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# Michael Broadbent

Tasting note  
no. 288

## New nuggets from the Old World

**T**his month I've tasted cult wines from Europe, which were introduced by the producers themselves at a tasting presented by Carney & Barrow's Adam Brett-Smith. The first was François Mitjavile, who has turned a 6.2 hectare (ha) Saint-Émilion grand vin vineyard into a minimum intervention, low yield, hand picked, traditionally pressed and made wine known as Le Terre-Rôteboeuf.

The 1988 (80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon) was an attractive ruby; gentle fruit, a touch of tar; fairly concentrated on the palate with high acidity. Next came an immensely impressive 1989: a lovely deep, intense colour; an unusual nose that I couldn't pin down; sweet and delicious on the palate, with a smooth texture. Certainly, a distinctively rich wine. François' vintage 2000 – something of a scoop: to be able to taste this – was predictably opaque; puppy-fat sweetness and richness on the nose with lots of spice.

The biggest surprise to me was what he and his son, Louis, are achieving in the Côtes de Bourg, the Right Bank district opposite the Médoc usually associated with decent but rather pedestrian reds. The 1995 Château Roc de Cambes, from a quartet of Médoc vignages, Merlot uppermost, has a lovely plummy colour; a distinctive, rich, slightly fudge-like nose; crisp on the palate, with a dry finish. Certainly worth keeping an eye on.

Fior de Pingus is rather rare and special, yet it is only the second wine of Dominio de Pingus, a bijou 4.5ha vineyard in the Ribera del Duero. Here, Peter Cissec works his magic with 100% Tinto Fino (the ubiquitous Tempranillo). He practises complicated and expensive winemaking, but the results are totally delicious. Cissec's Pingus 1998, 20 months in new oak, racked only once just before bottling, displayed medium depth and intensity, a lovely nose, with just a touch of tar and liquorice; tannic, very oaky. Despite my inbuilt prejudice, I was very taken by it. Even more so the cask sample of 1999: incredibly deep, black core; some sweetness, firm, high extract, very oaky. Finally, a preview of his 2000 vintage, which was decimated by hail. The surviving grapes were ultra ripe, resulting in an extraordinary wine, almost over-endowed with every component, and yet seemingly simple. How does he do it?

Well to the east of the Duero, in the hills inland from Tarragona, another passionate

young winemaker, Alvaro Palacios, struggles with an almost impossible terrain to produce three Priorat wines, his most renowned being L'Ermita, from a 6ha vineyard planted with 80% Garnacha (Grenache), 10% Cariñena and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon.

Some vines are a century old and very low yielding, the average production being only 450 cases per annum. Alvaro's 1997 L'Ermita was opaque with a velvety sheen; a very distinctive nose and taste; a touch of violets, port-like, sweetish, very tannic. The 1998, a firmer wine, had similar depth and intensity; brambly fruit, sweaty, tannic nose and palate; a rich, lovely flavour.

Priorat is a hot, arid region. In 1999 there was no rain from June to October, so one can imagine the grapes' concentration. I detected a touch of fennel and Pontefract cakes. Once again, an immensely impressive wine. Alas, in 2000 torrential rain ruined the harvest.

Lastly, Tenuta di Trinoro, from south of Siena, made from classic Bordeaux répages, this time Cabernet Franc dominating, by the delightfully eccentric Andrea Franchetti. His 1999 had a rich ruby glow; green peppery Cabernet Franc noticeable, rich and singed; very sweet on the palate with a curiously unobtrusive though high (15%) alcoholic content. Delicious flavour, with a warm, sweet yet tannic finish. The 2000, minus Merlot which had been picked but discarded, was dark as night; sweet with eagerly forthcoming aromas; powerful, packed with fruit, very tannic. A wine of gargantuan stature.

Then, almost as an afterthought, Franchetti's 1999 Cincinnato, a wine made from late-harvested Cesanese, a variety associated more with the Lazio region to the south. Not deep; a glorious, mildly exotic nose, fragrant, flavourful and delicate despite its 15% alcohol, totally enchanting. However, only 150 cases were produced, so hurry to C&B if you want to try a bottle.

Michael Broadbent is a director of Christie's

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