

Vinum

VALAIS

FAVOURITES, PAIRINGS AND WINE TOURISM

Valais

DECLARATION OF LOVE

Art and wine
pairings

Syrah and Ermitage:
a guide to the Rhone
grape varieties

Rustic yet chic,
rye bread



SWISS WINE

Switzerland. Naturally.

Drink responsibly.



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EDITOR
Roland Köhler

PUBLISHER
Intervinum AG, Thurgauerstrasse 66
Postfach 5961, CH-8050 Zürich
Phone +41 (0)44 268 52 40
Fax +41 (0)44 268 52 65
info@vinum.ch, www.vinum.ch
Nicola Montemarano, publishing manager
Laura Schlatter, marketing
Eva Pensel, online marketing
Viktoria Jeggli, event marketing

EDITORIAL STAFF
VINUM editorial board, Thurgauerstrasse 66
Postfach 5961, CH-8050 Zürich
Phone +41 (0)44 268 52 40
Fax +41 (0)44 268 52 65
redaktion@vinum.ch

Alexandre Truffer, deputy editor-in-chief
VINUM, responsible for the French edition
Martin Mächler, managing editor
Melanie Hilbertshäuser, editorial assistant

VINUM reader service
AVD Goldach AG
Sulzstrasse 10-12, 9403 Goldach
Phone +41 (0)71 844 91 53
Fax +41 (0)71 844 93 45
leserservice@vinum.ch

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION
Senior Art Director: Johanna Pietrek
Graphic design and layout: Rahel Duss
Cover picture:
Régis Colombo/diapo.ch
Traduction et correction:
Hancock Hutton, F-Bordeaux
Photos: Régis Colombo/diapo.ch,
Céline Ribordy, Sedrik Nemeth
Production/sales management:
Agentur Graf, CH-9001 St. Gallen
produktion@vinum.info

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



SWISS WINE

In an extraordinary setting at the heart of the Alps, the vineyards of Valais cover steep slopes criss-crossed with centuries-old irrigation channels. Terraces and stone walls have emerged on these dry slopes over the centuries, supporting the development of both native and imported grape varieties that professionals' expertise transforms into elegant wines with as much character as the men and women who created them.

DECLARATION OF LOVE



Gérard-Philippe Mabillard
Director of the Interprofession
des Vins du Valais

We love Valais wines because they recount the stories of men and women.

We love Valais wines because we love the winemakers who create them.

We love Valais wines because they are an infinite source of emotion.

We love Valais wines because they touch, test and transform us.

We love Valais wines because they draw us in.

We love Valais wines because they are colourful even in black and white.

We love Valais wines because they create movement and vitality in cellars, restaurants, wine stores, and our homes.

We love Valais wines when men loosen their ties to try them.

We love Valais wines because wine and art meld into one.

We love Valais wines because we can describe them in haute couture terms.

We love Valais wines because they whisk us away: turning, twirling and dancing, never stopping, like a dervish.

We love Valais wines because they bring poetry to the lips.

We love Valais wines for the childlike smiles they elicit in adults.

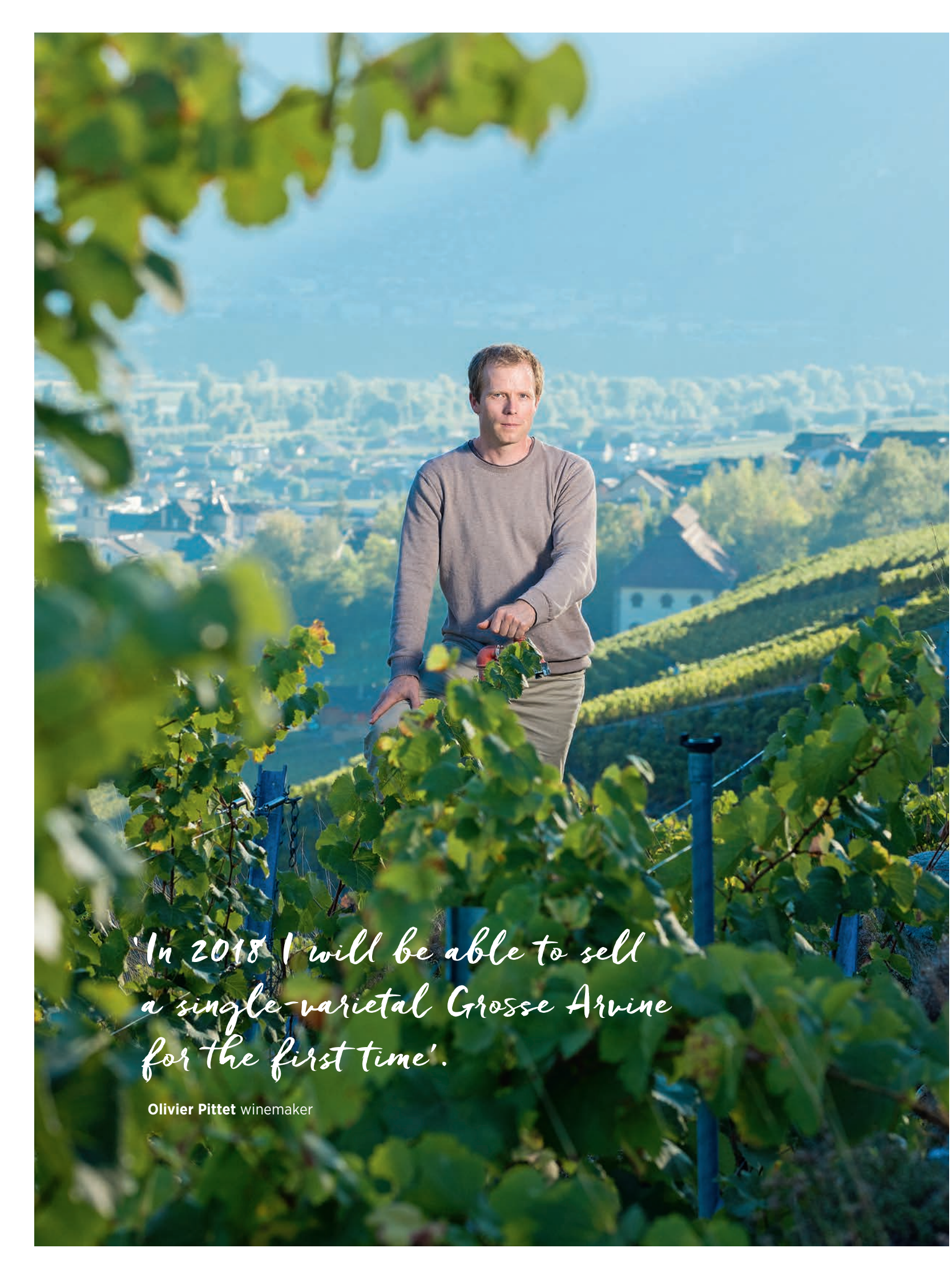
We love Valais wines because we love Fendant, Païen, Petite Arvine, Johannisberg, Dôle, Cornalin, Humagne Rouge and Syrah.

We love Valais wines for a thousand other reasons.

Wonderful emotions like this are important in life. They lift us up.

For all of these mad and mysterious blessings, for this irresistible charm.

Thank you!



*'In 2018 I will be able to sell
a single-varietal Grosse Arvine
for the first time'.*

Olivier Pittet winemaker

Grosse Arvine REVIVED VARIETIES OUT OF THE WOODS

Completer, Lafnetscha and Diolle are a few of the grape varieties that were once widespread in Valais but have now almost disappeared from its vineyards. It was a miracle that they survived, and their revival owes a great deal to passionate individuals like Olivier Pittet who were inspired by these relics of the past.

In 2013, our portrait of Olivier Pittet said: 'In the 19th century, this white grape variety was common in the Martigny and Fully regions, where it enjoyed a considerable reputation. Created as a natural cross between Rèze and an unknown variety, it was two family steps away from Petite Arvine (its grandmother). In 2008, when this young Vaud winemaker based in Fully began to show an interest, there were only a few known plants remaining - so the thirty-year-old roamed the region's oldest vineyards, rummaged through the vines clinging to walls, and discovered sixty or so Grosse Arvine plants, all of which were sadly infected with viruses. With its lacklustre name and what was then a negative image, scratched from the official list of Valais varieties, this native grape was not stirring passions. Olivier Pittet was not discouraged, and commissioned a nurseryman to propagate the plant materials available. In 2010, he decided to try the adventure and

plant a 200 m² plot. Autumn 2013 will mark the birth of Les Temps Passés, a wine composed of 80 per cent Grosse Arvine and 20 per cent other white grape varieties.' Five years later, Olivier Pittet remains a passionate small producer working with just under a hectare of vines. He has continued his search for the oldest plots of vines and found some Grosse Arvine plants outside of Fully, enabling him to expand the genetic diversity and quality of his plant material. 'Many of these old vines are heavily infected with viruses, causing problems for winemakers who might be interested in replanting Grosse Arvine. The situation can only be improved with significant selection work that requires time, specific knowledge, and consequently substantial funds', this passionate winemaker continues. Whilst approaching potential patrons, he grafted a plot of Fendant vines with Grosse Arvine. 'As it stands, my Grosse Arvine contains 15-40% other white

varieties which were mistaken for it or blended with it as part of our revival. In 2018 I can expect 150 litres of Grosse Arvine from grafting, enabling me to market a true single-varietal wine for the first time.' To the producer's regret, it will be sold as a Vin de Pays, since Grosse Arvine is not yet a permitted variety under the Valais AOC appellation. With the exception of Benoît Dorsaz, who runs the 200 m² conservatory mentioned at the beginning of the article, Grosse Arvine sponsored by the Grands Crus de Fully has not made many inroads with Valais winemakers. 'And yet it is a grape variety with everything going for it', in the regretful words of this winemaker who is now showing an interest in another white variety that was created by crossing Rèze with Humagne Blanche. This as yet nameless variety with confirmed parentage could also be making waves in a few years' time.

www.grossearvine.ch

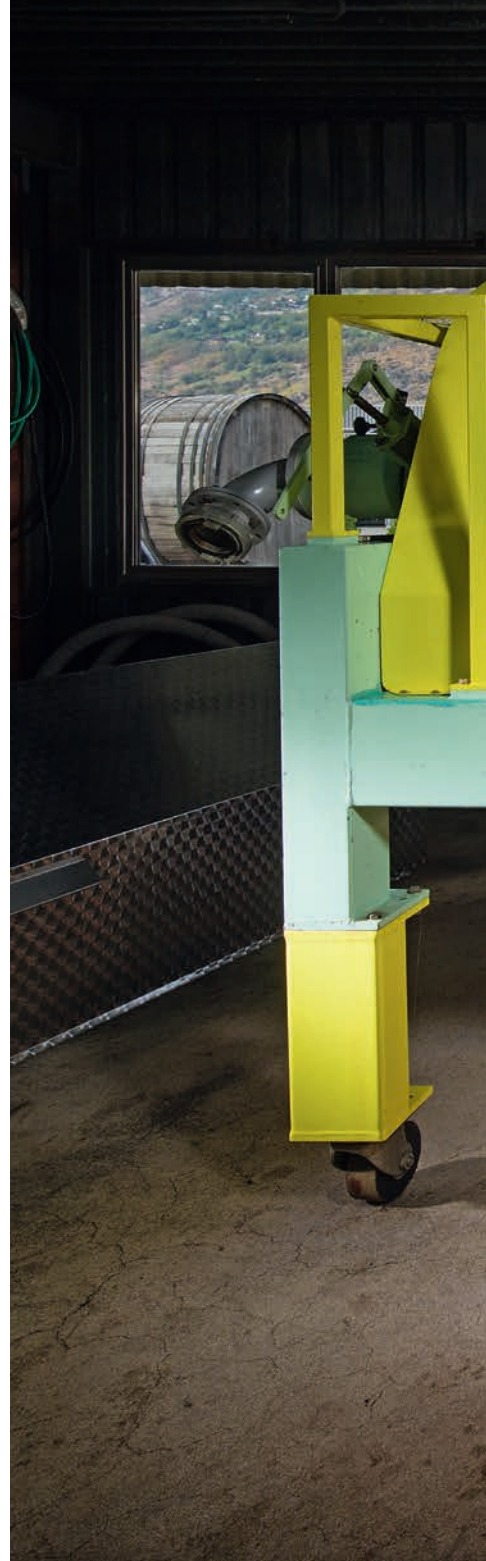
Lafnetscha THOROUGHbred VALAIS

In Visp, the Chanton family is making wine from grape varieties that have been forgotten by the rest of the world. The most elegant of this Upper Valais estate's rarities is Lafnetscha, an unknown native grape variety of the Valais.

Genetic analysis of Valais grape varieties has shown that numerous grapes once thought of as being native or indigenous to Valais have foreign origins. Some - like Cornalin or Humagne Rouge - came into being in the Aosta Valley before crossing the Great St Bernard Pass. Others, such as Humagne Blanche, can trace their roots back up the Rhone. For Lanetscha, there is every reason to believe that it truly was born in Valais. Its name, which means 'do not drink me too quickly', is a reference to its considerable acidity and ageing potential. This offspring of Completer and Humagne Blanche that is referenced as early as a 1627 text has always been grown around Visp. In 1970, when at Wädenswil engineering school writing his dissertation on the old grape varieties of Visp and Visperterminen vineyards, Josef-Marie Chanton decided

that since Lafnetscha had survived in the region for over three centuries, now was not the time to abandon it. 'You can buy Merlot, Cabernet or Chardonnay in any supermarket anywhere in the world. If you want to get visitors to this tourism-driven canton interested in our vineyards, you have to offer them something unique. I had already planted Gouais, and I decided that I needed to make wine from Lafnetscha', explains this nature fan who works with his son Mario to cultivate seven hectares of vines across the towns of Visp, Visperterminen, Leuk and Varen. 'With my father Oskar, who created the winery but bought in all his grapes from winegrowers, we advertised for people to send us Lafnetscha. The first year we received five or six hundred

kilos of grapes. The following year it was two tons of grapes. However, the generous price we were offering attracted some fraudsters who put a few Lafnetscha grapes on top of a crate filled with Fendant or Johannisberg. We sent all of these people home and decided to plant our own vines. That was in 1980', Josef-Marie Chanton informs us. Today, Lafnetscha is the biggest of the rarities grown by the family, at 2500 bottles a year. 'It is a low-yielding variety, producing 800 to 900 grams of grapes per square metre. However, it grows exuberant foliage that requires a lot of work. In a relatively dry region like Visp, it has proven very resistant to disease





'If Lafnetscha has survived in Visp for 300 years, now is not the time to abandon it.'

Josef-Marie Chanton œnologist

and only requires three to five plant health treatments per year', explains this winemaker who gave up insecticides three decades ago. 'In the winery we still use native yeast to ensure as typical a style as possible. For similar reasons, maturation (for whites all finishing their malolactic fermentation) is entirely in stainless steel.' With considerable acidity and touches of exotic aromas in its youth, Lafnetscha ages with great grace, our interviewee confirms. He organises regular tastings of old vintages, attracting connoisseurs from all over Switzerland who come to try Lafnetscha and other mature rarities twenty or thirty years old.

The rarest wines in the world

'The *New York Times* recently mentioned our Himbertscha in an article about the rarest wines in the world. A few days later, three members of staff from the US Embassy came to buy cases of this wine, which we are the only people on the planet producing', Josef-Marie Chanton explains. This offspring of Humagne Blanche and an unknown parent is just the rarest of the curiosities made and sold (at 900 to 1500 bottles a year) by the Chanton family. This means that in Visp, you can buy Gwäss (Gouais in French), a variety that was once common in Europe and has produced manifold offspring including Chardonnay, Gamay, Furmint and Riesling. You can also find Plantscher (or Gros Bourgogne), the child of Furmint, Rèze, one of the oldest grape varieties in Valais, and Eyholzer Roter, a red rarity. Sold at around 26 francs a bottle, these wines are making the ultra-exclusive accessible, since they are ten to a hundred times rarer than any of the prestigious labels from the world's great wine regions.

