

COMPLIMENTARY

Vini

Wines of Distinction

WELCOME
TO THE
SHOW

ISSUE:
#011
SPRING 2017

the experience matters

Matthew Clark

Welcome to Vini#011

Contributors

Contents

Simon Jerrome
Head of Wine Buying



Spring has arrived and so have our brand new range of wines! Our portfolio has grown and some of the brand new producers we have brought on board are featured in this issue including Santa Rita, Graham Norton wines with Invivo and Freemark Abbey.

For those who missed our London tastings event, we have an overview of it in this issue where we highlight key wines presented in each room at the event.

We have a feature on some of our more quirky wine producers in this issue, where we learn about some of their more different ways of working or thinking behind how they create their wines.

We look forward to seeing you at our events this Spring and we hope you enjoy trying our brand new wines there!

Cheers!

Simon

Matthew Clark | Vini | Spring 2017

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Bottle Prices

The codes listed next to wines are our product codes which can be used to purchase wines. Prices quoted are list bottle price. These are correct at time of print but may be subject to change without notice.

Brought to you by the wine geeks at Matthew Clark



Andrew Falk is our Wine Development Specialist for the North West. Having grown up in a family with strong links to the trade, Andy developed a passion

for wine and completed his WSET Diploma in 2013. Before joining Matthew Clark, Andy spent a number of years at Majestic Wine.

He cites being half way up the Andes during his pilgrimage to Machu Picchu as one of the most unusual places that he has enjoyed a glass of wine.



Simon Grayson is one of our Wine Development Specialists who works out of the Midlands. He has a background in fine dining and started out on

his wine career almost 10 years ago. He's a qualified WSET Educator and spends most of his time out in trade in support of Matthew Clark's regional wine customers.



Freddie Morley-Fletcher is our Wine Development Specialist for London. He joined Matthew Clark in 2004 and has always loved wine. In fact, it took

him longer to get on with beer than wine in his late teens and twenties.

He loves waking up and knowing that every day he will be working with and in front of customers who appreciate his knowledge and passion for wine which he has picked up over the past 28 years.



Tiffany Mogg has worked with wine since 2007, she holds her WSET Diploma and is a keen dinner party host. Currently working as a Wine Supplier Manager

she tells us that Italian wine is her 'go to' choice but she'd never miss an excuse to open a bottle of Champagne either.



Fiona Stephens Wine has been a passion of Fiona's for many years, resulting in many holidays to amazing wine regions and studying the subject

for her wine qualifications.

Fiona loves wine so much she has made a career of it, working in wine retail, sales and management in the on and off trade. Her mission is to enthuse others about wine.



Paul Collins is one of our Wine Development Specialists in the North and has been with Matthew Clark for over 6 years. Harvested in

September of 1975, this seminal vintage has been maturing slowly over the years. Muscular notes. Not to everybody's taste, but one for the true connoisseurs.

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THE OPENING ACT

We have all been there, at home or at a friend's house without a corkscrew but with an amazing bottle of wine in our hand which we are so desperate to open and drink!

But some very creative bods in the wine industry have come up with different ways to open a wine bottle without a corkscrew. Other than the sabrage technique of opening Champagne, Stephen Cronk from Mirabeau wines, has come up with a very unique way of opening wine bottles...with a shoe!



Stephen has become a viral superstar with his video detailing how to open a wine bottle with his shoe. We asked Stephen about his unique talent.

"We've all been there. Or at least most of us have. Just having unpacked all the perfect ingredients for a great outdoor moment and someone asks "Where's the corkscrew?!" So when someone showed me this trick of how to open a bottle of wine using only a shoe, I just had to make a video of it. We had already made over 200 wine-related videos on the Mirabeau YouTube channel with the aim of demystifying wine and making it more approachable, and so this seemed like a fun and very useful thing to do.

I knew that I wanted this to be amusing and short, but demonstrate this relationship-saving trick! So I grabbed a bottle of one of our red wines (our only rosé at that time was in screwcap!), took off my shoe and had a practice attempt, banging the shoe with the bottle inside it against the stone-clad wall of our office. My wife inside thought I was mad and was wasting my time. But when it worked so easily, I thought this could actually do quite well.

So I had a shave and put on a reasonably presentable shirt, set my camera on the tripod and filmed it in one take. 20 minutes of editing later and it was ready to upload to YouTube. I was hoping this one might get around 1,000 views. I had absolutely no idea that this 50-second video was about to go viral. I put it on our Facebook site and within 24 hours it had 1.2k views (and 2.1m views within a week!).

It was first picked up NBC Today Show and shortly after by the Daily Mail Online. It became one of The Telegraph's top videos for several days and more news channels spotted it and shared it. Before long it was picked up all over the world, including

Time magazine, the Los Angeles Times and The Huffington Post. Even Stephen Fry tweeted it (I was Twitter royalty at that time).

A month later it was fast approaching 5 million views and now, 3 years later, it has had 11.3 million views on YouTube and well over 40 million views on Facebook. Why did it become so popular and go viral? I think that came down to three factors: Short, Useful and Sharable. I only wish I could think of a follow-up video..."

Stephen Cronk, Mirabeau wines

So how do you open a bottle of wine with your shoe?

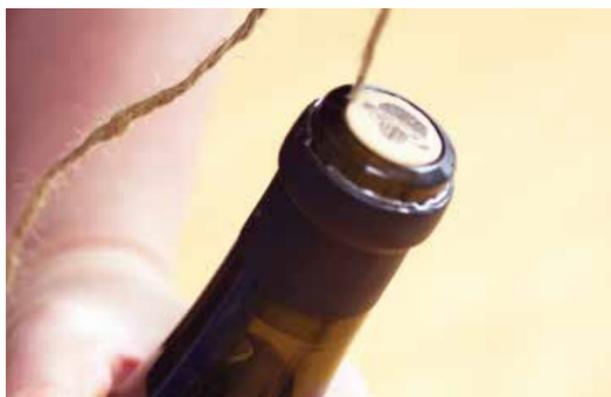
- 1 Remove the capsule, or protective seal.**
- 2 Grab a shoe and place the bottle, facing upwards, inside.**
- 3 Hold the bottle and shoe and start banging it against a wall.**

The cork will eventually break free from its trappings, all you need to do is pop it.

But how does it work?

The bubble of air at the top of the bottle moves to the bottom of the bottle as it gets accelerated backwards. The sudden, hard strike of the bottle against the wall compresses the bubble of air. One side of it is being pushed against the glass, the other side has the wine pressing against it. The inside volume of the bottle stays the same size, but suddenly the volume of the air bubble plus the volume of the wine is smaller. Once the wine has hit the wall and rebounded, the bubbles that have just been created are pushed up against the cork. They burst and push the wine cork up and out of the bottle.

Who will be giving this technique a go?



THE STRING METHOD

Jemma Calver

With a piece of string, make a strong knot at one end of it, making sure the string is long enough to go into the bottle past the cork. Using a small screwdriver or strong, thin tool, force the knotted end of the string into the bottle past the cork. (You can still make it work if you push the cork all the way in, but try not to).

Once you have the knot past the bottom of the cork, slowly but firmly pull on the string. The knot should pull the cork up through the neck and out of the bottle.

Cover the mouth of the bottle firmly with your thumb, then flip the bottle upside down and back upright until you can get the knot of the string past the cork and then get the cork to float back into position near the neck of the bottle. Now you should be able to work the cork out by pulling on the string.

I tried this once before and the wine went everywhere so probably not the best method but at least we got the bottle open!



THE KEY METHOD

Freddie Morley-Fletcher

Firstly the capsule is removed from the neck of the bottle. Next a typical door key is inserted, at an angle, into the cork towards the middle of the cork. Once inserted the key is then used to twist on the cork around and pull up slowly on the key to remove the cork from the bottle. Simple! This can also be done with a knife but is less dangerous.

How the wine geeks at Matthew Clark like to open wine bottles...



THE SABRAGE MASTER

James Smith

I visited M Restaurant Victoria in December with a couple of customers for a bite to eat and in their Private Member's room Pommery were sponsoring the 'Sabrage'. I had always wanted to do this so immediately volunteered to have a go!

One of the official UK Sabreur in the fancy hat and velvet cloak shows you how to do it. The trick is to follow the glass seal on the bottle up to the neck with the sword (the weakest point of the bottle). Then with one confident, smooth strike slide the sword up the bottle and very importantly follow through (like you would on a golf swing!)

Voila! An open bottle of champagne...with a little fizz on the floor....the bottle breaks cleanly with no shards of glass.

A great experience and one I shall be doing at home (I just need a sword first.)



TO OPEN, OR NOT TO OPEN? THAT IS THE QUESTION

Dan Milburn - Wine Development Specialist



For many years, restaurant wine lists have been littered with stunning wines, that by the bottle are simply too expensive for the majority of pockets. The end result is that these wine lists, whilst full of interest and intrigue, are just not commercial and now remain the sole domain of Michelin-starred restaurants and high-end hotels, due to the high cost of holding these expensive wines for (often) many years.

Surely there must be a solution to this I hear you say? Well, now there is — the revolutionary Coravin.

Coravin is a new needle-through-the-cork system that is already revolutionising the way we drink wine.

We've long used a variety of ways to keep opened bottles of wine fresh, from simple stoppers, to expensive 'Le Verre de Vin' wine preservation systems. But these have always had their drawbacks — that being a limited preservation time for each bottle opened.

What is its use?

Coravin isn't a wine preserver, it is a way of sampling from the same bottle over a long time period, without any detriment to product quality or enjoyment.

Clearly, this is of use to any restaurateur who wishes to open a number of higher priced wines that would otherwise have 'gone-off' over the period of time prior to the bottle being finished. What could be better than being able to offer a small number of high quality sweet wines, Ports or even top Bordeaux and Burgundy to accompany fine dishes or round off a meal?

The fact that Coravin is small and portable further extends its use in this environment, allowing it to be used at the table for interested customers and to provide an extra level of theatre.

Ask yourself a question: How do wine bottles keep best — opened or unopened? The answer is definitely unopened, but then how do you access the wine? This is a question Greg Lambrecht, MIT nuclear physics graduate and inventor of Coravin asked himself — but instead of just asking, he came up with a solution — pressurised gas, through a very thin needle, which allows access to the wine, without ever pulling the cork.

Lambrecht developed Coravin over a 10 year period, beginning when his wife was pregnant and not drinking, and he didn't want to have to drink just one wine at a time. He trialled a number of different gasses on a wide variety of different wines to determine which worked best, ultimately deciding upon Argon, due to its inert, odourless and colourless nature and the fact that it has no known chemical reactions.

Argon is heavier than air and resists Oxygen penetrating into the bottle. The two properties of being completely inert and heavier than air is why Coravin is so reliable at helping prevent changes on the nose and palate of wines that have been accessed using Coravin, over a period of not weeks, but months or years — all achieved without ever pulling the cork!

The commercials

Unit costs start at around £200, dependent upon the model chosen and top out at £400.

Other than that, the only costs are the replacement Argon gas canisters (approx. £9 each — 15 x 150ml pours each) and replacement needles at just under £25 each. A large number of accessories are available too, but are not essential to the operation of the Coravin unit, again, just adding to the theatre around wine, or operational simplification.

In terms of the additional cost this would add, I would suggest an additional £1 per glass would be more than adequate and help pay back the outlay in a matter of weeks. Compared to the stratospheric cost of an 'Enomatic machine' capable of doing the same job, you would be looking at £300, rather than over £5,000.

In closing...(or not opening!)

From my perspective, there is no comparison when looking at serving finer wines under cork closures, without the worry of spoilage over time.

Being relatively new to the market, there is still a vast amount of (very understandable) scepticism surrounding Coravin, but could it not be said that we all felt very similar towards screwcaps (Stelvin) until fairly recently? This development will allow the 'theatre of wine' to re-emerge and continue the progression towards 'premiumisation', which is happening with spirits and will do even further with fine wines, given the chance.

We resist change until it is either a well-proven fact, or it makes so much financial sense that it can't be ignored...I'll leave it up to you to make your own mind up as to where this sits... Enjoy!

Wine from the Norton Hemisphere

When I say the name Graham Norton, you typically think of a jovial Irish character who presents a BBC talk show with some famous Hollywood actors. However, the talk show king has been moonlighting as a winemaker.



Winemaker Rob Cameron (left) with Graham and Invivo cofounder Tim Lightbourne (right)

The range of wines created in conjunction with Invivo wines, are new to the Matthew Clark wine portfolio for Spring. And yes, these are the tipples which all the A-list celebs drink on his show!

With a love and passion for wine, Norton teamed up with Invivo to create his own limited edition range of Sauvignon Blanc which was quite uniquely produced by flying freshly picked Marlborough grapes from six different vineyards to London,

to be crushed by Graham's feet on the set of his BBC show, The Graham Norton Show! The juice was then taken back to New Zealand and added to his range of wine.

