



## Private Cellar dozen – 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020



*A dozen wines, plus a great-value box of Provençal rosé, from a widely dispersed country wine merchant.*

Private Cellar was founded in 2005 by a group of young people who had cut their wine-buying and wine-selling teeth with some of the UK's best-known traditional wine merchants, including [Corney & Barrow](#) and [Armit](#).

The head office is just outside Ely in East Anglia but the Private Cellar team, including their very competent buyer Nicola Arcedeckne-Butler MW, is widely dispersed around southern England. The idea is that they all have their own personal clients and, having spent many years in the English countryside, I feel as though I can imagine a typical Private Cellar customer clearly. I may be wrong but I imagine that they are looking for good-value wines in the £10–£20 bracket that are blessed by personal recommendation for everyday drinking, and some of them enjoy playing at a little wine investment and/or building up or augmenting their cellars for entertaining.

Unusually for the UK wine trade, a majority of the Private Cellar shareholders and senior team are women. Two of the team are working hard to become Masters of Wine like Nicola (whose first surname is pronounced Archdeacon, by the way, and who is the rightmost woman in the picture of the senior members of the team above). They also publish rather handsome illustrated wine lists, something that is becoming increasingly uncommon, even though they have an efficient website for online orders. The image that accompanies this 2017 article [Not so Private Cellar](#) is taken from the cover of one of their lists.

The wines they picked out were very solid indeed, as you can see from my scores, and ventured beyond the usual traditional UK merchant classics – although it was the Bourgogne Blanc that seemed some of the best value to me. (For all our complaints about Burgundy pricing, the region seems to be fielding some real value in the lower ranks at the moment.) And the two St-Émilions were clearly very fastidiously chosen. The full-throated Spanish red with some age on it, 200 Cepas 2015, is also great value at its currently reduced price.

But the most intriguing wines were some of the least expensive. Last September they started selling Sagesse, a Languedoc blend of white and red overseen each year by our fellow Master of Wine Mark Savage, whose own company, [Savage Selection](#) in the Cotswolds, is arguably a direct competitor of Private Cellar's. Not only that, he shares out some of his annual allocation of the highly sought-after wines of François Mitjavile of Ch Tertre Roteboeuf with Private Cellar. Mark says he does this because he sees his role as helping Mitjavile distribute his wines. Truly an exceptional wine merchant!

Nicola explains their embrace of Sagesse (French for wisdom) thus: 'Last year Mark sent us a few bottles to try and I confess to being sceptical – we don't normally buy through other UK merchants and I was a touch nervous about the idea of a wine designed by an MW! We always taste blind or semi-blind with the team (they may see the label but they won't know the history behind the wine), and the Sagesse wines stood out as being really good at their price point; we buy ex cellar so our pricing is at around the same level as Mark's and we don't really find him a competitor.'

The other relatively inexpensive find is their Figuière rosé from Provence. It's £11.85 a bottle, or £78 for a five-litre bag in box, which works out at £11.70 a bottle – so not a dramatic saving but the packaging might be useful for picnics and so on. This is really attractive light, dry rosé – not the most distinctive wine in the world but many a sophisticated notch above [Kylie Minogue's new rosé](#) tasted at the same time.

Since we are planning a collection of tasting notes on rosés, plus another on wines in unusual packaging, I'm none too sure where my tasting note on [Figuère Rosé 2019](#) will be published, so in the meantime I will content myself with providing the link to it.

### [Dom du Bosc, Sagesse 2018 IGP Pays d'Oc](#)

*Screwcapped blend that has been made at the Besinets' domaine near Vias close to Agde by admired Cotswold wine merchant Mark Savage MW of Savage Selection for almost quarter of a century. This time a bit of Roussanne and Petit Manseng has been added to the Chardonnay base.*

Admirably subtle and well-balanced on the nose. And then nice breadth and mildly tangy (the Petit Manseng?) on the palate. The Chardonnay is actually a lot less evident than the other two fine ingredients. **VG**