Completer BACK TO THE FUTURE

Thanks to two iconic Valais estates, Clos Tsampéhro and Marie-Thérèse Chappaz, this Graubünden grape variety is making a comeback in Valais vineyards where it was doubtless once widespread.

'Valais locals are curious people who like to experiment with lots of things. The variety of grapes planted is also part of the canton's charm', Marie-Thérèse Chappaz explains when asked why she has planted a new grape variety in her eleven hectares of vineyards, which already contain nearly twenty five. 'The fragmentation of Valais's vineyards means that every winemaker has one or two small plots where many people have planted one or sometimes two varieties that they like. So when you rent or buy a plot of vines, it often has four or five different varieties', continues this winemaker, who confesses that Completer bowled her over. 'At a meeting in Graubünden of the members of Mémoire des Vins Suisses, José Vouillamoz presented a Completer tasting. That is when I discovered this not hugely fruity grape variety, offering restrained complex aromas, considerable acidity, and magnificent ageing potential', our interviewee continues, adding that no-one supported her idea of reintroducing a grape variety (an approach being followed in parallel by Clos Tsampéhro, which also planted this curiosity in 2012) that some people preferred to leave to Graubünden, where its planting area remains limited but stable. 'My few plots are definitely not going to overshadow a grape variety planted across a total of five hectares. In addition, it seems to me that Valais needs to position itself on the international market with its white wines. We are currently putting reds everywhere,

but only our white specialties really set us apart from foreign competition', according to this winemaker planning to plant up to 6000m² of this variety that was first referenced in 1321 in Malans in a Chur Cathedral chapter document. At the time the variety was known as 'complies', the last sung religious service of the day. It was also the Benedictines who took it to Italy, Malans and Valais. These wanderings explain our Completer's distant family ties with transalpine Marzemino. Having arrived in Switzerland, it then produced two offspring with Ticino's Bondola: Bondoletta (a Ticino curiosity) and Hirzkicher (a rarity from the canton of Lucerne). In Valais it has always been confused with its son Lafnetscha, born of an affair with Humagne Blanche. This native flavour underpins Marie-Thérèse Chappaz's choice to revive Completer in Valais. 'It is a grape variety that can produce high levels of natural sugar whilst retaining considerable acidity, a major asset in the context of global warming, and it also has a firm skin that makes it suitable for making wine with no added sulphur using maceration on the skins (like a red wine). Ideally, I would like to make three different wines with my Completer: a classic barrel-aged white, a curiosity using maceration on the skins, and an oxidised solera-style wine. Of course, this is a project that will take ten years, as the 150 litres obtained in 2018 mark my first vintage.'

www.chappaz.ch

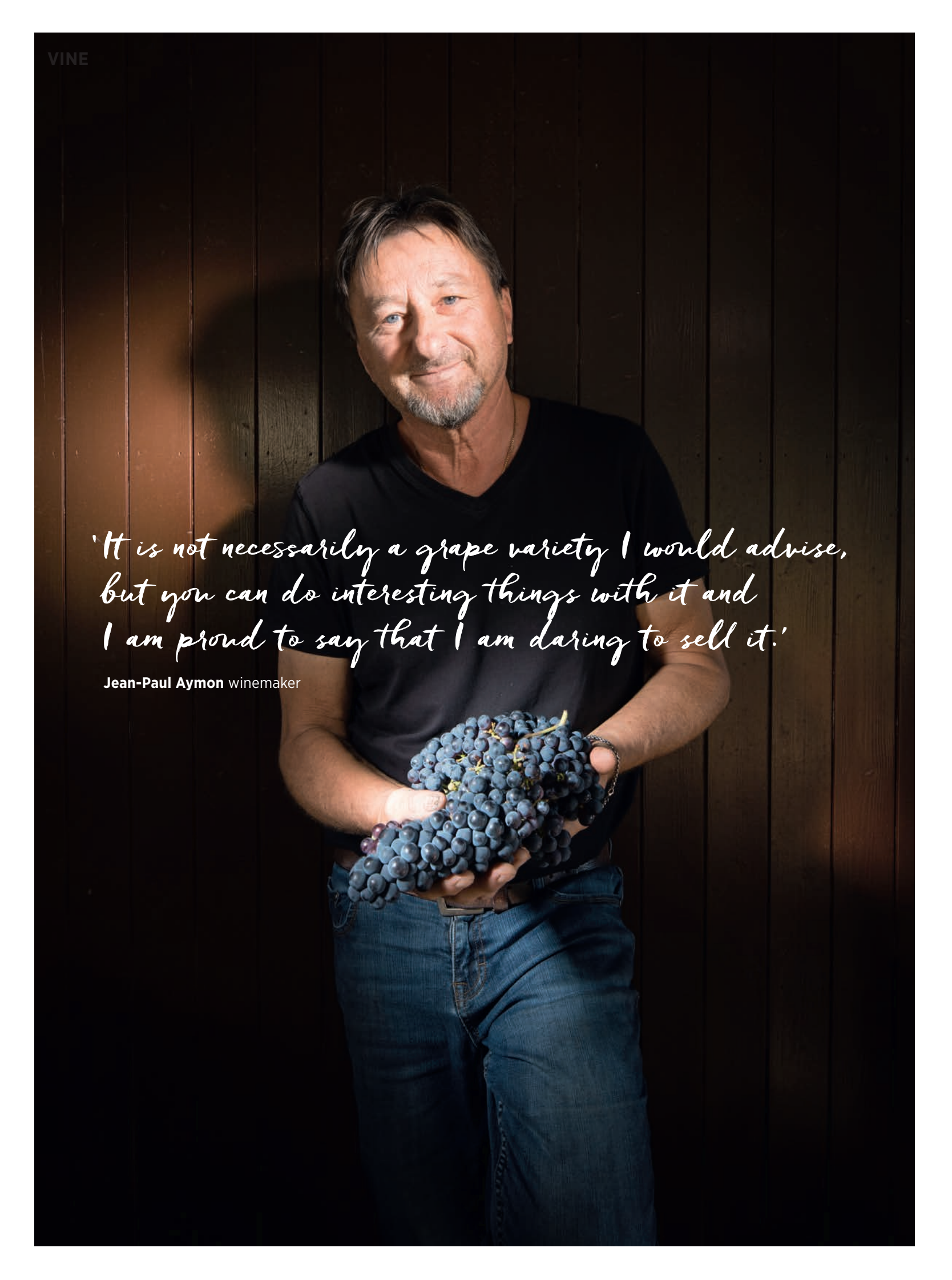
The Walser: high mountain settlers

Completer is not the only link between Graubünden and Upper Valais. These two Alpine regions were both colonised by the Walser, bringing their dialects, architecture and traditions with them. This people, whose descendants can be found in Italy, France, Austria, Liechtenstein and Switzerland's Alpine cantons, migrated from Germania to Helvetia in the era of major invasions. During the Middle Ages before the year 1000, they settled in the desolate valleys of eastern Valais, which then served as a base for spreading across much of the Alpine arc. These settlers were not invaders – they occupied uninhabited land in mountainous areas (1000 to over 2000 metres above sea level) and established self-reliant farms or hamlets. These farmers, who were skilled timber workers and knew how to obtain the best from an inhospitable environment, doubtless played a key role in the travels of Alpine grape varieties such as Completer, Petite Arvine or Humagne Rouge.



*'Valais needs to position itself
on the international market with
its white wines.'*

Marie-Thérèse Chappaz winemaker



*'It is not necessarily a grape variety I would advise,
but you can do interesting things with it and
I am proud to say that I am daring to sell it.'*

Jean-Paul Aymon winemaker

Pignoletta SECRETS TO UNRAVEL

Once mistaken for Rèze Rouge, the Pignoletta planted by Jean-Paul Aymon has proven as unusual and surprising as its rescuer.

Jean-Paul Aymon has always been passionate about grapes' transformation into wine. Born into a family of winemakers, his first attempts at making wine were at the age of just 17. He perfected his theoretical and practical training over the course of two decades which he spent travelling across Valais, northern Italy, and Ticino on behalf of a cork company. In 2009, he decided to focus his efforts on three hectares of vines in the municipality of Ayent, surrounded by forest and rocks. 'I grow around thirty grape varieties with quite a few curiosities such as Zweigelt or Grenache, not forgetting a whole range of Valais varieties', explains this amateur painter whose entire bottle production is sold to a very loyal customer base. In the 1990s he was interested in Rèze Rouge, a variety referenced in an 1862 publication (see inset to the right). 'White Rèze was like the medicinal wine of central Valais. It provided acidity and depth to slightly watery Fendant. By analogy, you would imagine that Rèze Rouge would play a similar role for red wines. I talked to senior colleagues, who confirmed that the plants I had set aside were a 99% match to what win-

emakers called Rèze Rouge', explains this artist who has exhibited his paintings all over Switzerland. A sample error led him to believe for a while that there really was a coloured variety of this ancient Valais grape. In 2013, new analyses showed that it was in fact Pignoletta, a productive hybrid direct from northern Italy. 'It has high acidity, little juice and little flesh. Sugar levels need to exceed 120 degrees Oechsle to quell its natural vivacity, but it has interesting fruit. In addition, like Brunello it tends to go brown very quickly. Since it is also a very productive grape, it is not necessarily a variety I would advise, but modern techniques mean that you can do interesting things with it and I am proud to say that I am daring to sell it', explains this winemaker who estimates that he will be able to produce 600 to 700 bottles from the thousand square metres he has planted. Named Careize, this barrel-aged curiosity is only sold in cases of three bottles (120 francs). It also went down very well at the 2018 New Arrivals tasting presented in the October 2018 French edition of VINUM.

www.orcyre.ch

The lost world

Given the re-emergence of old grape varieties, it seems like a good idea to look at how and why so many varieties have been lost. To tackle this issue, you have to realise that despite the widespread marketing discourse on tradition used in the modern winemaking world, vineyards (in Valais, Switzerland and across the world) have always been constantly changing ecosystems that have had to adapt to climatic, political and economic changes. These changes have been poorly or sporadically documented, often causing embarrassment even for top specialists. One example is this document taken from the journal 'Le Confédéré du Valais' on 27 November 1862, presenting a 'classification of wines grown in Valais'. According to this article, the following white varieties could be found: '1. Muscats Roux. 2. Fendants. 3. Malvoisie. 4. Amigne. 5. Humagne. 6. Reisi. 7. Petite Arvine. 8. Grosse Arvine. 9. Marque. 10. Coquinret (?). 11. Petit Gamet Blanc. 12. Blanc du Rhin. 13. Johannisberg. 14. Tokay. 15. Heida or Païen. 16. Blanc d'Arbois. 17. Giolay. 18. Guet. 19. Prie. 20. Blanchet.' For reds, the journalist lists: '1. Petit Bourgogne, Petit Gamet. 2. Dôle. 3. Cor-tailod. 4. Bailoz. 5. Salvaguin. 6. Ordinary Valais red. 7. Reise Rouge. 8. Muscat Rouge. 9. Arvine Rouge. 10. Guet Rouge. 11. Polenceau. 12. Gorrion. 13. Teinturier. 14. Rouge d'Italie. 15. Gros Rouge Croquant. 16. Bordeaux. 17. Veiret.' Whilst great connoisseurs of the vineyard might recognise Tokay as Pinot Gris or Bordeaux as Cabernet, like all top specialists they will remain dubious about Arvine Rouge or Blanc d'Arbois.

Diolle A WHITE EMERGING FROM THE NIGHT

Without going so far as to suggest that this Rèze offspring might be one of the future stars of the Valais vineyards, Dr. José Vouillamoz – who has played a key role in each of the revivals described in this section – views Diolle as such a promising grape that he has joined forces with Didier Joris to bring it to the market.

'The earliest mention of Diolle dates back to 1654, and the latest reference is in 1903', explains this globally recognised specialist in grape variety DNA. After that, this decaying grape variety from around Conthey and Savièse – considered to be the offspring of Rèze and Chasselas (if you believe the observations of the last ampelographer to mention the variety at the end of the last century) – disappeared. Its tale was picked up again in 2005. 'The University of Neuchâtel commissioned me for a project that consisted of cataloguing the genetic profile of all the vines grown in the country. I therefore used the media to ask winegrowers to send me any oddities that they had growing on their estates', José Vouillamoz explains. 'Among various more or less widely known varieties, an unidentified viticultural subject emerged.' The mysterious plant was sent in by Germain Héritier, a Savièse winemaker. 'He told me that the two vines, which were growing on a vineyard wall, dated from at least 1946, the year in which the wall was built. In addition, he explained that these plants had tended to gradually wither until the arrival of treatments applied by helicopter, which allowed them to also benefit from plant protection products', continues the biologist who has now begun a more systematic analysis of the genetic heritage of this unknown variety from the hillsides of Sion. The DNA revealed that it was the offspring of Rèze (a white grape variety that was very widespread in the canton until the arrival of phylloxera, and is referenced in annals as far back as 1313) and an

unknown father. 'Contrary to what Adrien Berger stated in 1903, Diolle is not the offspring of Chasselas, but everything else matched up, including the visual description of the plant and its viticultural characteristics: so in 2007 I was able to announce the revival of Diolle.'

Five years later, the author of 'Swiss Grape Varieties' – the source of the scientific information featured in this report – talked to Didier Joris. This man of the soil wanted to plant 'something special in a small plot of 300 square metres', so the man of science told him the tale of Diolle. They shook hands, and next year 300 Diolle vines were taking root on the peaks of Chamoson. Unfortunately, the rootstock selected was not suitable and it all had to be dug back up two years later. 'Two bunches survived', José Vouillamoz says. 'Didier Joris was determined to make it into a wine, and we were each able to drink a thimbleful of this first Diolle.' In 2015, everything was replanted on a more suitable rootstock. 'We harvested eight kilos in 2017, or six bottles of a white wine that astonished us. On an aromatic level, the citrus notes were reminiscent of a Pâien or Petite Arvine, but with much more acidity', explains the delighted producer, who hopes that the 2018 harvest will allow them to reach the 150-bottle threshold. 'To retain the purity of this crystalline grape variety, we worked the vines by hand using organic principles. In the winery, the wine was made with as few inputs as possible (only SO₂ was used), and I even asked Didier Joris to vinify our Diolle in 54-litre and 24-litre glass

carboys to minimise outside influences as far as possible.' Whilst waiting for new plantations, the few bottles marketed by the duo will be sold 'at an unreasonable price, because we will drink anything that is not sold anyway'.

www.josevouillamoz.com

VinEsch: a safe haven for rarities

Founded by Josef-Marie Chanton (who presents Lafnetscha on page 6) and José Vouillamoz, the VinEsch association unites numerous fans of old grape varieties who have been inspired by the idea of preserving a heroic vineyard on the slopes of the Vispental valley. In the hamlet of Esch, eighteen terraces that can only be accessed on foot are home to numerous native grape varieties. Alongside Completer, Gouais, Himbertscha and Cornalin, at VinEsch you will also find Roter, an unknown grape variety shows that it is the offspring of a Calabrian grape. There is also a second red grape variety: it has no name and no recognisable fingerprint, but this 'anonymous birth' has been found in various Valais vineyards, suggesting that it was once cultivated relatively widely in the canton.

www.vinesch.ch

*'In 2017 we
harvested eight
kilos of Diolle,
or six bottles of a
white wine that
astonished us.'*

Dr José Vouillamoz ampelographer



IVV art challenge

VInternARTio

#IVVARTCHALLENGE



nal

ENGE

Internationally reputed modern artists, young Swiss graphic designers, exceptional Valais wines, and the Anglo-Saxon cultural scene are the foundations on which the Interprofession des Vins du Valais has built its IVV art challenge.