Following this highly successful range, Norton went on to create his own Shiraz and his unique blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris grapes. All of which are now available to Matthew Clark.



Graham Norton's Own Shiraz, South Australia 50003 – £59.02*

Graham Norton adds his star quality to South Australian grapes, in this deliciously fruity Shiraz dominated wine, blended in Cork, Ireland. Constructed from 95% Shiraz and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon sourced from Barossa Valley, Langhorne Creek, Riverland and Limestone Coast.

The grapes express themselves very differently depending on where they are grown. Barossa fruit provides great intensity and blockbusting dark plum fruit, the cooler region of Langhorne is reflected in a leafier character with brighter acidity evident, the Riverland grapes give weight to the palate and those from Limestone Coast a hint of minerality.



Graham Norton's Own Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough 50002 – £57.97*

First launched in 2014, Graham Norton's own blend of Sauvignon Blanc is constructed from fruit grown in the Marlborough region, but blended in Cork in Ireland, by Graham, from six distinctive pressings supplied by winemaker Rob Cameron. The wine has already become extremely popular and is in Graham's glass when he presents his TV show.

It shows passion fruit, nectarine, lime and grassy notes with a hint of elderflower and a touch of richness and zing on the finish.



Graham Norton's Own Pink By Design, New Zealand 50001 – £61.51*

A blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris grapes from Marlborough and Hawke's Bay; the Pinot Noir grapes being left in contact with their skins, after crushing, for a few hours to provide the amber-pink colour. The nose shows raspberry, strawberry, lime zest and melon; the palate shows plenty of fruit and a touch of richness to the finish.

120 Freedom Fighters

Santa Rita's 120 range is new to the Matthew Clark portfolio. The range is an attribution to the 120 freedom fighters who, after a hard battle during the fight for Chile's independence in 1814, reached the Santa Rita land and found refuge in the estate cellars. Which are now home to these award winning wines.



Chief winemaker Oscar Salas

The Santa Rita winery was founded in 1880 by Domingo Fernandez in the same area of Alto Jahuel where its main facilities stand today.

Over the years it has grown substantially, increasing its vineyards; planting more than 1,000 hectares in the most important Chilean wine producing valleys of Maipo, Rapel, Lontué, Casablanca and Apalta in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Oscar Salas is chief winemaker for the 120 and Reserva brands from Santa Rita, one of Chile's premium and most innovative wine producers.

By sourcing grapes throughout Chile's most prized viticultural regions, Oscar crafts wines that express the terroir of the Andes. Oscar's passion for winemaking stems from his love of nature and terroir, which he seeks to capture in every bottle of Santa Rita wine he makes.

In November 2016, Santa Rita was named Winery of the Year by Wines of Chile at the trade association's annual Wine Gala. The award recognises the winery's commitment and passion as an ambassador for Chilean wine around the world, in addition to its good commercial performance and outstanding dedication to sustainability.



Santa Rita 120 Chardonnay, Central Valley 50010 – £43.48*

Grapes from vineyards planted on silty soils with good drainage in the Central Valley region are employed, to make this tropical and citrus fruit scented Chardonnay. A fraction of the wine is fermented with wild yeasts and 3% of the wine is aged in oak to increase complexity and depth.



Santa Rita 120 Carmenère, Central Valley 50009 – £43.48*

Hand-harvested grapes are sourced from a number of vineyard sites throughout Chile's Central Valley to make this lively and juicy Carmenère. The palate has a supple texture with ripe tannins, extracted by pumping over during fermentation, and bright, brambly fruit and subtle notes of spice.



Santa Rita 120 Merlot, Central Valley 50012 – £43.48*

Hand-harvested Merlot grapes from Central Valley vineyards, planted on a mixture of alluvial and volcanic based soils, are employed for this juicy, fruit-driven red. After fermentation, about 20% of the wine is aged in French oak barrels for about 6 months to build complexity into the palate. Shows intense red fruit aromas, backed by floral notes and a hint of vanilla; the palate is smooth with ripe fruit flavours.



Santa Rita 120 Sauvignon Blanc, Central Valley 50013 – £43.48*

The grapes for this zesty white were harvested from vineyards on the valley floor of the Central Valley. The harvest lasts for about a month, with plots being picked as they reach optimum ripeness; earlier harvested grapes providing a herbal fruit character, whilst later harvesting delivers more tropical fruit flavours. To add to the complexity tiny amounts of Sémillon and Chenin Blanc are added to the blend.



Santa Rita 120 Cabernet Sauvignon, Central Valley 50011 – £43.48*

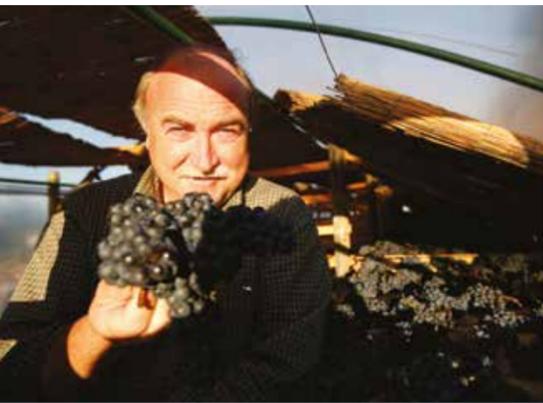
Cabernet Sauvignon ripens well in the Mediterranean climate of Chile's Central Valley. The grapes are harvested by hand, before being crushed and fermented at a range of temperatures depending on the lot and sub-region.

About 20% of the wine was aged in oak for 8 months, to build complexity and structure on the palate; shows lovely ripe red and black fruit flavours, backed with notes of clove and vanilla.

New to the Range

Anything but

Behind every good bottle of wine, there is the man or woman who makes it. Therefore, we decided to take a look at some of our producers who are known for their more creative or showmanship ways when it comes to making wine.



Willi Opitz by Simon Grayson

'Family, wine, food, life, engaging, innovation, unconventional, experience, enjoyment, eccentricity...'

A few of the many words you come across when you read about Willi Opitz and the culture that has evolved and grown up around his wines, his family's way of life and their commitment to sharing their genuine, creative passions with wine and food lovers and lovers of life, the world over.

It was only in the early 1980's that Willi Opitz started making wine with a small vineyard of 1.5 hectares near the shallow Lake Neusiedl, in Austria, pretty much as a 'weekend winemaker'. Willi and his wife Maria started out in earnest, in 1995, on a long harboured dream to produce quality, memorable wine. Willi came from an engineering background and Maria was a nurse; today there is no doubt that they are one of the most mesmerising and engaging personalities in the international world of wine. Their wines were noticed straightaway and that's down, in no small part to the character of Willi and Maria themselves, as well as the absolutely stunning wine. In that relatively short time, Willi has become famous for pioneering 'reed wines': healthy grapes are left to age for around three months on reed mats, the finished wine is called 'Schilfwein'.

Overall it's a story of food, wine, passion and innovation, as well as family heritage in the making.

You'll find Opitz set in the stunning surroundings of Lake Neusiedl National Park, near Illmitz, 30 minutes' drive from Vienna (it's a short flight from a host of airports in the UK). The winery has an adjoining lodge and modern British style restaurant. This reflects the classical training that Maria and Willi's daughter Angela and her husband Iain had in some of London's finest restaurants. Sitting on the terrace of your comfortable cottage style room with a chilled glass of white wine, watching the sunset, looking forward to the next day's range tasting and being spoilt by the C.I.A (Angela and Iain's catering company), which, wait for it, serves 'criminally good food', brings you gently into the heart of the Opitz experience. The family are very relaxed and down to earth and guests are looked after personally by a member of the family during their stay. It's well worth a trip and easy to get to. Have a look at their website for further details.

willi-opitz.at

Matthew Clark are extremely proud to be associated with Opitz and offer a comprehensive range of their wines to our customers, comprising six of their famed sweet wines, including a Welschriesling Eiswein and the famed Opitz (a Schilfwein). We also offer a red wine made from Blaufrankisch (a bit of a mouthful for us Brits), a classic Austrian grape, whose wines work well with game, lamb and smoked meats; as well as a barrel fermented white made from Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc).

What have they got going on at the moment? You have absolutely no idea what to expect when you ask Willi that question!

A Cabernet Sauvignon Blanc from Toledo as well as a Tempranillo Trockenbeerenauslese feature in a list that contains both current projects, as well as those maturing in his mind (God only knows what it must be like in there)! His unalloyed commitment and impetuous passion are injected into every bottle of wine he produces - they are unique. The family's flagship wine, the bravely named 'Opitz One' has earned its deserved place in the book titled 'The 1000 best wines in the world'. For a musical experience, immerse yourself in 'The Sound of Wine' a Willi and Maria creation, harnessing the sounds of fermentation, from the single varietal Pinot Gris, through a more vibrant 'Quartet', to the crescendo of a 'Full Orchestra'. I'm not kidding, copy the link below for a taster! If you buy the CD, track number 3 'Opitz One' (Red Trockenbeerenauslese) is the hit single!

soundcloud.com/antonklocker/sets/sound-of-wine-by-willi-opitz

Willi has shared his expertise with the Star and Castle Hotel, whose winery in the Scilly Isles was recently described by Michael Broadbent as being 'one of the most beautiful vineyard sites in the world' and rumour has it that he's also been asked to craft a Champagne. Now, top this; an admirer of Bill Clinton, Willi decided to make a special wine to celebrate his inauguration, et voila, a case of 'Mr President' was sent to Washington. That earned Opitz a new fan as well as an invitation for Willi and Maria to visit the White House! It is also alleged that another famous Austrian actor and politician, now living in America, may also enjoy a glass (Opitz created a small batch labelled 'Hasta La Vista'), though only as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Matthew Clark and the Opitz family have gotten to know each other well over the past two years and the relationship has added colour and vibrancy that is reigniting a wine category that had sadly stalled, though thankfully, not stopped altogether.

We need to drink more dessert wine, it's a simple as that. There is no better way (in my unashamedly biased opinion) to finish

off a meal - it's funny, though, that whenever we do pudding wine tastings, folks absolutely love it; they almost can't believe that flavours like this exist. All we need now is for them to order it when they eat out. The obvious, though impractical solution would be to sell Willi along with every listing - that'd work!

Hopefully some of you will have had a chance to talk to Willi, Maria or Angela at one of the Matthew Clark events and taste through the range of their wines. For those of you who missed out (or for those left wanting more), here's a fantastic prize to be won:

Win a weekend trip for two at Opitz

Courtesy of the Opitz family and Matthew Clark, you could fly out to Vienna, drive down to Illmitz and spend the weekend at Opitz as guests of the family. A relaxing weekend of superb wines, food and company await.

For your chance to win, simply answer this question:

What style of sweet wine production did Willi invent?

Send your answers, together with your full name and daytime telephone number to: winesofdistinction@matthewclark.co.uk

Competition closes on Friday 31st March 2017

Coconut Panna Cotta Makes 4 portions

Angela has shared one of her favourite recipes, which must be accompanied by a glass of Willi Opitz Pinot Noir Beerenauslese (on his own insistence).

300ml cream
200ml coconut cream
50ml coconut milk
80g sugar
3 leaf gelatine

1. Bring cream, coconut cream, coconut milk and sugar to boil and take off the heat straight away. Adjust the taste with additional sugar.
2. Meanwhile soak the gelatine in cold water. When the consistency is right, add it to the coconut milk mix. Set in individual glasses and leave to set in the fridge for about 3 hours.
3. For decoration you can use very thin, dried slices of vanilla pods.



Willi Opitz Pinot Noir Beerenauslese
29908 £19.45*

Ordinary

*Bottle list price



Abbotts & Delaunay by Freddie Morley-Fletcher

When I was asked to write something about quirky producers, Laurent and Catherine Delauney from Badet Clément immediately sprung to mind. With unique characteristics- Laurent wearing his signature broad rimmed hat and Catherine with her 'Peggy Guggenheim' like glasses, always have glass of wine in their hands.

For his 50th birthday, Catherine got Laurent a red Massey-Ferguson. "It shows that I am a real country man. However, not the kind with a Barbour coat and golden Labradors in the Range Rover's boot but the one with red neck and dirty hands!" commented Laurent.

They were both trained in oenology and winemaking in French Wine Universities. Some 20+ years ago they ventured down to the Languedoc area, which was considered to be the 'New Frontier' for many French young winemakers and oenologists.

They took their Burgundian traditions and have planted Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, in a region not particularly well known for those grapes, with the intention of making quality wine.

With the acquisition of Domaine de la Métairie d'Alon near Limoux their dream had

begun. On June 3rd 2016 they opened a new winery in Monze, delaying their 20th anniversary celebrations to coincide with the 'Grand Opening' of the winery. Judith Nicholson and I were lucky enough to go to this event which started with a trip in vintage 4x4 Range Rovers across country to their best vineyards to see the Terroir and taste the newest vintages of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir that had been grown there.

