

SPRING 2023 ₹300

Sommelier **INDIA**

THE WINE MAGAZINE

INDIA WINE AWARDS 2022

PLUS

FROM THE SWISS ALPS

Three luxury spirits for
the Asian market

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veteran wine consultant

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Ready to Drink

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Publisher's Note

Wine enthusiasts often remember the first wine experience that piqued their curiosity, teasing them into the mysterious world of wine. For me, it was a visit to Merryvale Vineyards in Napa back in 2003. I tasted a bold Cabernet Sauvignon, nothing particularly extraordinary by Napa standards, but the infectious energy of the owner, René Schlatter, and of course the delicious feel of the wine in my mouth, contributed to sparking what is now a lifelong interest in wine.

That introduction led me to enthusiastically supporting Reva in launching India's first magazine dedicated to the fledgling wine culture in India. I still remember The Oberoi New Delhi coffee shop table where we sat and discussed what would later turn into *Sommelier India*. At that time, there were few wine drinkers in India, very few wine producers and the global wine industry paid scant attention to anything that included the words wine and India in one sentence. How times have changed!



Shiv B. Singh, Co-publisher

Now, nearly twenty years later, with Sula's IPO symbolizing a coming of age for the Indian wine industry, we are much further along. We hope the attention on Sula serves to, not only lift the entire Indian wine industry, but also jump starts a much broader interest in wine among Indians.

Sommelier India, too, has grown over this period from a 16-page saddle-stitched bimonthly to a perfect-bound glossy magazine complemented by a much-read email newsletter, a rich and informative website, tasting panels and wine events. Esteemed writers from around the world have written for us and interest in the magazine continues to grow.

So what comes next? As with every new year, we treat this moment to recommit to our purpose of bringing you the best of wine writing to keep up with your own growing interest in the world of wine. This issue hints at some of those plans in its mix of stories.

We plan to do more to connect the dots between wine, food, travel, history and Indian wine news. We will also further invest in our digital presence bringing you regular features and wine recommendations. Yes, there's more to come and we look forward to an exciting 2023!

Happy New Year and thank you for reading *Sommelier India*, the country's premier wine magazine. It's been an exciting journey together and one that in many ways is only just beginning.

Reva K. Singh is on a short sabbatical and will be back with the next issue

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Founder **Reva K Singh**
Publisher **Shiv B Singh**

Advisory Council
Dhruv M Sawhney – New Delhi
Ravi Viswanathan – Singapore
Sanjiv S Dugal – URL, Kingston, USA

Editor in Chief **Reva K Singh**
Chief Copy Editor **Bunny Suraiya**
Tastings Co-ordinator **Gagan Sharma**

Correspondents – India
Alok Chandra, **Brinda Gill**, **Aditi Pai**, **Kaveri Ponnappa**, **Gagan Sharma**

Correspondents – Overseas
Renu Chahil-Graf – EU, **Rosemary George** – UK, **Mira Advani Honeycutt** – US, **Nimmi Malhotra** – Singapore, **Michèle Shah** – Italy, **Carol Wright** – UK

Contributing writers/columnists
Sourish Bhattacharyya, **Raymond Blake**, **V. Sanjay Kumar**, **Shoba Narayan**, **Ruma Singh**, **Jon Wyand**

Administration and Accounts
Harendra Singh

Design **Inkspot Inc**

Layout Artist **T M Jose**

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contributors

Sommelier India – The Wine Magazine is written by some of the best wine writers in the world. SI's cast of contributors includes wine experts, food and wine writers, professional journalists as well as new writers. We regard our stable of regular contributors as our most valuable resource.



Raymond Blake is one of Ireland's leading wine writers whose work has been published

in magazines and websites across the globe, including *The World of Fine Wine*. He writes principally on wine, and occasionally on food, travel, history, culture, education and classical music. He is also much in demand as a presenter at themed wine dinners, tutored tastings, both in-person and online, and other events. He is the author of three wine books, the latest of which, "Wine Talk", was published in New York in February 2022. He has recently been commissioned to write the Burgundy entries for the best-selling, Hugh Johnson's "Pocket Wine Book". He also works regularly with the London wine club, 67 Pall Mall, filming numerous items for the wine TV channel, www.67pallmall.tv



Alok Chandra is an independent Wine Consultant based in Bangalore. His company Gryphon

Brands Inc focuses on Knowledge & Research (Wine Markets & Consumers); Projects (Vineyards and Wineries, Import & Export of wines); and Marketing. An MBA from IIM Calcutta with 30 years work

experience, Alok was the founder of the Bangalore Wine Club in 2001, and has been writing on wine for *Sommelier India* and the *Business Standard Weekend* magazine since 2005. He has been a judge in several wine competitions in India and abroad.



One of the first women Masters of Wine, **Rosemary George** is highly regarded among

the UK's wine writers. She contributes to *Decanter* magazine and *decanter.com* and writes a blog, www.rosemary-george-mw.com. Altogether Rosemary has written 14 books, most recently, "The wines of Roussillon", published in April 2021, a third edition of "The Wines of Chablis and the Grand Auxerrois", published in June 2019, and "The Wines of the Languedoc", published in 2018, all by Infinite Ideas. Rosemary is also President of the Circle of Wine Writers and a Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole.



Brinda Gill has a graduate degree in Economics (Hons) from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi and a Masters from Gokhale Institute, Pune. One of her major interests is discovering the unique wealth of

India through the country's living, multifaceted heritage especially textiles and crafts. She enjoys writing on these subjects and travelling.



Mira Advani Honeycutt is the Wine Editor of *PASO Magazine* based in Paso

Robles. She is curator and writer of "Signature Wines & Wineries of Coastal California", curator of "The Winemakers of Paso Robles" and the author of "California's Central Coast, The Ultimate Winery Guide". She also writes for the Napa Valley Register. Mira has chronicled the wine world for several international publications and has also written on international cinema for "The Hollywood Reporter".



V Sanjay Kumar, an MBA in a previous life, writes fiction and has published five books with

Hachette, Bloomsbury, Juggernaut and Akashic, USA. He is a partner at Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai. Wine for him is an immersive experience and he is fascinated by the wine world, a muse he has been exploring through the glass. His column, "Nosing Around", promises to get up-close and personal.



Nimmi Malhotra is a freelance wine writer based in Singapore and the contributing

wine editor of *Epicure Asia* magazine. Nimmi's passion for wine grew in Australia, where she lived for 12 years, often visiting her uncle at his renowned vineyard, Nazaaray Estate on the Mornington Peninsula. Her work has appeared in various titles including *Peak* magazine, CNA News, and more. She holds a WSET Diploma, is a member of the Circle of Wine Writers and a wine judge with the International Wine Challenge.



Shoba Narayan is an award-winning columnist and the author of five books. Her latest

book, "Food & Faith: A Pilgrim's Journey through India" is just out from Harper Collins. She has written about wine and spirits for a number of publications including *Mint Lounge* and is a wine columnist for *Sommelier India*. She is passionate about wine, preferring floral Alsatian wines that go with her vegetarian diet. She is a member of many wine clubs and enjoys sharing her wines with friends.



Michele Shah is a wine, food and travel writer and wine critic based in Tuscany. She organises wine

tastings and seminars on Italian wine for Italy's regional wine consortia and the international press. Michele is the founder of Speedtasting® B2B events, an honorary member of

Donne del Vino in Italy, committee member of The Circle of Wine Writers, UK, Ambassador to the Old Vine Conference, and CEO of Exceptional Travel to Italy. (www.micheleshahtravel.com).



Gagan Sharma is a Certified Sommelier from the Court of Master Sommeliers, UK, and holds the

WSET Diploma from London. Gagan has a Masters degree in Hospitality Management (specialising in wines) from Victoria University, Melbourne, and works as a creator, curator, wine educator and sommelier at Indulge India. He reserves a soft corner for Barolos, Riojas, Australian reds and Sherries. When not working, he enjoys trekking in the Himalayas and chasing historic sites. Gagan is the coordinator of the *Sommelier India* Tasting Panel.



Julia Sherstyuk-Viswanathan is the founder and editor-in-chief of a Singapore-based Russian-

English lifestyle magazine, "103rd Meridian East". She enjoys writing on cultures and history and now spends most of her time in France in order to research on the wines of Jura and Burgundy. She also started and ran the first ever authentic Russian restaurant in Singapore, which was in the spotlight of world media for its acquisition of the oldest Veuve Clicquot bottles recovered from the Baltic Sea shipwreck.



Ruma Singh DipWSET is a qualified journalist, editor and writer.

Focusing on her passion for wine, she completed her WSET Diploma from London and works out of her base in Bangalore as a wine consultant and writer for several publications as well as her own dedicated website, *Between the Wines*. She is a wine judge and a columnist for *Sommelier India*. Connect with her at rumasingh.com and on social media @rumasi.wine (Instagram).



Jug Suraiya, a columnist for *The Times of India* and *The Economic Times*, is the author of several books

including two anthologies of short stories, a collection of travel writing, an autobiography, and a remembrance of Calcutta. Among other honours, in 1982 he became the first Asian to win the coveted Pacific Area Travel Association Gold Prize for travel writing. In 2020 he was awarded a Knighthood in the Order of the Star of Italy – Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Stella d'Italia – for his extensive writing on the art, cuisine and culture of la bella Italia.



Jon Wyand is a multi-award winning photographer. He has been shooting wine as his speciality for 20 years,

travelling extensively in Europe and the Americas. He has illustrated a number books as well as two of his own on Burgundy. He works with magazines in the US, UK and Europe and recently won "Pink Lady/ Errazuriz Wine Photographer of the Year" award for the third time.

Oenophile's notebook

News, views and trends for the wine enthusiast Compiled by Reva K. Singh

Vinexpo India - New Delhi

With over 250 exhibitors and more than 8000 trade visitors, Vinexpo India and India's leading agri-food show, SIAL India, concluded successfully after three busy days of packed programmes. Held from 1st to 3rd December 2022 at Delhi's Pragati Maidan, the Show was an ideal networking platform for the Food & Beverage industry.

The keynote address was delivered by Ravi Viswanathan, Chairman of Grover Zampa Vineyards followed by wine tastings and masterclasses on a range of



Crowds thronged the stands at Vinexpo India & SIAL India at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi

compelling topics which were extremely popular. Showcasing 350 high-quality food products as well as wine from 11 European Union Countries, the EU Pavilion also attracted a steady flow of

trade visitors.

Rodolphe Lameyse, Vinexpo CEO, noted, "Vinexpo India is returning to New Delhi with a greater international focus. A new trend in the geopolitics of wine marketing confirms the enhanced appeal of the Indian sub-continent."

Already one of the world's leading spirits markets,

the Indian market is tending towards premiumization in wine, with consumers eager for high-end products, especially among the young who are trading up and looking for new and different wines.

Sula – Stop Press

India's biggest wine producer Sula Vineyards is all set to list on stock exchanges after its initial public offering of almost Rs10bn (\$121mn) between December 12 to December 14.

The market debut is expected to be soon after the allotment to applicants' Demat account of equity shares offered in the IPO.

Sula is seen to be a first-of-its-kind listing in the wine market. Founder and Chief Executive Rajeev Samant is said to have felt "a little trepidation" at finally



going public 26 years after planting his first vines. But Samant need not have worried as Sula Vineyards' IPO was fully subscribed with healthy demand from across investors category.

On the last day, the IPO was oversub-

scribed by 2.33x. The portion for qualified institutional buyers was subscribed by 4.13 times, while the retail investors' were subscribed by 1.65 times and the non-institutional investors' portion subscribed by 1.51 times. Source:livemint.com

UK Craft Spirits producers visit India

Gins, rums and whiskies have seen an exponential rise in popularity in India, not just the local products but also international labels. Along with vodkas, liqueurs and non-alcoholic beverages, the British High Commission's Department of International Trade hosted a walk-around showcase last October at the Shangri-la Hotel, New Delhi. Sixteen distillers from across the UK presented their products to members of the media, F&B professionals, importers and distributors. For the first time in India, the tasting and interactions provided the exhibitors first-hand feedback as well as an insight into the palates



An Indian inspired gin of great complexity

and preferences of the Indian market.

From flavoured rums, peated Irish whiskies, rye-based Scotch, clean vodkas, organically grown gins to commendable liqueurs and low or no alcoholic beverages, the range was impressive. The timing of non-alcoholic drinks entering India is spot on, given their popularity globally as well as in India.

Garam Masala Gin (pictured, left) is an example of an Indian inspired, subtly spiced gin, with tamarind, fenugreek and bay leaf combined with traditional botanicals for a gin of great depth and complexity.

— Gagan Sharma

Grover's Signet Collection

Indian pioneer and most-awarded wine producer, Grover Zampa Vineyards recently released their signature wine collection, Signet, in Mumbai. India's first wine to be aged in *foudres*, amphorae and concrete tanks, the collection comprises five red wines with the most delicate

aromas of single vineyard, hand picked, estate bottled Shiraz. All wines are unfiltered to retain their natural mouthfeel and represent the five maturation processes used, an expression of the finest craftsmanship.

Speaking at the 2022 launch in Mumbai, Chairman Ravi Viswanathan, said, "With each launch, we at Grover Zampa aim to elevate Grover's rich wine drinking experience, which has always been known for pushing the boundaries through innovation. Gracefully made from hand-picked grapes, the Grover Signet epitomises our dedication to making wines that express their terroir."

Priced at Rs 4,000 in Maharashtra and Karnataka, the Signet range is available through Grover Zampa's cellar door and select retail outlets.

The Signet Collection of premium wines from Grover Zampa



KNOW YOUR CHEESES

There are so many cheeses that it's impossible to know them all. When substituting a cheese, think about its purpose. Will it melt evenly in a pasta sauce or spread easily on toast? If cooking, swap one with a similar texture, but if using cheese as an accent, there's much more flexibility. The following are widely available cheeses (mainly cow's milk) broken into broad categories.

Types & Examples

Fresh, unripened cheese (soft and wet)
Cottage cheese, Cream cheese, Fromage Blanc, Ricotta

Soft-ripened cheese (creamy)
Brie, Camembert, Pont l'Évêque, Taleggio

Semi-firm or semi-soft cheese
Cheddar, Colby, Edam, Fontina, Gouda, Havarti, Jarlsberg, Monterey Jack, Mozzarella, Muenster, Pepper Jack, Port-Salut, Swiss

Hard, aged cheese
Asiago, Comté, Gruyère, Manchego, Parmesan, Pecorino



En Fuego transports you to another world

Located at Atlantis, The Palm, in Dubai, En Fuego promises the ultimate dining experience, complete with immersive high-octane performances and live music paired with colourful costumes and mouth-watering culinary choices. Translating to 'on fire' in Spanish, En Fuego is a first-of-its-kind, vibrant and exciting venue that celebrates the food and culture of South America with Latin America's most loved dishes overseen by Chef de Cuisine, Daniel García. In addition to the food, you are offered a perfectly paired beverage menu created by the restaurant's Bar Manager, Sandor Sigler. Specialising in the unexpected, the multi-sensory entertainment creates surprise after surprise with fire performers,



En Fuego, Atlantis, The Palm: For the ultimate dining experience

aerial hoop artists, an energetic tango duo and gravity-defying acrobats. All in all, En Fuego recreates South American culture, captivating guests

from start to finish.

For more information and reservations, visit www.atlantis.com/dubai/dining/en-fuego or call + 971 4 426 0750.

WINE EDUCATION

YSO 2022 – bigger and better

The third edition of the Young Sommeliers' Olympiad, established in 2020, was bigger and better. YSO is a unique educational platform for young hospitality students under the age of 23. Comprising four days of masterclasses hosted online with approximately 20 hours of personalised learning, YSO provides a leg-up to students interested in pursuing a career as sommeliers and furthering their prospects in the trade. All 100 participants went through a preliminary course of quizzes, followed by rigorous testing sessions at Le Cirque, The Leela Palace, New Delhi. The competition had eight rounds through which the top six were selected for the finals, and the winners picked.



Winners with their trophies: Mayank Chhonker, Shubham Raulol & Govind Dutt Mathur

"We have seen the level of knowledge and skills among the competing students increase in the last few years and this year wasn't any different," said Sommelier Gagan Sharma, the creator of the programme. *The Olympiad returns in 2023 to discover future champions of the future.*

BORDEAUX

Did you know....

Not every bottle of Bordeaux needs to be stored for 15-20 years in a cool, damp cellar. The vast majority of Bordeaux wines are meant to be enjoyed young straight from the shop, when the unique qualities of freshness and liveliness are at their peak.

When serving Bordeaux wines to family or friends, start with young wines before old wines, and dry wines before sweet wines. Serving temperatures are important.

- Dry white, rosé, and sparkling (crémant de Bordeaux) wines are served at 7° to 11°C
- Powerful dry whites and sweet whites at 9° to 12°C
- Fresh and light reds at 13° to 15°C
- Powerful and complex reds at 15° to 17°C

Champagne & Sparkling Wine

New releases



Champagne Gosset

Champagne house Gosset has for the first time launched a vintage Gosset Celebris Blanc de Blancs, from the 2012 harvest. "Beyond simply being 'cuvées de prestige', the Gosset Celebris cuvées aim to be 'cuvées d'exception', said a Gosset spokesperson.



Chandon India Sparkling Wine

Inspired by the breathtaking sunsets at Dindori, Nashik, Chandon India has released its 'Own the Sunset' campaign as an ode to better times and a reminder to pause and be grateful for life. "Chandon India remains committed to constantly evolving with changing times, finding a reason to celebrate the now," said Ipsita Das, managing director, Moët Hennessy India.

Dom Pérignon

Dom Pérignon and Lady Gaga have released a limited-edition design for the company's Rosé Vintage 2008, an exceptional year for Champagne. The collaboration, described as 'the story of two creative forces', originated in 2021, but was revealed to the market in early 2022, retailing on Clos 19 for £330. (www.clos19.com)

Vranken Pommery
Pommery Champagne has launched a new vintage release in its latest World Collection, named Mandala. Inspired by Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the new giftbox collection includes the maison's Pommery Brut Royal, Pommery Rosé Royal, Pommery Apanage Brut, and Pommery Apanage Blanc de Blancs, all available in packaging that reflects the colourful mandalas of Tibet.



Remember the vintage

As a rule of thumb, when shopping around for a special bottle of wine to mark a milestone such as a silver anniversary or 21st birthday, look for vintages ending with a zero or a five to lay down. For example, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005 were all very good vintages for red Bordeaux. But if you want the wine to be at its best when you finally pour it, remem-



ber that only the finest wines keep well for more than a decade. Port lasts longer, with the best bottles of 1970 and 1980 (a difficult vintage for other wines) still going strong. Vintage Madeira and vintage-dated Armagnac have even longer ageing potential. Check www.winedancer.com for other personalized wine gifts to mark landmark birthdays and anniversaries.

INDIA WINE AWARDS 2022

410 WINES
TASTED

30 BEST
IN SHOW

77
GOLD

117
SILVER

Founded by Sonal Holland Wine Academy and chaired by Sonal Holland, the India Wine Awards 2022 staged its fourth edition in partnership with ProWine Mumbai. The winners were announced at the ProWine networking evening on 17th October 2022 at the Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai. India Wine Awards' five-year partnership with ProWine Mumbai will extend the audience and credibility of the competition in many ways.

The IWA 2022 had a panel of 15 judges, both Indian and expatriates resident in India. Each wine was tasted blind at least twice and rated on the basis of grape, price and vintage. Medals were awarded (Best in Show, Gold and Silver) on a common platform that did not differentiate by the wine's origin.

Thirty international and Indian wines were awarded 'Best in Show' medals, a title reserved for outstanding wines scoring 95 points and above; 77 Gold winners scored 90 to 94 points; and 117 Silver winners, between 85 to 89 points in the competition. Around 55%, of the nominated 410 wines won medals – 224 wines in all.

The India Wine Awards has set a benchmark for ranking the best domestic and international wines. The awards provide an invaluable guide to both consumers and the Alcobev trade to make informed choices about the comparative quality and range of Indian and international wines currently available in India.

