

THE MASTER'S NOSE CLUB

“Cabernet Franc – the underappreciated red with an exciting future!”

SIX FANTASTIC CABERNET FRANCS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

THE MORE CHARMING, “FEMININE” RELATIVE OF CABERNET SAUVIGNON

VERY ADAPTABLE TO TODAY'S CLIMATE-CHANGING WORLD

EXCELLENT AS A SINGLE VARIETAL WINE BUT ALSO AS PART OF A BLEND

Real Wines 



 DOMAINE DE LA NOBLAIE
CHINON

 Fabre + Montmayou

CHATEAU DE LA PITRAY

 ALTA-YARÍ

 emiliano falson

THE GRAPE

WHAT MAKES CABERNET FRANC SPECIAL?

This is the first time we have focused on a single grape varietal for a Master's Nose Club wine packet. So why have we chosen Cabernet Franc?

Quite simply, Cabernet Franc is one of the most exciting red grapes in the wine world right now!

It is the less famous but more charming and aromatic relative of Cabernet Sauvignon – “the feminine side of Cabernet Sauvignon; subtly fragrant and gently flirtatious rather than massively muscular and tough in its youth” as Jancis Robinson MW eloquently puts it. Its characteristic aromas are of raspberry, perfumed violets, blackberry and bell pepper. It is lighter bodied and more herbaceous in cool climates, but riper, silkier, fuller bodied and more structured in warmer vintages or regions. It is an adaptable grape which responds well to climate change and warmer summers, but is also well equipped for cooler vintages. It is generally grown on cool clay and limestone soils which are good at retaining water and give extra freshness to the vines and grapes, making it perfect for the hot, dry summers we have seen in recent vintages across Europe. But it is also a fairly early-ripening grape which in Bordeaux has always been harvested at least a week before its more structured and serious relative, Cabernet Sauvignon. So in cooler, wetter summers, which are another by-product of unpre-

dictable climate change, there is a much better chance that Cabernet Franc will reach full ripeness than Cabernet Sauvignon.

It is a grape which is a great team player, as it has been for centuries in Bordeaux where it is blended mainly with Merlot to add freshness, acidity, backbone and elegance to many of the great wines of the Right Bank. It reaches its pinnacle in majestic, ethereal Chateau Cheval Blanc in St.Emilion, where it usually constitutes around two thirds of the blend. But it is equally comfortable working on its own, as in France's Loire Valley in the appellations of Chinon, Bourgueil and St.Nicolas de Bourgueil to the southwest of Tours. Here it produces wines with high natural acidity; fresh, light bodied, elegant reds in cooler vintages which make perfect lunchtime reds when lightly chilled. Or in warmer vintages, which since 2003 have become far more the norm in this area, silky, structured reds with more weight and concentration of fruit which can improve in bottle over 15 – 20 years.

Cabernet Franc is a good traveller and performs extremely well in warmer, sunnier growing regions outside France. It has produced fantastic results in sun-drenched Bolgheri on the Tuscan Mediterranean coast, where it is the sole grape of super-Tuscans such as “Paleo” from Le Macchiole, or a smaller but never-



theless important component of wine legends such as Sassicaia. It also produces good results in California and South Africa, but perhaps its most exciting potential lies in the high altitude vineyards of the Andes mountains in Mendoza, Argentina. Here it can be blended with Malbec to give suppleness, elegance and delicate-fruited charm to the wine, or it is increasingly being bottled on its own. The warmer climates of Mendoza and Bolgheri seem to bring out the more voluptuous and “sexy” side of this

feminine grape, whilst the wines never lose Cabernet Franc's characteristic freshness, elegance and vibrancy. Finally, Cabernet Franc does not yet have the stellar reputation of more famous red grapes such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot or Pinot Noir. It therefore still offers relatively good value, particularly from less prestigious wine regions such as the Loire or Mendoza! So what better time to take this small voyage of discovery and try six fantastic, great value Cabernet Franc based wines from around the world!

THE PRODUCERS

DOMAINE DE LA NOBLAIE, CHINON, LOIRE VALLEY, FRANCE

This impressive, family-owned domaine of around 26 hectares is situated on rolling hillsides overlooking the town of Chinon and the river Vienne, a tributary of the Loire. The soils are a mix of clay and limestone, perfect for water retention in the warm, dry vintages the region is seeing more and more regularly. Jérôme Billard is the third generation of his family to look after the estate which his grandparents acquired in 1953. He is a trained oenologue and has rapidly become one of the most gifted Cabernet Franc winemakers in the Loire region. His entire range of wines, both red and white, were of such a high standard that it was a tricky job for me to select just one of his bottlings for this wine packet!