Typically with these trips there was some first aid needed on one of the cars which overheated in spectacular style but refreshed, we ventured on! Some of the driving was a little bit (French) hair-raising but we all got back safely to Carcassonne where Laurent and Catherine had arranged an unbelievable lunch on a terrace of one of the oldest restaurants in this beautiful, historic Medieval town. Lots and lots of Chardonnay later, it being late 20°C there, despite UK struggling to get over 10°C, we were allowed to wonder the streets of the stunning medieval town and castle battlements. Stories of hidden Monks' passages and lengthy battles from years ago, it was romantic.

We were then delivered that evening by coach to the new winery for the real celebrations. Not a sterile warehouse but a party venue, with waiters, a band, a photo booth and we all had to wear a neckerchief and a straw-hat!

In the speeches Laurent said that "It has taken us 20 years to really understand the region", but they are 'here to stay'! We partied on till the 'wee' hours of the morning amongst the barrels in the winery.

The next day we were all up early to visit the 'Canal de Midi'. Laurent and Catherine and co had arranged a mystery treasure hunt around a neighbouring village with guests from French History to help us with clues and then a leisurely boat trip along the Canal de Midi to absorb the local countryside and finally lunch in a local town hall to send us off in style back to the airport and the UK. We were all given a package of the local cooking salt, some olives and herbs to take home with us too.

We were then delivered that evening by coach to the new winery for the real celebrations...a party venue with waiters, a band, a photo booth and we all had to wear a neckerchief and a straw-hat! There was plenty of Jazz and flirting in the way that only the French can do.

Such imagination and passion and friendship. True French je-ne-sais-quoi.

Bottega by Carolyn D'Aguiar

Not able to find the right shape bottles for his grappa, he started to work with a local glass blowing workshop which could produce bottles to his designs...he started to develop a bespoke collection of diversely shaped grappa bottles with mini glass works of art inside...

The man with the golden touch – Sandro Bottega, owner of Bottega SpA, is a breath of fresh air and a true creative force in the Italian wine and spirit world. Perhaps best known for his iconic Bottega Gold Prosecco, Sandro's roots in fact lie in the world of grappa.

Sandro grew up with grappa. His father Aldo Bottega ran a small grappa distillery in the Veneto region and Sandro, the oldest son, helped his father with the distillation process from a young age. He was always interested in the creative arts with a passion for music, poetry and painting. Although he dreamt of pursuing a career as a pilot or Formula One driver, he always knew deep down that he would stay connected with the family business. In 1983 when Sandro's father died, Sandro gave up his university course and dedicated himself to the Bottega distillery. His first project was to design a grappa – The Eagle Grappa - which was dedicated to his father whose nickname, as a pilot in the Italian air force, had been The Black Eagle. From the beginning Sandro shook things up, he was determined to not to follow tradition in label and bottle design but to innovate.

Not able to find the right shape bottles for his grappa, he started to work with a local glass blowing workshop which could produce bottles to his designs.

Within the first decade, Sandro's creative approach grew the business from a three man family firm to a successful, expanding business. He saw the potential in the Prosecco market and began to diversify the company's portfolio. His real breakthrough came with the development of Bottega's painted gold bottle. While enjoying a meal and a glass of Prosecco with friends in a restaurant, Sandro experienced a true 'light bulb' moment as he saw the bottle glowing under a spotlight. He was momentarily convinced that the bottle was golden. Inspired by his vision, Sandro was determined to create his own golden bottle. He spent five years painstakingly researching and working with a bottle producer to determine how the effect he envisaged could be practically created.

The resulting painted golden bottle was launched in 2001 and was an immediate success, winning Best Duty Free product in 2002. Sandro continued to innovate in the grappa category as well. Having purchased his own glass business in 2007, he started to develop a bespoke collection of diversely shaped grappa bottles with mini glass works of art inside, including bunches of grapes, animals and flowers - all of them true museum pieces.

But Sandro's boundless energy is not just directed into design. He is equally passionate and perfectionist about the quality of his products. No barrier is too great for him in delivering the finest quality possible in each sector. For example the excellence of Bottega Gold's packaging is easily matched by the top quality DOCG Prosecco inside. Sandro worked with his oenological team to create a Prosecco through an innovative and complex single fermentation process to maximise flavour, freshness and finesse.

Today the Bottega portfolio includes an impressive range of top end Tuscan and Valpolicella wines, a collection of cream liqueurs, and premium gins and vodkas now sit alongside grappa. Sandro continues to develop Bottega's affinity with the arts through sponsoring cultural events such as The Venice Carnival and a prestigious poetry circle (after which he named the Vino dei Poeti range). He has also written five books, the latest of which is a book of traditional recipes to match with a glass of Prosecco. With such an energetic approach to business, you may wonder if Sandro has the time to relax! Apart from skiing, swimming and writing poetry, his favourite leisure moments are enjoying a meal with friends and family whilst pondering new business ideas!

Through Sandro and his team's tireless dedication to innovation and quality, Bottega has earned an enviable global reputation as a premium wine & spirit brand. It is this, and the fact that the business is growing and healthy, that makes Sandro most proud. He is determined to pass the business on to the next generation of the family and to keep Bottega's creative spirit alive for years to come.





Château De Fesles by Freddie Morley-Fletcher

In May 2016, whilst on a family holiday I snuck away with a male friend to meet Pierre-Jean Sauvion and visit Château de Fesles.

We drove from near Nantes to Bonnezeaux, a tiny village some 200 or so Kilometres away. The French countryside was fairly bland but once we got close, there was an old village or two. In one such village the road split to pass a grey stone house which apparently had been left in the way when they decided to build the road!

Pierre-Jean immediately drew us outside to the vines to feel the morning sun and breeze which he said came from the Atlantic over 200 Kilometres away...and that it was essential for the late harvesting of the sweet wines of Bonnezeaux.



Suddenly we were surrounded by vines. Rolling hills covered in vines for as far as the eye could see. Château de Fesles holds a commanding position on the top of one of those hills surrounded by trees and vines around them. It has a beautiful manicured entrance with knee high bushes cut to perfection by a gardener who works at it every day. Pierre-Jean received us in the old Château but immediately drew us outside to the vines to see and feel the morning sun and breeze which he said came from the Atlantic over 200 Kilometres away. He explained that it was essential for the late harvesting of the sweet wines of Bonnezeaux. The vines there were all Chenin Blanc but varied in quality and he explained that only a few would be good enough to make the fantastic sweet wine the area is famous for. The vines we stood by were barely up to our waists and had very young shoots with little green peppercorn sized buds on them. Pierre-Jean explained that each vine was capable of making a bottle of wine! We wandered around

asking questions as a large Black Labrador bounded up to us, apparently on its daily rounds of the vines looking for rabbits and checking out the workers on the vineyards.

We were then taken to a large shed which housed some nondescript metal equipment but through a door we found the highest tech, temperature controlled storage tanks, full of the rosé and red that they make. The red apparently needs to be as fresh as possible to keep its red fruit characteristics and is unoaked, as is the style there. Next we wandered into another empty chamber which Pierre-Jean explained he would be putting more tanks into in the next year as he wanted to make sparkling wine there as well. Very ambitious! Then down some stairs in to an underground cellar, at last wooden barrels...

'This is where we keep and age our whites!' exclaimed Pierre-Jean. I was confused. 'Can you tell me what is so special about the wood?'; 'No!' I replied. 'It is acacia, not oak! Look at the grain in the wood, it is very light and smooth. It only gives the wine a taste of honey to the flavour.'

Pierre Jean has a reputation that follows him. He wears a cloth Flat Cap, like old men from 'up-North' in Yorkshire and sports a 'Barbour' style coat, even on the front label of his wine. His business card states that he is the 'Pleasure Maker', no name, only a number and an address, which has got him in trouble before at a wine fair in Holland where someone picked up his card and thought it might have been dropped by...I'll leave the rest to your imagination but he does tell the story well, with his charming French accent. His excuse is that it is a different type of pleasure he is pushing.

Back to his winery and he suggested we try ten different vintages of his wood matured Chenin Blanc and then three vintages of the Bonnezeaux. What a host, what a gent!



Shannon by Fiona Stephens

Elgin Valley – a refreshing oasis in South Africa.

We at Matthew Clark were delighted when Shannon wines, from the Elgin Valley, joined our portfolio last year. The region is special in South Africa because it has a cool climate with cooling mists coming from the Peninsula Dam to the East (shown by the swirling logo), mountains to the West and cold 'Black South-Easter' wind blowing through the valley. This allows the grapes to ripen over a long time to develop layers of flavour, but also keep their refreshing acidity. This is a rarity in South Africa with many of the wine regions like Stellenbosch and Paarl being hot and producing bold ripe styles of wine. This area once dominated by orchards, is now making top-end Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir. The area represents only 1.3% of South African wine production, but in the latest esteemed Platter's award it represented over 9% of the top awarded wines in South Africa.

Shannon is a family affair, with the company's name relating to their Irish ancestry. I was fortunate to meet some of the family on a recent visit- James, the Viticulturalist and his sister Katy who has a hand in both PR and sales. James kicked off the visit by explaining how unique the area is and explaining that he used to grow apples and pears and then converted 12ha of the 75ha estate into vines when he realised the potential to grow quality grapes. After a few jokes about how it is a tradition in the wine industry that the older

shorter, shall we say less chiselled brother is sent to tend to the vineyard whilst the younger, tall, chiselled brother is encouraged into the Sales and Marketing side, we tasted through the range.

Shannon are unusual in the sense that they produce a Semillon which is a pretty rare grape grown in very few regions around the globe. Fermented in oak by wild yeasts it has complex grapefruit, citrus peel and clean acidity in its youth and develops lanolin and nutty touches after a few years of ageing. The other white which is the star of the region is Sauvignon Blanc (with a touch of Semillon), which has lovely papaya, blackcurrant leaf and green apple notes and the freshness is just what you need after being outside in the 35 degree heat.

We finished with the reds with the Rockview Ridge Pinot Noir, Merlot and the outstanding Mount Bullet Merlot which are all wonderfully complex with generous fruit but elegant savoury notes and fresh acidity. I should

Part of the quality of the grapes grown here and the beautiful wines they produce are because Shannon is a member of the Biodiversity Wine Initiative as the estate falls within the Kogelberg biosphere (the first UNESCO proclaimed biosphere in Africa and a world heritage site)

probably add at this point that the top range are all named after mountains that flag the vineyard and the view of each of the mountains is depicted artistically on each of the labels.

Part of the quality of the grapes grown here and the beautiful wines they produce are because Shannon is a member of the Biodiversity Wine Initiative as the estate falls within the Kogelberg biosphere (the first UNESCO proclaimed biosphere in Africa and a world heritage site).

They respect the unique eco-systems around them and preserve the natural corridors in the vineyards which connect the different habitats, providing the indigenous animals a link between the river and the mountains.

James very passionately explained that it is paramount to help maintain these corridors to encourage toads, field mice, Guinea Fowl, which feed on insects and help keep the vineyards healthy. These smaller animals are then food for the apex predators like Baboon, Leopard, Cape Fox etc. which keeps the whole environment in harmony and also helps to entertain James when he is in the vineyard watching the two Baboon troops fighting over territory in the hills surrounding the estate.

Overall the region, wines and estate are all unique and special. I urge you to put Shannon wines on your 'to sample' list.

Famous for his unique pizza art, we caught up with our customer Domenico Crolla who owns Italian restaurant Oro in Glasgow, to learn a bit more about his pizza creations.

The Pizza Whisperer



What is your background?

I was born in Glasgow, and lived above our family café in Alexandra Parade in Glasgow's East End. I had the privilege of growing up in the catering business. Seeing it first-hand, I always knew that it would be my career. Had my father not been a restaurateur who knows what I would have ended up doing. I went to the famous Strathclyde Hotel School, however I walked out in my third year, two months before the final exams.

At that time French /Swiss cuisine was all the rage and Italian food and wine were seen as bottom of the pile. I was frequently marked down if I referred to anything of an Italian nature. Within the wine classes they dismissed Italian Wines as plonk. The final straw was after I had predicted the rise of the gourmet burger

concept and suggest a 5 Star Hotel include this on their menu as part of a menu selection task. I was told my idea was ridiculous and that this would never happen. I left the next day as I could not continue to have my ideas dismissed in such an off -hand way.

Needless to say I have visited many 5 star properties around the world subsequently and a Gourmet Style burger appears on most menus. In hindsight I should have taken the opportunity to work abroad for a period of time before returning home, I would recommend that young folk starting in our industry take this opportunity as you just never know how your life can change by widening your experiences in our industry. You can always come home if the travel bug is not for you.

Tell us more about Oro ?

I started in the pizza business about 30 years ago. A cool story that I love telling is that I opened the first Dominos pizza in Europe back then.