Created in 2007, the Sélection des Vins du Valais rewards the canton's best wines every year. Nearly a thousand wines made by producers from all over the canton take part in this annual competition, which awards gold and silver medals to the most deserving examples and also has a promotional element. Every year, the 'Etoiles du Valais' - the top distinction rewarding the best wine in the Fendant, Johannisberg, Heida, Petite Arvine, Dôle, Humagne Rouge, Cornalin and Syrah categories - are unveiled at an event in German-speaking Switzerland. These eight award-winners are then put together in an original case, several hundred of which are sold by the interprofessional association. In the spring of 2016, spurred on by its director Gérard-Philippe Mabillard who is known for his exceptional network in the art world, IVV

launched an extraordinary competition giving Swiss creatives an opportunity to create original labels for the award-winning wines. The six artists who won over the judging panel were invited to travel to New York and exhibit their works in one of the East Village's trendiest galleries, as well as to share a special moment in the workshop of Billy the Artist, an international figure on the modern art scene and an ambassador for the 2017 Sélection des Vins du Valais. Following the success of this art and wine pairing, the IVV challenge was repeated in 2018, this time with a link between the London art scene and Valais wines.

www.ivvartchallenge.ch

The 'IVV Art Challenge' case is the culmination of a competition which took place in multiple stages: label competition, exhibition in New York, and creation of a promotional film.



IVV art challenge QUITE A CASE

'Our intention was to get off the beaten track and create a surprise to attract the attention of consumers. A presence abroad improves our wines' presence here', Gérard-Philippe Mabilard explained in the press release presenting the IVV Art Challenge 2017 case.

At the end of a process lasting for more than a year, this case presented at the Foire du Valais was the culmination of a project uniting the worlds of art and the earth. It also offered a way of introducing the award-winning wines



2018: spotlight on London

In May 2018, the interprofessional association launched the second ever IVV Art Challenge. According to the press release: 'The vines of Valais are once again soaking up the world of art and calling for creatives from Switzerland and abroad. The challenge is simple: create a wine label for an exclusive case, with a trip to London up for grabs.' With the dual aim of presenting the canton's specialities beyond its borders and highlighting the versatility and artistic potential of the wine world, creatives were invited to consult the oenological description of a wine (choosing from a Fendant, Cornalin, Dôle, Heida, Johannisberg, Syrah or Petite Arvine) and build on it to produce a label of their choice. The judging panel (presided over by London DJ duo Apexape who specialise in musical production and performance) selected the award-winning works, which had to be well-suited to both a large-scale exhibition in a London gallery and small-format use to decorate a bottle of Valais wine. The candidates had until the end of September to publish their projects on Instagram (#ivvartchallenge2), and the prizes were awarded at a gala evening in late November. You can admire their creations (and order the wines they decorate) on the interprofessional association's portal.

www.lesvinsduvalais.ch

from Sélection des Vins du Valais to a diverse audience. The first to show an interest were the artists who created the around 150 projects (photography, graphical compositions and paintings) submitted for the IVV Art Challenge 2017. Heida, Humagne Rouge or Blanche, and Syrah then won over the judging panel led by Billy the Artist, who together awarded prizes to three people from Valais (Loris Briguët, KOL and Julien Cortey), one from Bern (Marco Heer) and two students from Eikon, the Fribourg Vo-

cational School of Applied Arts: Camille Pasquier and Sébastien Delabays. The award-winning artists and wines then came to the East Village, where the former could exhibit their work in the famous Castle Fitzjohns gallery and the latter impressed New York's cultural elite. After making a promotional film, the last step in this art and wine odyssey was French-speaking Switzerland's unmissable event the Foire du Valais, where 150 'IVV Art Challenge' cases available for sale at 300 francs each.

Dionysia LIFE AFTER WINE

A young company in Sierre is transforming used barrels into stylish furniture. We met its founders, Aurélie Nanchen and Nicolas Fontaine.

'Barrels are a major investment for a winemaker. It costs nearly a thousand francs to buy an oak barrel, which will only be used for four or five years. Once this cycle is over, the containers are given to customers or tossed on the fire', Nicolas Fontaine explains. 'It really is a pity, as coopers use fine, excellent quality woods that have a very long life. And not forgetting that it takes remarkable expertise to make a barrel', Aurélie Nanchen adds. With this in mind, in 2016 the young Valais duo created the company Dionysia SNC, which according to the trade register aims to 'create furniture, lights and decorations using oak barrels'. Originally, neither of our entrepreneurs had any specific training in the timber trade: Aurélie had completed an apprenticeship as a beautician and Nicolas had a CFC as a landscape gardener. 'I have always loved tinkering, but the trigger was a trip to South America two years ago. After spending a lot of time thinking about recycling, I came back with the idea of creating furniture using second-hand materials. I initially thought that pallets would be my main raw material. Then, I met Nicolas and his project idea of barrel

upcycling (literally recycling upwards, meaning to transform a now obsolete raw material into a fine product)', the young woman explains. 'I had set up a landscape gardening company with an associate, and woodwork was a good way to fill the winter months, which were less busy for us. Things gradually sped up, and I sold my share at the beginning of the year to focus on Dionysia', her associate tells us.

Aurélie Nanchen and Nicolas Fontaine set up shop in the outskirts of Sierre in an artist workshop called 'ctrl' (an acronym for 'control the red line'), allowing them to draw on their co-tenants' metalworking skills when making some particularly complex pieces. 'Our work sits somewhere between art and craftsmanship', our young interviewees explain. 'We offer indoor pieces and outdoor furniture that is treated with natural products to make it weather resistant. Some pieces such as stools, tables or chairs are made as a series. We also work on unique pieces ordered by customers who come to us with very precise, often very complex projects.' The two associates, who try to use every part of the bar-

rels they rescue (including the metal), confirm that as it currently stands, most of their customers come from the wine and restaurant worlds. 'We have of course started to canvas in Valais, but German-speaking Swiss customers are also beginning to appear', Nicolas delightedly tells us, explaining that they received particularly good feedback from the Jardin des Vins de Berne, a tasting organised by Sion winemakers to which Dionysia was invited. 'We primarily advertise by word of mouth, but we are also active on Facebook', Aurélie explains, also adding that their website will be up and running soon.



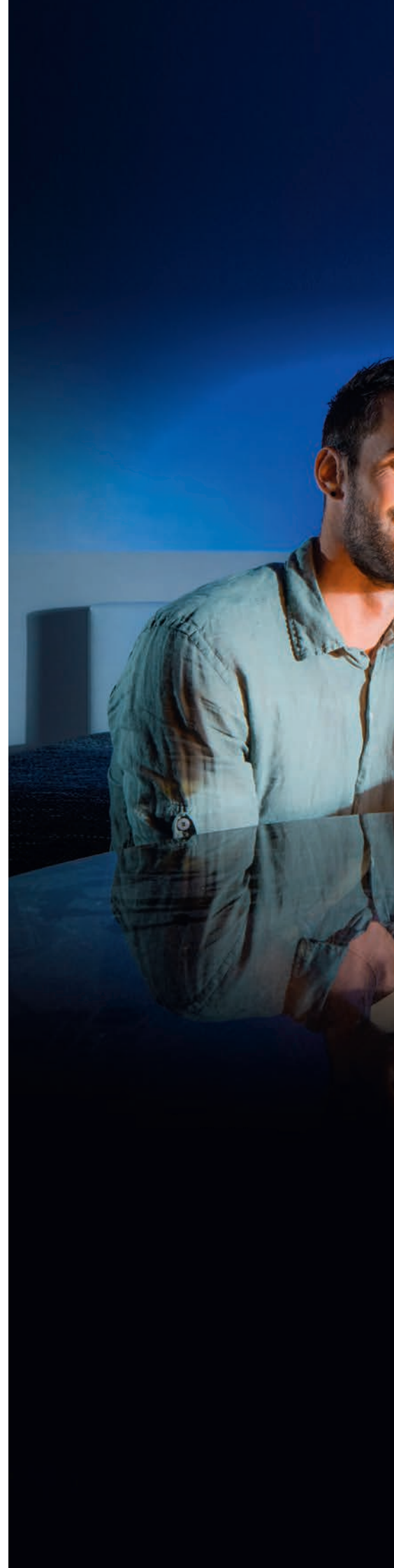
Bottle BRIGHTENING UP GLASS

Bringing used bottles back to life: the concept developed by Damien Perrin, who describes himself as a creator of visual value.

'After an apprenticeship as an autobody mechanic, I wanted to branch off onto a more creative path. So I went to Lausanne to attend design school. Then, with a bachelor's degree under my belt, I decided to stick to my fondness for being independent and set up my own company', explains Damien Perrin, a young Valais designer born in 1990. He adds that he offers his customers a relatively comprehensive service including both interior design and business communications. 'Creating visual value is what I like about this job. Recycling is of particular interest to me, as through transformation, you can enhance a utilitarian product that has lost its primary function.' The idea of transforming bottles into elegant lamps came into being in late 2017. 'Since I am always looking to give my projects a social dimension, I asked Foyers Saint-Hubert (a social enterprise in Valais offering work to the disabled) to make the lamp frames. To begin with, I made a few pieces with alcohol bottles before focusing

on the wine bottles used by Valais winemakers', explains this man who describes himself as a wine lover without claiming to be a connoisseur. Sold at 240 francs each, these lamps are in reality the tip of the iceberg. 'I also do more significant installations including various lights. For example, a wine merchant in Villars commissioned a major driftwood installation incorporating multiple lamps. The entire thing was nearly four metres long', this creative delightedly recounts, smiling when we ask if the cactus beneath the lamp is an integral part of the concept. 'The lamps are supplied without the plant, anyone can put what they like there, but I like the idea of bringing these recycled bottles back to life'.

www.designperrin.com



Culture and viticulture

Under the leadership of Anne-Dominique Zufferey, across its sites in Sierre and Salquenen, the Valais Wine Museum organises multidisciplinary exhibitions twice a year examining the links between the universe of wine and the rest of the world. Historical and ethnological approaches receive significant attention, but artistic elements are never forgotten. Although these exhibitions are temporary, they are made timeless by the publication of dedicated volumes that are more than just exhibition catalogues, as they explain the approach taken and present all of the exhibition's discoveries (and the questions that could not be answered). Here is a selection of these books published by the Valais Wine Museum, all available from the museum shop.

www.museeduvin-valais.ch

The beauty of gestures

Tools have always been a part of vine and wine work. Each plays its own role in the activities of the winemaking year, evolves as required, and changes status with the times. Tools are an extension of human hands, but are also 'experienced' by those who use them. They relieve drudgery, or can have a talent for making it even worse! This volume embraces objects as a whole, both in the actions they enable and in the men and women who use them. Vine and wine objects come to life through images and accounts, and shed new light on the Valais wine world.

Wine for contemporary tastes

Originally, taste was an intimate, personal, unique experience. However, human sciences have shown that it is acquired knowledge, a perfect combination of sensory data and social representations. Aromas, colour, containers, wine cultivation, winemaking, the role of the oenologist, and the views of tasters all form part of 'wine taste'. This research, highlighted by an examination of Valais wines from the Middle Ages to 1850 and supplemented with current observations, reveals the historic and cultural essence of wine perception. Wine is definitely more than just a liquid!

Oswald Ruppen, shedding light on vines and wines

Between 1950 and 1990, Oswald Ruppen photographed vines and wines for advertising commissions, reports and personal projects. His sensitive eye is vital in understanding the development of the canton and its wine industry. A discreet observer interested in people and their daily lives, the photographer captures the gestures and landscapes of a changing Valais. His mastery of light gives the images a theatrical depth. He captures facial expressions and the details of daily life with power and simplicity. Every facet of vines and wines is revealed, from breaking ground to harvests to enjoying an aperitif.

Drinking with wood

From the production of a wooden goblet to its use during ancient times and the Middle Ages, from the delivery cup containing Humagne Blanche thought to strengthen young mothers to the bourgeois goblets filled with century-old 'glacier wine', this publication reveals new and original insights into wine's role in Valais culture and society.

Photo: Régis Colombo/diapo.ch



Cork THE TIMELESS OPTION

Boasting plenty of good qualities and one major flaw, cork stoppers appear to be an invincible solution for medium to high quality wines.



Cork, a natural material taken from the bark of certain species of oak, has been used by humans for nearly five thousand years. Its insulation, buoyancy, impermeability and rot-proof properties are paired with a rare benefit: its ability to regenerate. In fact, removing the bark from a cork oak does not cause any damage to the tree. In the forests of Portugal (the world's largest oak producer), Spain or France, the bark is first removed once a tree has reached around twenty years old. The 'male' cork removed at this point is a low-quality product used only for insulation. The 'female' or 'reproduction' cork that regrows improves in quality each time the bark is stripped. As a general rule, it is not until the fourth bark stripping (with a period of nine to fifteen years left between each harvest to allow

the cork to regenerate properly) that it reaches a high enough quality level to make cork stoppers. The idyllic relationship between wine and cork began in the 19th century, when developments in glass manufacturing enabled the emergence of sales in bottles rather than barrels. Natural, impermeable, resistant and renewable, cork reigned supreme over the world of wine. Unfortunately, a significant number of bottles - with no relation to the wine, its origins or its quality - developed musty aromas. Although cork was quickly identified as the problem, the reason for this was not identified until 1981 and research undertaken by Hans Tanner. This Swiss scientist discovered that the chlorinated compounds present in the cork were transformed by a fungus into 2,4,6-trichloroanisole, or TCA. Sadly, most humans proved to

*The human nose
can detect TCA
at levels of five
billionths of a
gram per litre!*

be very sensitive to this molecule and could detect it in infinitesimal quantities (5 nanograms, or a billionth of a gram, per litre). This defect, which does not cause any health problems but leaves the wine undrinkable, has resulted in the emergence of various alternative stoppers. In response, cork makers have set up increasingly sophisticated control systems and promised that cork taint rates of 10-15 percent are absolutely a thing of the past. Some even offer to test each cork stopper individually to guarantee TCA-free batches. In fact, during VINUM tastings, we have found that although corked wines are much rarer than they were in the past, they have far from disappeared. For example, during the major Syrah and Hermitage tasting for this special, three bottles - just over 4 percent of our sample of 80 high-end wines sold for twenty to fifty francs - were irreparably damaged by TCA.



Alternatives
**COMPARE
AND CONTRAST**



Faced with the problem of cork taint, the industry has developed various alternative stopper systems. All have their advantages and disadvantages.

Screw cap

These aluminium capsules appeared on the Swiss market in the 1970s. They then spread to Oceania and various New World countries. Wine reduction issues resulting from the use of impermeable seals prompted manufacturers to offer micro-perforated seals from the 1990s onwards. Virtually fault free, the screw cap appeared to be an ideal solution from a technical perspective as it enabled wines to keep perfectly for several decades, as has been shown through numerous comparative tastings. Its only failing is low levels of acceptance by consumers, who still associate screw caps with low quality. It should be noted that this perception varies from one country to another, as wines sold for over a hundred dollars are stoppered with screw caps in Australia and New Zealand, whilst in France and Italy they are reserved for low-end wines.