The wines here are all certified biodynamic and everything is as natural as can be, from the natural ecosystem and biodiversity which are immediately apparent in the vineyards to the specially designed, gravity-operated cellar, where the grapes are converted into wine without any harmful pumping of the must being necessary. Natural “wild” yeasts are used to ferment the grapes and the extraction of tannins from the skins is always as gentle as possible, with the aim of maximising the Cabernet Franc grapes’ delectable, sweet raspberry fruit flavours and elegance. After fermentation, the wine spends 12 months in large 500 litre oak casks to help its tannins to mellow and flavours to open up before being bottled.



CHATEAU PITRAY, CÔTES DE CASTILLON, BORDEAUX, FRANCE

I have worked very closely with Bordeaux wines for over 20 years but had never heard of Chateau Pitray until this Spring. And what a discovery it is – for me one of my most exciting finds from Bordeaux in recent years! The beautiful chateau is the oldest family-owned wine property in Bordeaux, owned by the De Boigne family since 1453! It is situated 9kms east of the town of St.Emilion on the same limestone and clay plateau, which is perfect for growing Cabernet Franc grapes as it gives the wines freshness, elegance and fruitiness. Although many well known wines from St.Emilion and Pomerol contain small proportions of Cabernet Franc, it is still quite unusual to find Bordeaux reds made entirely from this grape. But so impressed was owner

Jean De Boigne back in 2011 when he tasted a tank of 100% Cabernet Franc wine from a single plot of his 50 year old vines that he has vinified and bottled this wine separately ever since. No herbicides or artificial products are used in the vineyard and the grapes are picked and carefully selected by hand. This wine sees no oak ageing as the aim is to produce the purest possible expression of the Cabernet Franc grape and its terroir. As a footnote, from the 2020 vintage onwards, the wines of Chateau Pitray will be made by Nina Mitjavile, daughter of Francois Mitjavile, who makes one of the finest red wines on Bordeaux’s Right Bank at Chateau Tertre Roteboeuf. The future for this chateau looks bright indeed!



THE PRODUCERS

FABRE MONTMAYOU AND ALTA YARI – UCO VALLEY, MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

Hervé Joyaux Fabre moved to Mendoza in Argentina from Bordeaux in the early 1980s to set up his winery, Fabre Montmayou. For the past 40 or so years he has been producing excellent Malbecs – both at high altitudes (and therefore cooler temperatures) in Mendoza, and further south in cooler climate Patagonia. He was also one of the pioneers in planting Cabernet Franc in his vineyards in Mendoza over 20 years ago, and his Fabre Montmayou Cabernet Franc Reserva is consistently a benchmark example of this grape at a great value price, regularly winning international trop-

phies in the UK's Decanter Magazine and International Wine Challenge. During the past few years, he and his wife Diane have spent much of their free time searching the high altitude Gualtary sub region of Mendoza's Uco Valley for the perfect terroirs to grow their flagship Cabernet Franc and Malbec grapes. Their "Alta Yari" project is the culmination of this search and their Cabernet Franc-dominated "Gran Corte" red shows the immense potential of blending low-yielding Cabernet Franc and Malbec grapes from the best terroirs in the Andes mountains.



EMILIANO FALSINI – BOLGHERI, TUSCANY, ITALY

Emiliano Falsini is one of the best respected winemaking consultants in Italy, consulting for several of the country's top organic producers. In 2017 he purchased four hectares of 30 year old vines in the most northerly area of Bolgheri, near Bibbona, and in the 2019 vintage he started bottling his own wines there. Both the wines he produces here are made entirely from Cabernet Franc, which is perfectly suited to the area's rich clay soils with a high proportion of calcareous stones. Bolgheri is a warm and sunny region situated in the west of Tuscany along the Mediterranean coast, with a climate which is perfect for growing full bodied, fruit-packed reds from a mix of mainly French grapes – Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet Franc. The main challenge here is to maintain freshness in the wines, and Emiliano is convinced that Cabernet Franc, with its high natural

acidity and vibrancy and affinity to the area's cool, water-retaining clay soils, is the perfect grape for the ever-warming future in this region. The other benefit which Bolgheri DOC has in relation to most other winegrowing areas in Italy is that irrigation is permitted here – also very useful in combatting the effects of climate change. Emiliano produces his two Cabernet Franc wines 100% organically, using no artificial fertilisers or herbicides in the vineyard. His grapes are very carefully picked and sorted by hand, so that only the healthiest grapes go into the wine. He uses local, wild yeasts for his fermentations. His "Il Debbio" label spends 10 months in a mix of 58% clay amphorae, which give the wines velvet smooth tannins, and 42% small oak barrels. His "Limite" wine spends 10 months in 100% small oak barrels, which gives it a little more structure, complexity and ageing ability.





