

*Decanting
special*

The world's best wine magazine

November 2013 £4.40

Decanter

To decant or not?

That age-old dilemma is resolved in our unique test

St-Emilion 2010

**A great year revisited:
we reveal the top performers**

Barolo 2009s tasted

**134 fantastic buys from
'an outstanding vintage'**

Value Christmas fizz

**25 sparkling wines under
£25 - some less than £10!**



*Also
this
month*

Figeac: the new team

Latour's Californian buy

Brunello 2008: top picks

Hospices de Beaune





16 Decanting guide: Bordeaux & Napa

Margaret Rand introduces the first in our three-part series on decanting, starting with a trio each of Shafer's Hillside Select Cabernet and Ch Lynch-Bages

26 Figeac: the new regime

Personnel changes at this St-Emilion estate have caused an uproar, says **Jane Anson**

34 Vintage report: 2008 Brunello, 2007 riserva

Challenging vintages both, but **Kerin O'Keefe** finds that the top producers still made some excellent wines

42 Regional profile: Panzano

It's off the radar for most, but this 'cru village' of Chianti Classico is well worth a closer look, says **Richard Baudains**

48 McLaren Vale's miracle vintage

Summer 2011 was a washout

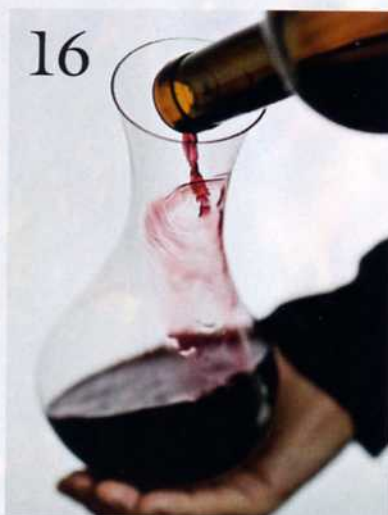
for most of Australia, but **Huon Hooke** finds some gems here

54 Producer profile: De Bortoli

Tyson Stelzer meets the family behind one of Australia's most successful wineries

60 Napa's Eisele vineyard

Christy Canterbury MW visits this famous plot on the Araujo Estate, just bought by the owners of Château Latour



BUYING GUIDE

73 Introduction

74 Spurrier's World

Decanter's consultant editor **Steven Spurrier** gives us a rundown of his travels and tastings this month



77 St-Emilion 1GCC & GCC 2010

58 wines tasted, 2 Outstanding

Fine, structured, ageworthy wines but sadly often marred by high oak, extraction and alcohols



87 Barolo 2009

140 wines tasted, 9 Outstanding

These wines bowled our judges over with their drinkability, refinement and sheer deliciousness

102 Expert's choice:

25 sparkling wines under £25

Choose wisely and you could be better off with these fizzes than many Champagnes, says **Susie Barre MW**

105 UK stockists

Where to buy this month's recommended wines

107 Weekday wines

Our team recommends 25 great-value wines on the UK shelves, for under £20

Regulars

- 2 The joy of terroir
Chimney Rock, Napa Valley
- 4 A month in wine
Should hail-struck estates be allowed to buy in bulk wine?
- 6 Letters
- 116 Notes & queries
Our experts answer your queries and share their expertise
- 127 Next month

Columnists

- 10 Andrew Jefford
- 12 Hugh Johnson
- 12 Sarah Kemp
- Good living
- 110 Restaurants
Brian St Pierre visits Grain Store and Hedone in London
- 112 Travel: Santa Barbara, California
Visit this county for a



taste of frontier spirit, says **Katie Kelly Bell**

Collectors

- 121 Collectors' news
- 123 Auction news
- 125 Investment analysis
Panos Kakaviatos on online bidding at the Hospices de Beaune
- 128 Fine Wine Price Watch
- 136 Wine legends
Egon Müller-Scharzhof TBA 1976



SUBSCRIBE to *Decanter* and pay only £41.99, plus receive the iPad/iPhone edition for an extra £4.99

For full details, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/decanter

The vineyard that Latour bought

It is testament to the success of Napa Valley's Araujo Estate - and the quality of its Eisele vineyard - that the new French owner has pledged to make very few changes. Christy Canterbury MW reports



Below: the Eisele vineyard of Araujo Estate, bought in July by François Pinault's Artemis Group, which owns Château Latour in Bordeaux, among others



THE SUN WAS edging west toward the ridge of the Mayacamas Mountains when I pulled into the drive of Araujo Estate, creating that lovely, late afternoon, rose-gold glow. The sky was bright blue, and the January air was crisp but still. Driving past the short, gnarled vines of the Eisele Vineyard, all seemed perfectly, and handsomely, in place.