Synthetic stopper

Synthetic stoppers, generally made from polyethylene (a petroleum-based plastic), have seen a strong increase in demand over the past decade. Cheap, relatively secure, and with no risk of breaking, they have numerous disadvantages - they are notoriously difficult to remove and age relatively poorly - and are relegated to entry-level wines. Nevertheless, new systems made up of a plastic structure covered in spongy polymers suggest that we have not seen the last of synthetic stoppers.

Glass stoppers

Technically secure and relatively elegant, the glass stoppers developed by a Czech company



(Vinolok) represent an interesting alternative to cork as they are a noble, recyclable product. Nevertheless, they remain marginal given the costs involved in acquiring a specific bottling system for this type of stopper.

Technological stoppers

A technological stopper is a cork that is crushed into a powder, cleaned (and decontaminated from any of the potential TCA-forming agents that cause the notorious cork taint) and then

reconstituted. Popularised by the Spanish brand Diam, these technological corks have been adopted by numerous Swiss winemakers. Their reliability and visual similarity to cork have been lauded, but critics remain concerned about the adhesives used during the reconstitution process, which could be picked up by certain very well-developed palates.

Marc-André Devantéry DOMAINE DU MONT D'OR, SION

'Despite its flaws, cork is demanded by consumers, particularly above a certain price level. It is a reality that we may bemoan, but we must accept.'

Marc-André Devantéry  Enologist



'Today, we only use Diam-style technological corks. We do not use screw caps. We abandoned natural cork due to the problems that this material causes', Marc-André Devantéry explains, continuing: 'With technological corks, the deviations caused by cork have virtually disappeared. It is a reliable, consistent system that matches our products' positioning and price point. Of course, there is the question of the solvents and adhesives used to produce technological corks, but Diam works exclusively with natural products.' However, cork is making a comeback at the company. 'We will soon be marketing some high-end red blends, for which we have opted for natural cork. The same goes for late-harvest wines, which will soon be returning to traditional bottling systems. Despite its flaws, cork is demanded by consumers, particularly above a certain price level. It is a reality that we may bemoan,

but we must accept. Within the Schenk group, various estates in the canton of Vaud have opted for screw caps, including for their prestige Chas-selas, but this does not match the expectations of Mont d'Or consumers, who view the ceremony of opening a bottle of wine as being a vital part of tasting enjoyment.' Reflecting on old vintages and the possibility of regularly swapping corks (whose life expectancy is estimated to be twenty-five years), Mont d'Or's new director (who took up the role in July 2017) is rather sceptical: 'We primarily keep sweet wines, which have the potential to age for multiple decades given their high sugar and alcohol levels. If storage conditions are suitable, uncorking is not always the best option: partly because this allows oxygen in, but also because you top the bottle up with wine from another bottle, which alters this flavour picture of the past, so to speak.'

Domaine du Mont d'Or

Celebrated for its exceptional sweet wines, impressive terraces, and bright yellow guard huts, Domaine du Mont d'Or is the oldest winery in Valais. Founded after the Sonderbund War, the company (which is part of the Vaud-based Schenk group) produces around 200,000 bottles a year. This Sion estate is also known for selling old vintages, mostly sweet wines, at reasonable prices. The oldest wines display 1903 on their labels, but the wines currently on sale 'only' date back to 1969.

www.montdor.ch



Cave Nouveau Salquenen

Diego Mathier, a three-time winner of the Grand Prix du Vin Suisse, runs the most award-winning wine estate in Switzerland. The company makes wine with grapes from nearly 130 hectares of vines between Tourtemagne and Leytron and works nearly 50 hectares of its own. It sells around fifty wines that bear the mark of Cédric Leyat, a talented oenologist who has been pairing up with Diego Mathier for several years. Cave Nouveau Salquenen is known all over Switzerland and is particularly active in the German-speaking part of the country. www.mathier.com

'We have chosen to limit our risk by systematically using four batches from four different cork providers when bottling.'

Diego Mathier Swiss winemaker of the decade

Diego Mathier CAVE NOUVEAU SALQUENEN

'Cork taint is a problem that creates major costs for a producer. If a restaurant opens a bottle contaminated with TCA, they have to change the glasses and return the bottle to the winemaker, who must replace it. Ultimately, the costs resulting from this accident are much higher than the wine's actual value. This is therefore an issue to which we pay close attention. At Cave Nouveau Salquenen, we have chosen to limit our risk by systematically using four batches from four different cork providers when bottling. This cuts the risk to a quarter of what it would otherwise be', Diego Mathier explains. For this producer who regularly wins awards at Swiss competitions, cork is clearly not the

best stopper system, but it is what consumers want - at least for high-end wines, as the estate uses synthetic and technological stoppers in its conventional wines for drinking within two or three years. However, Cave Nouveau Salquenen does not use glass stoppers ('we did some testing a decade or so ago and discovered that there were reduction issues') or screw caps for any of its wines. 'From a technical perspective, screw caps are the ideal wine closure. They offer interesting ageing potential, as I have seen with Vaud Chasselas. However, image is still a problem, particularly in restaurants', Diego Mathier continues. Our interviewee, who works in both French-speaking and German-speaking Swit-

zerland, confirms that there is no 'Röstigraben' cultural boundary in this area. 'Wine enthusiasts in both Zurich and Geneva want cork for exceptional bottles, and will tolerate alternative stoppers for less prestigious wines.' Finally, for wines for laying down, the Salquenen producer replaces the corks in his private cellar when the wines hit twenty years old: 'of course, opening and recapping bottles causes oxidation in the wine, but it is better than a cork that fails.'

'Easy to open, airtight, stable, with no risk of tainted flavours: glass stoppers have just one flaw – the cost of the machines required for bottling.'

Vincent Courtine

Director of Les Fils de Charles Favre



Vincent Courtine LES FILS DE CHARLES FAVRE

Formerly the director of the Sierre tourist office, Vincent Courtine became the new director of Fils de Charles Favre a few weeks ago: 'I have been continually immersed in the world of wine, which is a vital part of Valais culture. At Sierre Tourism I was always trying to highlight the city's particular links with this delicious and passionate universe', explains the man who created and developed Vinum Montis, the canton's wine tourism site. Before our meeting, brushed up on the company's history. 'We are known and recognised for our use of glass stoppers made by the Czech company Vinolok. This is a bold choice that dates back around a dozen years. In 2005, Les Fils de Charles Favre was facing recurrent cork taint issues. Tests showed that synthetic stoppers were not satisfactory. However, glass had a significant number of good qualities. Easy to open, airtight, stable, with no risk of

tainted flavours: this system has just one flaw – the cost of the machines required for bottling.' Thirteen years later, results have proven largely positive, as around ten different wines (generally produced in large quantities) use this stopper, which no longer provokes a reaction from consumers. 'Customers are used to it and we do not get any complaints or comments', Vincent Courtine confirms. 'However, whilst this type of closure is suitable for mid-range wines, as soon as you move to prestige wines cork once again becomes mandatory. You can think what you like from a technical standpoint, but customers have clear-cut opinion on the subject and there is nothing we can do about it', concludes the new director, also revealing that 2019 will be an exceptional year as Dame de Sion is celebrating its sixtieth birthday.

Les Fils de Charles Favre

The last winery to leave central Sion for the outskirts, Les Fils de Charles Favre is known for its slogan 'the little house of great wines' and its famous Fendant de la Dame de Sion (nominated for the 2018 Grand Prix du Vin Suisse). Hurlevent, Favi and Collection F are some of the brands that this company – which makes wine with grapes from nearly five hundred producers – has developed over the past sixty years. Combining tradition with modernity, the company gambled on glass stoppers, which it uses in some of its wines vinified by Jean-Edouard Liand. Vincent Courtine, the new director fresh from the world of tourism, took up his post on 1 November.

www.favre-vins.ch

Dominique Rouvinez DOMAINES ROUVINEZ



'If machines that check the corks one by one to guarantee TCA-free batches became more widespread, that could mean the end of cork taint.'

Dominique Rouvinez Oenologist

'We systematically use screw caps for wines that are drunk quickly, like Fendant, Gamay or Dôle Blanche, which are often served by the glass in restaurants. However, when it comes to higher-end wines and bottles for laying down, we systematically use natural cork', Dominique Rouvinez explains. 'For half bottles, we recently started using agglomerated cork stoppers. Personally I was not a fan of this system, as I feel like you can detect very faint but perceptible notes of adhesive. However, strong cork taint is virtually existent.' When asked if cork taint is an important issue for the group, Dominique Rouvinez admits: 'It is still a very annoying problem. For the past twenty years, cork producers have been assuring us that they have found new solutions ensuring that fewer than one cork in a thousand will be contaminated with TCA. In reality, almost every year we receive batches containing 3-5% conta-

minated corks, which is far too many.' In addition, the Sierre oenologist explains that as well as easily recognisable faults, there are also problems caused by cork that simply 'shroud' the wine. 'Customers will not make the connection with the cork, but will be disappointed with a wine that they consider weak and closed. To us, this is even more detrimental than a real cork identified as such', Dominique Rouvinez explains. Nevertheless, 2018 could be a turning point in the fight against TCA. 'Portuguese producers have developed a machine that analyses each cork one at a time and guarantees TCA-free batches. This seems to work, and we have not had any problems since purchasing these automatically checked corks. If they became more widespread, that could mean the end of cork taint.'

Domaines Rouvinez

Born on Gêronde hill in Sierre, this family winery was one of the first to make blends, use barrels in a large scale, and create consistent estates pairing one soil with one grape variety. Having become one of the canton's largest winegrowing companies under the firm rule of brothers Jean-Bernard and Dominique Rouvinez, it is now run by the third generation in the form of Véronique, Frédéric and Philippe. In addition to wines under the Domaines Rouvinez name, the group also sells wines labelled Orsat, Imesch and Bonvin 1858. The Rouvinez family owns more than a hundred hectares in Valais and is considered the country's biggest vineyard owner. www.rouvinez.com



Water SOURCE OF LIFE AND WINE TOURISM

In a region as dry as Valais, a good command of irrigation is a vital skill for the community's survival. This expertise created irrigation channels called 'bisses' criss-crossing the hillsides overlooking the Rhone and its tributaries.



Photo: Régis Colombo/diabect

An estimated 500 to 950 litres of water are needed to make a bottle of wine. However, Valais is the driest canton in Switzerland, whether you take the total annual rainfall or the number of days without rain. Hemmed in between two parallel Alpine chains that hold back the snow, the upper Rhone valley also enjoys significant sunshine resulting in extensive evaporation. To understand the challenges of irrigation, it is important to realise that altitude plays a vital role in the amount of rainfall that different parts of Valais receive. Sion or Sierre (some 500 metres above sea level) get around 600 millimetres of rain per year - two and a half times less than most towns on the Swiss plateau - whilst in Loècheles-Bains (1400 metres above sea level), annual rainfall reaches 1000 millimetres. The Great St Bernard Pass on the other hand, stretching up to 2472 metres, receives over 2000 millimetres of water (although a significant portion of this falls in the form of snow). Two conclusions can be drawn: watering the arid plains means finding water reserves in high areas, and these are particularly abundant during the period when the snow melts, which fortunately coincides with the time of year when rainfall is particularly low. The region's inhabitants realised this centuries ago. It is worth clarifying at this point that hypotheses attributing the invention of bisses to the Romans, the Saracens or 'pagans' have no historical or archaeological basis. The earliest written references to these irrigation channels date back to the 13th century, but these medieval documents frequently mention older structures, suggesting that even before the year 1000, Valais locals were (generally peacefully) capturing, guiding and distributing water from the melted snow on Alpine summits. According to 'The Bisses of Valais' by Johannes Gerber

and Jean-Henry Papilloud, there were various waves of bisse development. The first was documented as taking place between 1000 and 1300, a long period of economic and demographic growth. The second dates back to the 15th century. According to the historian Pierre Dubuis, the population (which had been significantly reduced by plague epidemics) was able to enjoy a richer and meatier diet. There are perceptible developments in farming processes, and consequently in the bisses that enabled fodder to be produced during the winter. This expansion phase corresponded with the construction of colossal structures that captured water from glacial rivers, which were difficult to access. The third golden age of bisses began in the mid-19th century when the railways opened up Valais. The population grew, grains were cheaper to import than produce, and meat was increasingly popular. Artificial grasslands had to be created and irrigated to feed this livestock. Finally, the 20th century saw the beginning of various bisse modernisation and expansion activities to bring water to vineyards, which were expanding at great speed. After a period of decline from the 1960s to the 1990s, corresponding with the decline in farming and the installation of water sprinkling systems, the bisses saw renewed interest. In 1993, the canton named the bisses a piece of cantonal cultural heritage and compiled an inventory. 190 were counted, the majority of which (165) were used for direct irrigation - of meadows (142), vines (24), orchards (11) or crops (9) - or indirect irrigation, transporting water to sprinkling systems or reservoirs built during the second half of the 20th century. The tourist element was not forgotten, as 94 were included in the network listing hiking routes in Valais.

www.les-bisses-du-valais.ch

Of the around a hundred bisses making up publically accessible trails, twenty or so are still used to irrigate vineyards. Here is our selection east of Sion.

Bisses du Valais FROM VISPERTERMINEN TO SION

Visperterminen HEIDO

As well as its extraordinary terraced vineyard stretching up to 1150 metres above sea level (making it the highest vines in Switzerland, and not Europe, as is often claimed) and still home to pre-phyloxera vines, Visperterminen also has one of the driest climates in Valais, explaining why this municipality with just a few thousand inhabitants contains 17 bisses. The most famous of these is the Heido (or Paien), referenced in a bill of sale dating from 1305. Found at more than 2000 metres above sea level, it does not criss-cross the vines, but offers an extraordinary stroll amid lush Alpine flora.

Varone DALAWASSERLEITU

Now used solely to irrigate vineyards, this bisse (which once supplied a sawmill) has an eventful history. The first written references to this channel, which draws its water from the Dala river, date from 1483, when part of the bisse buckled and caused extensive damage. Another document about this catastrophe, written the following year, specifies the rights and obligations (regular dredging, repair of various elements, improvements to be made to limit water loss) of each member of the consortium owning this community water system.



Varone BISSE DE VARONE

Called 'Grossi Wasserleitung' in German, this bisse is one of the oldest recorded. As well as being referenced in documents from 1150 describing the 'Grossi', this stream has also been flowing for long enough to cart along sufficient earth and alluvium to enable trees to grow in a hollowed out part of the solid rock. Furthermore, pines and other spruces are doing so well on the river banks that they form a green line contrasting with the yellowish steppe of this barren hillside. Alongside the water, hikers can explore the region's flora and fauna thanks to an educational trail with panels.

Lens BISSE DU RHO

In the old bourgeoisie of Lens, vines grow at up to 800 metres above sea level before giving way to pasture and fields, which in turn fade into forest from 1200 metres up. Bisses are a necessity in these poor soils without any streams or springs. Built in the 14th century, the Bisse du Rho is partly disused, but has been maintained because its route demonstrates the ingenuity of builders of old. This 9.5-kilometre stroll is not at all arduous but overlooks sheer cliffs that will impress even the most jaded city dwellers.



Bisses du Valais **FROM SAINT-MAURICE TO SION**

Of the around a hundred bisses making up publically accessible trails, twenty or so are still used to irrigate vineyards. Here is our selection from Sion to Saint-Maurice.

Sion **BISSE DE CLAVAU**

Built in 1453 by the bishop, the canons of the cathedral chapter, and the municipality of Sion, this bisse supplies sprinkler and drop irrigation in one of the world's most beautiful vineyards. Backing onto dry stone walls sometimes a good ten metres high, this is a memorable stroll through the heart of Sion's vineyards. The guard houses of the Varone Vins and Bonvin 1858 wineries also offer hikers some tasty treats, in the form of delicious modern tapas in the former (Le Cube) and traditional specialities in the latter (Guérite Brûlefer), accompanied by tasty local delicacies.

