

## Swiss Wines: Easy To Love, Hard To Find



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*I cover the world's best hotels, restaurants and wine.*



The vineyards of the Vaud region in Switzerland lie along Lake Geneva. MAUDE RION

Before going off to Switzerland this spring, I was fortunate to attend a dinner in New York held by the Swiss Wine Commission to show off modern viticulture from a country whose wines are so rarely written about—not from a lack of interest but from a lack of Swiss wines to write about.

As I learned over dinner at Nomad in New York with several Swiss vintners, the problem is that the Swiss pretty much drink every drop of wine they make, with only about two percent exported to the rest of the world. This was particularly disappointing because the wines I tasted that evening were of such high quality and varietal caliber. With a dish of foie gras was served a Provins Valais Petite Arvine 2015 from Valais, and Château d'Auvernier Chardonnay 2017 from Neuchâtel; with a mushroom dish two vintages (2013 and 2016) of Jean-René Germanier Balavaud Cayas Réserve Syrahs from Valais; with a beef and Swiss chard Angelo Delea Carato Merlot 2015 from Ticino and Valais Mundi Sa Electus Red Blend 2015, from Valais; **with the cheese course of Sbrinz, Domaine La Colombe Petit Clos Chasselas La Côte 2017 from Vaud** and Château d'Auvernier Chasselas 2018 from Neuchâtel; finally, **a chocolate cake with Domaine La Colombe Pinot Noir 2017 from Vaud** and Vini Delea La Bruna Grappa from Ticino.

These constituted more Swiss wines than I've tasted in the last five years. So when I arrived in Switzerland, I was eager to drink nothing but Swiss wines for the next ten days, mostly spent in Vaud. The region, sub-divided into eight smaller regions, encompasses 3,818 hectares of vineyards—a quarter of all wine-growing areas in the country—with more than 3,000 parcels that produce 39.62 million bottles annually, all overseen by the Vaudois Wine Office.

Tours of this beautiful, deeply sloping wine territory that winds on the Corniche Road along Lake Lemman—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—are as popular with the locals on weekends as with Europeans and other travelers. Most of the wine-producing villages open their cellars to the public from Easter through October. My wife and I had a marvelous guide named Fabienne D'Allevés, who showed us through the small villages and

vineyards and introduced us to Luc Massy, who with his sons Benjamin and Gregory, own Luc Massy Vins in the quiet village of Epesses-Lavaux. The estate dates back to a 17th century Clos du Boux farmhouse that originally sold wine in bulk. In 1995, Luc Massy brought the winery into modern focus, “marrying tradition with a 21st century viewpoint. Our responsibility is not to preserve a fixed world, but to make it live, to evolve it, to improve it even more, and above all to share it.” It is a modest-size winery, using only natural yeasts, and producing 9,700 liters per year.



Portrait Luc Massy, Benjamin Massy, Gregory Massy. MASSY VINS, CLOS DU BOUX MASSY

If any Swiss varietal is due for an emergence in the world market it is white Chasselas (sometimes called Dorin in Vaud), of which I enjoyed many that week. Massy’s Clos de Boux Grand Cru (about \$39 in the U.S., if you can find it) has a typically refreshing acidic edge, the minerality of the terroir, with no residual sugar and 12% alcohol.

Massy’s Chemin de Fer from the Dézaley region (\$59), also made from Chasselas, is even more complex, because the vineyards get more sun and can stay longer in the vineyard before harvesting. Luc Massy said these wines have remarkable longevity. “We have bottles going back to 1968 and they are delicious,” said Luc Massy.

Crêt Bailly (\$35) from Epesses is made from Gamay, the red grape best known for its eminence in Beaujolais. In Vaud it becomes a very graceful wine, with light to medium body, good fruit and acid, at 13% alcohol. Lighter in body but quite rounded and full of minerality is Sous Les Rocs (\$36) from grapes in the region of Saint-Saphorin.

The restaurants in Switzerland proudly list many Swiss wines on their menus. At Pavillon in Zurich’s Baur au Lac Hotel, my wife and I enjoyed a splendid dinner of dishes like lemony scallops with a Fläscher Sauvignon Blanc 2015 from Graubünden; rosemary-scented rabbit with a Domain Les Hutins Pinot Noir Premier Cru Barrique 2016 from Dardagny; and veal Metternich with a Guido Brivio Merlot Platinum 2012 from Ticino.

These only hinted at the variety of superb wines made in Switzerland, and I urged my Swiss hosts—begged, actually—to release more of them into the market. They deserve not just recognition for being good Swiss wines but for also being very good wines of any kind.



Next month, from July 18 to August 11, Vevey will host its legendary [Fête des Vignerons](#), a month-long festival that dates back to the 1700s, with colorful processions, music written expressly for the event, and, in this century, art exhibitions with artists around the world showing their work (*left*). Young people play Bacchus and Ceres, wonderful puppets are carved and carried and a good amount of wine is consumed. The fact that the Fête is held only every twenty years or so makes this very special and never becomes repetitious.

The Fetes du Vignerons is a month-long festival celebrating wine, music and art in the city of Vevey, held every 20 years or so. SWISSTOURISM

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnmariani/2019/06/14/swiss-wines-easy-to-love-hard-to-find/#617271c118b6>

## **TERROIR** «LES VINS SUISSES MÉRITENT D'ÊTRE RECONNUS»

Un chroniqueur américain fait l'éloge des vins suisses. Son seul regret: ils sont compliqués à dénicher sur le marché international.

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Les vins suisses sont extrêmement peu exportés. Image: Keystone

C'est lors d'un dîner organisé à New-York par l'association Swiss Wine que le chroniqueur américain John Mariani s'est découvert une affection pour les vins suisses. Goûtant des bouteilles valaisannes, vaudoises ou encore tessinoises (de haute gamme, faut-il avouer), cet influent spécialiste se voit surpris par la qualité de vins très méconnus aux États-Unis.

Méconnus, car les bouteilles suisses ne sont de loin pas légion dans les rayons américains, puisqu'elles sont extrêmement peu exportées. «Le problème est que les Suisses boivent à peu près chaque goutte de vin qu'ils produisent, avec seulement 2% environ exportés vers le reste du monde», se voit ainsi indiquer John Mariani lors du repas, comme il l'explique dans le magazine [«Forbes»](#).

### **Chasselas**

Une visite en Suisse ce printemps, avec notamment un passage dans le Lavaux, a permis au chroniqueur de se forger définitivement un avis très positif sur notre pinard. Et d'avoir un petit coup de cœur pour un chasselas d'Épesses (VD), un cépage qui selon lui «doit faire son apparition sur le marché mondial».

«J'ai exhorté, même prié, mes hôtes suisses de mettre davantage de leurs vins sur le marché, raconte John Mariani. Ils méritent non seulement d'être reconnus comme de bons vins suisses, mais également comme de très bons vins tout court.» (Le Matin)