— Alok Chandra

Top and middle: Guests at the India Wine Awards gala dinner. Bottom, left to right: H.E. Ambassador Juan Angulo Monsalve of Chile, Alessio Secci, Co-founder and Director, Fratelli Vineyards and Sonal Holland MW, founder of India Wine Awards



INDIA WINE AWARDS 2022 WINNER



Best in Show 2022 Winners

INDIA
York Sparkling
Rosé Brut

Sula Dindori Reserve
Chardonnay 2022

Virgin Hills Limited Edition
Chardonnay 2021

Vallonne Vineyards Chenin
Blanc 2022

Grover Zampa Art
Collection Chenin Blanc
2022

Vallonne Vineyards Vin de
Passerillage 2018

J'Noon Red 2020, Fratelli

Sula RASA Syrah 2021

KRSMA Syrah 2018

AUSTRALIA
D'Arenberg The Dead Arm
Shiraz McLaren Vale 2017
Brindco Sales

Penfolds Bin 389
Cabernet Shiraz 2018
Brindco Sales

Torbrect Woodcutter's
Shiraz, Barossa Valley
2019
Vinopolis Wines

FRANCE
Barons de Rothschild
(Lafite) Réserve Spéciale
Pauillac 2018
Aspri Spirits India

Domaine Chanson
Beaujolais Morgon AOC
2013
Gusto Imports

Hugel et Fils Gentil Alsace
Blend 2018
Sonarys Co-brands

Terroir Daronton
Châteauneuf du Pape
2019
Monika Alcobev

Vincent Girardin Cuvée
Saint Vincent Bourgogne

Blanc 2019
Wine Park

Wolfberger Signature
Gewurztraminer Alsace
2019
Chenab Impex

ITALY
Bottega 'Il Vino
dei Poeti', Brunello di
Montalcino DOCG 2016
Empire Spirits India

Bottega Amarone
Della Valpolicella DOCG
2017
Empire Spirits India

Casa Lupo 2017
Morgan Beverages

A QUO Montepeloso
Toscana 2019
Ace Beveragez

Sensi Boscovello
Brunello di Montalcino
DOCG 2015
Gusto Imports

Zenato Ripassa
Valpolicella Ripasso
Superiore 2018
Vbev

LEBANON
Jeune de Château Musar
Red 2019
Sonarys Co-brands

NEW ZEALAND
Dog Point Marlborough
Sauvignon Blanc 2021
Wine Park

Escarpment
Martinborough Pinot Noir
2018
Vinopolis Wines

SPAIN
Bodegas Faustino I Gran
Reserva, Rioja DOCa 2010
Gusto Imports

Dow's 20 Year Old Port
Monika Alcobev

Valdespino El Candado
Pedro Ximénez Sherry
Chenab Impex



Gold Winners 2022

INDIA
Chandon Brut NV

Desaal Wine
Collection Chenin
Blanc 2020

Fratelli Chardonnay 2021

Fratelli Master Selection
White 2021

Grover Zampa

Vijay Amritraj Reserve
Collection White 2021

J'NOON White 2020

KRSMA Cabernet
Sauvignon 2016

Sula Brut Tropicale NV

Sula Sparkling Shiraz NV

The Source Grenache
Rose 2022

The Source Reserve

Chenin Blanc 2022

Vallonne Anokhee
Grand Reserve Syrah
2016

Vallonne Vineyards
Merlot Reserve 2018

York Chenin Blanc 2021

York Sauvignon Blanc
2021

York Sparkling Cuvée
Brut NV

ARGENTINA
Bodega Norton Reserva
Malbec 2019
Brindco Sales

Jose Zuccardi Malbec
2017
Vinopolis Wines

Rutini Apartado Gran
Malbec 2018
Monika Alcobev

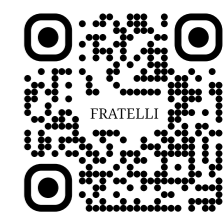
Rutini Cabernet
Sauvignon 2018
Monika Alcobev

Maison Louis Jadot Chablis 2020 Brindco Sales	Cantine Povero, Dolcetto DOCG 2020 Gusto Imports	Prosecco DOC Millesimato Brut Rosé 2020 Morgan Beverages	Framingham Sauvignon Blanc 2021 Aspri Spirits
Paul Jaboulet Aîné Crozes-Hermitage Domaine de Thalabert 2016 Gusto Imports	Castello Banfi Col di Sasso Toscana IGT 2020 Brindco Sales	Prosecco Rosé Luna Argenta Vinopolis Wines	SOUTH AFRICA M A N Family Free Run Steen, Chenin Blanc 2021 Wine Park
Paul Mas Cabernet Sauvignon 2020 Chenab Impex	Fantini Calalenta Rosé 2021 Monika Alcobev	Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio 2020 Vbev	Nederburg The Winemasters Sauvignon Blanc 2020 Aspri Spirits
Premius Bordeaux Rouge 2018 Monika Alcobev	Fantini Montepulciano d'Abruzzo DOC 2020 Monika Alcobev	Sensi Campoluce Chianti Superiore DOCG Vino Biologico 2020 Gusto Imports	Thelema Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 Wine Park
Terroir Daronton Côtes-du-Rhône 2019 Monika Alcobev	Fantini Pinot Grigio 2020 Monika Beverages	Sensi Collezione Pinot Grigio Delle Venezie 2021 Gusto Imports	SPAIN Bodega Faustino VII Rioja 2020 Gusto Imports
Thunevin, BAD BOY Merlot 2016 Wine Park	Fantini Sangiovese 2020 Monika Alcobev	Sensi Collezione Shiraz IGT Sicily 2019 Gusto Imports	Caldas Porto Tawny Special Reserve Chenab Impex
Camas Pinot Noir Anne de Joyeuse 2020 Rad Elan Distributors	Folonari Chianti DOCG 2020 Ace Beveragez	Sensi Collezione, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo DOC 2020 Gusto Imports	Casa El Unico Tempranillo 2020 Vbev
ITALY Bisol, BELSTAR Cult, Prosecco Extra Dry Wine Park	Folonari Pinot Grigio delle Venezie 2020 Ace Beveragez	Sensi Pinot Noir Rosé 18K Gusto Imports	El Goru 2020 Monika Alcobev
Boscarelli Vino Nobile di Montepulciano DOCG 2018 Wine Park	Marchesi de Frescobaldi Nipozzano Reserva Rufina Chianti 2018 Brindco Sales	Tenuta Sant Antonio Scaia Red 2019 Wine Park	Llopart Rosé Brut Reserva 2018 Chenab Impex
Bottega Acino D'Oro Chianti DOCG 2020 Empire Spirits India	Marchesi di Barolo Gavi di Gavi DOCG 2020 Brindco Sales	Tenuta Sant Antonio Scaia White 2021 Wine Park	Pedreria Rosé 2020 Ace Beveragez
Brancaia Rosé 2020 Wine Park	Marchesi Mazzei Poggio alla Badiola IGT Toscana 2019 Sonarys Co-brands	Vietti, Barbera d' Alba, Tre Vigne 2018 Wine Park	Portia Faustino Ribera Del Duero DOCa 2019 Gusto Imports
Brancaia TRE 2019 Wine Park	Paladin Valentino 2020 Morgan Beverages	NEW ZEALAND Allan Scott Sauvignon Blanc 2022 Vinopolis Wines	Condesa de Leganza, Seleccion de Familia, Faustino 2021 Gusto Imports
Cantine Povero, Barbera d'Asti DOCG 2020, Italy Gusto Imports	Produttori del Barbaresco, Barbaresco 2017 Wine Park	Escarpment Noir de Noir 2020 Vinopolis Wines	USA Avalon Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 Monika Alcobev
Cantine Povero Batù, Barbaresco DOCG 2018 Gusto Imports		Framingham Pinot Noir 2021 Aspri Spirits	Cannonball Chardonnay 2019 Ace Beverages



Awaiting Harvest

It's the onset of winter and Harvest season is approaching the Fratelli Vineyards. Harvest does not await a particular time; it purely is a product of great weather. The weather has treated us kindly and helped produce a fine yield awaited to be hand harvested and turned into the most delectable wines India has to offer. Experience these scenic harvest views at the Fratelli Vineyards this season



SCAN TO EXPLORE

COLUMN



JUGSURAIYA

The more it matures, the more mythical will the Yamazaki 55 become

Whisky Maltdown in the Land of the Rising Suntory

In 1972 when Bunny and I were in London for the first time, one of the main topics of conversation — apart from the latest episode of the Coronation Street soap, or what radio DJ Tony Blackburn would next feature on his morning music programme — was Centrepont.

Centrepont, as its name suggested, was in the very centre of London, in the heart of the West End, and was one of the first multi-storeyed office blocks in the city, which since then has suffered an eruption of these architectural monstrosities, steel-and-glass warts that have sprung up to blemish the skyline.

Centrepont was an eyesore. But its ugliness was not what made it such a talking point. What was intriguing about it was who was going to occupy it, when, and how. The promoters kept jacking up the square-foot rental of the premises with the speed of a rocket ship. The moment a prospective tenant made a bid, the asking price would go up and be beyond the would-be renter's budget.

Centrepont had become a self-perpetuating mechanism of notional value. It had priced itself out of the market, so that while on paper it represented a gold mine by way of potential rents, in actuality it had made itself an NPA, a Non-productive asset. I don't know the ultimate fate of

Centrepont, but the building, and the economic paradox it embodied, came to mind when I heard about a single 750 ml bottle of a Suntory malt whisky going under the hammer at a Sotheby's auction for the equivalent of ₹65.2 crore. Called Yamazaki 55, it is the oldest, and most expensive, whisky bottled in Japan.

The Yamazaki 55 is a blend of three single malts distilled in the 1960s, and aged for 55 years in Mizunara casks in a process initiated by Suntory founder, Shinjiro Torii. The blend was orchestrated by Suntory's chief blender Shinji Fukuyo and master blender Shingo Torai.

Describing the creation of the sublime spirit in which he played a pivotal role, Fukuyo said on the company's website, "Very old Scotch whiskies gave me the impression of them being perfect Greek sculptures with beautiful toned beauty. Instantly impressive as a piece of art. But the Yamazaki 55 is more like an old Buddhist statue. Calm and mysterious. It takes time to take in its inner beauty with the smell of Japanese incense and stripped old wood, like the Toshodaiji Temple in Nara."

While that elucidation might seem to some to be as beguiling as the Zen koan — What is the sound of one hand clapping? The Yamazaki 55 raises questions of a more



A blend of three single malts, the Yamazaki 55 is aged for 55 years

down-to-earth nature pertaining to its purpose and its intended end-use. The purpose or end-use of a building — Centrepont or any other — is to provide accommodation for people. The purpose of a whisky or any libation is to be imbibed.

But at an estimated ₹4.7 crore for a single wee dram, who would drink the Yamazaki 55, and when? It's more than just a question of simple economics. An Elon Musk or an Adani or an Ambani might well offer a glassful to privileged guests, and even induce them to have a refill.

No, the problem lies in the niceties of social protocol. Breaching the Yamazaki 55 for a special occasion — an anniversary, or the signing of a major merger or business deal, or the visitation of a VVIP — will itself upstage the event it is supposed to commemorate; the day will be remembered more for the inauguration of the prized spirit than for the event it was meant to toast.

To compound matters, the Japanese distillate will follow the law of appreciating returns, whereby increasing antiquity will add to, rather than subtract, from its worth, as is the case with those legendary 100-year-old Cognacs or Burgundies, that are spoken of in hushed and reverential whispers. The more it matures, the more mythical will the Yamazaki 55 become. The more priceless it's perceived to be, the more value-less will it become from any practical point of view, a fate it would share with the Centrepont of yesteryear. A museum piece enshrined in sublime inutility.

RIP — Retired In Perpetuity. ♦

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COLUMN



SHOBANARAYAN

On the pros and cons of wine descriptors generated by Artificial Intelligence

AI as a Wine Critic What will they think of next!

So what is AI? Whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, AI is already a part of our lives. AI is how Alexa or Siri work to understand the context of our lives

Last May, news broke that Artificial Intelligence or AI was used to write a convincing wine review. The news, reported in *Scientific American* and *Food & Wine* magazine quoted two reviews, written using “deep learning” algorithms, went thus: “This is a sound Cabernet. It’s very dry and a little thin in blackberry fruit, which accentuates the acidity and tannins. Drink up.” Another said that the wine was, “Pretty dark for a rosé and full-bodied, with cherry, raspberry, vanilla and spice flavours. It’s dry with good acidity.”

If you read this, would you believe that it was a human review? I would.

I am caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, I subscribe to the growing antipathy in wine circles over the pretentiousness of wine descriptions and the esoteric terms popularized by some critics. You know the kind I mean? Descriptions that talk about cat’s urine, tar, wet leather, and the insides of a man’s shoe (not a woman’s shoe but the more robust version that comes from a male chromosome) in an attempt to illuminate a Northern Rhône. Such overwrought prose is supposed to entice you to sip the said bottle.

Robert Parker, the revered and reviled American wine critic, is often blamed for these long and

often meaningless descriptions. His descriptions include words like “a sweet nose of creosote, asphalt (has anyone smelled creosote and if so, what is it?)” Other Parker classics say that a wine smells like sweaty saddles, rubber, a cigar box, pencil lead, sea spray or an array of berries. Such overwrought descriptions may be specific but are useless because they don’t aid olfactory memory.

Ever since Ann Noble, a professor emeritus at the University of California, Davis, came up with an ‘aroma wheel’ to describe the flavours of wine, people have been using it to entice people to buy wine. Today, people are using Artificial Intelligence to do the same.

So what is AI? Whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, AI is already a part of our lives. AI is how Alexa or Siri work to understand the context of our lives. AI or deep machine learning is how we get shopping prompts in our Facebook or Instagram feed. And AI could be used to customize our wine preferences. At least that is what the wine industry is hoping.

Consider these scenarios. An AI robot roaming the aisles of your wine store and asking you what tastes you like. You input ‘spicy’ or ‘fruity’ and voila, the robot churns out a list of wines that you might like. Similarly, AI-based apps can predict

what type of wines you gravitate towards and suggest ‘similar’ bottles.

AI can be used to power drones over vineyards which will tell the vineyard owner exactly which vines need to be pruned or watered. But AI as a wine critic? Now that is a hard pill to swallow. The problem is not that AI cannot come up with descriptions. In fact, the opposite. The ‘hive mind’ of the Internet can trawl through the internet and come up with all the adjectives that apply to a particular varietal. Is that good or bad? Well, let’s take it one step at a time.

What are the words you use to describe wine? Grippy is one I use to describe the sandpaper like taste. Austere is one that seems structured, even too structured – and I use this mostly for white Chablis wines. Flamboyant is a California Cab.

Some wine descriptions make sense. You drink enough Zinfandel and you will taste the thick, viscous, fruity taste that is often described as ‘jammy’, by aficionados. Australian Shiraz is indeed spicy and peppery. And New Zealand’s Sauvignon Blanc does have that herbaceous flavour that reminds one of cut grass. The Syrah in its birthplace, France, does not have the spicy and peppery flavour of an Australian Shiraz. Minerally wines remind Indians of the water we drink from copper pots.

Some descriptions just don’t make sense to certain cultures. What does ‘chalky’ taste like? Do you have to lick chalk to figure this out? Some descriptions try to be overly helpful by listing a wide range of berries that the wine is supposed to taste like. Having never tasted a linden berry or even a raspberry in its natural just-picked state, my palate has no clue how to process this information. Why not use people-friendly adjectives? A young Burgundy for instance can be tight and surly, like a glowering teenager who needs to mature.

The problem is that wine descriptions tend to have a formula, which is why it is easy for AI



Robots and Artificial Intelligence have entered the wine world

software to replicate. Consider this note, written by a piece of software: “While the nose is a bit closed, the palate of this off-dry Riesling is chock full of juicy white grapefruit and tangerine flavours. It’s not a deeply concentrated wine, but it’s balanced neatly by a strike of lemon-lime acidity that lingers on the finish.” Pretty good, isn’t it? So how did the AI do this?

According to the study description, the algorithm trawled through a decade worth of reviews from *Wine Enthusiast* magazine – about 125,000 in total. This helped it learn the general structure, tone and style of a review. Then the study’s authors gave the algorithm some basic information: winery name, style, alcohol percentage and price point. The algorithm then searched for existing reviews using this basic information, and collated everything together. It came up with the most frequently used adjectives for a particular wine and strung them together using the structure formula.

The study authors say that such algorithmic descriptions will help small wineries come up with descriptions of their products, particularly if they have no time to write it themselves or have no knowledge of English.

As for the rest of us, we had better be careful when reading descriptions on wine labels, websites or product reviews. Who knows? It may have been generated by a machine. As one study author said, humans are incredibly easy to manipulate. ♦

AI can be used to power drones over vineyards which will tell the vineyard owner exactly which vines need to be pruned or watered

COLUMN



RUMASINGH

On the story of Mas de Daumas Gassac, in the Aniane commune of Languedoc and its founder, Aimé Guibert

The Legacy of a Patriarch

Aimé's most significant viticultural decision was to make Cabernet Sauvignon his hero grape. Languedoc is noted for its diverse blends but the soils of Daumas Gassac seemed perfectly matched for the regal Cabernet

Ten years ago, on a driving holiday around the south of France, I visited Mas de Daumas Gassac, in the Aniane commune of Languedoc. Whizzing around the estate in a jeep I was stunned by its lush, un-manicured beauty with scattered vineyards nestled in between abundant bushes and shrubs. There was an unforgettable, untamed wildness about this unique piece of terroir. The Daumas Gassac wines we tasted after that underlined this; here was majestic structure overlaid with delicate purity of fruit.

Cut to last month and the launch of Daumas Gassac wines in India in the presence of Véronique and Basile Guibert. Though the legend of Daumas Gassac's patriarch, the late Aimé Guibert has not truly pervaded these shores – the time was ripe to understand the potential of Languedoc as a region capable of producing fine wine.

First, an introduction to Aimé Guibert, the patriarch whose towering personality and ardent beliefs have dominated Languedoc wine since the 1980s, and to Véronique his wife. Basile, the youngest of their five sons, who oversees the Asian market acknowledges, "Daumas Gassac would not exist if not for the tremendous effort – physical and mental – they both put in."

The fable of Daumas Gassac, a mere 50-year-old upstart in the Old World, is remarkable. The Guibert's intention to buy a countryside property in the 70s led them to a farmhouse or 'mas' in

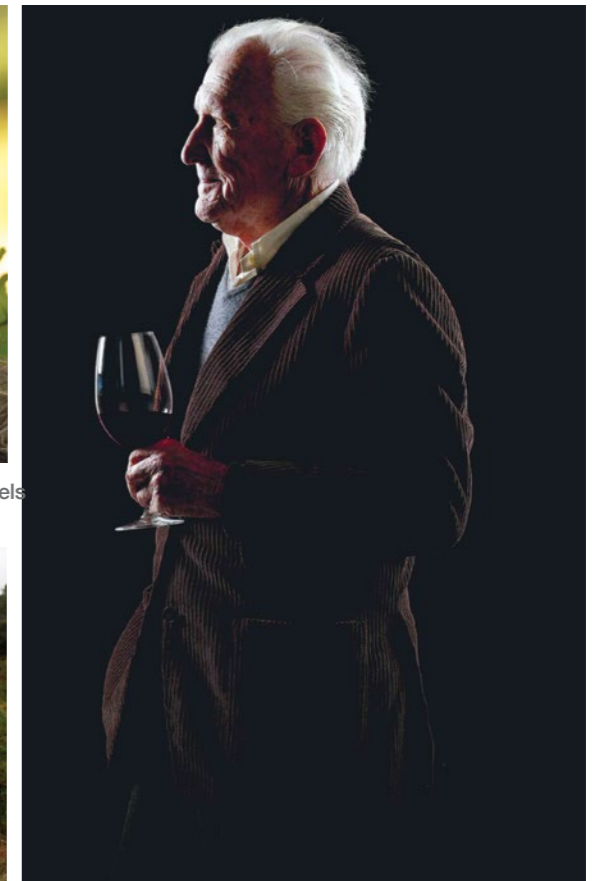
Languedoc, a region hitherto known for making vast quantities of unremarkable wine. They had little intention of becoming vintners, a profession they knew nothing about as Aimé came from a family of noted glovemakers while Véronique was a professor of ethnology at Montpellier. One day, friend and noted geologist Henri Enjalbert visited them and went for a walk with Aimé. He stopped in his tracks at the sight of the soil – a rare Ice Age scree strikingly similar to the soils of Burgundy's Cote d'Or. "This is a geological miracle!" he exclaimed.

Thus, viticulture became their sole option. Work began, with famous Bordeaux oenologist-researcher Emile Peynaud assisting them with their initial vintages. Today, Daumas Gassac's three main wines, all blends, a majestic red, a textured white and a unique rosé frizzante sell in a few chosen markets on strict allocation. Yet the addition of non-authorised grapes means it falls outside appellation rules and Daumas Gassac is labelled simply Vins de Pays de l'Herault.

Aimé's most significant viticultural decision was to make Cabernet Sauvignon his hero grape. Languedoc is noted for its diverse blends – the Mediterranean climate allows almost any grape to flourish and ripen at will – but the soils of Daumas Gassac seemed perfectly matched for the regal Cabernet. Today, it forms the mainstay of their flagship red.



Above: Moulin de Gassac – Grands Terroirs with striking hand-drawn labels from Daumas Gassac's second portfolio Below: The Guibert family



Above: Aimé Guibert, the family patriarch, who founded Mas de Daumas Gassac. Below: Aerial view of Mas Daumas winery and vineyards



The Moulin portfolio includes five individual sub-brands of which the Grands Terroirs selection with their arresting hand-drawn labels by artist Florence Billet, features Faune and Albaran, now in India

Says Basile, “Aimé intuitively felt that a great wine had to be based on Cabernet Sauvignon – strong, powerful and ageworthy. He loved the grand crus of Bordeaux.” Unsurprisingly, most media references of Daumas Gassac refer to it as the ‘Grand Cru’ or ‘Lafite’ of the Languedoc – a pithy phrase bestowed first in 1985 by French magazine, *Gault Millau* when murmurs about the estate’s quality started spreading. Despite having no winemaking background Aimé was a consummate businessman.

“He was a gifted man, compelling and seductive to listen to, curious about everything,” says Véronique, as we sit to chat before a sold-out wine dinner in Bangalore. “A brilliant, creative mind,” agrees Basile. Every decision the Guiberts made was reasoned and researched – a selection of ungrafted clones from Bordeaux took Aimé five years to source. His foresight drove him to build cellars underground where they were naturally cooled by the Gassac river. “He would go deep into wine knowledge. Winemaking is a combination of multiple factors, and he bound them all together with his vision.”

Truly pioneering, Daumas Gassac was organic before it became fashionable, producing low yields of exceptional quality, and harvested grapes in tiny crates to prevent spoilage. Zero pesticides were used from the onset.

Aimé’s love of reading – often about botany and history – added to his knowledge bank and led to the creation of Daumas Gassac’s historic nursery of rare vines. “He would read a lot about wine and its wine culture. He would pore over books by Olivier de Serres, the famous 17th-century French agronomist. And from travels around the world, he would collect rare vines to bring back and plant in his nursery, often smuggled in his bags,” reveals Véronique. These included Neherleschol from Israel, Sercial from Madeira, Petite Arvine and Amigne from Switzerland, Khondorni, Tchilar from Armenia, Georgia’s Saperavi, and a slew of Italian grapes.

Of the 50 grape varieties grown at Daumas Gassac,

25 are rare historical grapes. The main grapes used in their flagship white include Viognier, Chardonnay, Petit Manseng and Chenin Blanc, all from old, uncloned vines. Besides their own uncloned Cabernet Sauvignon planted in 1972, the red wine boasts of Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Merlot, Tannat, Petit Verdot, Carmenère, Syrah and Pinot Noir in varying quantities according to the vintage. And the rare grapes? They are added to the wines like a dash of salt and pepper or, as Basile describes it, “The way colours are blended and used in a painting – sometimes invisible, but adding to the whole.”

Basile explains that the Moulin or Daumas Gassac’s second portfolio was born in the 1990s, when the EU’s vine-pull programme spurred vine growers in the Languedoc to uproot their vines. In order to preserve Languedoc viticulture, Aimé offered to help them continue growing their vines by buying their grapes, and so the brand Moulin de Gassac was born.

“We joined hands with 120 vine growers situated around our estate – an amphitheatre of vineyards facing the Mediterranean – all grown to Daumas Gassac’s high standards,” explains Basile. Today 2.4 million bottles of Moulin de Gassac wines go out to 70 countries around the world, amounting to 40% of Daumas Gassac sales. “These are”, says Basile, “wines born of hard work, environment-enriching practices and for giving pleasure!” The Moulin portfolio includes five individual sub-brands of which the Grands Terroirs selection with their arresting hand-drawn labels by artist Florence Billet, includes Faune and Albaran, now in India.