Sion **BISSE DE LENTINE**

Capturing Sionne water at 760 metres above sea level, the Bisse de Lentine passes quickly through the vineyards of Savièse and Sion, which it crosses in just over four kilometres. Any of its waters not used for irrigation are diverted into Lake Montorge, a particularly interesting site from an environmental and a cultural perspective. 24 species of dragonfly and nearly a hundred different types of butterfly can be found here. The 'Maison de la Nature' with its educational exhibitions is actually a former ice house built by a local brewery in 1850.



Saillon BISSE DE LA GURE

In this magnificent fortified village with its thick walls, water supplies have always been a major challenge. Although the Bisse de Bornel was already filling the village fountains in the Middle Ages, it was not until the mid-19th century that it started supplying the hillside vines. In 1846, municipal president and state councillor Maurice Barman began some spectacular works on cliffs deemed impenetrable by the Salentse river. They were blast excavated, drilled, and supporting walls were built to create a small bisse less than two kilometres long that still irrigates the entire vineyard area today.

Saxon BISSE DE SAXON

This bisse flows for more than 28 kilometres through the four municipalities of Nendaz, Iséables, Riddes and Savon. Construction work began in 1865 with conflicts between the different parties involved, requiring the Council of State to intervene. It took four years and exceptional courage from the people working on this colossal structure, which passes through both rocky cliffs and marshland. Costing more than 100,000 francs at a time when a worker's average daily wage was 80 cents, it was abandoned less than a century later as maintenance costs (three or four guards continuously monitoring the bisse) proved too high.

Groundwater A HIDDEN WORLD

Bisses and streams are not the only ways that vital water can make its way into the vineyard – it sometimes takes seemingly impenetrable routes to do its beneficial work.

'A vine is like a water pump. The entire root system has just one aim: to find water to feed the juice and allow the grapes and foliage to grow', as Hervé de Tomasi of the Solum terroir research institute told VINUM a few years ago. This Vaud engineer explained that the vine's water needs vary at different times of year: 'Vitis vinifera effectively has two key periods during the year – the vegetative cycle, when the plant grows, and the ripening cycle when the grapes take on juice. The more energy the vine has to expend to find water, the more quickly it begins its ripening cycle. Ultimately you end up with small, sweet berries that produce very high-quality wines. However, if ripening begins at a later point, the resulting grapes are larger with a lower sugar content.' So you might think that the more a vine has to endure, the higher the quality of the grapes. In reality, the situation is a little more complex. Scientists realised that if water stress levels become too high and prompt a nitrogen deficit, this not only reduces yields but also causes problems during fermentation that affect the wine's final aromas. Although most Swiss vines grow in regions that have enough rain to find all the water they need, this does not hold true in Valais, which has always used irrigation systems ('bisses' irrigation channels, then sprinkler or drop irrigation systems). Managing these is not always easy as the water sometimes heads in unexpected directions, as Hervé de Tomasi ex-

plained: 'During my research work on the Chamson alluvial cone, I realised that the subsoil contained more water in the autumn than in the spring. This seemed illogical, as the summer saw little rainfall, and the scorching sun and wind resulted in large amounts of water disappearing from the upper layers of the soil. I was sure that my sensor was not working properly. In fact it was functioning perfectly and the water that I found had come from the Rhone, whose flow increases during the summer as the snow melts. The flooding overflow was absorbed by the surrounding land and ended up at the vines' roots. These conclusions allowed us to reduce irrigation in the area's vineyard plots.'


In Valais, water's invisible influence is not limited to vine roots. Together with the sun and the foehn wind, morning mists in late autumn create one of Valais's most beautiful wines by allowing 'noble rot', or botrytis cinerea, to develop. This requires very specific climatic conditions: morning mists that enable development of the fungus, then dry, sunny days that restrict the micro-organism's destruction tendencies. This alternation presents the noble rot from tainting the grapes, whilst also concentrating the sugars and transforming some of the grape's aromatic elements. Only very few regions (Tokaj, Sauternes, Valais, Rhine valley, Loire valley) are lucky enough to have these specific conditions that produce particularly complex sweet wines.

Wine here, water there

Water is an integral part of Provins's new wine tourism orientation, as explained by Raphaël Garcia, the director of this cooperative that organises boat rides on Saint-Léonard underground lake.

At the end of the Ice Age nearly 12,000 years ago, interaction between gypsum and run-off water began to dig out a thirty-metre cavity beneath what is now the vineyards on Saint-Léonard hill. The cave's expansion, a phenomenon that is still continuing today, is sped up by seismic events. It was therefore an earthquake, in 1946, that made this 300-metre-long reservoir (which proudly bears the title of the largest underground lake in Europe) navigable by humans. 'Water is a key part of our tourist services', Raphaël Garcia explains. The three flagship experiences offered to visitors are a tour of the estates along the Bisse de Clavos and the Bisse de Montorge, a visit to the Les Titans wine barrels stored in a tunnel within the Grande Dixence Dam (a concept presented in 2017 Valais special), and a boat ride on the Saint-Léonard underground lake. 'This very popular trip allows you to visit this geological gem before discovering another gem (this time a historic and architectural one) in the shape of the Castel d'Uvrier', explains the director of Valais's biggest winery. He recognises that whilst welcoming customers has always been important for Provins, the institutionalisation of wine tourism has been fairly recent. 'Castel, the former bachelor home of Gaspard Stockalper (a wealthy 17th-century salt merchant), is an extraordinary setting for the creative cuisine of our chef Bruno Toppazzini', Raphaël Garcia delightedly tells us. This 'Table Gourmande' (14 Gault & Millau points) will continue to play a vital role in Provins's wine tourism strategy. 'Our aim is to offer real multisensory experiences that could take place over 48 or 72 hours in the future, and not just a single day'.

www.provins.ch

A photograph of a small boat with several people inside, navigating a calm body of water within a cave. The cave walls are illuminated with vibrant, colorful lights in shades of blue, green, and yellow, creating a magical atmosphere. The water reflects the lights and the boat. The overall scene is dark, with the primary light sources being the artificial cave lighting.

*'Water is a key part
of our tourist services.'*

Raphaël Garcia Director of Provins

THE BIG TASTING

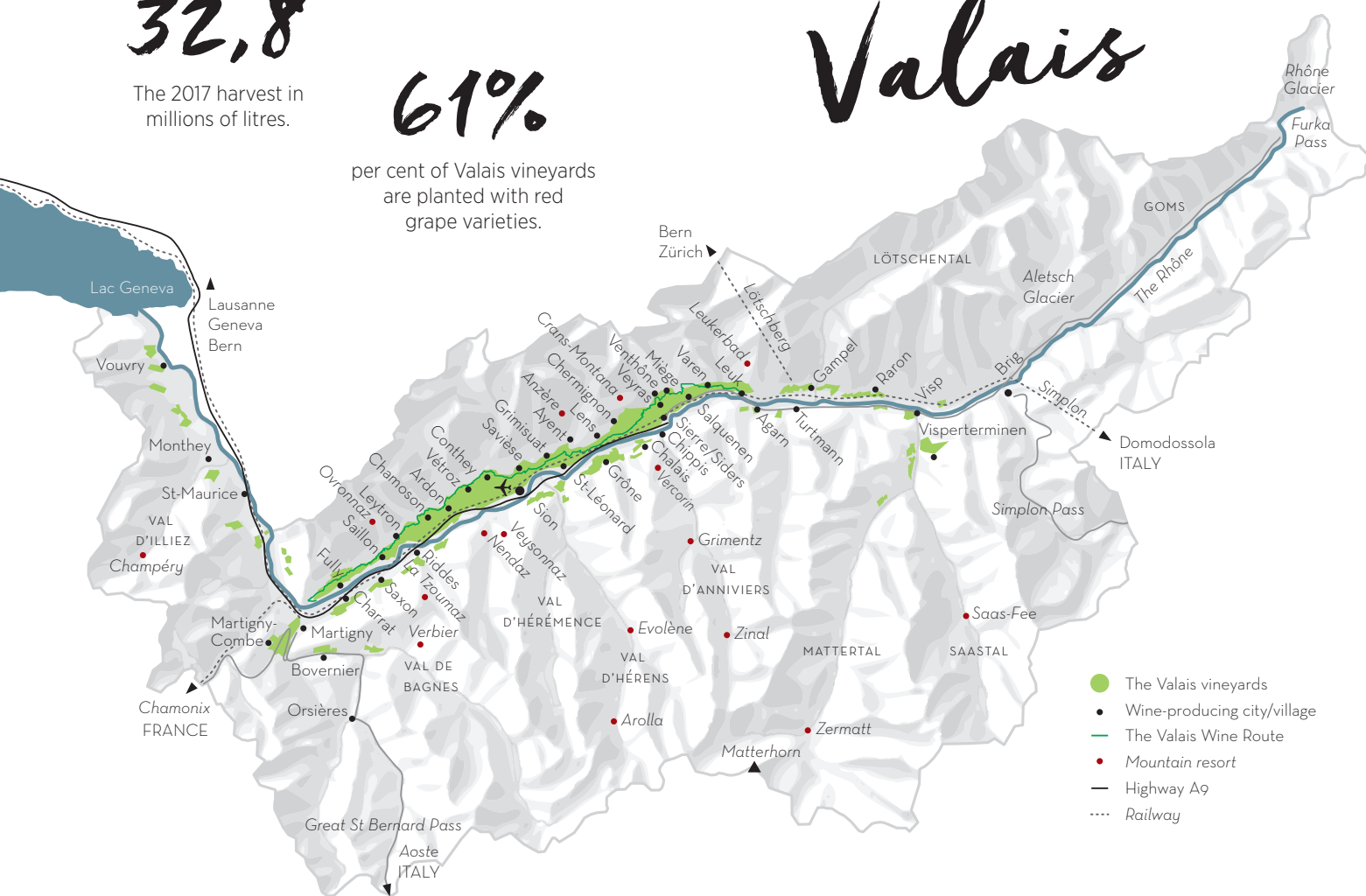
32.8

The 2017 harvest in millions of litres.

61%

per cent of Valais vineyards are planted with red grape varieties.

Valais



1957

The year when Valais (now 4842 hectares) became Switzerland's biggest wine canton with 3550 hectares.

1445

The number of hectares of Pinot Noir in 2016, making it the canton's top grape variety ahead of Chasselas/Fendant (879 hectares), Gamay (573 hectares) and Silvaner/Johannisberg (258 hectares).

1313

The year the 'Anniviers Register' references a payment in kind of Humagne, Rèze and Neyrun grapes, a term that remains mysterious to this day

Sometimes described as 'upper Côtes-du-Rhône', the Valais vineyards assimilated so-called Rhone grape varieties relatively late. Introduced in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries respectively, Marsanne Blanche and Syrah nevertheless create some of the canton's finest wines provided that they are given time to reveal their full potential. Our tasting offers a representative panorama of these typical wines, which do not always enjoy the fame they deserve but still delight epicureans who know to leave them until they have reached their peak.



With 170 hectares recorded in 2017, Syrah comes fourth (behind Pinot Noir, Gamay and Cornalin) on the list of the most widely planted red grapes in Valais. The area it covers has quadrupled in twenty years, allowing this iconic Côte-Rotie and Hermitage variety to become one of the Valais specialities most popular with foreign connoisseurs. It was introduced to the canton in 1921 by Dr Henry Wuilloud, one of the key figures in Swiss wine history. The research undertaken by another doctor, José Vouillamoz, suggests that the first plants came from the Jaboulet-Vercherre estate in Tain, whilst a second series of plants were supplied by Vaud nurseryman Albert Paschoud. In the Valais state vineyards, this grape variety (the result of a natural cross between Dureza from the

Ardèche and Mondeuse Blanche from Savoy) gradually spread across the canton under the name Hermitage Rouge, which it quickly had to give up as a result of French pressure. Marsanne Blanche on the other hand was able to retain the name Ermitage (occasionally written as Hermitage). This variety is thought to have crossed the Saint Maurice gap in the mid-19th century in the luggage of Colonel Dénériaz of Sion, who purportedly planted a vine in the vineyards of Clavoz. Covering 45 hectares, Marsanne Blanche has also increased the area it occupies, but is nowhere near as popular given the 33 hectares grown in 1997. It should be noted that Valais Ermitage can be made from Marsanne Blanche, Roussanne or a blend of the two. The latter was introduced in 1975 by cantonal

oenologist Jean Nicollier, who brought some young plants from Savoy. Made as a dry, sweet or late-harvest wine, Marsanne enjoys a rather ambiguous status. Many specialists view Ermitage as Valais's finest wine. However, this variety has had problems winning over the public, and has proven one of the hardest specialities for producers to sell. The wines in this tasting, for which wineries could present a Syrah or Ermitage available for public sale, are classified by geographic origin (west to east). They form a particularly flavoursome and relatively comprehensive panorama of Rhone grape varieties and how exceptionally well they have acclimatised to the upper Côtes-du-Rhône.

ERMITAGE

Martigny

Hermitage Molignon 2017 Marius Pitteloud et Fils

Presented as off-dry, this Marsanne made in traditional style is characterised by a pale yet bright colour, an expressive white peach raspberry and greengage nose, suppleness and fruitiness in the attack, fullness on the palate with perfectly integrated sweetness, a voluminous finish given character by a touch of bitterness, and exceptional value for money.

www.vinvalais.com

Fully

Marsanne de Fully élevé en fût de chêne 2016 Cave du Chavalard

A beautiful golden colour gleaming with bright hints of green. The expressive nose offers up vanilla, turmeric and mirabelle plum aromas. On the palate, a ripe structure and rich texture are framed by precise maturation notes. All of this builds on controlled liveliness, providing tension and length to this precise Marsanne that is only at the very beginning of its development.

www.caveduchavalard.ch

Blanc d'Y 2016 Cave La Rodeline

Presented as a blend of Rhone varieties, this dry white is made for laying down. Maturation notes currently dominate the moderately expressive nose of this sophisticated speciality. Voluminous, generous, complex, deep: on the palate the wine is borne up by controlled liveliness, giving a lingering, straight-lined style to the remarkably pure finish. Put this speciality down in the cellar for three or four years and you will open up a wine of exceptional complexity.

www.rodeline.ch



Saillon

Marsanne Blanche Domaine de Clavoz 2014 Cave Renaissance

Sold after four years in bottle, this superb speciality has a magnificent gold colour. The exuberant nose combines acacia honey, yellow plum, vanilla and summer truffle aromas that make you think of a late-harvest wine. On the palate, this opulent wine (without any perceptible sweetness) impresses with its volume, its aromatic complexity, its structure and its length, whilst still retaining a freshness right into the delicately spiced finish, giving vigour and potential to this giant of the Alps.

www.renaissance.ch

Marsanne Blanche 2017 Didier Joris

The slightly hazy yellow colour heralds an unfiltered or barely filtered wine, characterised by a moderately expressive vine peach, melon and mirabelle plum nose, powerful in the attack then ample and well-structured on the palate, supporting a perfectly controlled bitter note. This grants remarkable volume and huge length to this white, which needs a little time to reveal its full potential.

www.didierjoris.ch



Leytron

Marsanne Les Fourches 2015 Cave Le Bosset

This sunny vintage produced a powerful and generous Ermitage that charms with its bright appearance flecked with hints of green, but also with its expressive nose reminiscent of acacia honey, greengage, sunflower and raspberry. Its voluminous style on the palate is framed by a liveliness in the attack and a complex, well-balanced, remarkably lingering finish of ripe fruit and soft spice notes with a controlled touch of bitterness. A beautiful wine that is beginning to reveal the full potential of a great Valais Marsanne.