I remember this idyllic mental picture as I speak to Jaime Araujo, daughter of the winery's founders, Bart and Daphne, a few days after the sale of Araujo to François Pinault's Artemis Group, owner of Château Latour. 'My parents did everything with such conviction, it just seemed normal,' she reflects on her parents' work. 'It was only when I met other people in the wine industry that I realised my parents were obsessed – in a good way. They thought about every single decision. Never did I feel that they enjoyed a "We made it!" moment.'

Paul Draper was the first winemaker to buy Eisele fruit and make it into a single-vineyard designate. It became the third in California, after his own Monte Bello and Joe Heitz's Martha's Vineyard. Draper recalls: 'Since 1962, Ridge had been making the Monte Bello Cabernet from vines planted in the Santa Cruz Mountains. I felt that, with only two or three exceptions, Napa Valley wines weren't fulfilling their potential, as producers were using new winemaking techniques that did not complement their fruit. So, rather arrogantly, when Milton Eisele called to offer me the grapes from his vineyard, I decided that we'd show our friends in Napa what could be done with a different approach.' So begins the legend of the Eisele vineyard.

However, Draper made only one vintage of Eisele before choosing to use York Creek vineyard as his

Napa source. In 1972 and 1973, Eisele's grapes went into the Mondavi Reserve, but Robert Mondavi didn't credit the vineyard. Unsatisfied, Milton Eisele looked elsewhere. In 1974, he sold the fruit to Conn Creek after Lynncrest Winery, which held the original contract, filed for bankruptcy that autumn.

Milton continued his search for a longer-term partner and in 1975, via Sacramento wine merchant Darrell Corti, he met Joseph Phelps who, according to his son Bill, was 'always a follower of the French idea' of terroir expression and a friend of the vineyard designate trailblazer Heitz.

Phelps made the Eisele wine as a vineyard designate from 1975 to 1991, when the Araujos also made their first wine. Phelps also blended Eisele fruit into his 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1985 and 1986 Insignia. In fact, the 1976 is largely Eisele fruit. It is hard to believe such a special plot was cranking out French Colombard in the 1950s.

The Eiseles, who first planted Cabernet Sauvignon in 1964, always sold their grapes. But, even if they were all but twice labelled as vineyard

'We will not be waving a magic wand and changing everything. What we must do is understand very well what they are doing, and how they are doing it'

Frédéric Engerer, Artemis Group

designates, the Araujos felt that a vineyard beginning to firmly establish its name should be made into an estate wine. It was a far-sighted decision. After all, the Araujos knew little more than how to drink wine when they bought the vineyard in 1990. Bart and Daphne needed help. Daphne explained: 'We felt that with the vineyard's reputation, we would be able to attract the talent we needed in viticulture and oenology.' Certainly, the vineyard was developing a reputation, but only four winemakers had made commercial wine from Eisele, and only one made wine for more than a single vintage as a vineyard designate.

No matter – the vineyard clearly was speaking for itself and proved it could do so over time. When Pinault and Frédéric Engerer, who oversees the Artemis Group's properties (which include, among others, Château Latour), began looking for an investment outside France, they ultimately preferred an established vineyard. Engerer had tasted several of the 1970s Eisele wines and remarked: 'Even with all the different winemakers, the results have always been excellent.' He went on to say: 'Our group has a very French culture, and we have a very personal relationship with the vineyards.' The culmination of these factors led to Pinault's purchase of the vineyard and the Araujo Estate in July 2013. ➤



Photographs: Burges Smith

Above: harvesting grapes in the Eisele vineyard, whose gravelly loam soils are one factor that make it unique



'It was only when I met other people in the wine industry that I realised my parents were obsessed – in a good way'

Jaime Araujo, whose parents Bert and Daphne (pictured above), founded Araujo Estate

So what makes the vineyard so special? As with any vineyard, an infinite number of factors create its personality. Some are natural and some are manmade. The Eisele vineyard sits tucked into an amphitheatre southeast of Calistoga. Gravelly loam is its primary soil – a product of alluvial fan deposits from the Vacas Mountains standing 730m over the vines. The vineyard team reports roots digging down more than 2m to find water at the property's northern end, where a hodge-podge of pebbles and rocks create a fairly harsh environment below the topsoil. On the southern side, the presence of clay helps the vines early in the season, though they tend to stress later. The property's two creeks keep the vines partially, naturally hydrated – quite helpful as Eisele's average rainfall from December through to April is only 90cm.