Aimé and Véronique’s sons co-own the property and guard their parents’ heritage – a decision each has made of his own volition, Véronique affirms. Each handles a different responsibility but all are united for a single cause – the legacy they have inherited. Adds Basile, “We know we are not looking for the good. We are looking for the great.” ♦

A selection of Daumas Gassac wines is available in Mumbai and Karnataka, imported by Living Liquidz

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V SANJAY KUMAR

Expresses his surprise and annoyance at merely equating wine-drinking with health rather than a deeper appreciation of its intrinsic quality

Shiver Me Timbers

What can oak casks do to a wine? Are they nice to have, are they essential, or are they downright indispensable? Or is oak a cellar defence that poor fruit needs?

I am tired of articles that extol the benefits of drinking red wine. My advice; do not read them, and please do not forward them. Truth is, nothing as delicious as wine has ever cleaned an artery. Does it need to? As a convent school student, I saw wine being consecrated, I saw it serve as Communion, but does wine need to bear the cross for good health? There are friends of mine who complain of ill effects. 'Wine gives me a headache.' You must have heard people say that. Red wine it seems goes to their temples and throbs.

It happened again at a recent get together. 'I love red wine but it gives me a headache.' Must be Indian wine, said somebody, and the whole lot of them laughed. The hotel sommelier had an explanation. 'Wine headache is because of tannin.' What is tannin, asked the headache victim? More explanations followed. The sommelier was patient. 'Try wine that has been aged in casks,' he said. 'A few months in wooden casks and the tannins soften.'

Later that evening the headache victim came up to me. 'You are so aloof,' he said. I wasn't trying to be. 'Are you a wine snob?' he asked. I wish I was, I said. He was persistent. 'Would you enjoy the wine as much without the snobbery?' That was a great question, I realised, half the fun in wine is knowing more about it than others. There was one last question. 'Is that all that oak does?' he asked. 'Prevent headaches?'

'No,' I said, 'oak does a lot but honestly headaches

come from histamines in wine, not tannins.'

What can oak casks do to a wine? Are they nice-to-have, are they essential, or are they downright indispensable? Or, and I am not being facetious here, is oak a cellar defence that poor fruit needs? These are important questions that need to be asked now and then by each of us. In fact, wine in oak is one of those questions like what is the meaning of life, or the origin of the universe.

My oak journey began with a French winemaker, now a conglomerate in Rhône, called M. Chapoutier which was set up as far back as 1808. Many decades ago, the head of this group was Marius Chapoutier, the gentleman in the photograph. He was short and dapper and had his way with women if we are to believe his frank outpourings. Like this one on his website.

'Marius found the young woman's light snoring to be extremely sexy. She seemed to be lost in her dreams... her sleep betrayed the pleasure that she had just experienced and Marius felt a certain masculine pride in this... modest lighting allowed Marius to hastily find his clothes, and un-hastily to appreciate the naked body of the young woman...'

What is commendable about Marius and the generations that followed is that they resisted the seductive power of oak. Bordeaux and Burgundy producers revel in the polish and complexity that French casks provide, and they wear like a badge

the number of months the juice has spent in barrel. Southern Rhône producers are different, they will not come between you and the fruit. They would rather you brave the tannin and smell the earth. M. Chapoutier believes that if wine needs ageing and oxygen, a neutral material like concrete is ideal. Some wines like the Marius Rouge are matured in stainless steel.

The M in Chapoutier is now Marcel, descendant of Marius, and he continues this tradition, maturing the Côte du Rhône in concrete vats and stainless steel. The Châteauneuf du Pape, which is mostly Grenache, is also matured in concrete and has no exposure to oak. Marcel likes the Grenache fruit to shine on its own. He has strong feelings on the subject. To him oaking wine, especially in Southern Rhône, is a bad joke. Am I sensitive to oak in wine? I am, I notice it more than others. I don't object to it; in judicious hands it is a good weapon. Some grapes need oak, grapes like Nebbiolo and the Brunello Sangiovese. These produce acidic and tannic reds that take years to mature in oak barrels. Some grapes like Pinot Noir and the Bordeaux varieties are elevated by use of oak. So don't underestimate its effect. Think of what cinnamon sticks can do to a cup of cocoa or a glass of hot toddy.

Not so long ago, winemakers were carried away by the power of oak. Australian Shiraz went through an oak phase which it is trying to shake off. Even today at the lower end of the price spectrum the effect of oak is very noticeable. I was surprised to read the wine notes of an Australian Petit Syrah. 'The fruit was destemmed, crushed and fermented in static fermenters with an addition of premium untoasted French oak chips for five days.' I mean, oak chips were added in vinification itself?

A few months ago, I was at a whisky tasting and I was knocked over by the new Indian swagger that came from Sherry casks like Oloroso and Pedro Ximenez. These were single malts but they wore the colours of Bourbon. Indian malt is festive, right now it is crashing the colonial party. Amrut has a whisky called 004, the cask is custom-made with four alternating staves from different wood

sources. 004 has a deep dark colour, it looks and smells like a Christmas cake. These are serious whiskies, mind you, and these innovations are challenging the malts from the Isles.

Circa a month later and I am with a host serving a Double Barrel wine. That is what the label proudly declares. The omnipresent Jacob's Creek has a Double Barrel red that has been finished (off?) in Irish whisky barrels. They also have a white that has been finished in Scotch whisky barrels. Old-timers will sniff and all this recipe winemaking. Me?

That night I slept poorly, I had terrible dreams in which my friends and relatives were mocking me. My friend from Kanpur, a proud drinker of the malt called Rampur (excuse the *shayari*) was steeping his wine with packets of local zarda. He took a pinch of liquid with thumb and forefinger and threw it behind for luck, then swirled and sniffed his tumbler. 'Kya baat,' he said. 'So much tobacco.'

Another nightmare followed. Down south my aunt was sprinkling rasam powder on her glass rim, the glass held Syrah. She saw my horrified look. For spicy note, she said. I woke up with a headache. Wine folks, this is serious, these dreams are a warning. Reality's first port of call is an induced nightmare. We are not far from flavouring agents in wine. Just look at what Bacardi did to rum.

Redemption came when I needed it, in the form of an Indian producer called Grover. They have provided (inadvertently?) a master class on oak and wine. Their new range of reds called Signet has taken grapes from the same parcel and vintage and crafted three shiraz wines, maturing them in amphora (terracotta), foudres (small casks), and large 2000 litre casks. The bottles are attractive, the closures have imported wax. I was fortunate to curate an evening with these wines. I called it a Face/Off. The takeaway from this session was interesting. Participants could sense oak, and they could perceive its absence. And among the wines it was the 225 litre Signet that shone. The use of oak had added complexity on the nose and the palate. ❖

Not so long ago, winemakers were carried away by the power of oak. Australian Shiraz went through an oak phase which it is trying to shake off. At the lower end of the price spectrum the effect of oak is very noticeable



Marchese Nicolo Incisa della Rocchetta with a framed photo of the Italian jockey, Frankie Dettori

PICTURESTUDY

Marchese Nicolo Incisa della Rocchetta

Text and Photograph by **Jon Wyand**

Well, we all know vines need water from time to time but this particular morning the northeast coast of Italy was getting more than its fair share. My wife I were driving south looking for Bolgheri and Tenuta San Guido. Unsurprisingly my wife had been very keen to accompany me on this ten-day road trip around Tuscany and having arrived only yesterday at Pisa the forlorn dripping Cypresses at the roadside might have been a disappointing sight, grey and sad through the traffic spray.

We followed the sign to the left for Bolgheri and arriving at San Guido the rain was drenching.

We were directed to the offices of Marchese Nicolo Incisa della Rocchetta. I was grateful that the instructions I had were to photograph him with his beloved race horses rather than in a Sassicaia vineyard.

The stables were a great location if lacking a little in variety and the horses were immaculately turned out as you would expect. The only thing I lacked was any kind of connection with the Marchese. Today he had one of those faces that I imagined would improve, photogenically speaking, with the addition of anything that could be considered a smile.

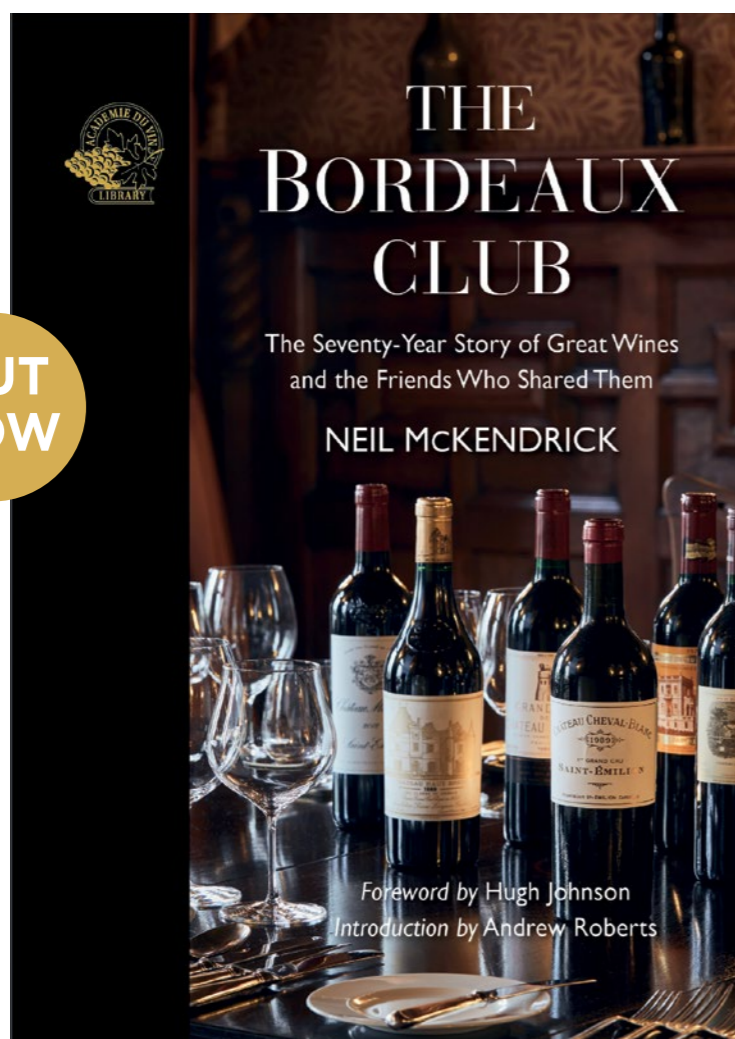
I tried to act as if inspired by the subject and the location but it was all a little uncomfortable and awkward however hard we both tried. He was happy to show us the horses but I sensed he was not happy with the location and perhaps my level of interest in his beloved horses. Well, they do say “Never work with children or animals”!

I suggested we try his office and he agreed with a reluctant, deadpan shrug of the shoulders. It was plain that I had failed to charm or entertain him. His office was no grand affair. “Cosy”, or one might say cramped, with one window. Not much light to play with here on a day like we had. The walls were adorned with equine prints and a large chest of drawers was topped with a huge array of silver cups. There were more, smaller cups among a variety of family photos on his busy looking desk. The Marchese stood and looked around silently, almost helplessly, as the three of us stood waiting for me to find an answer to our problem.

Fortunately, my father-in-law had once owned a race horse and my wife knew all the right questions to ask and broke the silence in an effort to buy me time. She had spotted a large framed photo of Frankie Dettori (to the uninitiated a well-loved Italian jockey) and asked the Marchese if Frankie rode for him often. It was that lightbulb moment when everything comes to life. He turned and reached down for the frame leaning against the wall and turned back with the picture and a glimmer of a proud smile in his eyes which broadened to a wide grin as he told us the story behind it. Job done, thanks to Mrs Wyand! ♦



WINE WRITING AT ITS FINEST



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WINEFOCUS

10 facts you should know about Le Grand Noir wines

1 Le Grand Noir is a wine that combines the classic, complex, food-friendly flavours of France with the accessibility of the New World.

2 Le Grand Noir is the brainchild of Robert Joseph, an award-winning wine critic; Hugh Ryman, a winemaker with experience across the globe; and a top label-designer called Kevin Shaw.

3 Like a black sheep that acts differently from the herd, the black sheep on the wine label represents the unconventional, out-of-the-box way of thinking of the founders.

4 Each of the Le Grand Noir wines has its own complex character combining the flavours of the terroir where the grapes were grown and the blend of different grape varieties. Le Grand Noir broke away from the mainstream by blending Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon; Grenache, Shiraz and Mourvedre; and Chardonnay with Viognier.

5 Oak barrels are used, but judiciously. Some wine styles such as Chardonnay pick up subtle vanilla notes from the wood. Others, such as their refreshing Sauvignon Blanc are better without it. The aim is to never overshadow the natural flavours of the wine.

6 All the wines are produced in the Minervois region in the Languedoc in the south of France. Le Grand Noir depends on family growers like Eric Lacuve and his

winemaking team at Celliers Jean d'Alibert, who painstakingly tend their own vines. They have an intense love and respect for the traditions of their region but are also open to new ideas.

7 By minimising the use of pesticides and other vineyard treatments, Celliers Jean d'Alibert has reduced the carbon footprint of both vineyard and winery. The weight of Le Grand Noir bottles was reduced as part of their sustainability programme.

8 All the wines in the Le Grand Noir range are ready to drink on release and remain fresh for at least a couple of years after the harvest, partly due to their screwcap closures.

9 Le Grand Noir wines are vegan. No animal products are used in their production. They can be enjoyed as aperitifs but are also a good match with a wide variety of foods.

10 Food and wine suggestions. Le Grand Noir Cabernet-Shiraz goes with full flavoured meat dishes, while the Pinot Noir is perfect with a range of lighter dishes. You can also pair it with fish. The Chardonnay-Viognier blend is particularly good with subtly spicy Indian, Thai or Chinese dishes. Details of individual wines available in India are given overleaf.



LE GRAND Noir
**The black sheep
on the label
represents the
unconventional,
out-of-the-box
thinking of the
wines' founders**

Imported by Sula Selections, two new varieties, Malbec and Merlot, have been added recently priced at Rs 1,600 in Maharashtra.

Le Grand Noir wines for all occasions



LE GRAND NOIR ROSÉ

Grape Varietal

85% Grenache,
15% Shiraz

Flavours

Intense aromas of raspberry, strawberry and redcurrant with a hint of pepper.

Wine Highlights

- Fresh modern, pale-hued, dry, but fruity, rosé: one of the most popular styles in the world right now.
- Great with food or by itself.
- Shiraz gives just a touch more weight to the freshness of the Grenache.



LE GRAND NOIR MERLOT

Grape Varietal

100% Merlot

Flavours

A modern Merlot with typical plummy notes coupled with a bright strawberry flavour.

Wine Highlights

- Low yielding vines
- Twenty year-old vines
- Oak age for six months



LE GRAND NOIR CHARDONNAY

Grape Varietal

85% Chardonnay,
15% Viognier

Flavours

Pineapple with a subtle hint of oak and a touch of mango and ginger.

Wine Highlights

- Subtle use of oak.
- Great with food or by itself.
- Unusual blend that adds a note of viognier spice to the chardonnay.



LE GRAND NOIR PINOT NOIR

Grape Varietal

85% Pinot Noir,
15% Grenache

Flavours

Raspberry, cherry with hints of strawberry and oak and a refreshing note of pepper.

Wine Highlights

- A small amount of Grenache adds extra spice and freshness.
- Great with food or by itself.
- New wave French wine, combining French regional character with new world accessibility.
- From Limoux the coolest area in the South of France.



LE GRAND NOIR CABERNET SYRAH

Grape Varietal

85% Cabernet Sauvignon,
15% Syrah

Flavours

Dark fruits with delicate peppery notes, supported by well integrated vanilla

Wine Highlights

- The two varieties were vinified separately / 6 months of French and American oak.



LE GRAND NOIR MALBEC

Grape Varietal

100% Malbec

Flavours

Soft, plummy and cherryish with hints of violet. Light use of oak to maintain fruitiness

Wine Highlights

- Harvested at night for freshness
- 20% of the wine has been aged for a few months in French and American oak barrels.



LE GRAND NOIR GSM

Grape Varietal

Blend of 60% Grenache,
35% Syrah,
5% Mourvedre

Flavours

Blackberry, dark plum, black cherry, dark fruit and a hint of spices & pepper.

Mourvedre lends distinctive mineral & perfumed notes

Wine Highlights

- Typical Rhône blend, but the first of its kind from Minervois.



LE GRAND NOIR CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Grape Varietal

85% Cabernet Sauvignon,
15% Shiraz

Flavours

Rich plums & cherries with hints of truffle and vanilla.

Wine Highlights

- A pioneering wine for the region. A revival of the old tradition of adding Hermitage made from Syrah to Château Lafite and other Bordeaux Cabernet Sauvignon wines.
- Subtle use of oak & a fine, well-rounded mouthfeel.

A Joy for Small Wine Producers

Ajoy Shaw is a veteran wine consultant based in Nashik, the wine capital of India. He has been working with wineries for 25 years and is a fervent advocate of small producers. [Brinda Gill](#) finds out why...

What drew you to the wine industry?

In 1992, during my graduation in Microbiology at Garware College, Pune, I did a project on wines for a competition. It involved a lot of study and scientific analysis. The project won the competition and in the process I got drawn to wines!

What has been your work experience in wine?

In 1999, I saw an advertisement for the post of an assistant winemaker at Sula Vineyards. I applied and got selected. I joined Sula and worked there till 2017. From winemaking to making out the first invoice for Sula, to adding automation and barrels, I learnt and did a lot in those 18 years. I continue to have a great relationship with the company. I also worked on harvesting in California, Bordeaux and Burgundy during my Sula days which added to my winemaking knowledge. In 2004, I went to London at my own expense and did the WSET Level 3 exam and passed with distinction. After leaving Sula I have been working as an independent wine consultant to many wineries, including making wines from fruits other than grapes. I have also judged many domestic and international wine competitions.

How would you define small producers and why did that segment catch your interest?

Small wine producers typically produce less than 200,000 litres a year. They may grow their own grapes or source grapes from contract farmers of whose viticultural practices they approve. One of my juniors at college, Ashok Surwade and his wife Jyotsna converted their small home into a boutique winery by the name of Nipha and started producing wine from the grapes they were earlier supplying to Sula. Their portfolio includes **Nipha Muscat Blanc** which is the first Muscat to be produced in India, with great perfume and character. Their efforts prove that if you have the passion you can create good, innovative wines. Of course, small producers face challenges, especially with regard to finances. The cost of grapes is a big challenge for small producers who do not have their own vineyards. Increasing acreage under vines is the solution to bringing down grape and wine prices. However, small producers can work out these challenges slowly as they do not have volume pressures from the market.

Why do you feel small producers are important?

I feel small producers are capable of making interesting, innovative and extraordinary wines. They are not under pressure to provide wines at the same consistency year after year the way big companies have to. Very large wineries rely on technology to cut down production costs, and in the process, lose some of their gut feel for a particular style, especially when handling small lots of wines. Small producers, on the other hand, make wines from the heart. They tend to be more experimental and innovative, and generally use simple machinery with less manpower in order to cut costs. They are thus more sustainable and more likely to tweak their wine during the process of winemaking to create something different for the consumer.



Veteran winemaker and consultant, Ajoy Shaw believes small producers in India have great potential to produce authentic terroir wines

Small producers make wines from the heart. They tend to be more experimental and innovative and use logic to make wine. They generally use simple machinery and sometimes less manpower

What part do you play as a consultant for small producers?

The most important part of my consulting involves advising my clients on how to enhance quality. This spans various aspects of winemaking. I tell them when to harvest grapes, I talk about skin contact and the pressing of grapes, barrel ageing vs oak chips and staves, how to manage the pH of the wines, and more. Then there are aspects related to cost cutting. I also give them advice about wine labels, about creating different styles of wine and connecting with the right people for marketing their wines.

Do you believe Indian wines have greater potential than is normally perceived?

We produce a lot of grapes in India, including table and wine grapes, and there is immense potential for producing a range of wines, including wines with different flavour profiles to interest consumers. When diners go to a restaurant they look forward to enjoying different cuisines and wines.

There is enough land available to grow grapes and we have all the infrastructure for it. India is a vast country and there are many places that are suitable for grape growing. Currently, India is the ninth largest producer of grapes in the world but the amount of wine produced is very low. I believe the number of wine producers and the types of wines are only going to grow.

So you think that the Indian wine industry can give something new to the world?

I feel we need to explore our terroir and create our own styles. We do not need to copy the West or their styles but reference and learn from them. We should not depend on the West or other traditional grape-growing regions of the world to benchmark our wines. Each terroir is different and will have its own character. Take the example of Georgia (see page xx). The country is considered to be the cradle of wine. It has its own unique wine production style,

with wines being produced from indigenous grape varieties and fermented in qvevri or in amphorae that are buried underneath the ground, where fermentation, maceration and maturation take place. Georgian wines have attracted interest because they are different. Another example is Dubonnet, a French fortified wine mixed with spices which was popularised by Queen Elizabeth II.

We need to broaden our view about wine styles. India's dusty and mildly chilly or warm conditions, as compared to cool climate conditions, will produce a certain style, that is completely different from the wines produced elsewhere. There are more small wineries in the world than there are big wineries, and the same is the case for India. The Indian wine industry is very young. The small wine producers in India can play a significant role in the wine industry by developing their own styles of wine.

What are the changes in wine production that need to be kept in mind?

Natural factors as well as winemaking techniques have to be factored in. The period of skin contact during fermentation depends on the quality of the grape skin matured under local weather conditions and will not necessarily have the same characteristics in India as in France or Italy. We are already harvesting as days are getting longer. This gives us a completely different quality of wine even though we follow the same process.

Even a maturation period of 18 months of ageing in barrels may need to be changed, depending on the aromatic intensity or the tannin levels of the wines produced. Malolactic fermentation which is necessary in Bordeaux may not be needed in India, as warmer conditions will produce grapes with lower malic acid. So, my role as a consultant is to bring out the best from the grapes that we have under local conditions. Basically, we need to be more adaptive and proactive rather

Photo: Satyajit Gill



Ajoy Shaw advises small wine producers on all aspects of wine production and marketing

than just wanting to imitate. A case in point is Sula Brut Tropicale, which is a fruitier rosé-style sparkling wine, and is quite fresh in comparison to the traditional doughy-yeasty, tangy, almost tart Champagne style.