www.lebosset.ch

Ermitage de Leytron 2016 David Rossier

This Ermitage, bright yet also very light in colour, surprises with its exuberant nose. Behind the intense raspberry aromas are truffle notes that are beginning to shine through. On the palate, its typical style is built on a taut, straight structure that produces a superbly lingering finish gleaming with delicate mineral notes.

www.david-rossier-vins.ch

Chamoson

Marsanne Blanche 2016 Cave Bertrand Gaillard

Clad in beautiful gold, this generous Marsanne charms with its expressive raspberry, vine peach and mirabelle plum nose, its suppleness in the attack, and its opulence on the palate that nevertheless retains freshness right into the opulent finish made tonic with a touch of bitterness. This beautiful oak-matured speciality stands out with the delicately saline notes that sparkle insistently right at the very end.

www.bertrandgaillard.ch

Marsanne de Chamoson Les Cigalines 2016 Cave La Siseranche

This sweet Ermitage is golden in colour with an expressive nose reminiscent of quince jelly, roasted pineapple and calisson candy. On the palate, these patisserie and crystallised fruit aromas build on controlled, well-balanced sweetness. Ample and voluminous, this very opulent wine nevertheless retains freshness right into the finish, which is as voluminous as it is lingering.

www.siseranche.ch

Marsanne 2016 Cave Le Banneret

This generous, full barrel-aged white is a bright, delicate gold colour with an expressive yellow fruit and raspberry nose, and a full and gourmet style on the palate combining the aromas from the nose with patisserie notes such as lemon meringue tart. The full, lingering finish offers a stylish end to this speciality, which has remarkable ageing potential.

www.banneret.ch

Marsanne Blanche 2014 Sélection Excelsus

After four years of maturation, this Ermitage from Jean-Claude Favre still has all the enthusiasm of youth. Matt gold in colour, this barrel-aged speciality is defined by its power, balance and lingering style. In terms of aromas we enjoyed its raspberry, melon and fresh mushroom notes as well as the delicate spice from the barrel, giving complexity to the expressive nose and hugely lingering finish.

www.selectionexcelsus.ch

Fully

Marsanne de Fully 2016 Cave de l'Orlaya

Clad in beautiful gold, this Marsanne charms with its expressive, essentially floral nose. On the palate, its very fresh aromas are paired with fruity notes and delicate mineral touches in the finish. In terms of texture we like its fullness in the attack, richness on the palate, and opulent lingering finish.

www.orldaya.ch

Vetroz

Marsanne Blanche 2017 Cave du Vieux-Moulin

Made by a talented self-taught winemaker, this Marsanne Blanche – offering excellent value for money – is a bright gold colour with an expressive nose reminiscent of raspberry and dried fruit, then full and generous on the palate with gourmet notes. This still timid, very youthful Marsanne offers a depth and complexity that will be revealed by a few seasons or years of ageing.

www.papilloud.ch

Sion

Ermitage 2015 Dubuis & Rudaz Vins

This powerful, full-bodied Marsanne Blanche from Sion offers all the markers of this Valais speciality. The sun makes an appearance in its golden colour and mirabelle plum aromas, with dry stone gleaming in the mineral finish of this opulent yet never sycophantic speciality. Precisely made, the raw materials have produced a beautiful, characterful wine with the potential to age for well beyond a decade.

www.dubuis-rudaz.ch



Vieilles Vignes 2016 Provins Valais SA

This blend of Marsanne Blanche and Roussanne, matured in oak barrels, stands out with its poise, balance and remarkable depth. Offering a rather light and bright colour and a slightly closed nose of soft spice and yellow fruit aromas, this speciality from the 'Maître de Chais' range surprises with its complex, elegant, structured, very sophisticated style on the palate. This wine is still very young and needs a few seasons to express itself to the full.

www.provins.ch

Ermitage 2015 La Torrenière

The result of a plot selection of Marsanne and Roussanne old vines with limited production capacity, this wine made by Hammel is one of the most beautiful Ermitages in Valais. Its power, generosity, volume and density are highlighted by perfectly controlled liveliness, giving a rare elegance to this wine with ageing potential that can be calculated in decades. We received the 2013 vintage for this tasting, which is even more sophisticated and harmonious than the nevertheless remarkable 2015.

www.hammel.ch



Sierre

Ermitage Grand Cru de Sierre 2016 Jean-Marie Pont

There is power, sophistication, depth, elegance and remarkable potential in this Grand Cru, matured in barrels for twelve months. We were won over by the charms of its golden colour, and its expressive nose of raspberry and vanilla notes that are already allowing through subtle wafts of summer truffle. On the palate we like the wine's wonderful balance between power and elegance, and the freshness of its finish. This fine, still very young wine will offer exceptional moments over the next decade.

www.jmpont.ch

Corin-sur-Sierre

Subtile 2017 Cave Le Tambourin

This distinctive and powerful Marsanne is a wonderful golden colour and has an expressive nose offering up distilled raspberry aromas, together with ripe yellow fruit and even citrus notes. The clean attack introduces a powerful, generous and voluminous wine with a lingering finish. The presence of a controlled touch of bitterness makes this an utterly characterful speciality that will improve even further with time.

www.letambourin.ch

Miège

Marsanne Blanche Vieille Vigne des Clives 2017 Cave Caloz

Imbued with elegance and finesse, this speciality boasts a beautifully bright, relatively light colour, a generous yellow fruit nose punctuated with raspberry, white tea and eucalyptus aromas, then a structured style on the palate framed by an opulent attack and a finish pairing freshness with length.

www.cavecaloz.ch

Salgesch

Ermitage 2017 Albert Mathier & Fils

This definitively elegant Marsanne is a relatively light straw yellow colour, with a moderately expressive fresh raspberry and greengage nose, clean attack, full and structured style on the palate and generous finish. This sophisticated but still rather reserved wine is worth leaving for a two or three seasons before being paired with a chicken and mushroom dish.

www.mathier.ch

Ermitage Grandmaitre Barrique 2017 Caveau de Salquenen

Opulence fans will love this extremely expressive, very rich and rounded Ermitage with its gleaming golden colour, exuberant soft spice and very ripe yellow fruit nose, powerful attack heralding a velvety richness on the palate, and lingering finish rendered tonic by a bitter touch.

www.gregor-kuonen.ch

SWEET ERMITAGE

Harvested a few months later than other grape varieties, late-harvest grapes have been transformed by the sun, wind, cold and (where conditions permit) botrytis, a fungus that alters some aromatic components in the grapes.

Ardon

Ermitage doux 2016

Cave Les Chais du Haut de Cry,

A gold appearance with light, matte highlights. The expressive nose combines raspberry brandy, quince, roasted pineapple, soft spice and mushroom notes. On the palate, its opulent texture shares the aromas of the nose. Beginning with a gourmet, ample attack, this speciality ends with a voluminous finish revealing the beginnings of truffle.

yannick.fournier@netplus.ch

Leytron

Ermitage Grains Nobles 2013

Domaine de l'Etat du Valais

A member of the Grain Noble ConfidenCiel charter, this sweet wine won us over with its bright gold colour and its expressive nose of jammy citrus, roasted pineapple and soft spice aromas. On the palate it combines acacia honey, mirabelle plum and crystallised plum notes with a touch of curry. All of this is supported by present but not dominant sweetness. In the finish, the beginnings of mushroom notes show that this late-harvest wine will soon move into a greater stage of development.

eddy.dorsaz@admin.vs.ch

Chamoson

Légende d'Automne 2014

Cave La Pleine Lune

Awarded a gold medal at the Grand Prix du Vin Suisse 2018, this Marsanne Blanche Flétrée is made from late-harvest grapes picked in December. A beautiful golden colour, this sweet wine has an exuberant nose of crystallised yellow fruit, citrus and pineapple aromas with soft spice touches such as vanilla. On the palate, the still-present oak notes frame a gleaming style building on controlled vivacity. The wine is already very charming and will offer lots of complexity in five to eight years.

www.lapleinelune-vins.ch



Vetroz

Caprice 2015 Cave Chantevigne

This barrel-aged late-harvest Ermitage is a beautiful golden colour. We also like the exuberant nose on this sweet wine, offering up crystallised citrus, raspberry, honey and truffle aromas. Its voluminous style on the palate conceals significant but controlled sweetness, ending with an opulent, beautifully lingering finish. Pair with blue cheese or a chocolate dessert.

www.chantevigne.ch

Sion

Soleil de minuit 2016 Maison Gilliard

Included in Hansueli Pfenninger's 'Tonneliers' range, this barrel-aged late-harvest Ermitage charms with its golden colour and its expressive nose combining jammy white and citrus fruit with honey aromas. On the palate we love its velvety smoothness, suppleness, and extremely generous, well-balanced soft texture. This particularly precisely made sweet wine boasts a magnificently fruity finish.

www.gilliard.ch

Sierre

Polymnie 2015 Domaine des Muses

This wonderfully pure Grain Noble ConfidenCiel is a deep orange yellow colour and boasts an expressive jammy fruit nose enhanced with a touch of turmeric and saffron, an opulent attack, a fullness and exceptionally well-balanced style on the palate, and a remarkably complex finish. In a few seasons' time, the current aromas of youth will give way to truffle, saffron and single malt notes supported by a magnificently well-balanced style on the palate, the signature of Robert Tamarcaz's sweet wines.

www.domainedesmuses.ch

SYRAH

Martigny

Syrah Les Serpentes 2016

Gérald Besse

A dark appearance with hints of purple and a powerful nose of spice and black fruit aromas herald a robust, sturdy, uncompromising wine. This impression is confirmed in powerful form on the palate, punctuated with beautifully intense pepper and spice notes, framed by a clean attack and a hugely lingering finish. Perfectly-balanced silky texture.

www.besse.ch

Fully

Syrah de Fully Quintessence 2016

Benoît Dorsaz

Deep, dense, well-balanced, juicy and complex, the Syrah Quintessence from Benoît Dorsaz is one of the great Valais reds. It offers remarkable aromatic complexity with a succession of raspberry, cherry, rosemary, sage, oregano, white pepper and violet aromas. The already well-integrated maturation notes come through in the slender finish of this juicy gourmet wine, which can be enjoyed now or over the next five years.

www.benoit-dorsaz.ch

Syrah 2016

Cave du Bonheur

Gourmet, velvety and fresh, this characteristic Syrah charms with its dense colour with hints of purple, its expressive nose with black olive, cherry and aromatic herb aromas, its clean attack, its expressiveness on the palate borne up by controlled vivacity, its fine tannins, and its lingering flavoursome finish. A typical wine best enjoyed with a curry or characterful fresh pasta.

www.cavedubonheur.ch

Syrah de Fully 2016

Olivier Pittet

This Syrah from Olivier Pittet displays a certain austerity and restraint, but also remarkable potential. This masterfully made wine, remarkably well balanced given its power, is characterised by a violet appearance, delicate grape nose, and subtly spiced finish. However, the fine tannins and velvety smoothness on the palate conceal a remarkable power and unfailingly pure fruitiness that will not come to the fore for another few years.

www.grossearvine.ch



Saillon

Syrah Saillon Grand Cru 2015

Pierre-Antoine Crettenand

A deep colour tinged with hints of purple, a nose combining red fruit, black grape and pepper aromas, a powerful attack, a well-structured style on the palate revealing some black olive notes, and a straight-lined finish: the features of this tannic, concentrated Syrah which is only just beginning its development.

www.crettenand-vins.ch



Leytron

Syrah 2017 Cave Defayes & Crettenand

More sophisticated than powerful, full-bodied than opulent, this Syrah impresses with its firm, straight tannins, its straight-lined style on the palate ending with a delicately spicy finish, and its slightly reserved nose harmoniously combining floral, fruity and spicy notes. Masterfully made, this wine borne up by controlled acidity nevertheless offers an elegantly silky texture that serves as a velvet glove around the robust structure.

www.defayes.com

Syrah 2015 Gilbert Devayes

As dark and sophisticated as the bottle holding it, this Syrah from a generous vintage charms with its expressive, generous aromas, offering up ripe black fruit along with some cardamom, violet and olive notes. On the palate we were won over by its velvety attack then by its character on the palate and in the (impressively fresh) finish, where blackberry and cherry notes are replaced by cardamom and Tasmanian pepper.

www.gilbertdevayes.ch

Riddes

Syrah La Barrique 2016 Les Fils Maye

Clad in garnet with a hint of purple, this oak-aged Syrah is characterised by an expressive nose pairing floral notes with soft spice aromas. On the palate the fruity attack introduces a structured wine, framed by still perceptible tannins and ending with a fresh finish that reveals touches of pepper, turmeric and nutmeg.

www.maye.ch

Valais cultivates 170 of the around 150,000 hectares of Syrah planted across the world. France and Australia (where it is often called Shiraz) are its two favourite countries.



Chamoson

Syrah 2017 Cave Ardévaz

Powerful, sophisticated and distinctive, this excellent-value Syrah has a very deep purple colour, a powerful fruit and spice nose with hints of leather and iris, and is clean in the attack and full and structured on the palate, where it reveals blueberry and blackcurrant aromas, ending with a lingering, stylish finish. This hugely characterful red will gain greater harmony as the seasons pass.

www.maye.ch

Syrah Réserve des Administrateurs 2017 Cave Saint-Pierre

This wine's deep colour heralds a powerful but still slightly austere Syrah. This impression is confirmed on the moderately expressive nose, combining black fruit, leather and black olive aromas. It is well-structured on the palate with firm tannins and a delicately spicy finish with lovely texture. This rather closed wine needs a little time or vigorous decanting to reveal its full potential.

www.saintpierre.ch

Syrah Modus Vivendi 2012 Cave Le Vidomne

This exceptional Syrah at its peak offers up a complex nose with Mediterranean touches: savory, black fruit, sage, jasmine, orange peel and white pepper. This wide range of aromas returns in superbly balanced form on the palate, building on a peppery framework supporting a texture as elegant as it is smooth. The finish is quite simply remarkable. An exciting wine being sold at the height of its glory.

www.levidomne.ch



Syrah 2016

Daniel Magliocco & Fils

In its purple setting, this delicious Syrah charms with a delicate nose pairing spice aromas such as white pepper and cardamom with cherry and ripe plum notes. On the palate, a touch of eucalyptus provides freshness to the gourmet flavours lining this well-balanced wine, framed by hugely refined tannins. The fresh and complex finish deserves special mention.

www.maglioccovins.ch

Ardon

Syrah 2015

Rives du Bisce

Deep in colour with a concentrated, powerful nose of ripe fruit and soft spice, well-structured, generous and voluminous on the palate, and a gleaming finish with spicy touches: every characteristic of the very sunny 2015 vintage can be found in this skilfully made speciality. This flamboyant but still rather restrained red should be left in the cellar for a few years so that it can be enjoyed at its best.

www.rivesdubisse.ch

Syrah La Guérîte 2017

Maurice Gay

This gourmet, powerful wine is purple in colour with an expressive nose tinged with black fruit ranging from blackberry to cherry with some blueberry and blackcurrant, then clean in the attack and powerful on the palate where fruity notes gradually give way to the grape varieties' characteristic spicy touches. These realise their full potential in the finish of this wine, offering excellent value for money and likely to improve over time.

www.mauricegay.ch

Syrah 2017

Simon Maye & Fils

Sophisticated, distinctive and taut, this Syrah grown in very gravelly limestone soils needs a little time before all its mysteries will be revealed. For now, its dark colour, delicately spicy nose, good structure on the palate, fine tannins, a remarkably smooth texture, balance, and chiselled finish offer the promise of wonderful moments enjoyed in good company.