Having returned from a trip to Florida I saw a pizza chain by the name of Dominos. Being Domenico I liked the name and their concept. It was a way of making pizza that hadn't come over to the UK yet so I copied their name, calling my pizzeria Dominos. I didn't see this as breaking any copyright as Dominos was unheard of over here. All went fine until a few years later when we received a lawyers letter threatening us if we didn't change the name as someone had bought the franchise. I changed the name to Doms Place, but in hindsight I shouldn't have changed as I had this name long before anyone had bought a UK franchise.

Doms Place was a successful little pizzeria but we soon moved to bigger premises and renamed it. ITALMANIA was a small pizzeria takeaway but it stood out for its glamorous yet functional look. Beautiful marbles adorned the walls with intricate Michelangelo-style hand painted ceilings. This environment allowed me and my wife Genny to develop a reputation for good pizza, something better than anyone else.

Then in 2000 we opened at a dream location smack in Glasgow's city centre. This turned out to be a very expensive mistake, as the rent and rates seemed always to be an uphill struggle regardless of how many pizzas I sold. I sold my interest in this site and bought the restaurant we are in now, which originally was named Bella Napoli then most recently changed to Oro. This brought me back to Glasgow's South Side. We have been here nearly 10 years and our two children Alfredo and Cristina, are now a vital part of the team.

You are known for your pizza art, how did you get into it?

I had a very simple philosophy to the pizza art, it was a means to an end. I've always tried to get free publicity in newspapers rather than paying for adverts. I would come up with

newsworthy events to capture the attention of the newspaper photo editor. The photographers would always ask me to prepare a dish for a photo shoot at my restaurant.

A pizza is easier to hold and more photogenic than other dishes, a steak or Spaghetti Bolognese can do the job, but a colourful pizza works better and it is more practical as you can hold it up to the camera for a better angle.

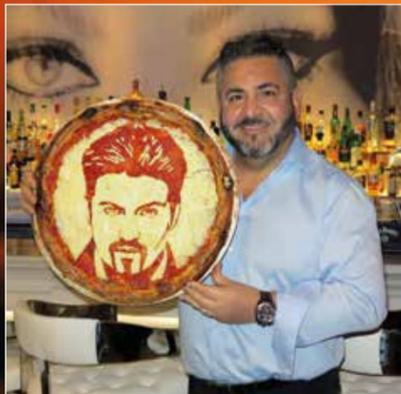
What are your favourite pizza creations to date?

The very first pizza I made in 2011 is my favourite – The Mortal Kombat Dragon. I wanted to create a pizza that would appeal to the Chinese media as I was going to Hong Kong for a cooking demo. At the time I didn't realise that the design I chose for the pizza was the logo for the world famous video game – Mortal Kombat. This game has an enormous worldwide following and the pizza went viral. Millions of likes and shares on Google, Twitter and Facebook. My only mistake was not to credit myself with the creation as there were over 11 million views within 6 months.

I now get asked to create pizza's regularly and I recently sent the newly sworn in President of the USA his own pizza design!

In 2006, to coincide with the release of the James Bond film "Casino Royale", I created a pizza to be sold on EBay for charity. The press jumped at this when I told them it was going to be the 'world's most expensive pizza', a story which became syndicated around the world giving us global exposure. The pizza sold for £2,150 to a lawyer from Rome. The theme of the pizza was all the food in all of James Bond's favourite meals, but finished off with a 24 carat gold leaf. A truly top class pizza.

Continued overleaf...



Dom has even shown us how to make our very own Vini pizza!



1. Find a suitable image



2. Using baking paper, trace out the outline



3. Turn the image over, drawing side down. Cover with mozzarella cheese



4. Bake in the oven for a few minutes to produce a layer of melted cheese. Leave in fridge to chill down.



5. Prepare half baked pizza base with tomato sauce



6. Place 'cheese slice' over pizza



7. With a scalpel cut out the cheese



8. The finished result - 'Vini'

Have you been commissioned to do any exciting pieces?

I was commissioned by Paramount Studios in LA to create some pizzas to celebrate the release of the movie, Ninja Turtles II. There are four turtles so I made one pizza showing each character.

Do you have a favourite wine to cook with?

I would never advocate using a cooking wine or cheap wine for cooking neither should it be an expensive wine for the kitchen. Not only is it a waste of money but in my opinion an insult to the winemaker's skill and passion that went in the bottle. It should be what I refer to as a good quality house wine. We use our excellent Frascati Terre dei Grifi and Merlot del Lazio Togale both from the house of Fontana Candida. If you wouldn't drink it then you certainly shouldn't cook with it.

I don't think that a sauce made from an amazing red wine and a decent wine will differ greatly on the plate. This is especially important at home, I have friends who have used their finest bottle of vintage Bordeaux to make a Bolognese sauce. I vividly remember my father Alfredo going crazy when he discovered my mother had flambéed fillet for the Beef Stroganoff in Louis XIII Cognac!

A favourite wine to relax with?

I enjoy bubbles to relax with. Initially me and my wife would enjoy a fruity Prosecco, but as we've matured (or as the bank balance has improved) the preferred style of sparkling has become drier, just as our taste in chocolate has become also less sweet and more to the darker side. We used to both love Asti Martini in our younger days. Recently Champagne has become our favourite tippie, my wife loves Perrier-Jouët and I always agree with her.

Can you give us a pizza and wine pairing?

I would recommend different wines depending on the style of pizza you are eating, for example a traditional simple Pizza Napoli needs a simple light red such as our Sangiovese Toscana, Bocelli. A meatier Pizza di Parma would complement a slightly heavier red such as our Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Vigne Nuove, Valle Reale. Finally our Pizza del Mare which has a selection of prawns, clams and mussels would need a richer style of white, our stunning organic Tenuta del Porconero Falanghina from Campania is an excellent partner to this pizza. Of course it goes without saying that all pizzas are fantastic with Champagne.

Can you give us your favourite Italian dish and wine pairing?

My favourite meal is without a doubt a well-aged fillet steak preferably over 21 days, well-sealed on the outside and rare inside, served simply with garlic butter chips and a simple salad.

I am not precious about picking only Italian wines so my favourite wine accompaniment is our delicious Salentein Barrel Selection Malbec from Mendoza in the foothills of the Andes. The intense ripe red fruit aromas and silky oak aged palate complement the steak beautifully.

THE DRINKS EMPORIUM

Our flagship annual tasting event was held on 28th February at Tobacco Dock, London. The event, based on a circus theme, showcased all our great wines and brand new wines to the range in different themed rooms. Read on to find out more about the wines in each room.

By Jemma Calver, Tiffany Mogg and Judith Nicholson

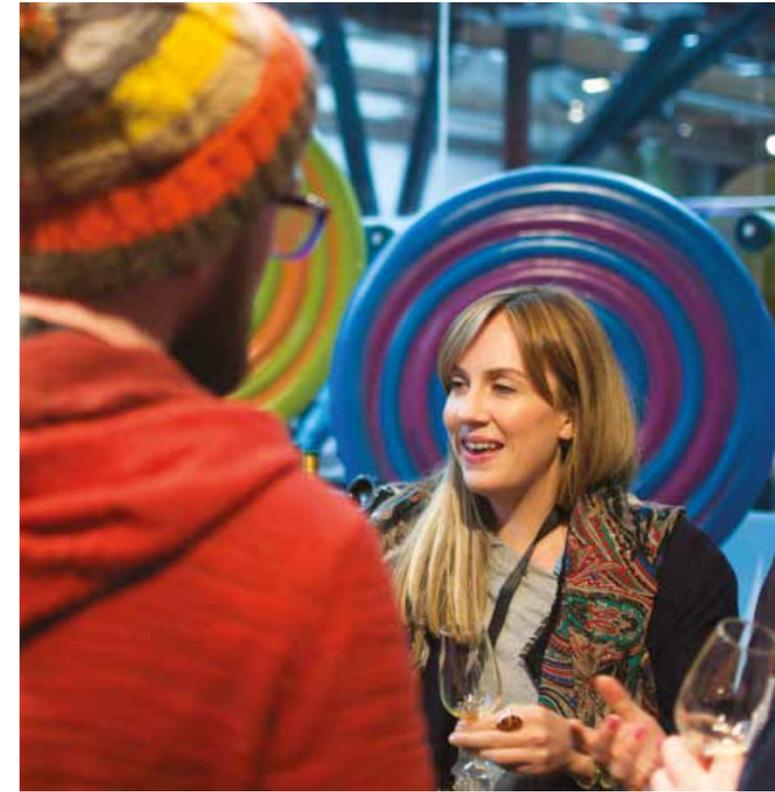
House of Fun

The House of Fun certainly lived up to its brief. It was full of fun, quirky and different wines that really stood out and got everyone excited. Along with the New Releases room, this one was my favourite, as again it let our customers try new and different wines that they wouldn't normally think about, and the buzz in the room said it all.

The first range that got everyone talking was our Beres range from Tokaji. Featuring a 5 Puttonyos Tokaji (rich, sticky, sweet) and a dry Furmint (full of citrus, minerality and refreshing). It was the Naparnay blend that really surprised everyone, with a hint of sweetness just lingering on the palate.

On the fortified front our range of Sherries from Gonzalez Byass really hit the mark, with the sweet Pedro Ximénez and the rare Palo Cortado, which is a sherry that is meant to be a Fino or Amontillado, but begins to oxidise, really showing the breadth of the range. The Ports from Graham's and Dow's, especially the 10 year old Tawny, were a real hit!

It was the German and Austrian wines that were being raved about. The Louis Guntrum Pinot Noir showed that it isn't just Burgundy and New Zealand that can claim to make good Pinot. Finally the Soellner wines from the famous Wagram region in Austria highlighted the region so well. Both Gruner Veltliners showed stunning minerality and really highlighted the region.



New Release Room

It was great this year to have a New Release Room at the tasting. It really allowed our customers to focus on what new and exciting wines our buyers have found this year, and as it was the first room they visited, it gave a great overview to start the tasting.

Every year I find it difficult to pick out highlights from our new releases – we wouldn't have listed them if they weren't so good in the first place – and having them all in the same room hasn't made it any easier!

Talking to customers on the day is always a good way to gauge the mood, and one range that really stood out was the new Vinho Verde range from Quinta das Arcas. Vinho Verde is becoming more and more popular at the moment and it's a great alternative to Sauvignon Blanc and Albariño. Other highlights include our Drassanes Bobal range, we've never had a Bobal Rose before, and this is a really interesting wine that enhances our Spanish range.

My personal favourites were the Dr Konstantin wines from Finger Lakes – a region in New York State. The Riesling is crisp, dry and refreshing, whilst the Gewurztraminer is full bodied and rich. They really showed our customers that it isn't just the West Coast of America that can produce great wines.

Finally our two new Turkish wines from Sevilen got everyone excited, really enhancing our emerging regions range.



Menagerie

Sneaking into the Menagerie so as to not disturb the 'animals' inside, you were welcomed with an array of interesting wines from both Spain and South Africa. Firm favourites were our two new Godellos, a grape that was nearly extinct back in the 1970's. Losada's Godello had a deliciously rich apple and pear fruit palate with a touch of oak from its lees ageing.

The one from the creative guys at Casa Rojo, The Orange Republic Godello is named after the thousands of orange trees that surround the five hectares of old vine vineyards. Fresh with apricot and peach aromas – this certainly left a lasting impression!

Paco & Lola's new stylishly packaged Cava was also drawing in the crowds – made from the traditional grapes Xarel-lo, Macabeo & Parellada was fresh and vibrant with delicious marzipan notes. Definitely one that will attract consumers this year!

Not forgetting South Africa – Durbanville Hills added both a Chenin Blanc and a Merlot Rosé to their ever popular range!

Wonders of the Old World

Vive la France! With so many regions in one room it could have been difficult to work out where to start, however the room layout followed our wine list taking you from Burgundy all the way round to the South of France.

Busy as always were Louis Jadot with their stand out Chassagne-Montrachet – perfectly balanced between rich butteriness and flinty elegance. Moving on you came to Bordeaux with top wines from Pauillac Château Pédesclaux 5ème Cru Classé & Margaux Château d'Issan 3ème Cru Classé alongside quirky labelled wines such as Les Hipsters Barbe with its bearded label staring back at you!

From Rhône, Jean-Luc Colombo's Picpoul de Pinet was going down well, further confirming this grapes popularity with consumers. Another increasingly popular wine was Sauvion Crémant de Loire showing that our customers are searching beyond Prosecco for their fizz fill!

Finally from the South of France the new Abbotts & Delaunay Solaire Pinot Noir was a clear hit – its silky tannins and fresh finish with hints of liquorice was going down well with the customers I spoke to.



The Great Gardens

Wow, what a buzz or should I say fizz, emanated from this area. Housing a delectable range of Champagnes and sparkling wines, this place was packed out from start to finish. Not that we expected anything else really.

Not only could customers sample a range of 37 different Champagnes, or 44 sparkling wines but there were also amazing prizes to be won!