Could you tell us about some of the wines you have worked on for small producers?

At Asav and Seven Peaks we have worked to produce a fresh, fruity style of wines which are doing well. For Plateaux Vintners we have made Vivaz Natural Chenin Blanc from organic grapes. The grapes are fermented with their skin and stems, giving tannins to the white wine, which is something unusual. For this the grapes are harvested when they are super-ripe and the tannins are also very ripe. It is also a natural wine and is produced without the addition of commercial yeast, making it India's first wine from organic grapes in a natural style. The wine goes well with Indian food. For Vivaz Cabernet Sauvignon we have

produced a wine with fruity flavours and tried to avoid the smoky flavours that characterise the typical Cabernet Sauvignon. This makes the wine a lighter version and it is more pleasurable to drink.

What are your thoughts on fruit wines?

I believe producing fruit wines is the best way to expand the wine market since a variety of fruits can be used to create wines that people enjoy and can relate to. The mind-set that wines can only be made from grapes needs to change. I have worked with pomegranate, kiwi and jamun wines. The Resvera jamun wines are light, fruity and refreshing, with off-dry sweetness. They have health benefits and pair well with spicy Indian food. Many fruits have curative properties with more antioxidants like resveratrol to be found in a glass of jamun wine than in a glass of grape wine! Infact, there is considerable potential for India to become the fruit wine capital of the world. ♦

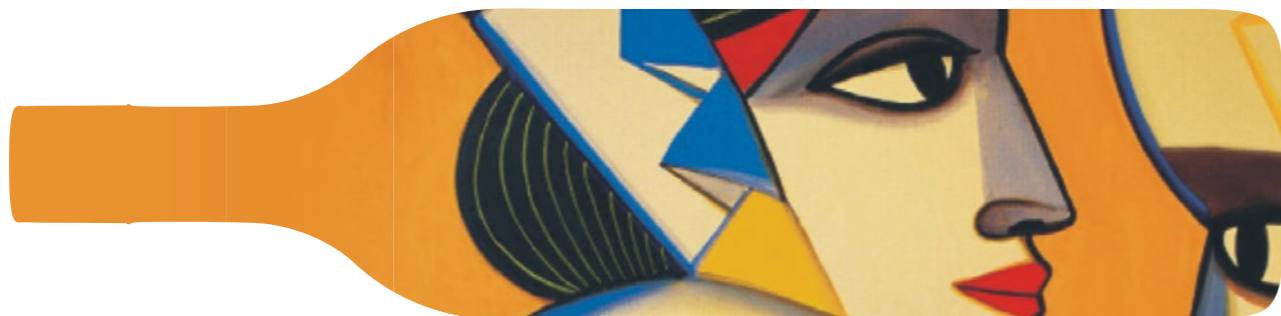
We should not depend on the West or other traditional grape-growing regions of the world to benchmark our wines. Each terroir is different and will have its own character



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WINE AND WORDS

Wine writing at its best

With the Académie du Vin Library dedicated to publishing the finest wine books (old and new), **Raymond Blake's** mini-reviews show that there's no shortage of 'proper' wine writing

For some years now I have bemoaned the demise of 'proper' wine writing and until quite recently I thought I would soon be penning its obituary. By 'proper' I mean something that was more than a shopping list dressed up as a wine column. My despondent mood was prompted by seeing newspaper columns descend to the lowest common denominator, wine-of-the-week writing, consisting of little more than a few paragraphs of introduction followed by that week's favoured bottles. A knee-jerk response was to blame the writers or even the editors, but a little reflection suggested that hard-nosed commercial reality had clipped their wings. Space was at a premium. Advertising had to be sold. The era of long, lofty musings prompted by long, bibulous lunches was over.

Lofty musings may have had their day, and may be mourned by few, but lunch goes on and it was over a short, though modestly bibulous lunch with my late and much missed friend Steven Spurrier that I first detected a glimmer of hope for wine writing that, in addition to providing a good read, might deliver a morsel of insight to give the reader a deeper understanding of the wine and region being written about. And if such writing came from an accomplished pen then some modest literary value might flow through it also.

I was in London with my wife, who was rehearsing for a concert with The World Orchestra for Peace at the Royal Albert Hall, when Steven got in touch to suggest lunch, in the process effortlessly scuppering my plan to go exploring some London wine shops. A convenient venue was chosen and, once the pleasantries had been exchanged, the conversation ranged wide, diverting at some length into which sherry we should start with,

before settling on Steven's latest project, spoken of and elaborated on with the compelling belief and enthusiasm he brought to every plan that interested him.

He was in the process of establishing a publishing house, to be called the Académie du Vin Library; currently described on the house's website: "First and foremost we are wine lovers! The Académie du Vin Library was founded by Steven Spurrier and friends, dedicated to publishing the finest wine writing of the past, the present and the future. The story behind the name came from Steven's days in Paris in the 1970s, when he began running wine appreciation courses for his English-speaking friends."

Though Steven is no longer with us he lived just long enough to see his idea take flight and prosper. The Académie has carved a clever niche for itself, encouraging new writing and breathing fresh life into works from bygone days. (As well as tidying up Steven's own book, "Steven Spurrier – A Life in Wine", the initial edition of which was woefully error-ridden.) Their compilations (see "On California" below) are excellent, drawing together the combined talents of a host of contributors whose collective wealth of experience adds tremendous gravitas while avoiding the 'worthy but weighty' trap that can afflict this type of publication.

As I write, my desk is groaning under the weight of new books – the mini reviews below are of books that publishers have sent to me over the past 18 months or so. Most are Académie publications. On this evidence 'proper' wine writing is alive and well. And Steven Spurrier can rest easy that his final creation is doing a fine job of embellishing his legacy.

On California: From Napa to Nebbiolo... Wine Tales from The Golden State

(Various Authors) Académie du Vin Library.

A compendium of contributions from celebrated contemporary figures, including Rex Pickett and Paul Draper, Randall Grahm and Warren Winiarski, as well as others from a previous generation such as the legendary Harry Waugh, who lived to 97 and whose championing of Californian wine did much to popularise it in Britain, when others were more likely to look askance if it wasn't Bordeaux or Burgundy. Let this book fall open at any page and your eye will land on an interesting topic. I particularly liked Margaret Rand's essay, 'The PostParker Recalibration', but there is something for everyone here.

Oz Clarke on Wine – Your Global Wine Companion

Académie du Vin Library

Originally published as Red & White in 2018 this is – as anybody who knows Clarke's writing would expect – a rollicking good read. He is the most diligent and accomplished taster I have ever met, yet there is nothing po-faced about his prose. Nobody can describe a wine quite like Clarke, as he paints a verbal picture of it and his response to it, the words swooping and diving on the page, the descriptions lengthy but never tumbling into tedium. His writing conveys his enthusiasm but to hear him speak in dulcet, precise tones is an added treat. Never miss an opportunity to attend a talk by Clarke should one come your way.

The Life and Wines of Hugh Johnson

Académie du Vin Library

Originally published as "Wine, A life Uncorked" in 2005 (devoured by me at the time) and read with the same urgency I devoted to Patrick O'Brian's wonderful seafaring novels. Above all, this book, like all great works, has stood the test of time, as enjoyable now on re-acquaintance as it was on first encounter. Readers can journey with Johnson as he takes them on a vinous odyssey that has spanned more than half-a-century. Let yourself be carried along by the easy cadence of his prose, measured and gently lyrical, sustained by tale and anecdote, as it criss-crosses the planet and the decades. In short, this is one of the best books on wine ever written.

Drinking with the Valkyries – Writings on Wine

by Andrew Jefford. Académie du Vin Library

It is impossible to review any work of Andrew Jefford's without first mentioning his magisterial opus "The New

France". Fully 20 years after it was published this wonderfully insightful and prescient book casts a long, though glorious, shadow over all his subsequent work – and the work of just about every other writer on wine. This current volume is a collection of essays culled from the period 2007 to 2022 and it is safe to say that Jefford hasn't lost his touch. Here he is on a 1914 Boal Madeira, drunk in 2014: "It began athletically, then widened and grew more sweetly ample on the middle palate, before finishing in the dark, dry shadows."



Recently published books by some of the best writers on wine

The South America Wine Guide

by Amanda Barnes & Amigos

For eye-catching dazzle no other book in this septet comes close to the exuberantly floral cover design sported by this weighty tome. It is the work of Argentinean designer Elena Cutri and is carried through the book, in various iterations,

to introduce each chapter. Fair enough, but the shiny violet colour on the head, fore edge and tail of the pages is gaudy and rubs off easily to leave a careworn look after little use. This guide comprises a densely packed 540 pages that contain just about every available pixel of information about South American wine. It is more reference work than guide – I always think of a guide as a book that is easily carried – and would be more at home on your bookshelves than in your luggage. A better title would be, "An Encyclopaedia of South American Wine". Sometimes you warm to a book and sometimes you don't. I didn't warm to this one, yet there can be no denying its usefulness. Perhaps a condensed version could follow in due course?

The World's Wine Legends – 100 Of the World's Legendary Bottles of Wine

by Stephen Brook. Sona Books

I sometimes buy car magazines, not to read about motors that I might be able to afford like Fords or Volkswagens, but to foster my dreams of speeding along in a Ferrari, an Aston Martin or a Porsche. For wine lovers with similar dreams this luxury, large format book is just the ticket. Each bottle is given a two-page 'profile' and all the 'usual suspects' are here: Trimbach Clos Ste-Hune 1990, Philipponnat Clos des Goises 1964, Tyrrell's Vat 1 Semillon 1994 and the daddy of them all, HM Borges Terrantez Madeira 1862. Each chapter is illustrated by a magnificent photograph, my favourite being the sweeping panorama of the Douro Valley on pages 156-157. If you don't have one, buy yourself a coffee table.

Stay Me with Flagons

by Maurice Healy, with an Introduction by Fiona Morrison MW. Académie du Vin Library

One single sentence from this long-esteemed book by fellow Irishman and barrister, Maurice Healy, has secured for it a prized place in the canon of wine literature. When writing of Chambertin, Healy notes: "One hears the clang of armour in its depths." There is no mention of planting density, soil analysis, temperature of fermentation, yeast used, malolactic, or anything so prosaic. Healy revelled in wine, wine in its proper place with good company and good food. Read this book and revel with him. ❖ Email team@sommelierindia.com to order AdVL books.

FLAVOURS OF THE LANGUEDOC

An overview of TERRASSES DU LARZAC

Rosemary George, MW, spotlights the Terrasses du Larzac, a young Appellation, remarkable for its very different terroirs and the quality of the wines produced

There is a magical moment when you are driving south down the A75 motorway which goes through the centre of France, past the city of Clermont Ferrand and the volcanic peaks of the Massif Central. After you have crossed the dramatic Millau bridge and the plateau of the Larzac, and you emerge from a tunnel at the Pas de l'Escalette, you almost imagine that you can see a silvery line in the far distance that

is the Mediterranean. The temperature has risen by at least 3°C and the first vines of the Languedoc are at your feet. They are part of the Terrasses du Larzac, the most northerly and coolest vineyards of the Languedoc. If you think of the Languedoc as forming an amphitheatre around the Mediterranean, this is Upper Circle or Balcony of the theatre, that is furthest from the sea.

It is an area that has attracted enormous interest over

Grape picking. The Terrasses du Larzac vineyards are the most northerly and coolest vineyards of the Languedoc

the last 20 years. In my book, “The Wines of the South of France”, published in 2001, I gave it little more than a cursory mention, merely acknowledging its existence as a possible new addition to the pyramid of Languedoc appellations, for which the simple appellation Languedoc, which covers Roussillon as well as Languedoc, forms the base. Essentially a more distinctive name was needed for villages that had once been part of the smaller and now defunct appellation Coteaux du Languedoc. There were pioneering wine growers such as Olivier Jullien at Mas Jullien, and his father at Cal Demoura, Château de Jonquières and Mas Chimères, followed by the likes of Mas des Brousses and Domaine Montcalmès.

The Syndicat was created in 1998. And Vincent Goumard, the new owner of Mas Cal Demoura, deserves credit for the successful negotiations with the INAO (Institut national de l’origine et de la qualité) so that the Terrasses du Larzac was recognised as an appellation in

Vincent Goumard deserves credit for the successful negotiations with the INAO so that the Terrasses du Larzac was recognised as an appellation

2015, with a retrospective use for 2014. Vincent is a graduate of the leading French business school INSEAD and he worked for Arthur Anderson before completely changing career. He has negotiating skills and an understanding of governmental bureaucracy, that considerably facilitated the situation. The new appellation incorporated the two former terroirs of St Saturnin and Montpeyroux, which still fiercely maintain their individual identity within the Terrasses du Larzac, and hope ultimately to form the tip of the pyramid, with appellations of their own, and with stricter requirements than for the Terrasses du Larzac.

The appellation of the Terrasses du Larzac covers 32 villages and some 700 hectares. The appellation forms the shape of V, covering two river valleys, the Lergue, on the west side, with villages such as Pégairolles and Poujols, and on the east, the Hérault, with the dramatic gorges of the Hérault, and



Delphine and Julien Zernott of Domaine du Pas de l'Escalette produce Clapas Blanc from Grenache Blanc and Carignan Blanc

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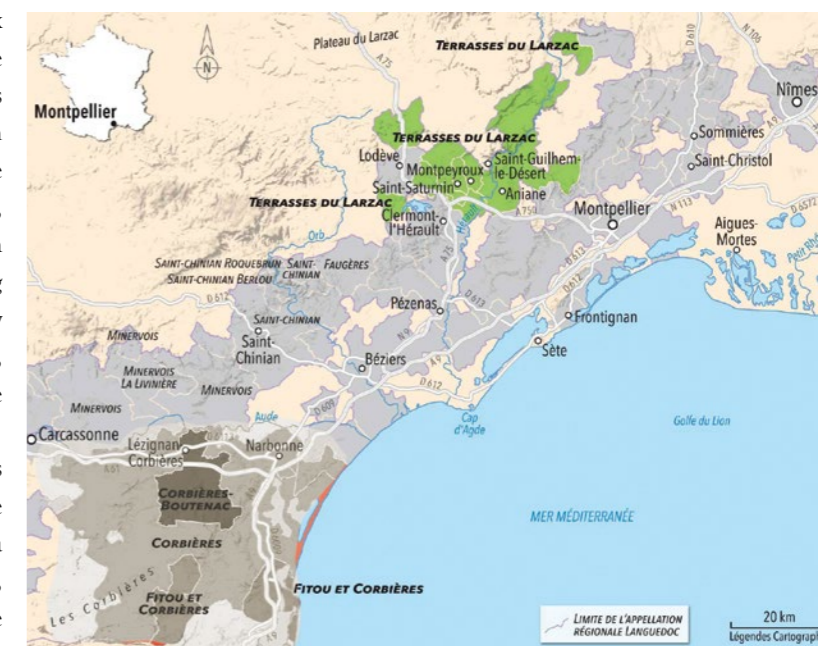


going further north towards Ganges and Montoulieu with estates like Terres des Deux Sources and Les Caizergues. The heart of the appellation is at the base of the V with villages of Jonquières, Aniane, and also St Saturnin and Montpeyroux. The soil over such a wide area is very varied, with limestone and clay, schist and sandstone and the red, iron-rich soil of St Jean de la Blaquière. The cooling influence of the plateau of the Larzac, below which the vineyards lie, is the unifying factor, giving a freshness to the wines, that is the benchmark of the appellation.

The wines of the appellation of Terrasses du Larzac are mainly red. And like all the appellations of the Languedoc, the wines are a blend, with a minimum of three grape varieties, from the five permitted varieties, which are the key grapes of the Languedoc, namely Syrah, Grenache Noir, Cinsault, Carignan Noir and Mourvèdre. Carignan must be no more than 50% of the blend; Cinsault no more than 25% and 70% is the maximum for the other varieties. If you wish to make a varietal wine, it has to be an IGP or Vin de France. There is also an ageing requirement of 12 months, in barrel, vat or bottle.

As Vincent Goumard observed, in order

MAP OF LANGUEDOC



The wines of the appellation of Terrasses du Larzac are mainly red. And like all the appellations of the Languedoc, the wines are a blend, with a minimum of three grape varieties, from the five permitted varieties

Beatrice and Sébastien Fillon of Le Clos du Serres make Saut du Poisson from Vermentino, Carignan and Grenache



©EPerrin



to allow for creativity they do not want too many constraints. And there is within the five varieties a wonderful diversity of flavours, stemming from differences in soil, blends and winemaking practices, but essentially the flavours are those of the Languedoc, with the scents of the garrigues, the vegetation that covers the hillsides, with herbs like rosemary and juniper, as well as black olives and tapenade, and subtle tannins, and always an underlying freshness.

The red appellation is now well established, but most wine growers also make white wine so that there is a growing interest in an appellation for white wines, which are currently Languedoc AOP, an IGP such Pays de l'Hérault, Pays d'Oc, Mont Baudile, or St Guilhem-le-Désert, or plain Vin de France. There is no doubt that the potential is there, with some lovely wines produced all over the area.

The red appellation is now well established, but most wine growers also make white wine so that there is a growing interest in an appellation for white wines

only represents about 15% of the area, as does the white, but there is a strong feeling shared by many that white wine has a real future, whereas rosé has a more frivolous reputation. Some may be gastronomic rosé but many are simply drunk by the swimming pool.

Part of the excitement of the Terrasses du Larzac is the wealth of new wine growers, currently with an average of five new estates each year. There are now about a hundred individual wine estates, along with three cooperatives, namely Montpeyroux, the tiny cooperative of Pégairolles and the large cooperative of St Felix de Lodez, which has merged with that of St Saturnin.

Some of the new estates have been developed by people who have taken their vineyards out of a village cooperative in order to start up on their own. This move may often be prompted by a generation change, when a child has studied winemaking and wants to put their

Oliver Jullien set the standard with his wonderful blends of Carignan Blanc and Chenin Blanc and others have followed. Vincent Goumard at Cal Demoura makes L'Etincelle Blanc mainly from Chenin Blanc, with some Carignan Blanc, Roussanne, Petit Manseng, which is usually found in Jurançon in the Pyrenees, and just a hint of Viognier.

Sébastien and Beatrice Fillon at Clos du Serre in St Jean de la Blaquière make Saut du Poisson from Vermentino, with Carignan Blanc and Grenache Blanc. Julien and Delphine Zernott at Domaine du Pas de l'Escalette produce Clapas Blanc from Grenache Blanc and Carignan Blanc, with a little Grenache Gris and Terret, as well as a pure Carignan Blanc, labelled Mas Rousseau. However, an appellation for white wine will be more complicated to establish, with the greater diversity of grape varieties.

Rosé will remain AOP Languedoc or an IGP. Some, such as Domaine du Pas de l'Escalette and Domaine Sauvageonne, take their rosé seriously; for others, it is more marginal and

Terrasses du Larzac vineyards and a small hut around Jonquieres



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Vincent Goumard of Mas Cal Demoura makes L'Etincelle Blanc mainly from Chenin Blanc

For many, wine growing represents a significant change in career, bringing their enthusiasm and vision to the region, which has benefitted from their broader experiences

studies into practice. Many of the others are newcomers to the region, who may have had careers in other completely different fields, or they have studied oenology, but have no family vineyards and land here is still affordable, at 25,000 to 30,000 euros per hectare. Many newcomers have come from elsewhere in France and from further afield. And for many, wine growing represents a significant change in career, bringing their enthusiasm and vision to the region, which has benefitted from their broader experiences.

On my last visit to the Terrasses du Larzac I spent a few hours at their Soulenque or harvest festival. Some 60 wine growers had got together at the elegant Château de Malmont outside the town of Clermont l'Hérault to provide a tasting opportunity for the French wine trade who wanted to learn more about this wonderful region. You immediately sense that there is a great camaraderie amongst the growers and the tasting amply illustrated the delicious flavours of the region. ♦

WINES OF CALIFORNIA

Bucolic region, seven AVAs, superb wines

Mira Advani Honeycutt takes us on a tour
around California's Santa Barbara County

Santa Barbara County's wine region got more than its share of fame when "Sideways" hit theatres in 2004. The runaway success of this multi-award winning film put the bucolic wine region in the spotlight. The Windmill Inn, which played a key role in the film, is now the Sideways Inn and there's a "Sideways Wine Tour" for the film's fans. The film not only changed the landscape of the region but also impacted the wine market across the US. Sales of Merlot tanked while Pinot Noir skyrocketed.

"Sure, the film ignited sales in the region, with all these crazy people trying to relive the film," commented veteran winemaker, Bryan Babcock when I met him at the recent 38th Santa Barbara Vintners Festival. Babcock's tasting room in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA (American Viticultural Area) was inundated by hordes of fans ready to discover this laidback wine region tucked along California's Central Coast. Babcock's theory, however, is that this explosion was predisposed. "Santa Barbara County was ready to explode anyway," he insisted. "The movie just kicked it into high gear." Dick Doré, veteran winemaker and co-founder of Foxen Vineyard & Winery, said, "Our tasting room went from 200 to 1,000 people; sales skyrocketed. "Sideways" took the shine off the bottle, made it human. It made wine real to a lot of people."

Santa Barbara County has more than 270 wineries
spread over the 69-mile long and 45-mile wide region

Santa Barbara County's 270-plus wineries are spread over the 69-mile-long and 45-mile-wide region. The wineries and tasting rooms meander along sprawling ranches and undulating hillsides through the seven AVAs. **Ballard Canyon** is prime Rhône territory while Bordeaux varieties thrive in the warmer **Happy Canyon**. **Santa Ynez Valley** is known for Burgundian, Bordeaux and Rhône-style varieties. **Los Olivos District** prides itself in Rhône and Bordeaux styles and some Spanish, while Italian and Rhône wines and Cabernet Franc are standouts at **Alisos Canyon**. But it's the **Sta. Rita Hills** and **Santa Maria Valley** AVAs that are prime Pinot country producing cherry-loaded, spice-laced Pinots from Santa Maria Valley and earthy, dark fruit Pinots from Sta. Rita Hills. And yes, there's plenty of the region's hallmark Chardonnay planted there too.