www.simonmaye.ch

Vetroz

Syrah 2016 Cave Arte Vinum

This incredibly velvety Syrah by Ferdinand Bétrisey offers a delicate gourmet style putting it almost in a category of its own. Add a garnet appearance tinged with hints of purple, a delicate violet, white pepper and ripe cherry nose, and a more slender than opulent style on the palate beginning with an elegant attack and ending with a finish as straight-lined as it is delicately spiced. A beautiful Syrah best enjoyed this winter or within the next five years.

www.cave-artevinum.ch

Syrah du Valais 2016 Cave La Madeleine

The oak and spice notes of careful maturation in barrels still punctuate the expressive nose and generous palate of this hugely poised, amaranth-coloured Syrah. However, its aromas give way to the fruity and spicy notes of a sophisticated speciality that won us over with its well-balanced structure and its gourmet style on the palate. A special mention goes to its expressive finish. Already elegant, this red wine will improve further as the years pass.

www.fontannaz.ch

Syrah Tête de Cuvée 2016 Cave Hubert Germanier

This wax-sealed speciality for laying down currently offers a refined profile. It is rather light in colour with hints of purple. The expressive nose offers up beautiful floral notes. Violet dominates, but wisteria and a touch of tea also make an appearance. On the palate, elegance and finesse give energy to this nevertheless well-structured, unusually elegant wine.

www.cave-hubert-germanier.ch

Cayas Réserve 2015 Domaine Jean-René Germanier

In this sunny vintage, the most famous of Switzerland's Syrahs offers a purple colour and a warm and expressive nose of soft spice and ripe forest fruit aromas, then is powerful in the attack and well-structured and gourmet on the palate thanks to the still-perceptible tannins and a finish punctuated with spice but also displaying developmental notes such as coffee or chocolate. Powerful and concentrated, this Syrah needs to be left for a few years to allow it to reach its full potential.

www.jrgermanier.ch

Syrah élevée en fût de chêne 2015 Les Celliers de Vétroz

An intense garnet colour, an expressive blueberry and black cherry nose, and a powerful and generous style on the palate come together to make this majestic limited-run wine. Maturation notes, discreet on the nose but more present on the finish, structure a gourmet, ripe wine that should reach its peak in a two or three winters' time. A special mention goes to the sophisticated finish, which remains beautifully fresh despite its opulence.

www.celliersdevetroz.ch





Sion

Syrah 2017 Bonvin 1858

This generous, gourmet wine, boasting hints of purple, offers all the features of a Valais Syrah. The expressive nose combines spices with ripe fruit. Cherry, blackberry, blueberry, white pepper and turmeric appear in well-rounded form on the palate, framed by a fresh attack and spicy finish. A delight with a chamois stew or a saddle of local venison!

www.bonvin1858.ch

Syrah Fin Bec 2016 Cave Fin Bec

Dense, almost opaque appearance with hints of purple. The expressive nose combines fruity, spicy and floral aromas. A clean attack and a spicy finish frame a structured style on the palate, characterised by firm tannins and a gourmet texture. This typical, well-balanced Syrah can be enjoyed now, or will pair well with tasty barbecued meat in a few years' time.

www.finbec.ch

Syrah 2016 Cave Les Ruinettes

Meticulous work and precise winemaking from Serge Roh have produced a sophisticated, flavoursome Syrah with a very distinct character. Beautifully intense colour with hints of purple. Expressive violet, blackberry, cherry, white pepper and turmeric nose. Velvety on the attack then supple and delicately spicy in the finish, framing a well-structured style with a gourmet texture, building on perfectly controlled vivacity. This very elegant speciality is already enjoyable today, but could keep for five to eight years.

www.sergeroh.ch

Syrah R 2016 Régence Balavaud

This speciality from the 2016 Swiss Winery of the Year is a deep purple colour and has an expressive nose combining fruity, spicy and oak aromas, then is supple and fruity in the attack and well-structured on the palate with a gourmet texture and a generous finish gleaming with spicy touches. Already beautifully open, this personable Syrah will go wonderfully with rib of beef or homemade pasta.

www.regence.ch



Syrah 2016 Chai du Baron

This well-balanced, harmonious Syrah is a beautiful garnet colour. It impresses with its complexity on the nose, boasting floral notes such as violet, fruit such as cherry and blackberry, and spices like white pepper and cardamom. More elegant than powerful on the palate, it charms with its lingering, straight-lined, gourmet style and its fresh finish.

www.chaidubaron.ch

Syrah Réserve 2016 Domaine de Châteauneuf

Magnificently silky and generous in a vintage as complicated as 2016, this Syrah made by the state of Valais won us over with its deep purple

colour, its warm turmeric, cardamom, cherry, pepper and plum nose, and its richness and gourmet texture on the palate. A special mention goes to its gleaming, spicy, perfectly balanced finish.

eddy.dorsaz@admin.vs.ch

Madame De 2017 Domaine du Mont d'Or

The nose of this purple-coloured speciality is reminiscent of scrubland in summer. Rosemary, thyme and sage aromas are paired with blueberry and cranberry notes. On the palate, its flavours stand on a supple, gourmet structure. Spicy notes in the finish add character to this generous Syrah, which can be enjoyed now or kept for a few years.

www.montdor.ch

Syrah Grand Cru Ville de Sion 2016 Les Fils de Charles Favre

Blackcurrant and blackberry notes explode within a very expressive nose that also boasts some floral touches. This black fruit makes up an exuberant spectrum of aromas that develop in full form on the palate, structured by fine tannins. The wine is framed by a clean attack and a lingering finish with mineral notes.

www.favre-vins.ch

Syrah 2017 Varone Vins

A beautiful purple colour reveals a monumental but still rather austere Syrah. This aristocratic wine offers up a moderately expressive black fruit, pepper and iris nose. On the palate, hugely elegant



tannins frame a remarkably gourmet wine that is well balanced on the palate, ending with a complex, fruity, lingering finish. A beautiful wine that should become exceptional with time (two or three years).

www.varone.ch

L'Odalisque 2015 Thierry Constantin

Clad in its intense violet, this Syrah manages to stay elegant despite the innate power of this warm vintage. With the label stating that the wine has been slightly filtered, Thierry Constantin has created a typically characterful wine that stands out with an expressive nose combining aromatic herbs, black fruit and soft spices, a juicy attack, a silky and ample style on the palate, and a lingering velvety finish.

www.thierryconstantin.ch

Champlan

Syrah 2016 Cave des Bouquetins

Structure, power, personality, and strong Alpine origins: this Syrah is like the wild goat it displays on its label. The expressive nose pairs cherry with pepper, plus a touch of leather. On the palate, this intensely coloured wine won us over with its depth, balance, structure, fairly fine tannins, and expressive fruitiness. This speciality with a distinct character will be fantastic with flavoursome meat such as game or lamb.

www.cavedesbouquetins.ch

Syrah 2017 Cave Mabillard

Cave Mabillard

This is a beautifully typical, hugely elegant Syrah from an increasingly popular family estate. An intense purple colour, an expressive nose of cherry, violet and pepper aromas, a silky texture, sophisticated on the palate with a spicy finish: all the markers of a great Syrah. A gourmet note and a touch of character make this very lingering speciality a favourite that offers excellent value for money.

www.cavemabillard.ch

Syrah 2017 Laurent Hug

Very typical, utterly gourmet style: this purple-coloured Syrah combines ripe black fruit aromas with delicate spice and subtle floral notes. This tasty combination appears on the expressive nose and in full, silky, personable form on the palate, framed by a relatively powerful attack and a flavoursome yet generous finish dominated by pepper and cardamom.

www.hugvins.ch

Pepper and soft spice combined with black fruit are the aromatic characteristics most often associated with Syrah. However, this grape variety can also offer garrigue and black olive aromas.

Savièse

Syrah Chamaray 2016 Domaine Cornulus

Made from one of the oldest Syrah vines, this representative of the Antica line charms with its purple colour, its expressive cherry, blackberry, Madagascan pepper and cardamom nose and its powerful, concentrated, velvety style on the palate. The still rather tightly-knit tannins are a reminder that this wine for laying down will reach its full potential in three to five years.

www.cornulus.ch

Lens

Syrah Réserve 2016 Cave du Mont de Lens

Awarded a gold medal at the Grand Prix du Vin Suisse 2018, this sophisticated Syrah is wonderfully flavoursome and harmonious. Intense colour with hints of purple. The rather delicate nose pairs ripe fruit with Malabar pepper. On the palate, this harmonious wine is already very engaging and open. To accompany this generous Syrah with its gourmet texture, try a delicate meat such as veal or venison, or even large poultry such as goose or stuffed turkey.

www.mont-de-lens.ch

Flanthey

Syrah 2017 Cave Feuille Morte

The expressive nose on this sophisticated red combines floral aromas, aromatic herbs, fresh black fruit and some peppery notes. Freshness in the attack and a supple gourmet finish frame a velvety style on the palate borne up by controlled liveliness. This sophisticated, fresh, flavoursome Syrah would go fantastically with a venison steak, or even brisolée or a mushroom cassoulet.

www.feuillemorte.ch

Syrah Grande Réserve 2016 Cave La Romaine

Matured in oak barrels for two years, this Syrah is one of Valais's most glossy reds. In an ungenerous vintage like 2016, it nevertheless offers remarkable depth, balance, generosity and vinosity. Its aromas will need a few years to transform the promises of youth into proven quality. Leave this fine wine in the cellar for two or three years and you will gain a majestic red with an inimitable personality.

www.cavelaromaine.com

Sierre

Syrah Réserve 2014 Caves du Paradis

Last year, the 2013 won hands down at the Swiss Syrah tasting. The 2014 vintage, matured in oak for a year and in bottle for three, seems to be cut from the same cloth. Elegance, delicacy and finesse are still the watchwords of this rarity, characterised by the precision of its tannins and the harmony of its hugely subtle aromas. A special mention goes to the finish, boasting mineral touches that seem to linger almost indefinitely.

www.caveduparadis.ch





Syrah 2015 Cave du Verseau

Matured in barrels, this powerful and concentrated Syrah has an intense colour and an exuberant nose combining blackberry, white pepper and black olive aromas. On the palate, concentration and density are the watchwords of a vinous, silky and generous red ending with a sophisticated, very full finish. This speciality, still in its adolescence, will reveal its full potential in a few years' time.

www.cave-du-verseau.ch

Syrah Sélection Didier de Courten 2016 Domaines Rouvinez

This Grand Cru from Sierra won us over with its exceptionally delicate style and distinct character on the palate. It is not an overly intense colour, with beautiful purple touches. The expressive nose combines forest fruits with subtle spicy aromas. These notes then reappear in silky form on the palate, framed by hugely refined tannins. In the finish, more pronounced spicy notes offer a surfeit of personality to this elegant speciality.

www.rouvinez.com

Syrah Maison Rouge 2016 Maurice Zufferey

This master of elegance here reveals an aristocratic Syrah that stands out thanks to its refined structure, its perfectly balanced and straight-lined style on the palate, its delicate texture with the smoothness required to charm palates without being sycophantic, and its complex aromas balancing fresh fruit, aromatic herb, charred and meadow blossom notes.

www.mauricezufferey.ch



Corin-sur-Sierre

Syrah Sélection 2015 **Cave de la Rayettaz**

Awarded a gold medal at the Grand Prix du Vin Suisse 2018, this harmonious Syrah (which improves with a little swirling) is intensely coloured with hints of purple and boasts a warm nose of soft spice notes, then is supple in the attack before turning fruity on the palate, structured by refined tannins and controlled freshness. This sophisticated, gourmet wine ends with a well-balanced, lingering, remarkably elegant finish.

www.caveray.ch

Syrah L'enfer de la patience 2015 **Histoire d'Enfer**

Anyone who doubts that Valais is well-suited to Syrah should try this monumental red. Fresh, intense, remarkably pure fruit dominate the expressive aromas on both the nose and the palate. Mineral notes sparkle in a remarkably full finish punctuated with some spicy touches. The gourmet, silky texture rounds out the picture of a hugely classy red.

www.histoiredenfer.ch

Venthône

Syrah de Lormey 2016 **Cave de la Pierre**

Sophisticated and spicy, this characterful Syrah is purplish in colour with an expressive nose revealing blackcurrant, blueberry, cranberry and meadow blossom aromas, then straight-lined and lingering on the palate, dominated by floral notes. Borne up by controlled vivacity, this red with its elegantly spicy finish will delight for another few years.

www.cavedelapierre.ch



Salquenen

Syrah Diego Mathier 2016 Cave Nouveau Salquenen

Bearing the name of Switzerland's most decorated winemaker, this Syrah offers exceptional balance between power, elegance and finesse. It has an intense colour gleaming with hints of purple, then fruity and spice aromas sparkle on the nose, and on the palate the wine offers sensual vinosity and notes matching those from the nose but in slightly more expressive form. The delicately spicy finish deserves special mention.

www.mathier.com

Syrah 2017 Cave du Rhodan

Structured and still relatively restrained, this sophisticated Syrah offers a certain elegance. It has a pleasingly intense garnet appearance. Floral, spicy, fruity and charred notes come together on the nose. On the palate, we were seduced by its gourmet texture borne up by controlled liveliness and framed by fine tannins. In short, a lovely wine that will become stunning if you have the patience to leave it in the cellar for a few years.

www.rhodan.ch

Miège

Syrah 2017 Cave Mabillard-Fuchs

Clad in purple, this Syrah offers the elegant, taut profile that is the signature of the Mabillard-Fuchs pairing. A moderately intense purple appearance, and an expressive nose combining cherry, cardamom, violet and fresh olive. On the palate, finesse and structure combine to create a characterful, remarkably flavoursome red. This Syrah is already very enjoyable but could keep for another few years.

www.mabillard-fuchs.ch

Encre de la Terre 2016 Claudy Clavien

This high-flying Syrah is aptly named – it has an inky, almost opaque colour. Graphite notes sparkle amid the mixed fruit and spice notes found both on the elegant nose and on the well-structured, wonderfully balanced palate. Hugely straight-lined and wonderfully lingering, the finish reveals the potential of this wine that could be enjoyed now with a slice of tuna and sesame or kept for a few years for a memorable evening in good company.

www.claudy-clavien.ch



Syrah «rhône saga» 2016

Domaines Chevaliers

A sparkling ambassador for the estate's new Lux Vina range, this Syrah offers a distinct character. We enjoyed its fine yet firm tannins and its silky texture, coating the rich, well-structured wine on the palate. This speciality won us over with its fruity, expressive nose and its intense colour. Offering a rare level of indulgence in a vintage like 2016, this skilfully made wine offers remarkable ageing potential and has great promise for the future.

www.chevaliers.ch

Syrah Salquenen 2016

Glenz Josef & Töchter

The purple touches in this wine's dark colour emphasise the powerful aromas of this juicy speciality. Blackberry, blueberry and prune dominate on the nose. On the palate, black pepper, cardamom, turmeric, flint, raspberry and meadow blossom notes emerge. Together this makes an enjoyable wine that won us over with its crisp texture and the touch of opulence in its finish.

www.glenz-weine.ch

Leuk

Syrah love never dies 2015

Vin d'œuvre

Almost opaque appearance with hints of purple. The exuberant nose pairs very ripe black fruit with roasted and coffee aromas. On the palate, these exuberant notes build on an opulent, very concentrated texture. This very generous, enveloping Syrah displays phenomenal power. Still fiery, it should gain harmony with time.

www.vindoeuvre.ch

Varen

Syrah Barrique 2016

C. Varonier & Söhne

Maturation in wood gives a solid structure to this slender Syrah, which begins with a clean, fresh attack and ends with a pleasingly lingering finish. On the palate, the very supple texture offers delicate spicy notes paired with fruity touches, whilst white pepper and turmeric merge with hints of aromatic herbs.

www.varonier.ch

Rarogne

Syrah 2017

Cornelia & Andreas Bolliger / Jean-François Rey

This small estate, still largely unknown to the general public, makes a resplendent Syrah clad in a particularly elegant bottle. We were charmed by its intense colour, but also by its expressive nose combining cherry, fresh plum, raspberry, violet and cardamom notes. On the palate, this wine – particularly silky for a vintage this young – proves harmonious, flavoursome and lingering.