This year we showed off three separate English sparkling wine estates – Ridgeview, Chapel Down and Camel Valley. You've told us that so many of your customers are buying local, and want to see English wine on your lists. We have listened and provided you with what we think is the best out there. Many at the stands agreed.

And of course no wine tasting (or just a gathering of people these days) would be complete without Prosecco and Cava. Range extension, increased quality and diversification is what the On-Trade has seen develop over the last few years in the Sparkling wine category. The hustle and bustle at the bars here show us that you're taking this on board and asking the suppliers the right type of questions. Gancia Pinot di Pinot Brut Fantinel 'One & Only' Single Vineyard Rose Brut and Freixenet Ice Cuvee Especial were amongst some of the more unusual popular choices.



Daredevils

Once your strength was appropriately tested outside, and you'd managed to zip past the strongman performer, customers could go and check out our 'Daredevils' wines. This room exhibited wines from Argentina, Chile and the USA and what a big hit it was.

Owing to popularity we rebooked some acts in here, one of which was Salentein whose estate in the premium Uco Valley in Mendoza date all the way back to the 17th Century. The Barrel Selection wines Malbec and a Cabernet Sauvignon really surprised a couple of our visitors with their drinkability. Yes they have generous dark fruit flavours, but the oak ageing provides that touch of vanilla and softness that's so pleasing when you want a big red but don't want to eat with it.

No-one could avoid being charmed by Laurie Webster serving wines from Atamisque Serbal, also from Argentina. That man could sell wine to a...winery? Customers enjoyed him talk about their Cabernet Franc, not the first grape variety to come to mind when choosing a red, or a red from Argentina admittedly. But that's part of the intrigue. And the wine lives up to it too, winning Gold and Food Match in the Sommelier Wine Awards 2015.

The Chilean Errazuriz Aconcagua Costa Chardonnay stopped people in their tracks. That old adage that people don't want Chardonnay anymore is just hearsay.



Marvels of the New World

Last but not least was the Marvels of the New World room – housing wines from Australia, New Zealand and USA, this was one not to miss.

Starting with New Zealand, it would have been difficult to miss the whimsical labels of Te Awa's Leftfield Wines – a stand out for me was their Albariño, a beautiful white full of stone fruit flavours and zingy lime notes on the finish.

Customers were gathering around the Australian wines raving about the Bay of Fires range from Tasmania and of course you couldn't have passed on the chance to try the Alpha Crucis Winemaker's Series Shiraz from Chalk Hill – there are six wines in the series, each made by a different winemaker, each is an interpretation of terroir, and all excellent examples of McLaren Vale Shiraz.

Many of you will already know and love The Federalist Visionary Zinfandel, a long standing favourite. This year we added five more smooth and well-structured wines from this amazing Californian winery. The Federalist Honest Red Blend stood out for me; a delicious fruity dark fruit and spicy blend of Merlot, Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon. the label is adorned with the face of Abe Lincoln, hence The wine's 'honest' name; although not a federalist, his efforts to preserve the union make him worthy enough to sit alongside the founding fathers on The Federalist's other wine labels.

PRESENT YOUR CASE

Is the modern label the future for wine labels?

With wine comes passion, and with passion comes opinion, closely followed by heated debate and arguing your point to death! Continuing our series, we look at some of the issues facing the world of wine and give two people pretty clued up on the subject a chance to voice their opinion.

This edition we debate if the modern wine label is the future of wine labels rather than the traditional label.



FOR Jose Luis Gómez from Casa Rojo tells us why Casa Rojo will always use a quirky label on their wines compared to traditional wines

Don't ask me why, but when I read the title, it automatically took me back to my twenties when everything was pink in colour and sweet, and I could not stop listening to that great album 'Modern Life is Rubbish', by the britpop group Blur. Coming back to reality, I would like to say that wine label designs are like food or colours, they are subject to personal tastes and individual preferences. So a very ugly and old fashioned label for me, could be considered for another consumer as a super cool and attractive design. Also, again like anything else in life, I believe modern labels are not better than traditional labels, they are just different and should be used by different wines to target different consumers. After 120 years and three generations of family producers, a traditional label can do a great job.

Having said that, there is no doubt that Casa Rojo looks at the wine industry and oenology in a different way, not only for our youthfulness (founded in 2009) but also for our team way of thinking. Therefore, our communication and presentations, our ideas and staff, our way of working (which of course includes, the wine label designs), is quite "particular".

Maybe we have to remember our philosophy to understand better our shocking and quirky label designs.

Casa Rojo was born in 2009, recovering a very old wine name elaborated by Laura's great grandfather in 1920, but with something quite new in mind: a concept quite different from the traditional wineries, normally located in one place and elaborating different wines from that place. We understood, and we understand oenology to be something not static but richer when it moves. Therefore, we wanted to make different wines, from different places in our country, particularly different terroirs and different native grapes conducted in different ways by selected growers inside our wide country.

We called it, 'The Wine Gurus Project', and today it is formed by eight wines which are constantly evolving.

After making the wine, we needed to bottle it. We had to give each a different design, a different name and choose a type of label. And here is the story behind our concepts, behind our funky namings: we consider the wine to have a wine name,

not a family name, not a state name, and not a vineyard name. As a dog needs to have a dog's name. We believe you name your dog after a name you really think suits him. Reasons may be thousands, but you just feel that it is the correct name for that dog. Well, that's exactly what we feel when we make our wines.

We sit down, taste it, and think about the right name for it. Then, we come out with the right and perfect name for that wine and also, the perfect name for that wine expected by our target consumers, the people we would love to see drinking our wine, the people we think of when we create our wines.

We know we might have fans and haters, not only for the names and labels, but also for the concept and modern approach to the wine business, but we just try to make sure fans are the clients we want to have with us.

Take a look at our wine training manager Angela Evans, favourite modern wine labels on page 34.



AGAINST Alastair Pyatt is a wine buyer for Conviviality PLC and he discusses why he prefers the traditional label

Okay, so old vs modern? What's better? Well, as someone who works with French wine every day, I see my fair share of traditional style labels, but also quite a few in the modern style.

The problem with modern labels is that they tend to polarise opinion – they fall under the category of 'love 'em or hate 'em' and are often designed with the producers' domestic market in mind - usually, a modern label that works in one market doesn't work in another.

It also depends on the style of the wine – surely a classic region or style of wine deserves a classic label? If someone is paying a lot of money for a Châteauneuf or a Montrachet, they probably want the reassurance and quality cues that come with a traditional style of label. It needs to look expensive on a dinner table as well, which modern labels seldom do. I know full well from my non-vinous friends that when confronted by a seemingly never-ending wall of wine with all the panic inducing considerations it entails, 9 times out of 10 they will pick the one that looks most expensive, or most traditional, because it's the safe bet. It's the one

that won't embarrass them when they show up to their friend's house with it. If the wine in question is not from a classic region, doesn't matter – if it looks classic, the same applies – the traditional label enhances the perceived value and reliability of the product.

With all things in life, fashions come and go, but class is permanent. A traditional label can remain virtually unaltered for years, building brand recognition and loyalty in the process. Just look at Veuve Clicquot - apart from the size of the font and a couple of other minor amends, that famous label has not changed in decades. It's so well known that they even managed to trademark the synonymous orange-yellow colour.

Cost, inevitably, is another factor to be considered. During my time as a wine buyer, I've been sent wines with all kinds of crazy labels made from metal, wood and even velvet! Of course, these kind of materials add significant cost without improving the actual liquid inside the bottle at all. It's heavier than paper as well, so not very sound from an ecological standpoint, either.

So yes, some modern labels can be brilliant, cool and make you stand out from the crowd, but they can also make you stand out from the crowd for the wrong reasons, and that's the last thing you want. Much better to play the percentage game with a tried and tested formula, safe in the knowledge that most people will expect it, like it and be reassured by it.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

What's your opinion?

Have you been swayed by either side? Get in touch on Twitter and voice your opinion @MatthewClarkLtd



Paul Collins
Wine Development
Specialist

Initially thrilled at the prospect of choosing ten oenological delights closest to my heart for this publication of Vini, it quickly dawned on me that this would be far from an easy task.

During my six years at Matthew Clark, I have been fortunate enough to taste the majority of our wines, and with additions to our list each Autumn and Spring, there is always something juicy

and fresh to get our mouths watering and challenge our palates.

Some of my choices are long term favourites of mine, whilst others are much more recent discoveries, but I can genuinely say that choosing my 100 favourite wines would have been easier than having to rule out so many wonderful wines. Thank you and cheers!

100

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for

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01

**Ceres Full Circle
Pinot Gris**
29013 – £15.23*

I spent a couple of days with Ceres winemaker James Dicey in Manchester and the Lake District. We sampled this outstanding wine with customers who were unanimous in their liking for all of James' wines, but my personal favourite was undoubtedly the Pinot Gris. It is the length of this wine that stands out for me. Real depth of flavour from four months of lees aging, with a slight touch of sweetness from the 12g/l residual sugar. I recall sitting on the terrace at the beautiful Beech Hill Hotel in Windermere, with the sun shining and thinking that life is pretty good.



02

**Robert Mondavi Winery
Cabernet Sauvignon**
14225 – £19.81*

Synonymous with Napa Valley, Robert Mondavi wines have long been held in high regard by the wine industry. I was fortunate enough to visit the winery last year, and was treated to a tour of the vineyard and cellars by Michael Stopka, one of their trade wine educators. The weather was blissful and whilst the white wines were fantastic (particularly in the 85 degree heat), it was the familiar comfort of the Cabernet Sauvignon which stands in the memory. A long maceration, followed by over 15 months in French oak provides outstanding flavour retention and the complexity one would expect from the founding father of Napa.



03

**Torres Celeste Crianza,
Ribera Del Duero**
19522 – £12.31*

The World's Most Admired Wine Brand (2014/2015) has long been a family favourite in the Collins household. The Torres Celeste Crianza is my 'go-to' Spanish Red, and I have yet to be disappointed. I first came across this wine (in large quantities) in the cellar of my then 'future' mother-in-law, and despite a man not giving his heart away lightly, I quickly succumbed to the spicy, intense nose and concentrated palate. Torres' first wine from Ribera del Duero is an absolute delight, and a great accompaniment to a Spring evening with friends.



05

**Terre Bianche Torbato di
Alghero, Sella & Mosca**
23497 – £11.20*

This wine has intrigued and beguiled me from the first time I tasted it. It was October 2010 and I had just joined Matthew Clark as a Sales Account Manager in the Lake District. Three days into my new role, I found myself hosting a gourmet dinner at a popular restaurant. The wine paired with the fish course was the Torbato, and I was fascinated to try a wine that was new to me. Today the Torbato grape is only found on the Sella & Mosca estate on Sardinia. A rich, elegant, mineral palate with zesty grapefruit and floral aromas. Lovely!



04

**Cornas, Les Ruchets,
Jean-Luc Colombo**
29230 – £61.41*

My favourite wine tour to date was to the beautiful Rhône Valley. I was fortunate enough to spend time at the home of Jean-Luc, wife Anne and daughter Laure. We were blessed with fantastic weather, magnificent food and a wonderful range of wines. It is the Cornas range however, and particularly Les Ruchets which was closest to my heart. Les Ruchets (the beehives) is planted with Syrah vines that are up to 90 years old, which provides the wine with real intensity of black cherry fruit and blackcurrant, with a long satisfying finish.



*Bottle list price

06

The Orange Republic Godello
33041 – £14.45*

If Albariño from Rias Baixas was your Spanish white choice for last year, this year allow me to suggest this beautiful Godello from Valdeorras. The team at Casa Rojo, who brought you Macho Man Monastrell, El Gordo del Circo Verdejo and Maquinon Garnatxa (amongst others), have produced another corker. Aged on its fine lees for about five months prior to bottling, the wine is bursting with apricot and peach fruit and has a long finish. Add to this the exciting label and this wine is most definitely the complete package of style, substance and fun.



07

Alpasion Malbec
32074 – £15.26*

Upon seeing this wine for the first time, I was instantly attracted to the label. The label features the fingerprints and signatures of the investors in the project, and provides a contemporary and modern touch, to a classic grape varietal. Alpasion's goal is to make the best possible wine according to sustainable organic standards. After a 15 day maceration and malolactic fermentation the wine is aged for 10 months in new French oak, with no filtration prior to bottling, which produces a veritable fruit-bomb. Ripe red and black fruit aromas, fresh acidity, supple tannins and very good length.



08

Nobilo Icon Sauvignon Blanc
23568 – £12.65*

They say true love lasts forever, and from my first taste I was smitten. I have always been a Sauvignon Blanc fan, and despite forays into the wonderful world of Loire Valley Sancerre and Pouilly Fumé, I always seem to find my way back to this Marlborough delight. An elegant palate with zingy pronounced gooseberry and nettle flavours and fantastic acidity. Year after year, this wine is consistently good, and I have yet to be disappointed. A great wine for a warm afternoon in the garden with your favourite book.