Santa Barbara County was voted as the 'Wine Region of the Year' by *Wine Enthusiast* magazine in 2021. And the euphoria was evident at the recent Vintners Festival held on the grounds of the historic, Old Mission Santa Inés in the quaint town of Solvang. In addition to an abundance of knock-out Pinots, I discovered a plethora of wines, ranging from Trousseau, Carignan, Aligoté and Chenin Blanc to Riesling, Valdigüe, Gamay and the current favourite, Grenache.

With a 15-wine portfolio ranging from Cabernet Franc and Clairette Blanche to Trousseau and Malvasia Blanca, owner-winemaker of Tercero Wines, Larry Schaffer, asserted, "It's not just Pinot country." A dramatic floor-to-ceiling display of his wines graces the tasting room in Los Olivos.

"If you had told me 35 years ago that I'd be making Carignan, I wouldn't have believed it," said Babcock offering me the sensational 2020 Carignan called Status Crow. "That's the magic of Santa Ynez Valley, there's a cornucopia of diversity," added the veteran winemaker, who launched his eponymous

Santa Barbara County was voted as the 'Wine Region of the Year' by Wine Enthusiast magazine in 2021. And the euphoria was evident at the Vintners Festival in Solvang



Veteran winemaker Brian Babcock, owner of Babcock Wineries and Vineyards

Babcock Winery in 1984.

At the festival, I stopped by at The Hitching Post restaurant booth where grill-master Frank Ostini was busy slicing the famous Santa Maria-style barbecue tri-tip cut of beef while his partner Gray Hartley offered a lineup of Pinot Noirs. The legendary restaurant in Buellton, The Hitching Post played a key role in "Sideways" as did The Hitching Post Highliner Pinot Noir. But now the partners have gone beyond their signature Pinots and Chardonnay, producing varieties such as Valdigüe, Riesling, Malbec and Petite Sirah.

While the region's winemaking history dates back to the Franciscan friars, the first post-Prohibition winery that revitalized the region was not in the valley but in downtown Santa Barbara, established by retailer Pierre Lafond in 1962 as the Santa Barbara Winery. Others followed in the early 1970s including Brooks Firestone from Firestone Winery (scion of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Co.) and Richard Sanford who planted the iconic Sanford & Benedict Vineyard. Among the earlier wineries, Zaca Mesa became the training ground for then-emerging and now-noted winemakers such as

Ken Brown, Rick Longoria, Bob Lindquist and the late Jim Clendenen, all of whom have left an indelible mark on Central Coast wines.

The region's vine-growing valleys enjoy an unusual east-to-west orientation thanks to a major tectonic shift between the North Atlantic plate and the Alaskan and Pacific plate. Such an axis ushers in the nightly cool marine air which lifts in the morning with heat coming in from the east. The cool climate extends the growing season and hang time, which in turn gives the vintners the rare ability to harvest grapes at full ripeness with extraordinary amounts of acidity.

THE WINE TRAILS

Since the region's wineries and tasting rooms are spread far and wide, the eight defined wine trails make navigation easier for visitors. The woodsy winding **Foxen Canyon Wine Trail**, which stretches from Santa Ynez Valley to Santa Maria Valley, is home to such pioneering wineries as Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard, Cambria and Foxen Vineyard & Winery. In the Instagramable hamlet of

The region's wine-growing valleys enjoy an unusual east-to-west orientation thanks to a major tectonic shift between the North Atlantic plate and the Alaskan and Pacific plate

Sonja Magdevski's line-up of Rhône-style wines and Pinot Noir at Casa Dumetz



Los Olivos, the **Los Olivos Promenade**, is populated by more than 20 tasting rooms. Here you'll find small lot, handcrafted Rhône and Bordeaux-style wines at tasting rooms such as Andrew Murray, SAMsARA and Coquelicout. Epiphany specializes in Rhône-style wines and refreshing sparkling wine crafted in the *méthode champenoise* style.

Nearby, the **Santa Ynez Valley Wine Trail** is home to such scenic wineries as Sunstone and Gainey. The **Solvang Wine Walk** offers an experience of over a dozen tasting rooms along the main 246 Highway artery through the town, leading to wineries such as Lincourt and Rideau wineries. The **Sta. Rita Hills Wine Trail** is dotted with wineries such as Melville, Sanford, Lafond, Dierberg and The Hilt, all known for their signature Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays. This AVA leads to the town of Lompoc, an enclave of industrial spaces and a hotbed for artisanal and terroir-driven wines from Brewer-Clifton, Fiddlehead Cellars and Ampelos to name a few. In and around the **Buellton Wine Trail**, there are tasting rooms of Margerum, Ken Brown and The Hitching Post famous winery. Further up, along the winding trail of **Ballard Canyon** there's Rusack, Beckman, Stolpman and Jonata's 600-acre hillside estate



Photos: Mira Advani Honeycutt

Left and above: A wide range of quality wines produced across the seven AVAs of Santa Barbara County along eight defined wine trails

planted to Bordeaux varieties on the ancient Careaga sandy soil, which contributes to the wine's structure and complexity with richly textured wines and silky tannins

The one-horse town, Los Alamos, nicknamed Lost Almost, seems to be locked in time back to the 19th century. But don't let the whisper-soft quietness fool you. This is home to Santa Barbara County's One-Michelin-star restaurant awarded to Bell's, helmed by chef Daisy Ryan, an alumna of Thomas Keller's Per Se restaurant in New York. Among the handful of tasting rooms, Casa Dumetz is where owner-winemaker Sonja Magdevski offers a lineup of ethereal Rhône style wines and Pinot Noir.

Last but not the least, the coastal town of Santa Barbara is trending as an urban wine trail. Dubbed the American Riviera, the town is part of the larger Santa Barbara County and is renowned for its early Spanish Mission-style architecture. The wine country experience comes full circle back to the town where the late visionary, Lafond opened Santa Barbara Winery in an industrial zone not far from the beach that is now the uber-hip Funk Zone. ♦

Los Alamos, nicknamed Lost Almost is home to Santa Barbara County's One-Michelin-star restaurant awarded to Bell's, helmed by chef Daisy Ryan

IF YOU GO...

Where to Stay

● **Fess Parker Wine Country Inn** Elegant with exquisitely appointed furnishings in the heart of Los Olivos with 20 tasting rooms within walking distance. www.fessparkerinn.com

● **The Ballard Inn** Romantic Wine country charm with contemporary decor and an excellent restaurant. www.ballardinn.com

● **Santa Ynez Inn** An indulgent wine country getaway, luxurious European linens, gourmet breakfast and tasting of local wines. www.santaynezinn.com

● **Sideways Inn** Previously known as the Windmill Inn in the Dutch style, the new look offers an inviting patio and bar. This is the ultimate lodging for the "Sideways" film fan. www.sidewaysinn.guestreservations.com

Where to Eat

Los Alamos

Bell's, French-inspired bistro run by Per Se alums Daisy & Greg Ryan. One-Michelin star. www.bellsrestaurant.com

Full of Life Flatbread Exquisite handmade pizzas and organic salads. www.fulloflifefoods.com

Santa Ynez

Trattoria Grappolo Long-running Italian bistro, a local favorite. www.trattoriagrappolo.com

Brothers at the Red Barn For prime rib lovers, traditional American fare by brothers Jeff and Matt Nichols. www.brothersredbarn.com

Buellton

The Hitching Post A legendary local hangout serving Santa Maria-style barbecue. Featured in the "Sideways" film. www.thehitchingpost2.com

Industrial Eats Small plates, cavernous barn-like eatery, wood-fired oven pizzas and creative salads, another local hangout. www.industrialeats.com

Los Olivos

Los Olivos Wine Merchant & Cafe Italian with a Mediterranean touch. Featured in the "Sideways" film. www.winemerchantcafe.com

Bar Le Côté Seafood tavern inspired by Central Coast's local bounty. Sister restaurant of Bell's. www.barlecote.com

WINES OF HUNGARY

The Spice of Hungarian Wine

Although spice is a common descriptor of Hungarian wine, the spices are rarely differentiated. But as **Elizabeth Gabay** MW, discovers, there's more to spice than meets the eye

When the Magyar tribes swept in from central Asia to settle in what is now Hungary in the 8th century, they brought with them their own tastes and traditions. Spice is particularly important in both Hungarian cuisine and wine. It is the most frequently cited tasting note according to the WSET's Level 2 Wine-Lexicon, mentioned in almost a fifth of all tasting notes, followed by oak 17.2% and cherry 9.5% and a range of classic fruits. However, despite being an important descriptor, the spice is rarely specified.

American importer Eric Danch, along with his business partner Catherine Granger, specialising in Central European wines with their company Danch & Granger Selections, find a large range of spices, playing on "the exoticness of Hungarian history with the Huns eastern origins and short occupation by the Ottomans with notes of sumac, rose water, pomegranate, cardamom, nutmeg, caraway etc... They've shared so much history and already have coffee and paprika from the same source".

Do these exotic notes exist? Going through my own notes, and those of a range of Hungarian wine specialists, it would appear

Hungarian wines have a distinct character, with many producers describing their wines as spicy. The most popular spice in Hungarian cuisine is paprika

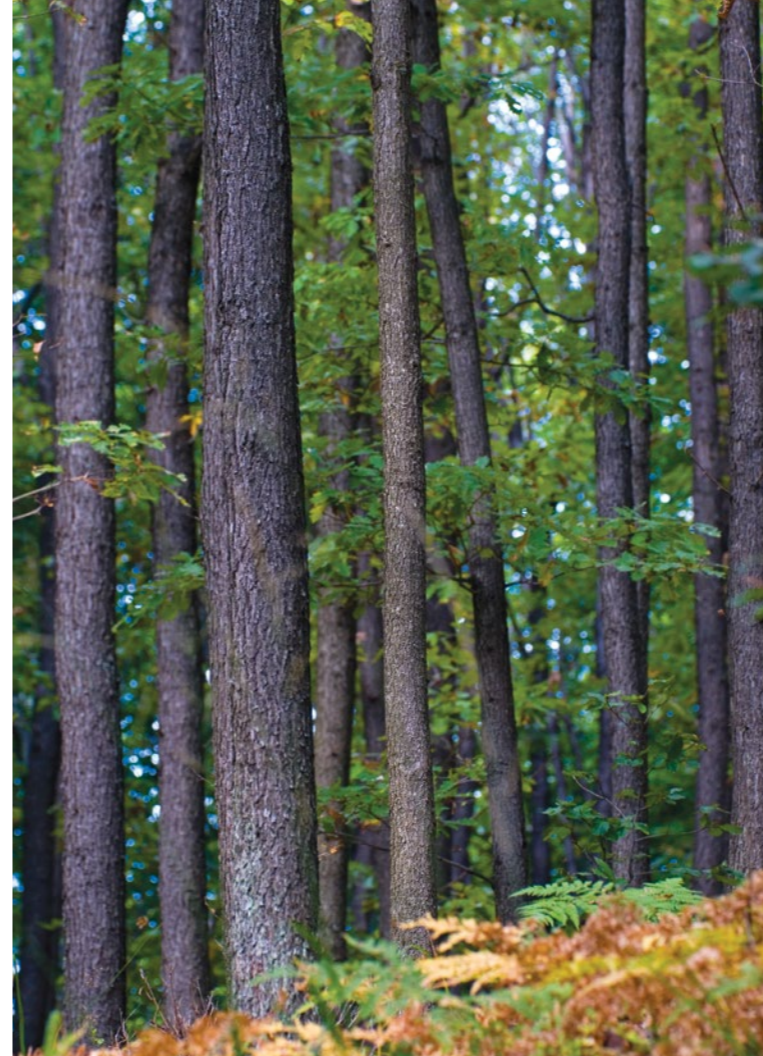


that Hungarian wines do indeed have a unique range of tasting descriptors.

Land-locked Hungary is located at the heart of the Central European crossroads with Austria to the west, Slovakia to the north, Croatia to the south and Romania to the southeast and Ukraine to the northeast. The climate changes from classic continental with hot summers and cold winters along the mountains of the northeast (Tokaj, Eger and Mátra appellations), through Szekszárd (pronounced seks-sard) in the south and the almost Mediterranean climate of Villány in the far south on the Croatian border.

A large number of local varieties, both historic and recent crossings, give Hungarian wines a distinct character, with many producers describing their wines as spicy. The most popular spice in Hungarian cuisine is paprika, with hotter spicier versions from the south, traditionally used in *Szegedi halászlé*, the very spicy fish soup of Szeged, and milder, sweeter paprika from the cooler north.

With 70% of production dedicated to white wine, whether dry, off-dry, sweet or sparkling, the majority of the spice terms are found in white wines. While many dry whites are not aromatic or spicy, and **Furmint** is famed for its powerful minerality and acidity, many are



Oak trees on the Bükk mountains, northeast of Hungary from which barrel makers, Kádár, source their oak. Below: Oak forests in Zemplén. Right: Victoria Evans, head of wine strategy of Vinonovi Ltd and a Hungarian Sommelier Champion



aromatic. Hungarian Victoria Evans, head of wine strategy of Vinonovi Ltd and a Hungarian Sommelier Champion, finds notes of rosemary, thyme, nettle, coriander, cumin, fennel and anise seeds on dry Furmint wines, especially with a bit of age. The second most planted white variety **Cserszegi Fuszeres** (a cross between **Irsai Olivér**, which can have ginger and candied pineapple notes, and **Roter Traminer**, which can show ginger and floral notes) actually has the word “spicy” (*fuszeres*) as part of its name! Fragrant examples can have a perfume candied lime fruit. **Grüner Veltliner** can reveal white pepper notes, while according to Caroline Gilby MW, a specialist in the wines of Central and Eastern Europe, some dry **Szamorodni** from Tokaj and riper **Pinot Gris** have hints of ground coriander. Floral spice notes are particularly prevalent. Rosewater also appears on notes for **Sárga Muskotály** (yellow Muscat) and **Irsai Oliver** and for Gilby coriander and rosewater on Pálffy’s orange wine **Traminer**.

Hárslevelu’s name refers to the typical lime tree flower aromas of this variety. József Bock’s old vine **Hárslevelu** from southern Villány is intensely aromatic and perfumed with honeyed lime blossom, while Kolonics winery’s Hárslevelu from the volcanic vineyards on Somló is perfumed lime flowers with a salty minerality. Gilby finds orange flower water notes on Kikelet’s **Váti** in Tokaj. For Evans, Hárslevelu is about, acacia, honey, lime tree, peach, camomile and black tea.

Cherries have their place in the spicy vocabulary of Hungary, but not as ripe juicy sweet fruit. Hungary is the second-largest producer in Europe of sour cherries, of which there are more than 300 types in the world. The Hungarian name is *meggy*, a word of Finno-Ugric origin, suggesting that Hungarians knew about this fruit before conquering the Carpathian Basin. The tangy taste of sweet and sour fruit features heavily in Hungarian cuisine. Not only do Hungarian tasters name specific types of cherries, with their subtle variations, in



Above: Journalists attending the Hungarian Wine Summit on a walk through the loess 'canyons' in Szekszard. Below: Hills and valleys of Szekszárd stretching towards the Danube



Gilby finds ginger in the 6 puttonyos Tokaj from Disznóku and I have notes of ginger, dried fruits and quince on several sweet Tokaj from Barta

Below: The author, Elizabeth Gabay, finds unique spice aromas in her glass



their tasting notes, but there is an association of the taste of cherries in Hungarian cuisine with cinnamon and cloves.

Hungarian wine writer Daniel Ercsey, editor of WineSofa, includes a range of different cherry notes in his tastings: fresh cherry, black-stem cherry (sweeter), sour cherry, cherry compote and dried cherries. **Kadarka**, in particular, with its Pinot-style silky tannins and fresh acidity, has notes of sour cherries, cinnamon, roses and potpourri, especially dried roses and violets. Gilby also finds pepper and cloves on Vida’s *Bonsai Kadarka*; Sue Tolson, a British wine writer based in Hungary, finds pink and white pepper and allspice.

Similar tangy, sour fruit notes can be found on **Cabernet Franc**. Danch feels Hungarian producers could communicate on their unique spice notes, “instead of chasing French or other terms/reference points” such as Filipino writer Miguel de Leon’s description of **Cabernet Franc** as tasting like tamarind, while Ercsey has similarly acid rosehips. Evans picks up on other spice descriptors, feeling that “red paprika notes are a very important factor in the Cabernet Sauvignon and Bordeaux cuvées from Villány while powdered red paprika (both sweet and spicy) often appears in good vintages”. She also includes eucalyptus, cocoa and earthy notes, while Gilby notes that for the oaked Cabernet Franc *Varacio* from Vylan in Villány, cinnamon, cloves and sometimes bay leaf can be found, and British-based Indian wine writer Sumita Sarma found notes of cloves, cardamom and nutmeg on oak-aged Hungarian Cabernet Franc.

Spice notes can also come from the barrel. András Kalydy, CEO of leading Hungarian barrel makers Kádár, feels that his Hungarian oak barrels contribute spice to the blend. The oak comes exclusively from northeast Hungary and southwest Slovakia, which, unlike most oak forests which have several species, is made up uniquely of the *Quercus petraea* species, growing on thin soils in a continental climate of hot summers and cold winters. Its lack of rich nutrients means the oaks grow more



Caroline Gilby MW, a specialist in the wines of Central and Eastern Europe

slowly, giving a tighter grain and resulting in complexity and less oxygen permeability. The cooperage has a range of over 200 permutations in the barrel-making – size and thickness of staves, seasoning and toasting – but all have two common characteristics: vibrancy and spice.

Kalydy finds spice notes in Hungarian oak of “Christmas spice, brown spice such as cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon which, combined with the vibrant character of the barrels, give ginger notes”, and this character marries well with the sweet botrytised wines of Tokaj. Tolson notes that these **Tokaj Aszú** wines “can boast quite a range of spices, including saffron, ginger, anise, clove, cinnamon, allspice, cumin and sandalwood”. Gilby finds ginger in the 6 puttonyos Tokaj from Disznóku and I have notes of ginger, dried fruits and quince on several sweet Tokaj from Barta; both estates use Kádár barrels. Sarma defines these ginger notes as being more like sweet gingerbread than pungent fresh ginger. For Evans, Hungarian oak is “less sweet spice and more smoke, cedar, cigar, gunpowder and graphite notes, with lesser notes of nutmeg and cloves” which appear more in red wines.

Kékfrankos is the most widely planted variety in Hungary, and despite being better known by its Austrian name Blaufränkisch,

has its largest global presence in Hungary, found in every appellation other than Tokaj. Gilby has found notes of cloves on Kékfrankos from Centurio’s *Diós* on the northern hills of Mátra while in warmer Szekszárd, notes of wild plums, sloes, redcurrants, black chocolate and tobacco are typical. Some Szekszárdi Kékfrankos show even greater spice character. Hetényi’s *Tábornok* has notes of Earl Grey tea, while Heimann’s *Alte Reben* has smoked paprika with violets and white pepper.

Hungary’s most famous red wine is **Bikavér** which literally translates as “bull’s blood”. The name refers to a legend from the 16th century during the Ottoman invasion of how Hungarian soldiers defending the northern town of Eger drank red wine to give them courage. The Ottoman soldiers saw the red stains on their beards and thought they had drunk bull’s blood for courage. Bikavér wines are traditionally found in Eger and Szekszárd, and are based on Kékfrankos blended with Bordeaux varieties. In Eger a silky edge is found with the addition of Pinot Noir, and in Szekszárd a small amount of **Kadarka** is added. Szekszárd producer Csilla Sebestyén describes the region’s Bikavér as “elegant and spicy”. Tolson notes a list of spices she finds on Bikavér with notes of pepper, paprika and cinnamon. Ercsey finds cherries and anise in Stumpf’s Grand Superior *Egri Bikavér*, reminiscent of the ingredients in the traditional cold, sour cherry soup, *meggy leves*, which includes star anise, cinnamon and cloves.

While many of these descriptors refer to specifically Hungarian flavours, unknown to the rest of the world, the move beyond simply saying ‘spice’ illustrates both the complexity and differences of these wines. A chance to taste 300 sour cherry varieties, different paprika styles and different Hungarian oak barrels will surely reveal an even greater range of spice notes. The discussion provoked amongst tasters for this article reveals that exploring different spices in wines is an angle ripe for further development. ♦

The cooperage has a range of over 200 permutations in the barrel making – size and thickness of staves, seasoning and toasting, but all have two common characteristics: vibrancy and spice

Sommelier INDIA WINE MAGAZINE



OTHER**DRINKS**

From the glacial waters of Mt TITLIS



Jenith Aiyappa and
Swapnil Yalgi dreamed
of producing three luxury
spirits for the Asian market.
Brinda Gill has the story

My grandmother gave us a bite of Bird's Eye Chili for any ailment we had and it invariably cured us!" says Jenith Aiyappa, of the fiery chilli native to Coorg, where he hails from. Coorg is a district in Karnataka state, famed for its forested hills and coffee and spice plantations. Now based in Bangalore managing businesses, Jenith and his brother-in-law, Swapnil Yalgi, an engineer based in Switzerland saw a gap in the market and thought of producing artisanal spirits in Switzerland, a country they believe signifies luxury and premium brands, for the Indian and other Asian markets.

To achieve their dream of bringing handcrafted Swiss-quality spirits to the Asian market Swapnil and Jenith founded Royal Alpine Distilleries GmbH, a private limited company based in Turbenthal, Switzerland.

"After the company was formed, the quest to be unique in the market took over," says Swapnil. "While brainstorming for symbols that would appeal to consumers of Swiss alcoholic beverages, the one that stood out was Mt Titlis, the highest summit at 3238 metres in a long chain of mountains in the Alps capped with a glacier."

The water flowing from the Titlis glacier was

**Brainstorming
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formed by a process that took place over several centuries. It is the result of the accumulation of layers of snowfall that have become compacted and transformed into ice over time. The pressure exerted by the upper layers causes some of the ice to melt. This incredibly pure water flows into the Engelberg valley joining a river called the Engelberger Aa, which ends its journey at the mouth of Lake Lucerne, at an altitude of 455 metres.

"Every summer, around 200,000 Asian tourists visit Mt Titlis. We ideated on this icon and thought of using the glacier water from Mt Titlis for our alcohol production! When we approached the concerned authorities responsible for marketing and using glacier water in spirits, Titlis Bergbahnen, they loved our idea. Knowing how famous the mountain was among Asians, they were very supportive," says Swapnil. "They helped us get started, explaining how to collect the water, the location of the collection source and its transportation."