While the valley's cooler, southern vineyards benefit from morning fog and winds from the San Pablo Bay by San Francisco, warmer Calistoga benefits from afternoon winds coming through the Chalk Hill Gap. Joseph Phelps remembers Milton joking with him that the wind machines for frost protection 'turned in the wrong direction' when these cooling breezes blew. During the growing season, temperatures average about 29°C but they sometimes hit 34°C toward harvest.

Today, the 16-hectare vineyard consists of 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5.5% Cabernet Franc, 2.5% Merlot, 2.5% Petit Verdot, 10% Sauvignon Blanc, 3.5% Viognier and 12% Syrah. The Araujos strongly believe in massal selection and developed an Eisele Cabernet Sauvignon clone. The Eisele cluster is looser at the bunch tip and has 10% to 20% fewer

berries than typical Cabernet. Dense tannins – said to be some of the densest in the valley – result from the combination of this clone with the vines' slow vegetative growth due to their poor soils.

Looking forward to the winery's transition, Engerer declares: 'We will not be waving a magic wand and changing everything. What we must do is understand very well what they are doing, and how they are doing it.' He draws a comparison to two other estates that Pinault recently bought: [Château Grillet, the monopole estate and AC in the Rhône; and Domaine d'Eugénie, in Vosne-Romanée], noting that those required immediate changes. 'Araujo is different. You don't want to change something that is working well. Perhaps it's just the little touches...'

When I ask the Araujos about their hopes for the Eisele vineyard in the new team's hands, they reply: 'That the focus on the land will continue.' Though the Eiseles retired when they sold to Bart and Daphne, the latter want one more project. Jaime says: 'I remember my parents were "thinking big" [when they bought Eisele]. Of course, they had no idea what they would be able to create in 24 years.' As Daphne and Bart plan their next venture in Napa Valley, one has to wonder just how big they are thinking this time. **D**

Christy Canterbury MW is a journalist, speaker, judge and educator based in New York

Three of the best from the Eisele vineyard



Araujo Estate, Eisele Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 2011

17/20pts (90/100pts)
£67 (2010) **Hedonism Wines**
81% Sauvignon Musqué, 18% Sauvignon Blanc and 1% Viognier. This wine is packed with guava, pineapple and tangerine peel. Tarragon and verbena

add further dimension on the palate, which feels weighty without being viscous. **Drink** 2013–2016 **Alcohol** 14.3%



Araujo Estate, Eisele Vineyard Syrah 2009

19 (96)
£122 **Hedonism Wines**
The Araujos made Syrah in 1991 and 1993 with the few remaining vines from the 1978 planting. It convinced them to replant Syrah and make it a regular bottling. Viognier is added in every vintage, 4% in 2009. This has huge aromatic intensity: pine, black pepper,

iron, beef, iodine, cassis, blueberry and chocolate. The complex, dense palate is framed by sleek tannins and good acidity and the alcohol is well integrated. **Drink** 2014–2034 **Alc** 14.8%



Araujo Estate, Eisele Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2009

18 (93)
£224 **Hedonism Wines**
The winemaking trio of Nigel Kinsman, Françoise Pechon and Michel Rolland truly use Eisele vineyard's varieties as their spice rack. This is 99.2% Cabernet Sauvignon with 0.6% Petit

Verdot and 0.4% Cabernet Franc. This wine's bold nose is faintly (and appealingly) medicinal, with cassis, blackberries, bay leaf, marjoram, cocoa and asphalt as well. The bright acidity and dense, fine-grained tannins are well integrated and while the alcohol is slightly high it does not hinder the drinkability. **Drink** 2014–2034 **Alc** 14.8%

For full details of UK stockists, see p105