A discovery that was worth the detour!

ac.bolliger@bluewin.ch



Visp

En-là Syrah 2017

Weingut Romain Cipolla

Remarkably silky and dense, this upper Valais Syrah made by a young man from Fribourg charms with its velvety style on the palate, combining gourmet texture, elegant structure and a delicately spiced finish. Add a purplish colour and a beautifully refined nose moving back and forth between fruity notes and spicy touches, and you get a Syrah as delicious as it is sophisticated that deserves to be much better known.

www.weingut-cipolla.ch

Syrah 2016

Chanton Weine

An intense, bright purple colour. The rather expressive nose combines floral aromas with red fruit and a touch of leather. In the attack, ripe but not jammy red and black fruit notes are paired with liquorice touches in the finish, framing good structure on the palate with fine tannins. Add a relatively gourmet texture and you get a characterful Syrah.

www.chanton.ch

Visperterminen

Syrah Barrique 2016

St Jodern Kellerei

Coming from Switzerland's highest vineyard (reaching up to 1100 metres above sea level), this oak-aged Syrah is a deep purple colour with an expressive nose, where black olive fights with cherry and white pepper. These full-bodied aromas reappear in velvety form on the palate, framed by supple tannins that end with a spicy finish. Enjoy now with venison stew or later with a lamb fillet.

www.jodernkellerei.ch



*Valais rye bread*

RUSTIC CHIC

Historical research has shown that in the late Middle Ages, rye was the most widely grown grain on the hillsides of Valais. This grain, well-suited to the difficult climatic conditions and poor soils, was most likely domesticated in the Neolithic era. Appreciated by the Romans and the Celts alike, it prospered in both Valais and neighbouring, less rugged and better irrigated regions that focused on wheat or rice cultivation over the centuries. The first written reference to rye bread comes from a Renaissance scholar called Thomas Platter. Born in 1499, this son of an Upper Valais mountain farmer and future rector of the University of Basel wrote in his autobiography

that cheese and rye bread were the staple diet of local shepherds. Baked in the village's communal oven that was lit two or three times a year to bake the bread for the entire season, our speciality has demonstrated its ability to keep. Although it did not rot, rye bread tended to dry out, and there are numerous accounts of loaves several months old that had to be cleaved with an axe and eaten drenched in soup or wine. After the Second World War and the disappearance of communal ovens, the popularity of rye bread began to decline, although it never disappeared from the

This poor man's bread, scorned until the late 20th century, has become the flagship for traditional specialities from the Alpine arc since the turn of the millennium. Explore the secrets of this symbol of the local produce revival.

Valais menu. The 1980s marked a resurgence of interest in this poor man's bread, matching the very particular social and economic organisation of Alpine valleys. This renewal was perpetuated thanks to the involvement of passionate bakers and the support of local authorities. The campaign to obtain a controlled designation of origin, launched in 1990, was finally successful in 2002. Today, rye bread - AOP or otherwise - is a common bakery product that benefits greatly from consumer interest in traditional grains and from public distrust of gluten.

Photo: VWP

Valais AOC rye bread is well-suited to all standard bread uses, from open and closed sandwiches to cheese crostini. As well as the traditional version of this speciality, we are also presenting two recipes – one unusual, the second ancestral – using this local Alpine product.

RECIPES PAST AND PRESENT

To make Valais rye bread or AOP Walliser Roggenbrot, you have to comply with precise specifications governing every step in the production process. Grain production (the flour must be made up of at least 90% rye and no more than 10% wheat) and processing must take place within the canton. Water, salt and yeast are the only ingredients permitted to be added to the cereal flour. These grains are grown using environmentally-friendly methods and in accordance with specific quality characteristics. To get the dough to rise, you can use remnants of the last production round or a 'poolisch' made of flour, warm water and yeast. Once the dough has been kneaded, the baker has to make 300, 600 or 1200 gram loaves that are left to rest until they tear. The bread is placed in a refractory stone oven and baked for around an hour, after which it should be round in shape, grey-brown in colour, have a flat base and weigh 250 grams, 500 grams or a kilo in order to be able to display the tiny star of the AOP logo.

www.paindeseiglevalaisan.ch

Valais platter

This typical starter offers a way to try all of Valais's main specialities at once. Served on a dish or platter, this presentation of local produce will always include dried meat, dried bacon, raw ham, raclette cheese, gherkins, butter and rye bread. Various sausages and cheese may be included to complete this rainbow of flavours, although they must of course have proven Valais origins.

Virginia burger

Taken from the book 'Accords Gourmands de Suisse Romande' ('Gourmet pairings in French-speaking Switzerland'), this modern recipe is a reminder that at the beginning of the last century, many people from Valais went to North America, Brazil and Australia to seek their fortune.

Ingredients (serves 4)

1 rye bread loaf
400g beef fillet
100g peanuts, 20g honey
2 onions, 4 gherkins
1 small lettuce, 1 beef tomato
Toothpicks
Pepper, paprika, salt, olive oil

Cooking instructions

Ask the butcher to chop the beef fillet (ideally from a Hérens cow). Preheat the oven to 180 degrees.

Shape eight identically sized steaks suitable for rye bread. Season. Drizzle with olive oil and fry for five minutes (they will finish cooking in the oven). Set aside.

In the pan, brown the chopped onions, honey, and crushed peanuts for 10 to 12 minutes.

Prepare the burgers by laying out a slice of rye bread and top with a lettuce leaf, half a gherkin, a steak, a layer of the onion, honey and peanut mixture, another lettuce leaf, two slices of tomato, and a second slice of rye bread. Hold together with toothpicks if necessary. Put in the oven for around 10 minutes.

Sii

The history of this dessert, thought to be originally from the village of Savièse, has been lost in the mists of time. It is definitely a great festive way of recycling old loaves that have hardened over time. This is a modern version of the dish, taken from the website painsuisse.ch.

Ingredients (serves 4)

250g rye bread
400ml Dôle
100g raisins
100ml elderberry syrup
200ml whipped cream
20g butter
A pinch of cinnamon

Cooking instructions

Crumble and soak the (ideally slightly stale) rye bread overnight in the wine with the cinnamon and elderberry syrup.

Melt the butter in a pan and add the mixture you have marinated overnight. Serve in dessert bowls and garnish with the whipped cream and raisins.



Photo: Régis Colombo/diapo.ch

Pairings MARIE LINDER'S SELECTION

Wine specialist Marie Linder has selected ten characterful wines from Valais and wider Switzerland to go with the most rustic of the country's AOPs.

Holding a federal diploma in winemaking, Marie Linder also completed oenology studies at the Changins School of Engineering. Seeking to present wine to a wider audience in a simple, fun way, this professional is well-known all over Switzerland for her columns and articles in the free weekly magazine published by Coop, a supermarket that is also the country's largest wine retailer. Marie Linder is also involved in numerous professional training courses, and teaches the winegrowers and winemakers of the future at the Ecole d'Agriculture Valaisanne de Châteauneuf.



Valais wines

Rèze 2017 by Cave Jules Duc & Fils

Made by Jean-Alexis Duc, who took over a family winery known for the quality of its sweet wines, this typical, elegant Rèze does not contain a single gram of sugar. With an elegant, even slender profile, delicately citrusy aromas paired with a pine resin note and a beautifully lively finish, this noble speciality offers an original alternative to serve at the beginning of the meal.

Chardonnay 2014 by Cave La Petite Vertu

'Chardonnay is not one of the best-regarded grapes in Valais, but there are some gems. One of these is this Chardonnay by François Schmaltzried of Chamoson', Marie Linder explains. Displaying wonderful development, this deep, complex white wine without pretence will induce plenty of emotion if you pair our Valais bread with a very mature, even slightly 'runny' Tomme cheese.

Pinot Noir de Salquenen Pachien 2016 by Fernand Cina

Pinot Noir, the main grape variety in Switzerland and Valais, has a symbiotic relationship with the municipality of Salquenen. This plot selection made by Fabien Luisier – a 'discreet but very talented winemaker' – is superbly elegant and beautifully authentic with sophisticated fruit, without becoming ostentatious or heavy. Perfect with the cold meats on a high-quality Valais platter.

Johannisberg 2017

by Cave François & Mathieu Constantin

If you spice up your plate of bacon, ham and dried meat with autumnal fruits or some Serac cheese, you will need a vinous, rich wine to pair with it. 'Two qualities offered by this Silvaner made by a still largely unknown family winery in Ayent, which nevertheless offers a range of wines that stand out with their consistency and quality. Floral, elegant, even airy, this Johannisberg offers character and balance in equal measure.'

Malvoisie Flétrée 2016 by Cave Les Sentes

'This is a particularly successful example of late-harvest Pinot Gris – a wine that was once very prestigious but is becoming increasingly rare – on consistently precise and delicious form. Its golden colour, expressive nose of jammy yellow fruit and acacia honey, and richness on the palate with generous sweetness balanced out by lively freshness make a perfect pairing for Sii or a trio of rye bread, fresh goat's cheese and mountain honey.'

Swiss wines

Vully Belles Rives 2017 by Madeleine Ruedin

'Madeleine Ruedin makes very fine, lively, fresh and delicate Chasselas wines that go particularly well with delicate lake fish', Marie Linder explains, here envisioning our slice of rye bread being topped with trout tartare or fera carpaccio. These dishes will be enhanced by the minerality of this northern 'Fendant'.

Riesling-Sylvaner 2017 by Schmid Welti

'Müller-Thurgau or Riesling-Sylvaner, a traditional white variety from German-speaking Switzerland, produces wines that are aromatic but sometimes a little clumsy. Not so for this elegant version, characterised by its freshness and flavour. It will show off its best side if our rye bread is paired with Alpine cheese, some roasted chestnuts, and old varieties of pear.'

Noir Brut Spumante Bianco

by Vini e Distillati Angelo Delea

Clad in a dark yet elegant bottle, this Chardonnay and Pinot Noir blend 'offers very fine bubbles, delicate aromas and huge elegance. All of this gives sophistication to this Ticino sparkling wine', our interviewee explains, suggesting pairing it with smoked trout served on a slice of rye bread, either whole or as a mousse or tartare.

Chardonnay élevé en barrique 2015

by Château d'Auvergnier

'This is one of my favourites from the canton of Neuchâtel. It is a powerful, generous Chardonnay matured in Burgundian style, demonstrating the potential that this grape variety can offer in the north of the country. Skilfully created by Henry and Thierry Grosjean, this aristocratic oak-aged white has the character required to team up with a platter of very mature cheese (AOP of course) for demanding palates.'

Comte de Peney 2010

by Domaine des Balisiers

With a Hérens beef burger, Marie Linder opts for this Genevan blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. 'This is a powerful, generous, well-balanced and tannic Genevan red which if left to age for a while will develop magnificent aromas with a complexity reminiscent of fine wines from Bordeaux, the native region of the grape varieties used in the blend.'



Interview with... DELPHINE RIAN-DUBUIS

What do you do at Domaine Jean-René Germanier?

During the year I spend a lot of time working with our grape suppliers. Since we make wines that have enjoyed success on the market and have an international reputation, they are generally very proud to supply us with their grapes and appreciate the vineyard monitoring we undertake. I am also responsible for making our white wines, a task which begins when the harvests come in and ends with bottling.

At just 30 years old, you already have a considerable amount of experience.

How do you see the future of Valais wine?

Coming from a family of winemakers, I have a particular attachment to this job which is becoming increasingly difficult due to falling grape prices combined with natural challenges such as frost or hail. For a grape producer who does not bottle their own harvest, making a living has become an ongoing challenge. This is particularly true for those who work with traditional varieties such as Fendant, Pinot or Gamay, which are losing momentum despite making up the majority of Valais wines. The situation is a bit different for native varieties (which have a higher status), but it's still complicated, something that does not really encourage the young generation to continue in this profession that is so vital to Valais wine-making.

Biography

Born in 1989, Delphine Dubuis began working the vines grown by her mother at the age of fifteen, whilst also taking a correspondence course. She joined the Domaine Jean-René Germanier in September 2007, soon leaving the office to join the cellar team. From 2009 she became involved in white wine production under the direction of oenologists Gilles Besse and Richard Riand, who she subsequently married. In 2013, without ever having completed any theoretical education, she gained a cellar master CFC qualification as an auditor. This was soon followed by a federal diploma from Changins. For the past few years she has also been making the wines of Caveau Saviésan and Ozéni, a young estate whose Fendant was one of six awarded the Grand Prix du Vin Suisse 2017 and whose Cornalin achieved the same in 2018.

Young people may be hesitating to become winemakers, but are they enthusiastic consumers?

There is an interest in Valais wine, I see it among my friends as well as at the promotional events we take part in. That is why we at Jean-René Germanier are taking great care to look after our most accessible brands, such as Fendant Les Terrasses or Gally. The young people who discover wine via these classics are the ones who will return to us a few years later to order the high-end examples that we have developed considerably in recent years.

The estate's wines have earned high scores from tasters using the Parker system. What has this changed for you?

It is great recognition that motivates both company staff and the winegrowers who bring their grapes to our winery. It has also allowed us to develop our exports. However, these high scores have not affected the style of our wines. One of the company's great strengths has been its ability to get established with wines that have their own style, rather than following the changing tastes of the public or critics. A cellar master's worst nightmare is a director who says that you have to make wine in a particular way, and I have been lucky enough never to have had such an experience.

Calendar VALAIS

The winemakers of Valais invite you to come and enjoy their magnificent vineyards with your friends or family and taste the specialities they have to offer!

30 March

Pruning Festival

www.chamoson.com/fr/fete-taille

27 April

Wine Spring

www.salgesch.ch

2-5 May

**180° degrés
(formerly Prim'Vins)**

www.salonprimvert.ch

30 May - 1 June

Caves Ouvertes

www.lesvinsduvalais.ch

1 June

Court of the Senses

www.salgesch.ch

15 June

Fully en Terrasses

www.fullygrandcru.ch

26 July

**Valais day at the
Winegrowers' Festival 2019**

www.fetedesvignerons.ch

1 August

Valais Wines Cycle Race

www.lacyclosportivevalaisanne.ch

24-25 August

Amigne on the Road

www.amigne.ch

September

At the heart of the harvest

www.aucoeurdesvendanges.ch

6-7 September

Vinea

www.vinea.ch

14 September

Marche des Cépages

www.marchedescepages.ch

14 September

Temps du Cornalin

www.letempsducornalin.ch

15-16 November

Fully, Arvine en Capitale

www.fullygrandcru.ch

22-25 November

Cinquième Glorieuse

www.lesglorieuses.ch

27 November

Jännusfäscht

www.salgesch.ch

30 November

St Andrew's Day

www.chamoson.ch

Information

Interprofession des Vins du Valais

Avenue de la Gare 2 | CH-1964 Conthey

Phone +41 (0)27 345 40 80

www.lesvinsduvalais.ch | info@lesvinsduvalais.ch

Valais/Wallis Promotion

Rue Pré Fleuri 6 Case Postale 1469

CH-1951 Sion

Phone +41 (0)27 327 35 90 | www.valais.ch



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