

Post Magazine

11.12.16

Jewels in the crown

The many facets of red princess Wan Baobao

THE LAST OF THE PARSIS P20

A SEX SCANDAL THAT ROCKED PRE-WAR HONG KONG P24





restaurants. We're self-funded in that we did crowdfunding so we have lots of minority investors. We started with very little money and couldn't afford curtains or nice cutlery, but now we have curtains and are slowly buying nicer stuff."

HOW DID YOU MEET YOUR PARTNERS? "I've been cooking for 21 years in restaurant kitchens. Five years ago I met Daniel Willis and Johnny Smith. They worked at St John, a very British restaurant, and I did pop-ups with them. They are super fun guys – very nice and kind hospitality, without being fine-dining, Michelin-trained service. They wanted to do a restaurant in their house and it was named The Clove Club. After we decided to do a restaurant together, it ended up with the same name."

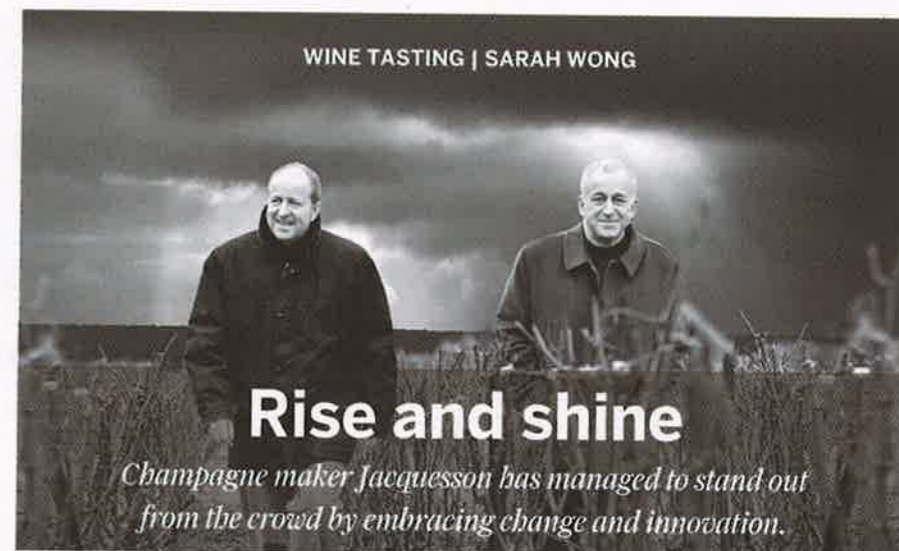
WHAT'S THE FOOD CONCEPT BEHIND THE CLOVE CLUB? "I've worked in restaurants a long time and we'd use any ingredients from anywhere. The odd thing is, [at those restaurants] in summer we'd use British berries and fruits, then in wintertime tropical coconut, lime, passion fruit and mango. These have no relation to the UK."

"Noma didn't want to use the same ingredients as everyone else. But Denmark has smoked salmon and dill, langoustine and lobster, carrots and root vegetables, butter cream instead of olive oil. They frame the ingredients and their land differently but that's nothing new. If you go to Japan, people are fiercely regional – the same with Italy. But because there wasn't a renowned local cuisine, if you cooked fine dining in Denmark, you would cook foie gras and truffles, and so on. So Rene opened people's eyes to the products in the region and cooked them in their own style."

"I didn't come back thinking I must do the same thing. I didn't want to do desserts with coconuts even though I love coconut. The UK has some of the best produce in the world. The beef is grass fed, British breeds of cattle are the best because it's free-roaming cattle that eat grass and so it has a lot of betacarotene that allows for proper dry-ageing, and controlled decay to allow more flavour to come."

"We have the most amazing shellfish, and langoustine, lobsters, razor clams, scallops, velvet crab, shrimps, crayfish, wild Scottish salmon and trout. We have good pork and lamb, too. But vegetables are a struggle. Since March we started a little farm in central London, one mile from our restaurant. We are growing tomatoes, herbs, flowers, shelling beans, white beans, asparagus, peas, spinach, radish and turnips. We're seeing what works for us there. It's an experiment to use what we can get. We still import vegetables from elsewhere."

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING? "I need some hobbies. My life has been obsessed with working in kitchens. My hobby was learning about sourdough bread and which chefs were in which kitchens. But I'd like to play more squash and badminton. I can't drive but I'd like to walk in the country, learn to pick mushrooms, learn to make pasta."



Brothers Jean-Hervé (left) and Laurent Chiquet, of the House of Jacquesson.

When it comes to choosing champagne, it's easy to pick one of the massively marketed grandes marques. However, it might pay to seek out a house that is quietly creating a great reputation. Jacquesson is often voted by wine experts as a must-buy champagne.

The House of Jacquesson was founded in 1798. Today, brothers Jean-Hervé and Laurent Chiquet are at the helm. With other brands, a non-vintage champagne usually showcases the "house style", producing a wine that is consistent in taste regardless of vintage variation. This is achieved through blending and the use of reserve wines from back vintages. Jacquesson, however, is different. In 2000, the house started the Cuvée 700 series, which is described as the "opposite of a non vintage wine". The goal is to "seek excellence rather than homogeneity, respect for the character of the vintage rather than its denial, and the preference to strive to produce a great wine rather than maintain a house style".

The "700" denotes the production number of the cuvée's record in the cellar book, with cuvée No 1 having been made in 1898. Cuvée 728 is that which is based on grapes from the 2000 vintage.

Jacquesson may change depending on vintage but it is always elegant and pure, with mineral notes and low dosage levels. Its low sugar levels make it a good food wine to be enjoyed throughout the meal.

Here are three standouts.

Jacquesson Cuvée 738 NV

A blend of 61 per cent chardonnay, 18 per cent pinot noir and 21 per cent pinot meunier. Sixty seven per cent of the wine is made from grapes from the 2010 vintage, while reserve wines from back vintages make up the rest of the blend. Aged for three to four years.

Citrus, apple, mineral, toasty notes. Well balanced with good fruit intensity,

elegant and ready to drink. HK\$457

Jacquesson Cuvée 733 Dégorgement Tardif NV

The *dégorgement tardif* (late disgorged) is made with the same method as wines from the 700 series. The champagne is aged for nine years before release. Jacquesson believes that "the wine has matured a lot but evolved very little, it has gained complexity without ageing in any other way". Think of this wine as a mature person who is still youthful on the outside and inside.

The wine is a blend mainly from 2005, with reserve wines from 2004 and 2001 vintages. A blend of 52 per cent chardonnay, 24 per cent pinot noir and 24 per cent pinot meunier. The wine was disgorged (removal of sediment) in September 2013.

Honeyed, toasty and yeasty nose. Quite tight on palate. Mellow, with rounder fruit. Still youthful, complex and elegant. HK\$750

Jacquesson Brut Avize Grand Cru Champ Caïn 2004

Champ Caïn is a *lieu-dit* ("said location", referring to a specific vineyard) with chardonnay vines planted in 1962.

The year 2004 was a classic year, with mild and rainy weather during the summer months followed by hot and sunny weather in September.

The wine has spent eight years on lees before disgorgement in 2013. Made entirely from chardonnay.

Very restrained with mineral, citrus and floral notes. Elegant, tightly woven with high acidity. More linear in style. Very young, with good cellaring potential. HK\$1,722