In order to obtain the water a process was established to travel to Engelberg Tallstation and onwards by cable car and then mountain train to reach Lake Trübsee. The water is collected there in containers and brought back the same way.

The glacier-capped Mt Titlis in the Swiss Alps is a popular site for Asian tourists

The next step was to define the products they wished to bring to the market. Based on market research, they targeted gin and whisky. “The other unique product we thought of was Williams, also known as schnapps in Europe,” says Swapnil. The idea to incorporate Bird’s Eye Chili from Jenith’s hometown together with Williams’s schnapps from Lake Constance was a win-win combination, as they zeroed in on three products for their company, Royal Alpine Distilleries.

With the products decided and a distillery master on board, they set up a compact distillery of 250 litres near Winterthur and decided on Swissvål as the brand name. Swissvål alludes to a typical valley in Switzerland that is blessed with natural beauty thus linking their luxury brand with Switzerland’s natural beauty.

The finest ingredients were sourced for



Originally from Coorg, co-founder Jenith Aiyappa is based in Bangalore, managing the business



Swissvål Premium Alpine Dry Gin — A transparent aromatic gin infused with botanicals

infusing the spirits, such as high-quality lavender from Switzerland, Edelweiss, the Swiss national flower (that costs Rs 24,000 per kg), and spices from India, including the coveted Bird’s Eye Chili from a self-help group in Coorg employing women to promote women’s empowerment.

Swissvål alludes to a typical valley in Switzerland that is blessed with natural beauty thus linking their luxury brand with Switzerland’s landscape

The three spirits — Single Malt Whisky, Premium Alpine Dry Gin and Williams With Birds Eye Chili — were produced in small batches of 200 litres, akin to a limited-edition spirit. All three are produced with glacier water from Mt Titlis, under naturally-controlled special climatic conditions, and bottled in custom-made bottles.

The Single Malt Whisky is produced by traditional distillation techniques and an advanced maturation process. Aged in Sherry casks with 46% alcohol, the whisky is amber in colour with a woody fragrance and a hint of earthiness. A nutty taste of almond on the palate, with a hint of orange and flavour of the Sherry cask ends in a long finish. The annual capacity for its production is 70,000 litres. At the “Swiss Spirits Review 2022”, it was awarded 88 points and received a Silver medal.

The Premium Alpine Dry Gin is a transparent aromatic gin, infused with more than ten



Swissvål Single Malt Whisky — Aged in Sherry casks

botanicals. It has a crisp scent of juniper mingled with botanicals such as lavender, coriander, pepper and ginger. The bottle has a screen-printed design depicting the botanicals used in the spirit. It has 43% alcohol. The annual production capacity is 60,000 litres. At the Swiss Spirits Awards 2022 it won Gold with 90 points in the Gin Tonic Challenge, and at the Swiss Spirits Review 2022 it won Silver with 84 points.

“Williams With Birds Eye Chili” is Swissvål’s distinctive drink, made with a pear Schnapps, to which Bird’s Eye Chili is added sourced from forests in Coorg. These chillies have Scoville Heat Units between 50,000 and 100,000. Clove is also added to enhance its flavour. The taste is intensified as the drink is aged in old Bourbons casks giving a unique woody flavour and colour. The design of this bottle has an imaginary Turaco bird, the national bird of Switzerland, holding a green Bird’s Eye Chili in its beak. “This graphic is symbolic of a meeting of the two countries”, says Jenith.

True to its story, Williams With Birds Eye Chili is a smooth, sweet and spicy spirit, a lovely amber in colour that unfolds a unique experience, savoured in stages as the



Swapnil Yalgi is an engineer based in Switzerland and co-founder of Swissvål

chili, known for its intense heat springs a late surprise. A sip initially charms the palate with a touch of sweetness, then spiciness, and then a burst of heat from the chilli! It has 40% alcohol. The annual capacity for its production is 50,000 litres. At the Swiss Spirits Review 2022, it secured Gold with 91 points.

Each spirit can be blended to create cocktails, but they are best enjoyed neat, sipped slowly to savour their flavours, structure and smoothness that speak subtly of the effort and joy that has gone into creating them. ❖

WINES OF LEBANON

The Legacy lives on

With the third generation at the helm, Chateau Musar of Lebanon faces challenges and triumphs alike with aplomb. Nimmi Malhotra reports



Chateau Musar is a family-owned winery founded in 1930, inspired by Lebanon's 6,000-year winemaking tradition

For the last 89 years, Chateau Musar has crafted wines with a unique Lebanese signature despite being in a constant state of war and turmoil

Had there been no war in Lebanon, probably the story of Chateau Musar would not be as it is today,” says Ralph Hochar, the third-generation custodian of the winery. For the last 89 years, Chateau Musar has crafted wines with a unique Lebanese signature. That the country has been in a constant state of war and turmoil hasn’t stopped the winery. With the exception of two vintages – the 1976 and 1984, the wines have been produced every year, shells and war irrespective.

Chateau Musar’s flagship red is moody, imperfect, and yet, intense and memorable. “When people opened a bottle in New York or Tokyo, they were uncorking conflict. There was a whiff of war in every bottle of wine that they opened,” says Michael Karam, author of “Wines of Lebanon”, in the documentary War and Wine (2020) which focused on

wines of the Middle East. If anything, war has inadvertently framed its success.

THE ROAD TO ACCLAIM

Wine has deep roots in Lebanon, dating back to 6000 years. Gaston Hochar revived winemaking when he laid down vineyards in Lebanon in the 1930s. His son, the late Serge Hochar, studied oenology under Émile Peynaud, took over the winemaking in 1960 and added his unique imprint on the wine. As the civil war raged over the land in 1970 and local wine sales dropped by 90%, Serge and his brother, Ronald, brought the wines to London in suitcases to find an international market for their labour of love. Famously, at the Bristol Wine Fair of 1979, acclaimed wine critic Michael Broadbent awarded Chateau Musar 1967 the top prize, and the cult status was born.

Chateau Musar wines are cult wines from an ancient tradition in Lebanon and were organic from the start



Photos Lucy Pope



“Musar Jeune” white, red and rosé, a youthful unoaked range. Right: “Karai”, lighter than the Chateau wines but more serious than the Jeune range



Serge Hochar became the driving force behind the winery’s success, travelling across the world to promote his wines and leaving a trail of friends, fans, and admirers. When he died in 2015, the wine world mourned him deeply. Not only had he established Chateau Musar but re-ignited the Lebanese wine industry.

It helped that the wines were individualistic. Broadbent captures their unique quality astutely when he says they were neither Bordeaux nor Burgundy nor trying to imitate any other wines. Since Gaston Hochar was inspired by Bordeaux, axiomatically, the wine leads with Cabernet Sauvignon, the main actor of the hallowed French region. In other cases, based on vintage conditions, Cinsault, the Southern French varietal, is more prominent (as is with the 2015 vintage). Carignan also features in small doses, as does Mourvedre and Syrah. The wine is aged in

As the civil war raged over the land in 1970 and local wine sales dropped by 90%, Serge and his brother, Ronald, brought the wines to London in suitcases

French oak and released at leisure — some seven years after the harvest. With age (ideally, around 15 years), the wine unfurls its true personality — savoury, spicy, broody. Wine critics have always faulted it for high volatile acidity, but fans don’t seem to care.

Chateau Musar’s white wine isn’t as well-known and often called an oddity by experts. An oxidative style wine, it relies on native grapes — Obaideh and Merwah, indigenous to the mountains of Lebanon and reminiscent of Chasselas, Chardonnay and Semillion. The vineyards are located 30 km southeast of Beirut, in Bekka Valley (quite close to the Syrian border), at 1,000 metres above sea level. There, on sunny gravel and limestone soils, the grapes grow organically, with minimal intervention.

Ralph Hochar, Gaston’s grandson, shares his family stories as he presents the wine to a Singaporean audience. “In the early days, Lebanon’s border lines were sketchy, so my

“Wine does not care about war or no war because yeast makes the wine, even if people are fighting” — Serge Hochar



Ralph Hochar, the third-generation of the family, looks after international markets

grandfather didn't buy the vineyards." He was justifiably unsure of the political scene. Lebanon's location is precarious, abutted by Syria in the north and east, and Israel in the south. "It was no man's land. No one knew if the Bekaa Valley would remain in Lebanon or integrated in Syria or Israel," he says.

The Ghazir winery is situated 70 km away from the vineyards in Bekaa Valley, which posed unique challenges during the war years. For example, in 1984, when the roads throughout Lebanon were blocked, the grapes

had to be put on a ferry and reached the winery five days later, fermenting in their own juices.

"Wine does not care about war or no war because yeast makes the wine, even if people are fighting." Serge Hochar lent his voice to the same documentary. As with wine, the work at Musar continues.

Chateau Musar is now under the stewardship of Ronald Hochar and the third generation — Serge's two sons, Gaston and Marc, look after the winemaking and Ronald's son, Ralph Hochar, looks after international markets. Around them, the Lebanese wine industry has grown to almost 50 producers and among them are some known names like Chateau Kefraya, IXSIR and Chateau Ksara. Planting vines is symbolic of putting down roots and committing to their ancestors' land.

However, the wine industry is facing a new challenge. This time, it's not a war but the Lebanese financial crisis that took hold in 2019.

"Everybody had COVID issues, but for us, it was COVID and the financial meltdown of the market," says Ralph Hochar in a matter-of-fact tone. Years of war have bolstered the wine industry's resolve to survive despite everything. The Lebanese pound has lost 1/6th of its value, driving up the cost of imports and wiping away savings. The local credit cards are blocked, and unless a business has a foreign bank account, it cannot pay for goods and products outside the country. For Lebanese wineries, which rely on imports for most products like bottles, labels etc, it makes the day-to-day operations extremely challenging.

"No one gives credit to Lebanon anymore. If you're a Lebanese wine producer and want to buy bottles from a European manufacturer, it's a pro forma payment (pay before delivery)," says Ralph. Also, Lebanon does not have access to 24-hours electricity and shipping the wines is mired in delays. Ralph adds: "There are

fewer containers coming to Lebanon, making it trickier for us to be able to export our own wines outside of Lebanon."

Exports are the lifeline of wineries as local consumption has largely dried up. Chateau Musar is a little insulated since Serge and Ronald Hochar established the export markets back in the day. Today, 85% of the production is exported to 75 countries, and they can confidently introduce new wines like the second wine, **Hochar Pere and Fils** and a youthful unoaked range of **Musar Jeune**.

The Musar Jeune range is organically farmed and unoaked. It offers a red blend, a white and a rosé. The fruit-driven red is made with Cinsault, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon and aged in cement-lined vats for a year. In contrast, the white is an expression of Viognier, Vermentino and Chardonnay. The grapes are bought from long-term contract growers.

Acutely aware of workforce shortages across the hospitality industry, the back label is redesigned to offer key details about the grapes and region to help the server talk about the wine. The front label's redesign shows an attractive "ripple in the water", adding a touch of modernity to the traditional house.

Adding to the political trouble is climate change which has not spared Bekaa Valley. The vintage of 2015 was viticulturally, the hardest faced by the chateau. First the cold decimated the buds and later the heat reduced the yields. Ralph notes, "In less than ten years, we have moved the harvest from September to three weeks earlier to early August. It's quite a big change."

But there is no talk of moving to calmer shores. Instead, Musar is modernising the winery and is planning to increase capacity over the next five years. "We've been very busy for the last seven years continuing the legacy of my uncle and making sure that the business will continue to expand," Ralph says. With



Wines resting in the cellar. Serge believed that the longer a wine took to be made, the better it would age

Chateau Musar high in demand, the Jeune range is helping the family-run business open new markets.

When asked if Chateau Musar will ever expand beyond Lebanon, Ralph gave a mixed response. He reflected on the 40 years it's taken them to arrive at this point and wondered where else in the world they might have bought vineyards. His conclusion: "At the end of the day, we have realised that Chateau Musar outside of Lebanon will never be Chateau Musar." ♦



WINE**SO**FITALY

ABRUZZO

A Diverse & Scenic Region

Punta Aderci – From sandy beaches along the Adriatic Sea to snowcapped mountains, Abruzzo is known for its scenic landscape

Photo: Renato Cieri



Pacentro is renowned for its springs and fresh mountain water that comes from the snow of the Majella

A lesser known wine region, situated on the Adriatic coast east of Rome, Abruzzo is diverse and scenic and worth visiting for its amazing wines and native grapes, writes [Michèle Shah](#)

Best known for its dramatic mountain scenery, Abruzzo's landscape is surprisingly diverse with 65% of its land designated to national parks, such as the Gran Sasso and Parco della Majella. No other region in Italy or Europe can boast such extensive protected areas or diversity. For example, it's possible to pick up live scampi from the coast at Giulianova, in the province of Teramo and within 40 minutes, at a distance of 30 km, you can reach the snowy peaks of the Gran Sasso, while stopping on your way to collect some truffles in Campli in Teramo.

In a world of climate change, Abruzzo is able to seek out cooler areas for new plantings. Its viticulture can 'climb' the mountains and dig its new roots into virgin habitats and uncontaminated soil, untouched by the industrial activity of modern society. In a sense the 'undeveloped' aspect of Abruzzo has benefitted its agriculture.

The region has three main, historical DOCs, including the red Montepulciano d'Abruzzo and white Trebbiano d'Abruzzo. The third DOC of Controguerra also produces wines based on Montepulciano and other native grapes,

The Torre di Cerrano stands out clearly on the horizon on a small hill close to the beach.

Photo: Lorenzo Sgalippa





Above: Luigi Valori in the vineyard with his 55-year-old vines. Below: Bottles of Valori Pecorino and Montepulciano d'Abruzzo



Pecorino's revived attraction lies in its freshness and high acidity as well as structure and slightly higher alcohol levels which give it good smoothness

although a small percentage of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc is permitted in the blend. Some of the most historic wines come from the Teramo area, where the DOCG exists for Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Colline Teramane, while some classic rosé wines, known as Cerasuolo, are under their own DOC appellation.

The Montepulciano grape has gained a substantial following for its fruit-forward, approachable reds. The Trebbiano grape is best known for dry, light and easy drinking wines with subtle citrus flavours. However, quality Trebbiano and Montepulciano can both produce complex age-worthy wines.

A second DOCG appellation Terre Tollesi or Tullum DOCG area was created more recently in 2019. This historic area with ancient Roman roots is mainly planted to the indigenous white grapes, Pecorino and Passerina with the pergola training system which is the most widespread trellising system in Abruzzo, representing more than 80% of vineyards in the region, whereas new vine training systems are planted to rows of spurred cordon or guyot.

There is a definite trend and revival of Pecorino vines which due to its early ripening and scarce production almost disappeared and were replaced by Trebbiano. Pecorino's revived attraction lies in its freshness and high acidity as well as structure and slightly higher alcohol levels, which give it good smoothness.

"Trebbiano is an amazing variety but you need to reduce the yields. Abruzzo was a poor region with a lot of wine and in the face of poverty, we couldn't throw anything away," explains Luigi Valori of Valori, a medium sized winery with 20ha of vines exporting 80% of production. "I don't produce any Trebbiano now, I am a Pecorino freak. It was a challenge because when I planted Pecorino some 10 years ago no one, or very few, believed in it as production was lower with high acidity."

Valori is an organic viticulturalist by training, and his 55-year-old Vigna Sant' Angelo, single

vineyard, produces excellent Montepulciano Riserva. According to Valori, the thick vine trunks on these old vines contain all the necessary nutrients for the plant to survive, even in stressed climatic conditions, with roots that go down seven metres deep where they find water in the sandy soils. "Sandy soils are poor soils, therefore good for phenolic development and a long vegetative ripening, producing elegant wines," says Valori.

Abruzzo's production with an average vineyard property of one or two hectares has a history of cooperatives, which today counts for 80% of its production and include medium to large cooperatives. Bottled wine is a fairly new concept in Abruzzo. Until the 1980s most wine was sold in bulk by large cooperatives, which still produce large amounts of bulk wine, alongside a wide range of well-priced bottled wines.

One of the largest cooperatives is a group of nine consortiums in the area of Chieti under



the gigantic Consorzio Citra with 7,000ha and a production of 18m bottles. Established in 1960, Cantina Tollo with 780 members is very much tied to Abruzzo's cooperative history. It controls some 3,000ha of vineyards planted to indigenous varieties such as Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Trebbiano d'Abruzzo, Pecorino, Passerina and Cococciola.

Cantina Miglianico a historic cooperative founded in 1961 by the priest, Don Vincenzo Pizzica to help local producers, has 200 members and 500 ha, producing 1.8 million bottles under its own brand, plus 300,000 for a private label.

"Today, we are looking at a new reality here in Abruzzo," says Davide Acerra who manages the marketing and development of the Consorzio Vini d'Abruzzo "We have backbench producers of great value with highly respected and award-winning wines and we have a solid belt of cooperatives which absorb the smaller grape growers giving breath to export markets, while more recently we have a new generation

Di Sipio Estate tasting room at the beautiful 35ha Di Sipio Estate, in the province of Chieti, a farmstead of stature



of small to medium winemakers that are producing some really exciting, quality market driven wines, as well as natural, biodynamic and organic production. The bottom line is we have different kinds of wines that cater to the market in quality, price and style,” explains Acerra.

The history of Abruzzo’s wine production is not merely limited to cooperative production, however. The region represents important historic names connected to Italy’s viticultural elite. Historical producers such as Francesco Valentini, famous for top quality traditional Montepulciano d’Abruzzo and Trebbiano d’Abruzzo wines, along with Emidio Pepe, known for his biodynamic production of Montepulciano d’Abruzzo and Trebbiano d’Abruzzo are considered among Abruzzo’s best producers. Other premium names include Illuminati with 135ha and Cataldi Madonna with 30ha.

Valentini established in 1600 has some 65ha of vineyard yielding annually between 20,000 to 50,000 bottles of Trebbiano, Montepulciano and the lighter, ‘rosato’ Cerasuolo, depending on the vintage. Francesco Valentini, an artisan at heart, doesn’t release his Montepulciano d’Abuzzo if it is not a good vintage. His exports are only 5% of his production, the rest goes to his historic clients in Italy. Valentini’s vines are traditionally planted to a pergola canopy, which according to him is the best kind to protect the grapes from the strong Abruzzo sun.

In Valentini’s opinion the main change over the last 10 to 15 years has been a noticeable improvement in producing quality wines in Abruzzo. “Our region is amongst the greenest regions of Europe,” says Valentini. “Our biodiversity is one of the oldest and was known to the Greeks and Romans. We have 26 cultivars of olives that have survived over the centuries, like our grape varieties that are strongly adapted to the region and yield age-worthy wines.



Nat Colantonio from Controguerra DOC uses the appellation name, meaning ‘against the war’, as a play of words on his packaging with the ban the bomb symbol

Francesco Valentini, an artisan at heart, doesn’t release his Montepulciano d’Abuzzo if it is not a good vintage. His exports are only 5% of his production

Medium sized wineries such as Tenuta Masciarelli with 300ha of vines are also known for traditional grapes in addition to the growing popularity of Pecorino. “Abruzzo is a land which offers plenty, where organic and biodiversity are a natural way of life,” says Marina Cvetic of Masciarelli estate. “The production of Trebbiano can at times be tricky due to its productive potential, however, Montepulciano has the ability to express with greater ease its deep tannins and intense colour, which is what has singled it out for its great appeal.”

Over the last 20 years a growing ‘nouvelle vogue’ and a new generation of producers represent the future of Abruzzo wines. The scenic Fattoria Bruno Nicodemi, in the Colline Teramane DOCG area, managed by brother and sister team, Alessandro and Elena Nicodemi exports 80% of its production which includes the classic wines of Abruzzo as well as establishing new trends for the region as ‘cocciopesto’ wines, a project which started in 2017.



Nic Tartaglia, pictured in his vineyard, is probably the only producer in Abruzzo experimenting with a sparkling Riesling and a barrel fermented Chardonnay

“This is a unique Trebbiano d’Abruzzo style made with grapes from a 50- year-old vineyard, vinified in cocciopesto, which goes back to Roman times,” explains Elena. The whole bunch grapes are fermented in the cocciopesto amphora with indigenous yeasts. Following a 10-day maceration the skins and stalks are removed and the wine left in the cocciopesto to finish fermentation, producing an elegant and delicate Trebbiano d’Abruzzo with a decidedly mineral character.”

The smaller gems of production may be difficult to find, as roads in Abruzzo are often small and winding up and down hilly terrain, while distances can be difficult to calculate. Although the sea-shore is always a good reference to follow especially when in Controguerra DOC. Its very name is an enigma, meaning ‘against the war’, a symbol that Nat Colantonio of Bossanova winery has featured on his packaging. This small 9ha and 43,000 bottle production of natural winemaking uses spontaneous fermentation,

indigenous yeasts and whole bunch pressing, as well as maceration on the skins. Here too, many of the grapes originate from 35- to 40-year-old vines, which over the years have gained balance from lower yields, producing wines that show great purity and individual character.

Like many wineries in Abruzzo, Nic Tartaglia’s small 12ha vineyard and winery in Alanno, in the province of Pescara, was passed down from generation to generation. Yet, few can boast such a wonderful legend as that of the ‘golden calf’, a Roman relic apparently found by Nic’s great-grandfather in an abandoned cave in the countryside, which he sold to purchase 100ha of land, planting vineyards which later were divided among his four sons, each one to his own. Nic Tartaglia is probably the only producer in Abruzzo experimenting with a sparkling Riesling and a barrel fermented Chardonnay.

The rise to riches story of success can be summarized by the beautiful 35ha Di Sipio Estate, in the province of Chieti, a farmstead of stature which was bought some 20 years ago by the son of one of its former farm labourers. Nicola di Sipio renovated the entire estate, no expenses spared, and handed it as a gift to his father who had dedicated his life to the estate as a farmer. Di Sipio started with a production of *metodo classico* sparkling wine from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and today produces a wide range of excellent wines including a powerful, age-worthy Montepulciano aged for five years before releasing it to the market.

Abruzzo has tremendous potential to emerge as a quality region with significant exports and a solid platform of well-recognized quality estates. Promotion is of course the necessary tool for communicating quality and the diversity of the region. Abruzzo is only beginning to touch on these issues by promoting its wines and tourism internationally. ♦

www.abruzzowineexperience.com



Wines in the Air

Despite the challenges they face, airlines are going all out to please passengers on long-haul flights with their wine offering. **Carol Wright** describes what to expect on British Airways and Emirates



Serving wine on an Emirates airline flight. Emirates has six different wine lists split geographically to suit international travellers

Settled back in one's seat with some hours of flight ahead may seem the ideal time to savour a glass of wine. However, flying is not the ideal way to appreciate the subtle nuances of wines with cabin pressure reducing the effectiveness of one's taste buds at 35,000 feet.