09

Willi Opitz Goldackerl Welschriesling – Scheurebe Trockenbeerenauslese
28899 – £25.50*

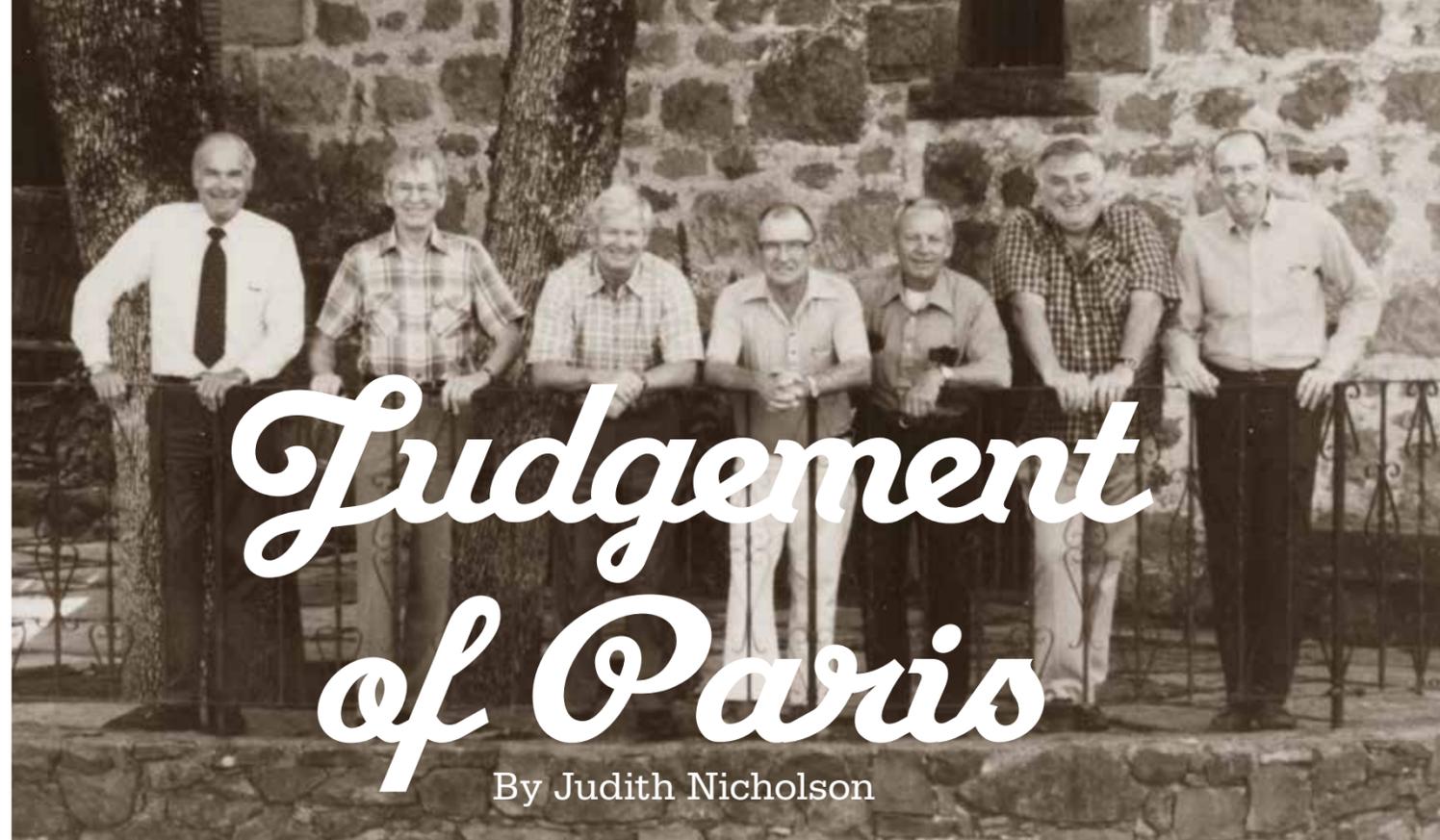
I lived in Germany for 18 months, as a part of a degree in German, and it was here that I first discovered and was introduced to the world of 'sticky' dessert wines. I still to this day possess a sweeter tooth than I ought, and no dessert would be complete without a liquid accompaniment. The Willi Opitz range is phenomenal, but my personal favourite is his Welschriesling-Scheurebe Trockenbeerenauslese – easy for me to say! The late harvesting of the grapes (mid-November) means that the Botrytis affected wine achieves sugar levels exceeding 300 g/l, with rich and powerfully sweet honey and exotic fruit. Luscious.



10

Taittinger Vintage
11104 – £50.04*

I have always been a fan of Champagne, and include Krug and Taittinger Comtes amongst my favourite wines (if someone else is paying), but in terms of value for money, I don't think it gets any better than the Taittinger Brut Vintage. Equal proportions of Chardonnay & Pinot Noir contribute to the blend, and the finish is elegant and biscuity. The grapes are sourced primarily from Taittinger's Grand & Premier Cru vineyards. I have always been fascinated with the history of Taittinger and the Vintage would be my special occasion Champagne of choice.



The Judgement of Paris took place on the 24th of May 1976. Organised by Steven Spurrier, who at the time owned a wine shop in Paris, it was an event inspired by the American Bicentenary. It pitted famous reds from Bordeaux (so mainly Cabernet based blends) and whites from Burgundy (Chardonnay), against Cabernets and Chardonnays from California. The idea was that all wines were tasted blind, and then the results decided by each Judge scoring the wine out of 20. Of the eleven judges, all were French except for Steve Spurrier (British) and Patricia Gallagher (American); their votes were discounted, so it rested purely on French shoulders.

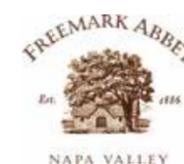
It was meant to just be a wine tasting, but became a day of historical importance when the Californian wines topped every category. Although California and the Napa Valley had a good reputation, this really put the Cabernets and Chardonnays of the region on the world map.

Freemark Abbey Wines, which are new to the list this year, were probably some of the most important wines at the tasting.

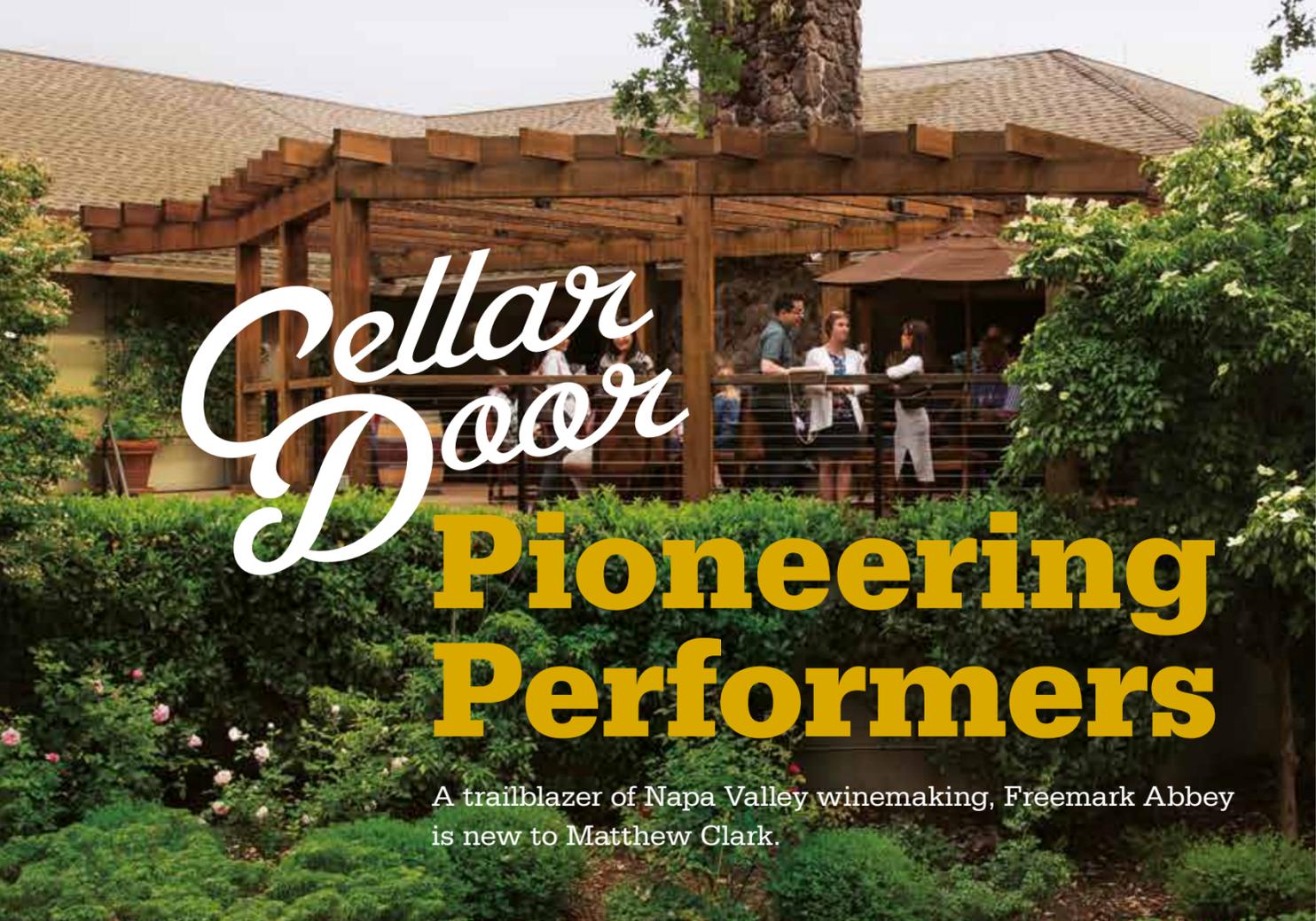
They were the only winery to have both a red and a white representing California, and it is recorded that when one of the judges tasted the 1972 Chardonnay they stated "Ah, back to France."

Five years later in 1981, the tasting was repeated between the best Bordeaux reds and Californian Cabernets. In this tasting, the Freemark Abbey Single Vineyard Bosche 1974 was voted the top wine, putting the 1970 Lafite Rothschild into second place.

We are now lucky enough to stock these wines that made the Judgement of Paris so famous (although the current vintages!). The Freemark Abbey Chardonnay is full of spice from the oak ageing, with rich tropical fruits and a creamy richness on the finish, balanced by the elegant acidity. The Cabernet Sauvignon is full of blackberry, black cherry and dark chocolate, with spicy cinnamon and cloves from the oak. Finally the Bosche Cabernet Sauvignon is full of dark fruit, well integrated tannins and an incredible finish of dark chocolate.



*Bottle list price



Cellar
Door

Pioneering Performers

A trailblazer of Napa Valley winemaking, Freemark Abbey is new to Matthew Clark.

Freemark Abbey is 130 years old and going strong! Tell us about its history and what transpired during the Prohibition era?

The estate's roots date back to 1886 when John and Josephine Tychson purchased 187 acres of land in St. Helena with the dream of building a prosperous winery. John suffered a tragic and untimely death shortly thereafter, making his widow the sole proprietor of their winery.

A woman well ahead of her time, Josephine singlehandedly oversaw construction of the estate's original redwood cellar and managed the cultivation of 65 acres of vines, rendering her the first female recognised as a grape grower and winemaker by the Napa-Sonoma County Directory.

In 1898, Josephine sold the winery to her good friend Antonio Forni, who renamed it Lombarda Cellars and constructed the still-standing historic stone winery building. Lombarda Cellars, along with most other Napa wineries, ceased all winemaking operations due to Prohibition in 1919.

Following Repeal, Lombarda endured a slow recovery until it was purchased by Albert "Abbey" Ahern in 1939 and renamed "Freemark Abbey." Freemark Abbey opened a "Sampling Room," as tasting rooms were first called, in 1949, making it one of the earliest wineries in Napa Valley to offer visitors sips of wine.

In 1966, the winery was sold to seven partners—John Bryan, Dick Heggie, Brad Webb, Bill Jager, Laurie Wood, Chuck Carpy, and Jim Warren—who ushered in Freemark Abbey's signature style of Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Their combined viticultural, winemaking, business and management expertise catapulted Freemark Abbey into a new era of excellence, and the winery was dubbed "University of Freemark."

Under the partners' direction, the first vintage of Freemark Abbey Cabernet Bosché was created in 1970, and was only the second vineyard-designated wine in California history. Within a decade of their ownership, Freemark Abbey was chosen as one of only 12 California wineries to compete

in the 1976 "Judgment of Paris" tasting, and was the only winery to have representation in both red and white wine categories.

Freemark Abbey isn't named after an Abbey though, how did the name come about?

When Albert "Abbey" Ahern purchased the winery in 1939, he combined his name with the names of his two business partners—Charles Freeman and Markquand Foster—to create the name "Freemark Abbey."