ABOUT THE WINES

OUR EXQUISITE SELECTION



**Domaine de la Noblaie
"Les Blancs Manteaux" 2019,
Chinon Rouge,
Loire Valley**
CHF 21.90/bt
(one bottle)

From vines averaging 65 years old grown on limestone soils, this excellent value Cabernet Franc has a wide array of violet, raspberry and redcurrant flavours. It is silky smooth with impressive depth of flavour but has an overriding freshness, tension and even some minerality on the finish. *Drink with a Mediterranean-style, herb-crusted rack of lamb.*

1250 cases were produced. Drink now – 2029

Rated 95pts by the French publication Bettane & Desseauve



**Chateau Pitray
Cabernet Franc
2019, Côtes
de Castillon,
Bordeaux**
CHF 24.90/bt
(one bottle)

This 100% Cabernet Franc-based Bordeaux has lovely spice, raspberry and blackberry fruit and violet flavours. It is medium to full bodied with smooth tannins and impressive fruit weight and concentration, but never loses its freshness and vitality. A really fine and great value example which shows the huge potential of this grape when grown on cool, high quality terroirs in today's increasingly warm vintages. *Perfect with a duck breast or fantastic with chocolate mousse!*

1250 cases were produced. Drink now – 2028



**Fabre
Montmayou
Cabernet Franc
Reserva 2021,
Mendoza**
CHF 17.90/bt
(one bottle)

This 100% Cabernet Franc was grown at 1100mts altitude in the Lujan de Cuyo subregion of Mendoza. It is dark and brooding, with rich aromas of dark fruit and black spice with a hint of mint. On the palate it is fresh, pure and elegant, similar to a Cabernet Franc from the Loire but with a little more depth of fruit and body. *Drink slightly chilled as an apero or enjoy with lamb stew, pork, game or chocolate desserts.*

Approximately 2300 cases were produced. Drink now – 2025

Rated 95pts and a Gold Medal, Decanter Wine Awards 2022

ABOUT THE WINES



**Alta Yari Gran
Corte 2020,
Mendoza**
CHF 24.90/bt
(one bottle)

This delicious blend of 60% Cabernet Franc, 35% Malbec and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon comes from vineyards planted at 1500mts altitude in the Gualtallary sub region of Mendoza's Uco Valley. It displays a wild freshness of fruit with hints of mineral and spice. It spent 16 months in French oak barrels which have helped add complexity and a smooth, velvety finish. Bordeaux finesse combined with Andes mountain fruit concentration! *Enjoy with a rack of lamb in a rich jus.* Around 650 cases were produced. Drink now – 2028
Rated 96pts by Tim Atkin MW, Argentina Special Report 2022



**Emiliano Falsini
"Il Debbio"
Cabernet Franc
2020, Bolgheri**
CHF 38.90/bt
(one bottle)

This Cabernet Franc comes from vines averaging 30 years old in the warm and sunny 2020 vintage. It has spicy, floral red and dark berry fruit flavours with impressive fruit concentration and depth. Despite its 14.5% alcohol, it shows impeccable freshness, balance and elegance and it has very fine tannins. A beautiful wine which – from this expensive wine region – is exceptional value! *Enjoy with mixed cheeses, cured meats, baked pasta and lasagna.* Less than 200 cases were produced. Drink now – 2029.
Not yet rated, but the inaugural 2019 vintage was awarded 93pts by Wine Advocate.



**Emiliano
Falsini "Limite"
Cabernet Franc
2020, Bolgheri**
CHF 55.-/bt
(one bottle)

Emiliano's top Cabernet Franc comes from the same vines, averaging 30 years of age, but is entirely aged in 225 litre Bordeaux barrels, which gives the wine extra structure and ageing potential. It has intense blackberry and blackcurrant fruit flavours with very fine vanilla notes from the oak barrels. Fuller bodied, more concentrated and dense than Il Debbio, this is a real mouthful of fruit, complexity and power. It is still on the young side but should drink very nicely for another 8 – 10 years. *Enjoy with red meats, lamb, aged cheeses and cured game.* Less than 150 cases were produced. Drink 2023 – 2030+
Not yet rated, but the inaugural 2019 vintage was awarded 95pts by Wine Advocate.

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