12.5% Drink 2020– 2021 £9.95 Private Cellar 16 /20

### [Waipara West Sauvignon Blanc 2018 Waipara](#)

*Londoners with memories as long as mine will remember Paul Tutton, who had a restaurant in Covent Garden long before it became 'the piazza'. As long ago as 1989 his family bravely bought Waipara West, an old sheep farm close to Canterbury in the South Island, planning to grow wine in a largely untested region. They deliberately chose land further inland than most Waipara vineyards on the banks of the river in order to reduce the risk of frost. They now have 25 hectares of vines. Their Sauvignon Blanc is made from home-grown fruit, harvested from three separate blocks of vines which are planted on varied soils. Quite a nice minerally streak and some blackcurrant-leaf fruit on this. Not common or garden NZ SB, but quite chewy and robust. A real mouthful with just a touch of sweet fruit.*

13.5% Drink 2019– 2020 £14.60 Private Cellar 16 /20

### [Springfontein, Terroir Selection Chenin Blanc 2017 Walker Bay](#)

*Made by innovative winemaker Tariro Masayiti. Massively informative back label tells me this was grown on limestone ridges close to the Antarctic-influenced ocean. Picked on 9 February with an average yield of 59 hl/ha. Ambient yeast. Fermented for four weeks in 40% second-use and 60% third-use barrels and then aged for eight months in those very barriques.*

Light lime character on the nose and not a trace of obvious oak flavour, though its density suggests some barrel maturation. Lovely playful fruit with a cool breeze blowing through it. Light honey on the palate is varietally true. It would be easy to enjoy this lightly pungent wine without food. I'm surprised this 2017 is not all sold by now, considering so many 2019s are on the market.

13% Drink 2019– 2023 £16.50 Private Cellar 16.5 /20

### [Dom Jean Chartron, Eugénie Dupard Chardonnay 2017 Bourgogne](#)

*This is the cuvée that used to be labelled Clos de la Combe and still comes principally from the Clos immediately outside the Jean Chartron cellar, in Puligny-Montrachet. But it can't be called after this close because it now contains fruit from other vineyards around the village. Mme Dupard was Jean Chartron's maternal grandmother.*

Light, lemony and savoury in a Côte d'Or (as opposed to riper Mâconnais) way on the nose. Rather flirtatious on the nose – excellent proof that you don't have to spend a bomb to secure the true flavour and style of the Côte d'Or. Elegant and ready. I should imagine this is a very popular wine with Private Cellar's regular customers. Flinty finish. I'd rather drink this with food as I think its bone-dry finish might just be a bit too demanding as an aperitif. **GV**

13% Drink 2019– 2023 £19.80 Private Cellar 16 /20

### [Viñedos y Bodegas de la Marquesa, Valserrano Gran Reserva 2015 Rioja](#)

*Private Cellar must really believe in this wine to be selling such a relatively expensive white rioja! It's a blend of old-vine Viura and Malvasia made only in the best vintages designed to combine fresh fruit with oak and gentle oxidation. Fermented in new, fine-grained Allier oak casks, with lees ageing for 18.5 months, this is from a batch of 3,600 bottles, bottled in June 2017. Selected by Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW and Sarah Jane Evans MW as one of the 24 Spanish wines you should have in your cellar for Decanter magazine in 2019.*

Waxy mature white rioja – a very distinctive style. Serious! Not to everyone's taste this beeswax and very slight oiliness, I would imagine, but it would be an intriguing wine to serve with shellfish in a rich sauce. Definitely should not be chilled too severely. I am really enjoying it at cellar temperature, about 13 °C. It's very well made but a little goes quite a long way. Not cheap, but a blessed change from the simple white rioja that predominates. I suspect it will age intriguingly.

13.5% Drink 2019–2027 £36.50 Private Cellar 16.5 /20

### [Dom du Bosc, Sagesse 2018 IGP Pays d'Oc](#)

*The red version of the wine that Mark Savage MW of Savage Selection blends each year from Pierre Besinet's vineyards. This is a blend of Merlot and Cabernet Franc with 10% Petit Verdot.*

Transparent crimson. A little rough and raw on the nose but cleverly softened on the palate with a little peppery note after the sweet fruit. Not quite such a triumph of value as the white version but it certainly doesn't taste remotely industrial. Tannins a little intrusive on the finish.