Wines in the air pose some very real challenges. A Lufthansa study showed that the perception of saltiness and sweetness dropped by 30% in flight. The cabin air lowers humidity to 20% or less; cabins are often drier than some deserts. This lack of moisture also reduces the sense of smell which again affects taste judgement. Summed up, the effect is like drinking wine with a heavy cold's blocked nose. Other factors that adversely affect in-flight taste are engine noise and vibration, time change and stress.

Airlines try and counteract this effect by modifying food recipes and adding more spices such as curry and lemongrass flavours. They cannot do much about wines, however. No known winery is prepared to adapt its process to make wines especially for airlines. It is the passenger's response, not the wine that changes in the air and a well balanced wine at ground level will still be that at 35,000 feet.

Fine Bordeaux and white Burgundies are expected in First and Club classes but they do not always travel well; fruit and sweetness is suppressed and tannins and acidity, exaggerated. Ripe, fruity New World wines are a better palate choice although passengers tend to want recognised brands and labels. Informed advice is to go for bigger-styled wines; nothing subtle or aperitif drinking style. Shiraz, Merlot, Chardonnay and Viognier with bigger riper flavours and lower acidity are the best grape bets. Red meat with an Australian Shiraz would be a made-in-the skies combination.

Champagne is one of the delights of premium class air travel and, again, it loses some of its ground level charm. It is a good



British Airways' Club Class wine service is impeccable

Bordeaux and white Burgundies are expected in First and Club classes but they do not always travel well; fruit and sweetness is suppressed and tannins and acidity, exaggerated

idea to drink it as soon after take-off as possible before atmospheric changes cause bubbles to be lost. They tend to stick to the side of the glass rather than be released in a steady, pleasurable stream. This is one viticultural area where producers may tweak their product a little for an airline. Sparkling wines are bottled at a lower pressure for airplanes than for use at ground level. If this was not done and the cabin pressure dropped for some reason (when the oxygen masks appear) the bottles in the galley would explode.

But in spite of taste loss airplanes are often the place to discover new wines which one might like to taste again on the ground. Two leading airlines, British Airways and Emirates think their passengers should have this opportunity and have set up their own wine retailing outlets, reflecting the full resumption of in-flight food and wine service pared back during the pandemic.

British Airways' announced its online wine retailer, 'The Wine Flyer' (thewineflyer.co.uk) in October 2022. Jack Smith its CEO, said, "We know that wine is a huge passion of many of our clients, so we are offering a broad choice in country, region, grape style and price point to suit as many customers as possible. With our own outlet, we have a unique opportunity to bring to customers a variety of wines including those that they've enjoyed in the air."

The airline hopes tasting the wines will bring back memories of travel and destinations visited. Every wine in the range comes from a country served by British Airways including France, South Africa, USA, Australia and New Zealand. The range includes premium brands, for example Whispering Angel, Penfolds and Moët & Chandon. Some of the wines have been chosen because of past popularity on flights, like Barossa Valley's Teusner's The Riebke Shiraz. Some are included in the Wine Flyer range as they will be served on future flights.

BA's long-haul flights for the first time are serving an English sparkling wine in First class – Hattingley Valley Blanc de Noirs 2018. The Teusner Riebke Shiraz and Te Tera Pinot Noir Martinborough 2020 are air robust wines available along with wines from Pauillac and St Julien in Bordeaux. In Club class, wines to combat taste buds that have become less appreciative in pressurised flying conditions are a De Morgenzon DMZ Chardonnay from Stellenbosch and Swartland Winery's Limited Release Syrah.

The wine lists are usually changed every three months though the Cru Classé red Bordeaux wines in First Class may be changed more often. Menus, too, are changed regularly reflecting the destinations served and highlighting dishes according to the routes flown, such as Chicken Dum Biryani on routes from India and King Prawn Machbous from the Middle East. The menu is paired with wines from the in-flight



A selection of Bordeaux Grand Crus Classé wines served on board Emirates first class cabin

list that the airline thinks will remind travellers of the places they visit and will want to buy them when they return home.

British Airways is linking appreciation for wine with brand loyalty by offering Avios travel reward points on all wine sold through 'The Wine Flyer'. A subscription option with higher Avios points helps customers collect enough Avios to fly to short-haul destinations from the UK such as Paris, Barcelona and Naples in only six months. Wine has certainly become a window on the world!

Emirates provides an immersive wine experience including its own wine channel on Dubai TV with flight information, ability to check out what is being served on board ahead of a trip and order the wine in advance; or browse at Emirate's retail wine shop, Le Clos established 15 years ago at Dubai airport where wines from producers featured in-flight can be tasted and pre-ordered to be collected later. Le Clos ranges also include such labels as Petrus, Margaux

British Airways is linking appreciation for wine with brand loyalty by offering Avios travel reward points on all wine sold through The Wine Flyer



Champagne served on British Airways. Wine lists are changed every three months

and Mouton Rothschild. All the wines are available online. (leclos.net/emirates.)

Le Clos and inflight wines are selected and bought by the same team. Emirates's regular tasting panels include personnel from their culinary team, procurement and general management. The airline's president is also involved. Every wine is assessed on its quality, personality and how it fits within the airline programme. There are 250 wine changes each year or roughly five a week. Bordeaux and Burgundy are key regions that have grown significantly in the past three years. Ten new producers have been sourced, according to the company, in the past year alone to keep up with demand. Tuscany is also an important region. In the New World, California's Napa Valley is the region offering wine aficionados with an earlier drinking alternative to Bordeaux.

Emirates has six different wine lists split geographically to suit a worldwide mix of passengers' tastes. The wine lists have three basics: Champagne, a French white wine and a red Bordeaux which are the most popular

Emirates' inflight lists have a special bottle symbol indicating that the wine is available for purchase at Le Clos. An example is the 2002 Château Lascombes

choices. As with British Airways, the selection of alternate in-flight wines depends on the route and are chosen from the areas to where the flights are flying, for example, Australian and New Zealand wines on those routes while the wines from Tuscany are the most favoured on European routes.

Emirates airline will keep a particular vintage for years to serve it at the appropriate time, even though large profits could be made by selling it. Thus, a case of 2013 Tignanello was recently served on all European routes.

The inflight lists have a special bottle symbol indicating that the wine is available for purchase at Le Clos. An example is the 2002 Château Lascombes, a Bordeaux Second Growth Cru Classé which has a silky texture and 'an endless finish'.

Each wine is listed with detailed tasting notes, often including details of terroir and the producer's biography. Some wines that are exclusive to Emirates are indicated by a star and a note saying, 'You won't find (this) anywhere else'. Such wines include 2010 Château Valandraud 'Virginie de Valandraud', Saint-Emilion Grand Cru Classé with 'a long smoky blackcurrant finish', served in both First and Club classes which I found went very well with a veal fillet.

The First Class list also features The Emirates Vintage Collection described as 'the rarest and most exclusive wines from our cellar in Bordeaux matured for over ten years and handpicked for you by our sommeliers'. The airline's cellar contains some 7000 wines including different bottle sizes. In Club Class, the Sommelier's choice is tagged as 'sometimes we bring on board special wines that aren't on our list'. Emirates says these are hidden gems bought in small parcels and served on various regional routes to heighten the traveller's experience.

The company says their aim is to provide versatile Old and New World wines in a range of flavours while maintaining quality in the challenging cabin environment. ♦

OTHERDRINKS

HARD SELTZERS

The new kid on the block

Gagan Sharma traces the evolution of the latest entrant in the ready-to-drink category and declares it a trend that's here to stay



Pursue is a highly decorated brand, winning internationally famed Penta awards for its design and packaging

Call it whatever — hard seltzer, spiked seltzer, boozy soda water — it's a drink that has turned heads in the recent past. What was once considered a niche category, a fad, a drink for the uninitiated, something for beginners before you moved on to the more serious drinks, has been on the rise with its timing fueled by Covid, and the general shift towards limited-yet-conscious drinking. In the beginning it was called "the world's first, brewed alcoholic lemonade" by the Aussie brand, "Two Dogs", circa early 1990s. Now, it's generally accepted in the US which has added more shades to its personality and pushed it to become a global citizen. The drink has found a home in India too and is making waves across the board. Despite its tardy awakening from the slumber of adolescence, hard seltzer is becoming a permanent addition in the spectrum of daily elixirs, and you must know about them, or fear being called a social outcast!

Let's go back in time a thousand years. Across the world there were mineral springs with naturally sparkling waters. Rich in nutrients, they were lauded for their medicinal value, whether consumed or from bathing in the waters. Seeing an opportunity here, some towns started bottling and selling them. One of the towns in Belgium was called Spa, contributing its name to the detoxifying and cleansing rituals of today. Another important German town was Niederselters which has etymologic roots with today's moniker, seltzer. For marketing and commercial reasons perhaps, all waters came to be called 'Seltser's water', which over the years was reduced to seltzer. Simply put, mineral water with a kiss of fizz equals seltzers, capisce!!

In 1772, Joseph Priestley, an English chemist, figures out a way of infusing water with carbon dioxide. A Swiss watchmaker, named Schweppes, chances upon this miracle and builds an empire around it. By the 1880s Europe was fixated on bubbly water. The



Moving away from beer, IST is a lighter drink with two flavour, lemon and grapefruit

When President Franklin Roosevelt lifted Prohibition in 1933, and denizens started looking for something different and flavoursome, colas took over, overtaking the craze for seltzers

Americans, however, thought minerals were a fault of nature and started neutralising the water, carbonating it and shipping it to bars for soda fountains and bottling it for homes. During the Prohibition of alcohol in America and the giggle-water gone, seltzers become the fallback for a decade and a half. When President Franklin Roosevelt lifted Prohibition in 1933, and denizens started looking for something different and flavoursome, colas took over, overtaking the craze for seltzers. However, as nature has it, civilisations turn tides and are now visibly bidding a slow-but-sure adieu to these sugary alternatives, replacing them with low-sugar, low-calorie, sophisticated drinks, bringing seltzers back in vogue.

So what exactly is a 'hard' seltzer? In geek speak, it's carbonated water that's been flavoured and spiked to typically around 6% abv. The initial examples were mostly brewed with barley or cane sugar, but they could also be wine based. The general norm now rests

on grain-based neutral spirits, probably due to the ease and size of production, pace of filling shelves, conducive financials, etc. Nonetheless, seltzers are characterised by minimal sugar and calories, pleasant flavours, bright labels and ease of drinking.

India's tryst began with Bro Code, which was a decent product for its time but it didn't quite make it, much like the first American brand, Zima. However now, the US market has boomed with growth spiking at 285% at times. India is adding its own homegrown varieties. Pursue, IST, Raya, and Barney's are the names to note.

Anish Reddy, founder of Pursue had his first hard seltzer in the US. He began with some skepticism but his inhibitions came tumbling down after the first sip. "The US has been a great cultural driver," he says. "Look at Truly and White Claw's journey. When Covid hit, I returned to India but there were no hard seltzers to be found. Often I settled for beers which left me sluggish and bloated. Having been in the distillation space ourselves for generations, I wanted to create something different, got experimental, and Pursue was the result."

Pursue sets itself apart as a highly decorated brand, winning internationally famed Penta awards for its design and packaging and the highest 3-star rating from the International Taste Institute, Brussels.

Jeet Khandwala, had a similar epiphany. "During my MBA days in Madrid, we drank a lot of gin. At the time of Covid I moved to Goa, with the idea of exploring the gin market. The RTD (Ready to Drink) scene was booming and it was the largest growing category in the world back then. But there was hardly any alternative to beer, so we decided to launch our own brand."

Raya, sets itself apart by re-distilling its botanicals on an ENA base, like a gin, and then cutting it down, while traditionally carbonated



Raya seltzers include flavours such as citrus spice, pineapple ginger, and pomegranate mint

Anish Reddy, founder of Pursue had his first hard seltzer in the US. He began with some skepticism but his inhibitions came tumbling down after the first sip

water is spiked with a bit of neutral alcohol.

Ruchi Gupta is the co-founder of the How I Met Your Mother-inspired Barney's hard seltzers. She was a teetotaler who was watching global trends and decided to jump in. "Look at the US, French Fries are being replaced by pita bread and hummus. There's a health-conscious shift that's developing. Hard Seltzers are the equivalent in the alcobev world," she says. Barney's started in India and is now also available in Australia and other countries, showing that the category is truly global.

Krupa Shah of IST was another passionate and conscious drinker, looking for a more conducive alternative, who noticed the gap. "Most options were either sugary drinks or beer. So we took it upon ourselves to create an easier, lighter alternative."

Hard seltzers are not aiming to compete with beers, breezers and cocktails but offering drinkers an alternative. The argument is that while beer is known for its confusing categories, rituals, and calorie level, hard

seltzers are possibly the only natural response to the 4 to 6% abv category. There's no way this geeky, delicious group of drinks can be passed off as just a fad. However, the truth remains that it may not be the most conscious of choices. For the longest time the only RTD choice was Bacardi's Breezers, an amazing feature in our early drinking days. Although breezers share commonalities with hard seltzers in their alcoholic base, changing trends have moved on and hard seltzer-makers are battling to set themselves apart.

Krupa explains, "Considering excessive artificial colours, flavours, sugar, and calories, we don't want hard seltzers to fall into that pit. There's a growing impression that breezers are not for evolved drinkers. Though hard seltzers appeal to young people, we don't wish the category to be just for them and viewed as a frivolous drink. Instead, they are a drink for connoisseurs and those who seek complexity in the glass."

Jeet concurs and adds, "Hard seltzers should be looked at as premium sparkling cocktails without the hard work of measuring and mixing different ingredients."

There's no way this geeky, delicious group of drinks can be passed off as just a fad. However, the truth remains that it may not be the most conscious of choices

Barney's hard seltzer features strawberry and rose flavours



Since the category is still young and is free from a cast-in-stone definition, the possibilities are endless. IST has two flavours currently, lemon lime and grapefruit. "We've all had lemonades and citrus drinks, they create a nostalgic connection, and grapefruit is a lesser known flavour which works brilliantly," Krupa says.

Pursue has four variants that work in pairs, Barney and Raya, as of now, have three each. "Since there weren't any Indian players, we took international brands as our yardstick," says Anish. "We worked with a mixologist to fix our flavours and a combination of ingredients to create a single unique flavour. Flavour combinations spruce up the taste intensity and there are endless options to create."

Ruchi's idea was simple but hard-hitting. "Hard seltzers make you stand out from the usual flavours of orange, pomegranate, etc, and the combinations are hard to impersonate". Jeet goes on to present another analogy. "We wanted to make a herb and a fruit mix. We worked with a chef and even cooked some flavours together. A marriage of flavours makes it a much more wholesome drink."

Pursue's four variants include mint and mosambi, strawberry and rose, mango and chilli, and peach with white tea. Raya's line-up features citrus spice, pineapple ginger, and pomegranate mint. Barney's has strawberry and blueberry, apple and rose, as well as lemongrass and grapefruit.

With giants like Pepsi and Coke entering the category, one thing is assured, it isn't a bubble or a fad, and has the potential to grow. The drink is also being promoted as gender neutral. While beers targeted men and fruity, sweet, colourful drinks were for ladies, seltzers are for all, and their array of flavours please both sides.. All the producers agree that the opportunities are endless, and that it'll be the most flavour-driven category unlike spirits, beers and, to some extent, wines. ♦

FINE DINING: PUNE

Master Strokes

Master Chef Fu Lei offers diners at Tao-Fu, JW Marriott Pune, a choice of delectable preparations drawing on his heritage and family recipes

Chinese by birth and upbringing, Master Chef Fu Lei has worked at restaurants in different countries. He first came to India in 2007 for four years and then returned in 2018. At Tao-Fu, the Chinese restaurant that recently opened at JW Marriott Pune, Chef Fu Lei has curated a unique dining experience. He spent the last year in Pune trying out local food with the aim of offering diners traditional, authentic family-style Chinese food, so that they could experience the difference between Indo-Chinese food and authentic Chinese.

“I want to bring the heritage of Chinese food going back six centuries, with the original flavours of Sichuan spices, especially Sichuan pepper, and the joy and warmth of Sunday family meals cooked by my mother and grandmother,” he says.

A sense of space and style unfolds at Tao-Fu as one steps into the voluminous restaurant with well spaced seating, private dining areas as well as outdoor seating. Pendant lamps. (inspired by dim sum baskets), blue and white vases, a buzzing bar, an open kitchen with a backlit panel to the ceiling and the menu presented on iPads (complete with images and videos) create a smart, contemporary vibe.

The beverage menu features an extensive range of cocktails, wines and spirits. Twelve Zodiac Cocktails



Master Chef Fu Lei's cooking draws on the ancient heritage of Chinese cuisine

specific to Chinese zodiac signs and five Tea Cocktails invariably catch the interest of diners. Tapping the Chinese zodiac sign linked to your year of birth on the horoscope wheel reveals a drink to match your sign!

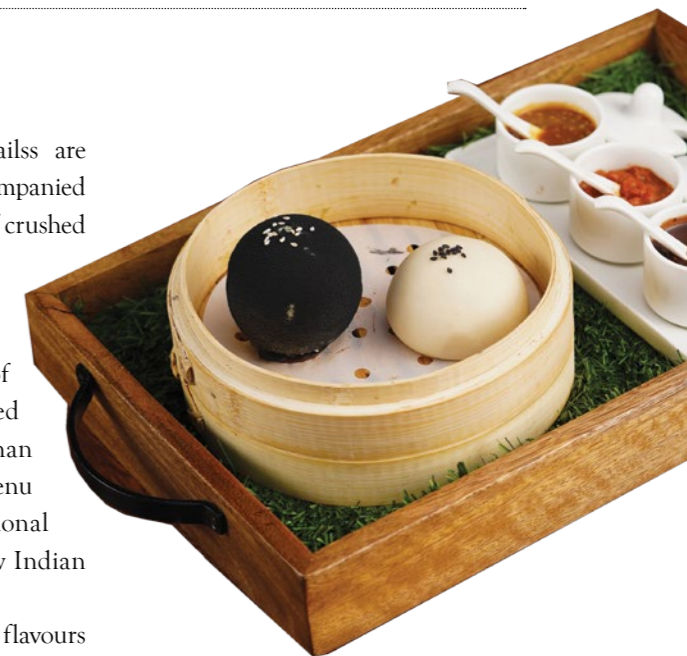
The multicoloured Zodiac Cocktails arrive with flourishes such as slivers of edible gold leaf on the Qilin cocktail while the Moon Rabbit cocktail is topped with an ethereal bubble that gently bursts into delicately scented wisps of vapour.

The Tea Cocktails draw on China's tea culture where tea infusions provide a mildly flavoured base for spirits and fresh ingredients that complement the infusion. For example, white rum is infused with jasmine tea and bourbon with oolong. With evocative flavours and names like Orange Dragon and

Flaming Ice Tea, the cocktails are served in a tall slim glass accompanied by a tumbler of tea on a bed of crushed ice for topping up.

The wine menu features around 70 labels of blends and varietal wines, listed by grape variety, rather than region or country. The menu predominantly lists international wines by the bottle and a few Indian wines offered by the glass.

Try a Riesling with delicate flavours and nice acidity, such as Dr. Schmitt Riesling Qualitätswein Rhein, or a Syrah/Shiraz with fine tannins and low acidity paired with traditional Beijing style duck. A crisp Champagne, sparkling wine or a young Sauvignon Blanc is recommended with fish,



Ying Yang bao at Tao-Fu restaurant in Pune

shrimp, or vegetarian dim sums. Gewürztraminer balances the bold flavours of Sichuan dishes like spicy Dan Dan Noodles, Mapo Tofu and Kung Pao Chicken given the wine's



The stylish, spacious interiors of Tao-Fu restaurant at the JW Marriott hotel in Pune



A collection of delectable dishes from the Tao-Fu menu

touch of sweetness and low acidity. For most of the other preparations a French or Argentinian Malbec are suggested, while a full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignon would nicely complement tenderloin and lamb dishes.

Starting with one of Chef Fu Lei's signature appetizers, dim sums, salad or soup one is spoilt for choice straight away! Chef Fu Lei's Signature Appetizers are a treat of fresh flavours and colours, and a surprise crunch from nuts – walnuts with a soya sauce glaze tossed in sesame seeds. The six styles of dim sums (steamed, bao, poached, crisp, baked and Cheung-Fun) offer a choice within each style. The Three Dozen Puff barbeque New Zealand lamb is recommended for its 36 layers of light flaky pastry. The salads, Black Fungus salad with red chilli, soy garlic dressing or Marinated Chicken, Sichuan style are light, fresh

and tasty.

At the Shabu Shabu counter you can select from a total of 38 options ranging from stock, noodles, vegetables, meat, poultry, seafood to different sauces, herbs, spice and oil to create a soup to match your preference.

The main course offers something for all food preferences and styles, with the chef's wok busy tossing ingredients to create a variety of made-to-order preparations. Among them are heritage dishes Mapo tofu, chilli bean sauce, Sichuan pepper and "Ants climbing on tree" (spicy sweet potato noodles with minced morel mushrooms, minced chicken or minced pork). Sichuan dishes are redolent with bold flavours, Wok tossed string bean, preserved mustard vegetable, light soy and Kung pao chicken, roasted cashew nut, fried chilli. Home-style dishes, with subtler flavours include Steamed Australian

seabass, fragrant garlic, light soy, pickled chilli sauce among others with a touch of pickled chilli that Chef Fu Lei recalls being added to dishes at home for added flavour.

There are some good sharing options as well. From the barbeque oven is the heritage dish, Salt baked chicken that arrives on a trolley and is gently flambéed with rum, cracked open with a hammer and then sliced and served. Traditional Beijing style duck, another heritage favourite, is served first with the crisp skin brushed with castor sugar, then the duck is carved and fine slices are served on pancakes with a touch of hoisin sauce, mashed garlic, scallion and cucumber, with what remains served salt and pepper style on a bed of lettuce.

