

WHEN CHEVAL BLANC AND VIEUX TELEGRAPHE MEET IN THE LEVANT

COMPASS WINES



The eastern Mediterranean can pretty much take credit for the birth of the world's wine industry. Even though the debate still goes on about who was first, the ancient Greeks, Trojans, Persians, Georgians, Armenians, Ottomans, Mycenaean's etc. all make reference to wine in their legends and histories, so there is no doubt that they were making it centuries before vines were introduced to Europe. However, modern, 'western' winemaking is what we have come to expect in 'old world' wines. The Beqaa or 'Bekaa' valley of central Lebanon is not a region that most of us on this side of the pond think of as a wine region. However, the ancient Romans thought enough of it to build a temple to the wine god Bacchus at their newly acquired city of Baalbek on the eastern slopes of the valley in approximately 64BC. Now that is 'old world' wine cultivation. Fast forward a couple thousand years. In the 1990's Sami Ghosn, whose family had lived in the valley for generations, decided to revive the old family vineyards. He started with the local spirit, Arak then transitioned into wine. Needing some guidance, he brought two rock star families south from France to see the land and what he was doing. They immediately saw the potential and not only agreed to consult, but invested as well. Who were these mysterious Frenchmen? Dominique Hebrard, former owner and winemaker of Cheval Blanc in Bordeaux and Frederic and Daniel Brunier of legendary Chateauneuf du Pape producer, Vieux Telegraphe. We are talking about some serious wine studs here. Needless to say, the wines are awesome. This is their ultra-limited, top cuvee the 2010 Massaya Reserve Gold label. 50% Cabernet, 40% Syrah and 10% Mourvedre, it brings together both great French regions with the remarkable fruit of the Beqaa valley. Dark and brooding at first, it opens to notes of grilled meat, dried roses and hints of rosemary and thyme. Coffee and dark chocolate with a hint of allspice round out the finish. Stunning stuff and insanely limited. A remarkable wine from a remarkable place. Add in '90' points from Robert Parker and this becomes a wine not to miss.