13% Drink 2020–2021 £9.85 Private Cellar 15.5 / 20

### [Podere 414, Badilante Sangiovese 2018 IGT Toscana](#)

*Simone, son of local oenologist Maurizio Castelli, makes this wine in the Maremma from Sangiovese, called Morellino here. Badilante is a name in honour of those itinerant workers who broke up the soil in the Maremma after it was drained using spades called badili. Half is aged in large oak for 18 months. Playful, light, tangy Sangiovese with an extra layer of warmth and ripeness over a Chianti Classico. The finish is dry and this is definitely a wine to serve with food – prosciutto? There is, apparently, a more serious version, called Morellino, at £18.90.*

13% Drink 2020–2023 £12.95 Private Cellar 16 / 20

### [Dom Truchetet, Hugo 2017 Coteaux Bourguignons](#)

*This Prémieux-Prissey producer uses an unusual cask called a harlequin, which alternates staves of oak and more porous acacia. A blend of two-thirds from Gamay vines planted in 1960 and the rest Pinot Noir from a neighbouring vineyard planted in 1977. They are moving towards organic methods and use a horse for their 100-year-old Nuits vines.*

Transparent garnet. Lightly aromatic with marked Gamay freshness, smoothed by sweet Pinot fruit. A pretty wine that could be served as an aperitif as well as with delicate foods more commonly served with white wines.

12.5% Drink 2019–2022 £16.50 Private Cellar 16 /20

### [Pinuaga, 200 Cepas Tempranillo 2015 Vino de la Tierra de Castilla](#)

*From certified organic vineyards at 720 m near Toledo south of Madrid – a selection of Esther Pinuaga's oldest vines from a 3-ha plot of 45-year-old vines. Just 5,000 bottles made, and only in superior vintages. Aged in French and American oak barrels.*

Richly voluptuous and velvety on the nose. Heady stuff! Smooth, sweet palate entry and pleasingly smooth tannins and sufficient freshness on the finish. Not too heavy at all – quite a success. Very Spanish and very well made. Just a tiny hint of heat on the end. **GV** at the reduced price.

14.5% Drink 2019–2025 £19.95 (usual price £22.96) Private Cellar 16.5 /20

### [Mas Asturias, Massuria 2014 Bierzo](#)

*Mencia tamed by José Mas, who has worked, inter alia, at J P Moueix in Bordeaux. The 60-year-old bushvines are planted at a density of 3,500 to 4,000 plants per hectare over just 5.5 ha. Only 30% of the oak is new.*

Dark, shaded crimson. Light hint of reduction on the intense, fresh, mountain nose. Much more integrity than many of the bandwagon Bierzos. Bone-dry finish after a smooth palate and some really mineral stoniness. This was probably a little tough in youth but it's at a great stage for current drinking. It's great to be offered a truly mature wine with a beginning, middle and end. Quite persistent. A name to watch? Smart bordeaux bottle too. Nothing extraneous. My favourite red of this Private Cellar dozen. Really individual. **QGV**

13.5% Drink 2018–2023 £24.85 Private Cellar 16.5 / 20

### [Ch Magnan La Gaffelière 2015 St-Émilion](#)

*This is a little plot next to where Ch Magdelaine used to be, next to Ch Belair Monange, recently acquired by the acquisitive J P Moueix. For the moment it is bottled and sold separately although one suspects it will soon be subsumed into Belair Monange. 70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Mid crimson. Savoury but fleshy, classic right bank claret without any excess. Quite early-maturing - hardly any tannin in evidence even though this is a 2015. Relatively soft and lightweight without that much persistence but usefully ready. Order by the magnum for a big party.*

13.5% Drink 2018–2024 £22.50 (£45.85 a magnum) Private Cellar 16 / 20

### [Ch Tour Baladoz 2015 St-Émilion](#)

*Owned by the De Schepper family since 1950 and the wines have been made for 20 years by Jean-Michel Garcion who apparently likes to ensure his wines are drinkable relatively early without prejudicing their ageability. Mainly Merlot. Vines partly on the limestone plateau and partly on more clay-based soils towards St-Étienne de Lisse. Bottle is adorned with gold medals from Lyon and Vinalies.*

Deep blackish garnet shows the odd bit of evolution. Clean, sweet, fresh and vital on the nose. More concentrated than the Ch Magnan La Gaffelière 2015. Lightly inky with a little tannin in evidence as well as all that ripe fruit. Quite ambitious and long.

14% Drink 2019–2027 £28.96 Private Cellar 16.5 / 20