Napa Valley has become a bit of a hot spot for wine loving celebrities to visit. Do you think this has helped with the awareness and perception of Californian wines?

Geographically, Napa is fortunate to be a short flight away from Los Angeles, making it an easily accessible weekend getaway for Los Angeles-based celebrities. Celebrity visitors do lend certain prestige to Napa Valley by generating widespread awareness of the region while creating a certain sense of exclusivity, particularly in this current era where celebrities are especially active in documenting their travels on social media.

What is your favourite wine and food pairing with one of your wines?

Almost any red meat will pair well with our signature Cabernets. It's most important to keep the food simple so that the wine is allowed to shine. Steak, a premium burger, and braised short ribs are all excellent companions to a glass of Freemark Abbey Cabernet.

If you had one paragraph or sentence to convince people to try Freemark Abbey wines what would you say?

Freemark Abbey has a rich and storied history as one of Napa Valley's original Cabernet houses and boasts more than a century of wine-growing expertise, resulting

in time-tested wines that rival the best in the world. With a legacy that dates back to 1886, the historic winery pioneered the California wine industry and has become a beacon of enduring quality and tradition. Timeless, trusted and authentic—Freemark Abbey's steadfast spirit and pedigreed approach to winemaking result in elegant, refined wines crafted to withstand the test of time. The winery is lauded for crafting classically structured Cabernet Sauvignon from pedigreed vineyard sites, and is widely known for its iconic Bosché and Sycamore single-vineyard Cabernets from Rutherford.

The winemaker, Ted, is really well known in the industry, how did he get into winemaking?

After earning a Bachelor's in Biochemistry and Master's in Food, Science and Engineering from the University of California at Davis, Ted Edwards began his winemaking career in the cellar of Freemark Abbey in 1980. After two harvests, he accepted a position at Rutherford Hill as associate winemaker, a post he held for three years. He returned to Freemark Abbey in 1985 as winemaker and has managed the winery's grape growing and winemaking operations ever since.

In 1992, Freemark Abbey's seven founding partners named Edwards the eighth partner, and when managing partner Chuck Carpy passed away in 1996, Edwards took over his former boss and dear friend's duties as managing partner and director of winemaking. He remained at the helm of Freemark Abbey as director of winemaking upon Jackson Family Wines' purchase of the estate in 2006. With 35 years of experience at Freemark Abbey, he is one of the longest-tenured winemakers in Napa Valley.

You are really well known in the industry, in particular for your Cabernet Sauvignon. Tell us how this wine came about to be your forte?

In the 1960s, after a long recovery following the Prohibition era, Napa Valley began to adopt the modern

techniques that allowed California wines to compete on the global stage. Freemark Abbey was at the forefront of this revolution, and placed special focus on refining and perfecting its production of Cabernet Sauvignon—a grape that grows extraordinarily well in Napa's unique climatological conditions. When the seven partners took over the winery in 1967, it was the wine world's consensus that the partnership was composed of unusually capable people who produce extraordinary Cabernets.

The legacy of these seven partners, and earlier owners, lives on at Freemark Abbey today. As stewards of a landmark estate and a label emblematic of pedigree and heritage, they set the standard for a classic California Cabernet Sauvignon style that continues to stand the test of time. To this day, Freemark Abbey continues to stay true to its winemaking roots, producing elegant, round wines that compare with the best of Bordeaux.

Is there anything else of interest you would like to point out about your wines or the vineyard?

Freemark Abbey recently completed an innovative estate renovation during its 130th anniversary year and reopened in July 2016. The historic building has been transformed to offer new guest experiences including diverse wine education and tasting options highlighting the winery's portfolio of classic Cabernets, Chardonnay and winery-exclusive offerings. The renovation preserved the century-old stone building while introducing modern updates, a highlight of which is a dedicated space for the winery's unrivaled wine library.

Because Freemark Abbey's seven partners had the foresight to save 100-200 Cabernet cases per year, the winery now boasts an extensive wine collection that spans more than three decades and showcases how well a top-flight Californian Cabernet ages and evolves.

Demystifying Wine

When wines don't show well

Whilst every effort is made by the winemaker to present fit and healthy bottles of wines, sometimes, things go wrong and a bottle can be off its mark. Wines like these, with 'stage fright', are not harmful to the consumer – however, the consumer may shy away from them in future if the problem is not rectified.

Wines can develop faults at any stage along the journey from vineyard to glass. From taint associated with rot in grapes that are not sorted out at the triage table, to heat related problems picked up when sitting on a hot dockside in a shipping container. Sometimes the consumer may perceive a fault which may be stylistically normal; such as the oxidative qualities of sherry or a sediment thrown by an unfiltered wine.

In all cases, how the consumer is treated is of paramount importance, and understanding what the major faults are and how they might have occurred is handy information to have when addressing the, 'my wine is corked', situation.

Tartrate Crystals may be found on the cork or seen resembling 'broken glass' at the bottom of the bottle; these form in unfiltered wines that may have been kept for a few hours in cold conditions, perhaps whilst in transit. A simple fix is to decant the wine, not feasible with a guest but acceptable at home, the taste is not noticeably affected.

Cork Taint is generally caused by two closely related chemicals 2,4,6 trichloroanisole, often called TCA, or 2,4,6 tribromoanisole, often referred to as TBA. These chemicals are produced by bacteria that may have been living in a piece of cork or perhaps a pipe in a winery: so even wines sealed with a screwcap might be 'corked'. Low-levels of TCA dull a wine's fruit character, whilst higher levels might make one think the wine smells of wet cardboard, or heaven

forbid, damp dog! Nothing can be done to repair this wine – it's worth noting that some people can detect TCA and be put off a wine with really low levels of the chemical, whilst others may barely notice, beyond the fact that it is not particularly flavoursome.

Another 'fault', some actually see this as a stylistic option, is often referred to as Brett. **Brettanomyces**, to give it its full name, is a genus of yeast; as is *Saccharomyces* which is employed by all winemakers to change the grape sugars into alcohol. The issue with Brett is that, whilst low-level influence adds some complexity and a savoury character that some find attractive; a high-level influence can make the wine smell of a barnyard, one with a horse in it; or a plaster, the type one might put over a cut. Too much is just too much.

If a wine is bottled with some residual sugar in it, quite common, there is always a chance of a **Secondary Fermentation** occurring by some rogue yeast, lactic acid bacteria or acetic acid bacteria. If the latter is involved the symptoms might be a vinegary or ethyl acetate (nail-polish remover) smell: this is generally referred to as **Volatile Acidity** or VA. The wine may also appear a touch cloudy and have a prickly fizz or spritz.

Whilst in transit or on a hot shelf above a radiator wine can suffer **Heat Damage** – usually this happens above 26 °C, it is irreversibly damaged from this point. The wine will appear cloudy and taste perhaps slightly burnt; the cork may have even been pushed out a little.

Oxidation is an issue that might be initiated by excessive heat, but can also be a result of an ill-fitting cork or bad handling in the winery. The wine, if white, will have a noticeably darker, amber or brown colour; reds show a colour change away from vibrant purple towards duller brown. There will also be sherry-like flavours or aldehyde/nutty flavours. There's no going back to the brightness of youth here.

The chemical opposite of oxidation is **Reduction**, wines that suffer from reductive qualities are often bottles with not enough exposure to oxygen. The winemaker might do this with the best intention to preserve the wines fresh, fruity notes. However, wines affected might have a hint of struck match or rubber at best, and at worst show volatile sulphur compounds. Hydrogen Sulphide

(rotten eggs) is perhaps the worst outcome, but the smell of disulphide and dimethyl sulphides, rotten onions and canned corn, are not far behind. Put the cork back in quickly!

Fortunately, innovations such as screwcaps and a better understanding of how to look after wine, both in and out of the winery, mean that the percentage of wine bottles showing faults are very low these days – as always the key is to make sure the customer gets a fresh glass or bottle and continues to enjoy their time in your restaurant or bar.



By Angela Evans
Wine Training Manager

It's a well-known fact that people buy with their eyes. In the fascinating world of wine, this fact often rings more true than anywhere, even if consumers won't always admit it!

Catching the wine drinker's roving eye, piquing their interest to look more closely, pick up the bottle even, is the holy grail of wine marketing.

The traditional wine label has not, for the most part, been known for being showy, ostentatious, flamboyant or eye-catching. A traditional label can often look rather serious, or wish to lure its drinker in with the promise of class and poise.

Perhaps a beautiful line drawing of an architecturally elegant chateau, or rolling vineyards stretching into the distance. The family crest or a beautiful painting – nothing too outrageous!

But tradition often sparks rebellion, and the front of a wine bottle is a good place to shout from. The young wine consumer is far less wooed by stuffy images of chateaux and swirly writing. Colour and dynamism, avant-garde and shock-tactics are the language of more and more of today's wine labels.

These images are not to belittle the quality of the liquid in the bottle either, or present a frivolous buy-me message. Rather they intend to compel the imbiber to look again, to throw out their old expectations, or to be intrigued into trying something new.

Showmanship is definitely in evidence with the unctuous dessert wines of cult winemaker, Willi Opitz. He is one of the outstanding producers of Austrian wines and with countless awards to his name, he, above anyone, has the right to proudly shout from his label. With beautiful simplicity, he uses his opulent signature to fill the entire label from top to bottom. In gold lettering. And he can be rightly imperious, having invented a special production method, called Schilfwein, where the Zweigelt grapes are dried on reed mats. 28902 **Willi Opitz, Opitz One Schilfwein, Burgenland** £26.85*

The strapline for wonderful Spanish wine team, Casa Rojo is Enologia Creativa; Creative Winemaking. And their labels sing this from the rooftops. Their passion for wine shines from their quirky labels which buck the trend and stop you in your tracks. They produce eight carefully crafted individual wines showcasing the essence of each Spanish terroir, and the design of the label is very much part of this craftsmanship, the window on each wine's character.

The label for Casa Rojo's El Gordo del Circo from Rueda, has echoes of Monty Python. A rather rotund, moustachioed man, bursting out of a wine barrel. The label wonderfully represents the larger than life character of this white wine, the full-bodied, rich and intense flavours of the Verdejo grape from Castilla Leon. The label shocks the consumer out of any preconception about the style of Verdejo, saying, 'hey, think again, try me'.

It is an outstanding version, with grapes from fine old vines and fermented using indigenous yeasts, with a long maceration and lees ageing, giving the end result a spicy richness. 29905 **El Gordo del Circo Verdejo, Rueda, Casa Rojo** £11.33*

Another thoroughly modern wine which pulls no punches with its presentation is also from Spain. El Púgil, Tempranillo from the northern Spanish region of Toro. 'El Púgil' means a fighter who defends himself, a kind of gladiator. The label showcases an exultant fighter, arms raised high in victory, indicating the powerful and intense red wine from this traditional but progressive wine region. 29916 **El Púgil, Tempranillo, Toro** £6.33*

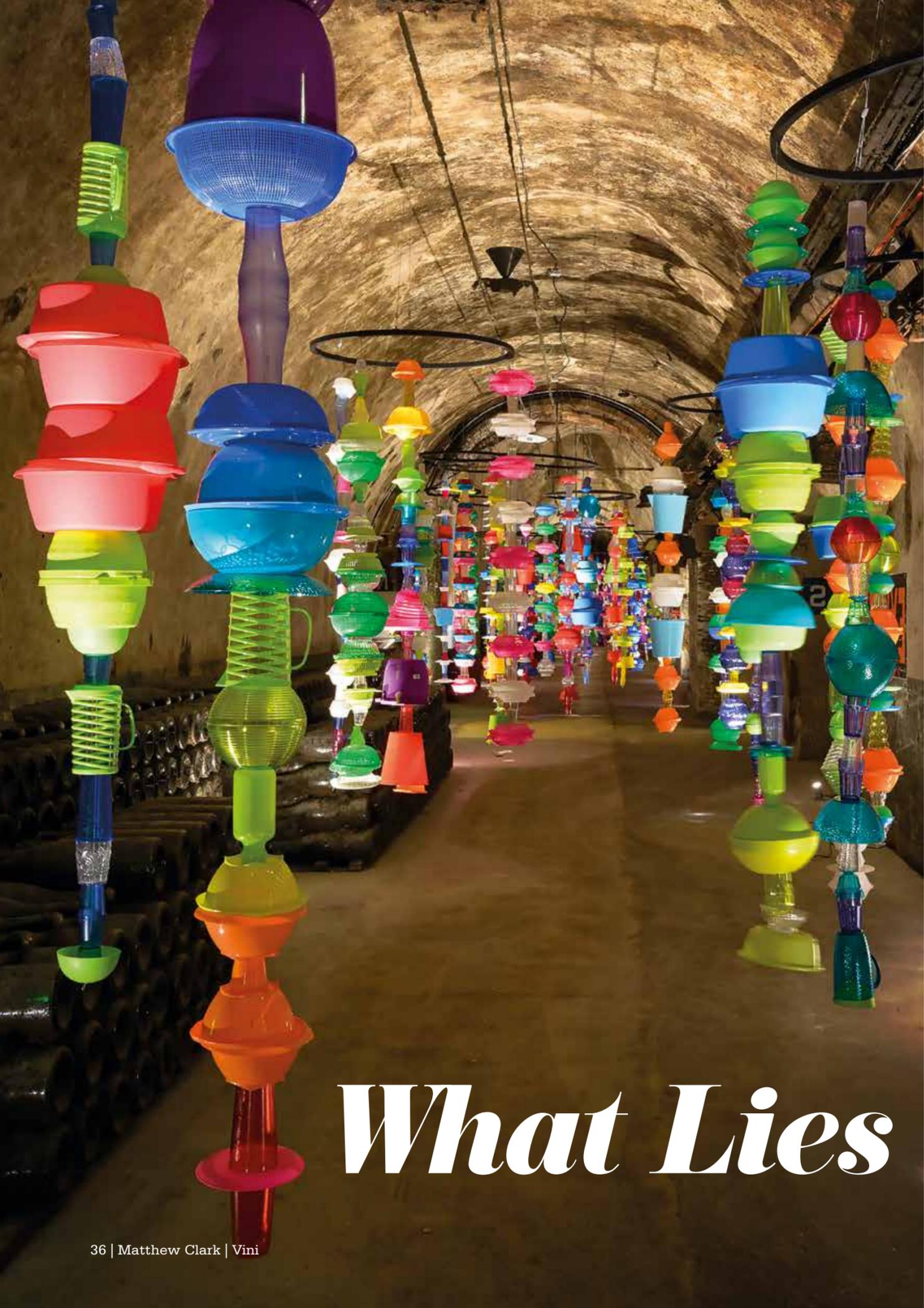
Spain does seem to have cornered the market when it comes to eye-catching labels, perhaps their cultural heritage from Picasso to Gaudi gives them the confidence to be different, to experiment.

