2010 in Alsace really do seem to have resulted in some particularly exciting, bright-fruited wines and this is a prime example. Don't think of it as the equivalent of an entry-level Alsace that is somehow inferior to a Riesling, Pinot Gris or Gewurz, but as the encapsulation of the region's smoky, rich-but-dry fruit. This tastes thoroughly dry and racy but chock full of spice and excitement. I'd drink it over the next year ideally but it certainly won't head downhill fast.

While Jean-Michel is now fully occupied by the vines, his son Matthieu has been responsible for winemaking since 2008. His training included stints with Stéphane Derenoncourt of Bordeaux and Jeffrey Grosset in Australia.

This wine is sold by Lea & Sandeman in the UK (so is available at £13.95 if a total of a dozen mixed bottles are bought) and is also available in France, Austria, Spain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Australia.

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