The desserts at Tao-Fu step away from typical Chinese desserts to offer homemade ice creams and sorbets, and the chef's creative expressions such as Ying Yang Bao, filled with hot custard or with orange sesame; Matchamisu, a white chocolate and matcha tea tiramisu served along with matcha tea, (sweets) and cookies). We opted for Tao-Fu Dragon Ball, a fretted chocolate globe tucked with passionfruit and Sichuan pepper that gently crumbles as hot chocolate is poured over it. It makes for a perfect ending to an afternoon of gustatory indulgence. ♦

— Brinda Gill

GETTING THERE

JW Marriott Pune

Open Monday to Sunday

Lunch: 12.30 to 3.30 pm;

Dinner: 6.30 pm to midnight

Lunch for two: ₹2500 without alcohol

Dinner for two: ₹3000 without alcohol

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WINECLINIC

Your Questions Answered

Why is wine always sold in a coloured bottle?

This is because when wine is exposed to sunlight, fluorescent light or any other form of lighting, it can change its aroma and produce off-flavours, which are sometimes called lightstruck flavours. Another reason for keeping wine in coloured bottles is to protect wines

from oxidation, a common wine fault. A little bit of oxygen is good for a wine, because it allows the flavours to open up. However, when a wine comes into too much contact with oxygen, it starts to get 'oxidised' and becomes duller.

What does 'fortified' wine mean?

A fortified wine means that a distilled spirit has been added to the wine, usually brandy (a neutral grape spirit), during fermentation. This results in a wine whose natural sweetness is preserved and gives a full, rich texture to the drink. Some examples include Port, sherry, madeira, Marsala, and vermouth.

Can a rosé wine be aged?

Rosé wines are usually made to be drunk as fresh and



young as possible, ideally the year they are released. The flavours will start to 'fall flat' and taste old if you keep them much longer. However, a few rosé wines are built to last. For example, vintage rosé Champagnes, and also deep pink Tavel wines from France, which have the intensity of fruit flavour, body, and structure to age for three to five years.

Can I drink alcohol if I want to lose weight?

Yes, you can drink alcohol and lose weight. Alcohol itself is not fattening. Most wine has from 92 to 175 calories per glass. However alcohol calories are more forgiving than, say, gulab jamun calories. Still, moderation is key. You should watch the number and type of drinks you choose. Alcohol has

in the 1970s that mechanized the riddling process. The wine bottles are placed in a cage and moved in a specific way by a hydraulic arm with automatic controls, similar to the manual action of riddling. A gyro palette handles hundreds

empty calories. This means it has calories, but no nutrients. Also keep an eye on how drinking affects your eating habits.

What makes Prestige Cuvée Champagne special?

A Prestige Cuvée, or *tête de cuvée* is the very best champagne a house produces. It symbolises the ultimate in luxury. Winemaking choices that distinguish these wines include using only the finest fruit, extended ageing on the lees and a greater use of oak. They are highly priced because they comprise the most rigorous selection of grapes usually from the very best plots in the finest vintage years.

What is a gyro palette?

A gyro palette is the machine invented in Spain

of bottles at the same time, performing the same task of turning the bottles but is more efficient. It is widely used, even for high-end Champagnes. The first user was Codorníu, producer of the iconic Spanish sparkling wine Cava.

What is cork taint?

Cork taint is a term used to describe flaws in wine that affect the wine's smell and taste as a result of musty or stale aroma compounds. The primary reason behind this is the 2, 4, 6 trichloroanisole or TCA chemical compounds. Cork taint not only gives off a really pungent smell but also ruins the taste of wine. Cork taint roughly affects five per cent of all wines that have natural cork closures.

Send your questions to team@sommelierindia.com

glossary

AMARONE The most famous dried grape wine in Italy produced from the same grapes and in the same zones as Valpolicella. High quality grape bunches are dried, often allowing Botrytis to form on the grapes. The grapes are then pressed and fermented, resulting in an intense, highly alcoholic wine with some oxidative qualities that vary depending on the presence of noble rot.

APPELLATION D'ORIGINE CONTRÔLÉE (AOC) This is the French appellation system that controls and designates wines, spirits, cheeses, and other foods of distinct geographic regions in France. Pessac-Léognan is an important wine appellation created in 1987 in Northern Graves, Bordeaux, renowned for red wines with longevity.

ARNEIS (ar-nez) is a white Italian grape variety originating from Piedmont. Arneis (little rascal, in Piemontese) is a difficult grape to grow. A crisp, floral varietal, the wines tend to be dry and full bodied with notes of pears and apricots.

ASSEMBLAGE The blending of base wines to create a final cuveé, or blend. This is a crucial part of the champagne vinification process.

ASTRINGENCY A sensation of puckering or drying of the mouth's tissues. Puckering is a tactile response to compounds such as tannins.

AUSLESE A classification in the German QmP system that means "selected". These wines are sweeter than Spätlese.



BALANCE A reference to the harmonious relationship between the acids, alcohol, tannins and other compounds in wine.

AVA An AVA is an American Viticultural Area that has been recognized by the federal government for a distinctive combination of soil, climate, and identifiable regional wine character. AVAs are often referred to as appellations or districts. The word appellation (and the AVA concept) comes

from the French Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée laws, which are meant to ensure quality within specific regions of France.

BARRIQUE French word for barrel. Used worldwide to describe any small oak cask.

BEERENAU SLESE The fourth level of the German QmP system. Wines of this classification are made from grapes that are harvested later and have some noble rot. They tend to be rich and sweet.

BENTONITE A type of clay that is used in the process of fining. Clay is mixed into wine to clarify it. As the clay settles to the bottom, it absorbs and carries with it suspended particles.

BIODYNAMIC A way of farming without the use of chemical or synthetic sprays or fertilisers, vinified with natural yeast, and minimal use of filtration, sulphur, and chaptalisation. Biodynamic grape growers also base their planting and harvesting schedule by astrological events and cycles.

BLANC DE BLANCS A term literally meaning, "white of whites," referring to wine that is made from white grapes. For example, champagne produced with only chardonnay grapes.

BLANC DE NOIRS Literally, "white of blacks", describing a white wine made from black grapes, usually pinot noir in champagne.

BODY The impression of weight or fullness on the palate; usually the result of a combination of glycerin, alcohol and sugar.

BOTRYTIS CINEREA A beneficial form of Botrytis bunch rot commonly referred to as "noble rot" that produces flavours that harmonise with the grape flavours. One of the most famous is the sweet wine, Sauternes.

BRUT A general term used to designate a relatively dry (low sugar content) champagne or sparkling wine.

CHARMAT Method of producing sparkling wines, aka, Metodo Italiano or Martinotti-Charmat with the second fermentation in stainless steel tanks instead of the bottle as in the traditional méthode champenoise.

COULURE (pronounced coo-LYUR) is triggered by periods of cold, cloudy, rainy weather or very high out-of-season temperatures that causes a failure of grapes to develop after flowering. Flowers stay closed and are not fertilized. It also occurs in vines that have little sugar content in their tissue.

CUVEÉ A blend or special lot of wine.

DECANT Pouring wine out of the bottle to aerate and remove sediment.

DISGORGING (DÉGORGEMENT) Disgorging in sparkling wines involves the freezing and ejection of yeasty sediment that settles in the neck of a bottle after the second fermentation.

DIURNAL RANGE The difference between day and night temperatures. Cool nights help slow the loss of aromas and acidity in the grapes during ripening. Warm nights accelerate ripening.

DOSAGE In bottle-fermented sparkling wines, a small amount of (usually sweet) wine is added back to the bottle after the yeast sediment that collects in the neck of the bottle is disgorged.

DRY WINE A wine which has no sugar levels or has levels that are so low that they cannot be detected by the tongue.

EN PRIMEUR is commonly associated with Bordeaux wine where the previous year's harvest is available for tasting and contract sales several months before the wine will be bottled and released.



FERMENTATION The process of converting sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide affected by the oxygen free metabolism of yeast.

FILTRATION Straining solid particles in wine with various types of filters. An alternative to natural settling, it speeds up the winemaking process, allowing better control. It is sometimes argued that filtration strips a fine wine of some of its complexity and capacity for aging.

FINING The process of clarification and stabilisation by adding a clarifying agent to coagulate or absorb the colloids in a wine for efficient precipitation. Commonly used fining agents include egg whites, fish bladders (isinglass) and bentonite.

FORTIFIED Denotes a wine whose alcohol content has been increased by the addition of brandy or other neutral spirits.

GRAND CRU A wine of the highest rank or reputation within its appellation.

GREEN HARVEST Trimming unripe grapes to decrease crop yields, thereby increasing the concentration of flavours in the remaining bunches.

HALBTROCKEN Means "half dry" in German and in wine.

JEROBOAM An oversized bottle holding the equivalent of six bottles. In Champagne, a jeroboam holds four bottles.

KABINETT The first level of the German QmP rating system, indicating wine made from ripe berries that are not purposefully harvested late. This is the driest of the designations.

LATE HARVEST On labels, indicates that a wine was made from grapes picked later than normal and at a higher sugar level than normal. Often associated with botrytized and dessert-style wines.

LEES Spent yeasty sediment remaining in a barrel or tank during and after fermentation.

LEGS Droplets of wine that slide down the glass after swirling it. This is a good indicator of the wine's alcohol content.

LIQUEUR D'EXPÉDITION A mix of wine and a small amount of sugar that is added to top up the wine in the bottle after disgorging to balance high levels of acidity.

METHUSELAH An extra large bottle holding six litres; the equivalent of eight standard bottles.

MOUSSE Effervescence or frothiness in the mouth from

a sparkling wine. A 'creamy' mousse is a lively sparkle on the palate without being too frothy.

MOUTHFEEL The tasting term used particularly for red wines to describe the texture of a wine within the mouth. This relates to attributes such as smoothness or grittiness. Among the factors that influence a wine's mouthfeel are tannin, acidity, body and bitterness.

MUST The unfermented juice of grapes extracted by crushing or pressing. Also grape juice in the cask or vat before it is converted into wine.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR A giant wine bottle holding 15 litres; the equivalent of 20 standard bottles.

NOUVEAU A style of light, fruity, youthful red wine bottled and sold as soon as possible. Applies mostly to Beaujolais.

NON-VINTAGE Blended from more than one vintage. This allows the vintner to maintain a house style from year to year. Many champagnes and sparkling wines, ports and sherries are non-vintage.

OXIDISED Wine that has been exposed too long to oxygen and taken on a brownish colour, losing its freshness. Oxidised wines are also called maderised or sherrified.

PHENOLICS Phenolics in wine that mostly come from the pulp, skin, seeds and stems of grapes are molecules that help preserve wine by absorbing oxygen. They are also responsible for structure, colour and ageing potential in red wines. Two key phenolics found in wine are tannin and anthocyanin.

PHYLLOXERA Tiny aphids (root lice) that attack vitis vinifera roots. The disease was widespread in both Europe and California during the late 19th century, and returned to California in the 1980s. There is no known cure at this time. Vitis vinifera vines are instead grafted on to native American rootstocks.

QMP – QUALITÄTSWEIN MIT PRÄDIKAT German for a 'quality wine with distinction', a classification based on the level of ripeness of the grapes. The grapes must be picked as specified by law and the wines cannot have any added sugar. The six levels of QmP wines, starting with the driest and harvested earliest, are Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Eiswein and Trockenbeerenauslese.

QUALITÄTSWEIN German for "quality wine." A broad category encompassing the majority of German wine. It includes QmP and QbA wines. In Austria, it is the category between Landwein and Prädikatswein.

RACKING The practice of moving wine by hose from one container to another, leaving sediment behind, for the purpose of aeration or clarification.

REMUAGE In sparkling wine production, a tedious process where each individual bottle is rotated and tilted very slightly over time so that the yeast is loosened and settles into the neck of the bottle.

RIBOLLA GIALLA (ree-bohl-lah jah-lah) Ancient white variety from northern Italy, bordering



Slovenia. Rarely seen elsewhere, wines are typically light in body and offer fruity, floral aromas, as well as bright acidity.

RIPASSO A traditional style in Italy's Veneto region, where fresh, young Valpolicella wine is placed in contact with the used lees and unpressed skins of Amarone wines after their fermentation, activating a second fermentation, which imparts a sweet, raisiny character into the young wine while increasing alcohol content.

RISERVA Specific to Italian wine regions, this term acknowledges wines with both higher alcohol levels and longer ageing than the minimums stipulated by the appellation laws.

SAIGNÉE Meaning "bleeding" in French, involves making rosé as a by-product of red wine fermentation, where a portion of the pink juice from the grape must is removed at an early stage, and fermented separately to produce rosé.

given grape variety grows. Derived from the French word for Earth, "terre".

TROCKEN The German word for "dry" and indicates dry wine.

TROCKEN BEERENAUSSLESE Wines made from grapes picked after they are fully infected with noble rot. The water has dried leaving behind more concentration. The wine produced is golden and honeyed, high in alcohol and lusciously sweet. The best quality is balanced by acidity and thus avoids being cloyingly sweet.

UNION DES GRANDS CRUS DE BORDEAUX An organisation comprising 134 estates located in exalted Bordeaux appellations of the Gironde like Barsac, Graves, Médoc, Pessac-Léognan, Pomerol, Sauternes and Saint Emilion.

VARIETAL A varietal is a wine named for the dominant grape variety although other grape varieties may also be present in the wine.

VINTAGE The year the grapes were grown and harvested

VITIS VINIFERA Classic European winemaking species of grape. Examples include cabernet sauvignon and chardonnay. There are many other species of grapes such as Vitis Labrusca, a North American grape species.

VOLATILE ACIDITY Describes an excessive and undesirable amount of acidity, which gives a wine a slightly sour, vinegary edge. At very low levels (0.1%), it is largely undetectable. At higher levels it is considered a major defect.

YEAST Micro-organisms that produce the enzymes which convert sugar to alcohol. Yeast is necessary for the fermentation of grape juice into wine.

SALMANAZAR An oversized bottle holding nine litres, the equivalent of 12 regular bottles.

STRUCTURE The interaction of elements such as acid, tannin, glycerin, alcohol and body as it relates to a wine's texture and mouthfeel. Usually preceded by a modifier, as in "firm structure" or "lacking in structure".

SUR LIE (French for "on the lees") Wines aged sur lie are kept in contact with the dead yeast cells and are not raked or otherwise filtered. This is mainly done for whites, to enrich them (it is a normal part of fermenting red wine, and so is not noted).

TANNINS Compounds that contribute to a wine's structure, mouthfeel, and astringency. Tannins in wine are derived from grape skins, seeds, and stems. The more contact the juice has with these elements, the more tannic the wine.

TERROIR The overall environment within which a

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www.dhallgroup.net

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C-6 East of kailash,
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E: globalpursuits.vipl@gmail.com

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www.gustoimports.com
E:info@gustoimports.com

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info@hema.in

Kiara Wines

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Dr V. B. Gandhi Marg, Fort,
Mumbai- 400001
T: 022 2416 5230, 022 24150 1155
E: ravish@kiarawines.com
www.kiarawines.com

Mohan Brothers

B-81, Okhla Industrial Pvt Ltd
Phase –1, New Delhi-110020
T: 011 4374 3434

Munjral Brothers

Gala No 4, Building No. 13,
Samhita Complex, Near MTNL,
Sakinaka, Mumbai
E: sumit@munjral.com
raideep@munjral.com
www.munjral.com

Natures Bounty Wines & Allied Products

F-85, Okhla Industrial Area,
Phase- 1, New Delhi- 110020
T: 011 3248 0119, 3243 35767,
4652 5932
www.naturesbounty.co.in

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15th Floor, Building,
8C, DLF Cyber City,
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Gurugram, Haryana 122002
T: 0124 235 8001
www.pernod-ricard.com

Quale Magni

I-40 (2nd Floor), Lajpat Nagar-3
New Delhi: 110024
M: 99116 91212
T: 011 2984 1213
surya@qualemagni.com

Radico Khaitan

Plot No. J-I, Block B-I,
Mohan Co-operative,
Industrial Area,
Mathura Road, New Delhi-110044
T: 011 4097 5444/ 555
E: info@radico.co.in

agrawalm@radico.co.in
banthiyadk@radico.co.in
www.radicokhaitan.com

Riona Wines

F-2, Sarang Commercial Complex,
Plot No. 49/3, Near Shivshankar
Talkies, Shivaji Road, Miraj - 416410
E: info@rionawines.com
www.rionawines.com

Sonarys Cobrands

119 Creative Industrial Estate
Sitaram Mill Compound
N.M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel (E)
Mumbai- 400011
T: 022 6666 9111
E: sonarys@sonarys.biz

Sula Selections

901 Hubtown Solaris,
NS Phadke Marg,
Andheri (E), Mumbai
T: 022 6128 0606
E: info@sulawines.com
www.sulawines.com

VBEV

1202 c/o Riana Business Center, A
Wing, 12th Floor,
Kanakia Wall Street, Chakala,
Andheri East, Mumbai - 400093
Maharashtra, India
E: sumedh@vbev.co.in

Wines

- 1.Monte Pacifico Reserve Pinot Noir, Chile** ₹2250
- 2.Vina Pomal Reserva Rioja, Spain** ₹3650
- 3.Wente Morning Fog Chardonnay California** ₹3650
- 4. M. Chapoutier Le Meysonniers Crozes Hermitage, France** ₹5390 (Same price in all three cities)

Wine Enterprises

34 Oshiwara Industrial Centre
Opposite Goregaon Bus Depot
Goregaon (W)
Mumbai- 400104
VinayDatt, Proprietor
Vinay_datt@hotmail.com

Wine Legend India

R-50, 2nd floor, TNBH Main Road,
TNBH Colony, Velachary,
Chennai- 600042
E: raju@winelegend.com
www.winelegend.com

Wine Park

47A, Nandiyot Indutrail Estate
Safed Pool, MTNL Road,
Andheri-Kula Road,
Mumbai- 400072
M: 98208 59548
www.thewinwpark.com

Wines

1.Man Family Wines Bosstok

Pinotage, S. Africa

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹2490, Mumbai
₹1995, Bangalore ₹1995

2. Susana Balbo Crios Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹3,990, Mumbai
₹3,895, Bangalore ₹3450

3. Saint Clair Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹4300, Mumbai
₹3,995, Bangalore ₹3350

4. St. Urbans-Hof Riesling 'Old Wines', Germany

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹4300, Mumbai
₹3795, Bangalore ₹3295

WINE PRODUCERS

Big Banyan Wines

No. 8/1, Chunchunkuppe,
Tavarakere, Near Big Banyan Tree,
Bengaluru, Karnataka 562130
T: 080 8466 6969
E: marketing@bigbanyanwines.com
www.bigbanyanwines.com

Fratelli Vineyards

Plot No 131, Shipaiwadi,
Motewadi, Solapur,
Maharashtra 413107
M: 99588 80577
E: info@fratelliwines.in
www.fratelliwines.in

Good Drop Wine Cellar

CU 6 & CU 7, Vinchur Wine Park,
Vinchur, Tal: Niphad,
Dist Nashik 422305 India
M: 96195 96477
E: www.gooddropwine.com

Grover Zampa Vineyards

Plot No. 967/1026,
At Post Sanjegaon,
Taluka Igatpuri,
Nashik - 422402
T: 0253 220 2586
E: info@groverzampa.in
www.groverzampa.in

Grover Winery

63, Raghunathpura,
Devanahalli Road,
Doddaballapur,
Bangalore - 561203
M: 95354 39222
E: info@groverzampa.in
www.groverzampa.in

Wines

1.Chêne Red

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹1600, Mumbai
₹2200, Bangalore ₹2000

2.Vijay Amritraj White

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹1300, Mumbai
₹1750, Bangalore ₹1525

3.La Reserve Red

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹900, Mumbai
₹1175, Bangalore ₹1225

4.La Reserve Brut Royale

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹2100, Mumbai
₹2200, Bangalore ₹2000

Krsma Estates

Survey No. 24/1/3,
Julakunta Village,
Tavaragere post,
Kustagi Taluka, Koppal Disrict,
Karnataka - 583279 India
M: 94490 55260
E: mail@krsmaestates.com
www.krsmaestates.com

Moet Hennessy India

Plot No 652 & 653,
Village & Taluka Dindori,
District Nashik - 422202
M: 83089 79899
E: amrut.vare@moethennessy.com
www.chandon.co.in

Oak Wood Winery

Wadala Mahadeo , Newasa Road ,
Shrirampur, Ahmednagar,
Maharashtra - 413 709
M: 98201 43425

Renaissance Wines

Plot No. 2317,
Mumbai - Agra Highway,
Ozar (MIG), Nashik 422206
Maharashtra
M: 92251 24624
E: admin@renaissancewineryindia.net

SDU Winery

HN Layout, Malleshwaram,
Bengaluru, Karnataka 560003
E: www.sduwinery.com

Soma Vineyards & Resorts

Survey No. 1,
Village Ganghavare Gangapur-
Ganghavare Road,
Maharashtra 422222
M: 70280 66009
E: info@somavinevillage.com

Sula Vineyards

Plot 36/2, Govardhan Village,
Off Gangapur-Savargaon Road,
Nashik 422 222, Maharashtra, India
T: 022 6128 0606
E: info@sulawines.com

Wines

1. The Source Sauvignon Blanc Reserve

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹1440, Mumbai
₹1195 Bangalore ₹1195

2. Dindori Reserve Viognier

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹850, Mumbai ₹975,
Bangalore ₹895

3. Rasa Cabernet Sauvignon

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹2400, Mumbai
₹1,950, Bangalore ₹1,850

4. Sula Brut Tropicale

Delhi/Gurgaon ₹1340, Mumbai
₹1,550, Bangalore ₹1,450

Vallonne Vineyards

Plot No. 504, Kavnai Shivar,
Near Sanjegaon, Taluka Igatpuri,
Nashik 422 403. India
M: 98191 29455
E: info@vallonnevineyards.com
www.vallonnevineyards.com

Vinsura Winery

CU - 3, Vinchur Wine Park,
Tal: Niphad, Dist: Nashik
M: 87889 09323
E: vinsurawines@gmail.com
www.vinsurawines.com

Vintage Wines

Plot No. 71, AP Gitakunj,
Tal: Niphad, Dist: Nashik,
Maharashtra 422 303. India
M: 93717 77615
E: sales@reveilo.com
www.reveilo.com

York Winery

Plot No. 15/2, Gangavarhe Village,
Gangapur-Savargaon Road,
Nashik 422222, Maharashtra,
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E: mail@yorkwinery.com

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