A highly artistic label, in La Unica's case, enables this wine to stand out from the crowd, telling the consumer that they flout the rules. Just as with Super Tuscans in Italy, which will not toe the line in terms of permitted grape varieties and regional requirements, La Unica is simply classified as a table wine. But the price, over £75 a bottle, along with the striking individual labels tell a different story. The winemakers take outstanding parcels of Tempranillo from Rioja, Ribera del Duero and Toro, key Spanish regions, making only a very boutique 2,600 bottles per year. Extraordinarily, each label is hand-painted by acclaimed Argentinian artist Mariano Rinaldi Goni. His elegant and playful artwork aligns beautifully with the virtues of the intense and complex blends. 28951 **La Unica** £79.59*

*Bottle list price

Showmanship on Labels

As these labels show, in an ever-expanding and experimental world of wine, exhibitionism is going to be key, hiding your light behind a boring label just isn't an option.



Château Pommery, based in Reims has been described as a striking highlight of this French city. With large iron gates beckoning you up a sweeping avenue that is framed with flags from various countries around the world, it is indeed a spectacular stature of the home of Pommery Champagne.

However, not only is the building breath-taking but what lies beneath is also remarkable. With its 55 hectares, 18 kilometres of underground tunnels and 25 million bottles, one 116-step staircase the dark and cool cellars are brought to life by some dramatic artwork.

We caught up with the team at Pommery Cellars to find out a little more.

What was the inspiration to create such unique and artistic cellars?

Jeanne Alexandrine Louise Mélin was born March 18, 1819 in Ardennes and married Alexandre Pommery in 1839. Upon Alexandre's death in 1860, Louise Pommery, assumed full control of the Champagne business.

In July 1868, she launched what would be the largest construction project of the century in Reims, the transformation of chalk quarries into wine cellars. French and Belgian miners dug 18 kilometres of interconnected galleries formed of barrel vaults and rib vaults. It is a giant subterranean town. Working by candlelight, artist Gustave Navlet adorned the plazas, formed by ancient wells, with immense bas-relief sculptures, going blind in the process. The bas-relief artwork accentuates the surreal beauty of these grandiose galleries, which are cast in permanent twilight. A monumental staircase with 116 steps is the sole connection between this underground world and the one outside.

These unique cellars allowed her to store and age thousands of bottles in a temperature-controlled environment (a constant 10°C). Many other Champagne houses later followed suit.

Do you host art exhibitions in the cellars?

Since 2002, Pommery has been opening its doors and making its cellars accessible to provide artists with a new way in which to express their talents. These chalk cellars are a unique and historically significant point of convergence, offering artists from around the world an opportunity to work under curators whose creativity knows no bounds. These exhibitions, entitled "Expériences Pommery", have already garnered

significant attention. They pay tribute to the visionary talent of Louise Pommery while offering the estate's visitors a glimpse into tomorrow's creativity.

Tell us more about the artwork on display.

Fabrice Bousteau, editor of France's Beaux Arts magazine, has curated the latest exhibition in Pommery's champagne cellars in Reims. Inspired by their vast size, Bousteau's "gigantic" theme highlights the excessive, the colossal and also the minuscule in scale that artists are approaching in their work. Pieces by 21 artists punctuate a meander through part of the labyrinthine cellars.

Not only are your cellars spectacular but your grounds are too!

The underground and upper world were built almost at the same time. Work on the main buildings began in 1878 with the creation of the first cellar complex, the Carnot cellars, built in a Tudor/neo-Elizabethan style, replicating an English castle with a combination of red brick, blue plaster and castellated towers.

Within the walled grounds of Domain Pommery Champagne's largest single Clos can be found. At 25 hectares, the grapes harvested from this demarcated area are kept exclusively for the creation of Les Clos Pommery, a rare and extremely limited single-vineyard Champagne available only in Magnum.

Anything else you feel our readers should know about the cellars and Pommery Champagne?

In 2015 the cultural importance of Domain Pommery's buildings and cellars were acknowledged with it being listed as a UNESCO heritage site.

French and Belgian miners dug 18 km of interconnected galleries formed of barrel vaults and rib vaults. It is a giant subterranean town.

What Lies Beneath?

Award Winners

It has been a fantastic start to the new year for one of our favourite South African wineries. Nederburg, based in the Western Cape region, have been named 2017 Winery of the Year by Platter's.

The award was given in November 2016 as part of the publication of the respected Diner's Club South African Wine Guide, with four of Nederburg's wines being given ratings of 5 stars, more than any other winery.

On the announcement of the award, Nederburg's cellarmaster **Andrea Freeborough** (right) who took over from Razvan Macici in 2015, said: "We are thrilled! Earning the title of Platter's 2017 Winery of the Year is a true acknowledgment of the collective efforts of the winegrowing and winemaking team in producing consistently delicious, well-balanced wines of excellence.

"The Platter guide is respected locally and internationally, considered the go-to source for many in identifying remarkable South African wines." Well, we're thrilled too, so to celebrate we've decided to have a closer look at their superb range of quirkily-labelled and brilliantly crafted Heritage Heroes wines.



The Anchorman
Chenin Blanc,
Western Cape
29042 – £12.72*

The Brew Master
Cabernet Sauvignon-
Merlot, Western Cape
29052 – £12.72*

The Beautiful Lady
Gewurztraminer,
Stellenbosch
29059 – £12.72*

The Young Airhawk
Sauvignon Blanc,
Western Cape
29041 – £12.72*

The Motorcycle
Marvel Grenache-
Carignan-Shiraz,
Western Cape
29058 – £12.72*

Heritage Heroes By Andrew Falk

The Heritage Heroes range has been created to commemorate the long and unique history of the winery with a range of five beautiful wines, each telling a story related to key figures in the formation of Nederburg as a leading South African winery today. The eye-catching labels help take you on the journey too, with a related image donning each wine within the range.

The Nederburg story begins all the way back in 1791 (yes that's 1791!) when Phillipus Wolvaart purchased the Nederburg farm sat between the Berg and Palmiet Rivers. Here he planted Chenin Blanc grapes and started the land's long-standing association with quality wine.

To honour the vital role played by Wolvaart or "The Anchorman", Nederburg have created a superb Chenin Blanc. The Anchorman Wooded Chenin Blanc is actually blended with 15% Grenache Blanc and the two grapes are fermented in oak vats. The resultant wine is light and fruity with a classically floral and honey character to go along with apricot and nectarine flavours. A versatile wine that is just as happily drunk on its own as with a fresh tomato salad or poultry dish.

In 1937 the land was acquired by German Johann Graue – The Brew Master. Graue, a tea specialist, was an innovator who used

clonal experimentation to highlight the best vines for replanting as well as introducing cold fermentation techniques. **The Brew Master** is a Bordeaux-style wine which commemorates Graue's innovative spirit. Made up of 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot, with Petit Verdot and Malbec making up the balance, the grapes are vinified separately and then matured for 18 months in French oak. The result is a smooth and silky wine with ripe dark fruits and a smoky, cigar box finish. A perfect partner for red meats and casseroles it was also given an individual 5-star rating in the Platter's Awards for the 2014 vintage.

Visitors to the vineyard at the time were welcomed by Johann's wife, Ilse. She was famous for her gracious hospitality, as well as her love for the finer things in life. Her rose garden still blooms in the Nederburg estate to this day. **The Beautiful Lady**, as she was affectionately known, was created in her memory. An aromatic and seductively fruity Gewurztraminer sourced from a single vineyard plot in Stellenbosch, the hand-harvested grapes are given great care in the winery to retain the varietal characters of lychee, rose petal and Turkish delight. The slight sweetness on the finish makes it a great partner for spicy dishes as well as richly flavoured cheeses.

Graue and Ilse's son Arnold, known as The Young Airhawk, was trained to take over the business but was tragically killed in an aeroplane crash at the tender age of 29. **The Young Airhawk** is a wine made from 100% Sauvignon Blanc sourced from vineyards in Elim and Durbanville. The wine is, perhaps unusually for a Sauvignon, barrel-fermented and kept on its lees for 10 months to add greater complexity. A green fruit character with notes of asparagus followed by a creamy finish make this wine perfect to accompany seafood.

The final crucial character in the Nederburg story, Gunter Brozel, started life at the winery as a 21 year-old cellar hand. After working his way up the ladder he became cellar master in 1956, and was known for traversing the vineyards on his trustee motorbike, thus earning himself the nickname the Motorcycle Marvel. **The Motorcycle Marvel** is a wine made in the image of a Rhone blend, mainly made up of Carignan, Shiraz and Grenache. It is a robust and hearty red with smoky spice notes and vanilla imparted from the 2 years in French and Romanian oak accompanying the ripe blackcurrant fruit character making it ideal to enjoy with the smoky meats of a BBQ.

People buy with their eyes - that is why it is important to ensure you have your back bar merchandised correctly with 'signposts' to guide purchasing decisions. We have some top tips on back bar merchandising. Please contact your Matthew Clark account manager for a more detailed guide.

Back bar merchandising

By Gemma Laken

Your back bar and fridges are THE SHOWCASE for your products... view your bar as your stage!

Merchandising is a combination of:

- Product display
- Point of sale and menus
- Visual sales messages that appeal to the emotions and sub-conscious

- Through effective merchandising not only can you guide customers into beverage choices that are more profitable for you, you can also improve perception of your venue.
- Make sure everything you do suits your venue - chalkboards are great in some places, but completely out of place in others - you know what works for you.
- Successful merchandising taps into your customers' emotions - think about what will appeal to them, what tone of voice, what products you will realistically have success in upselling - there is no point creating a great display of a product that is completely out of your target audience's price range or not to their taste!
- Every bar set up and room layout is different - make the most of what works for you, we have created a general guide to cover the basics of creating the best showcase possible:



1

People's eyes naturally move from centre to the right when browsing. Make sure the products you want to drive are off centre - to the right of your bar.



2

Hotspots - your prime selling positions, the place that is most likely to attract traffic and therefore have greater ability to influence. These will change in every venue, but likely to be:

- On route to the bar such as pillars/walls
- Behind the till
- Eye level behind the bar
- Tables
- In your bathrooms

Ensure you don't over clutter - keep messages simple and minimal to achieve maximum results.



3

Fridges - The top right hand corner is your hotspot - put your premium range here.



4

It's all about the labels - some of your products have eye catching, art based or thought provoking labels.

Make the most of these in a display space - double bank and consider using luggage tags to highlight key flavour characteristics.



5

Make it easy - aide decisions on your back bar by grouping your products by category, making it easy for customers to view a whole spirit category at once.



6

Use simple sales messages - when you're driving down the road and you pass a restaurant or pub that has chalkboards, how many messages can you take in before you have driven past or lost interest?

It is the same in your venue - keep messages to a minimum and make them impactful. Drinks choices can be emotive, you have a chance to appeal to people's sense of occasion or the mood they are in through use of simple language and a few descriptive words.



7

Remove the non-saleables - the milk/ staff lunches!

SEEING GOLD

Over the past few months we have picked up some prestigious wine awards. Read on to find out more...



Harpers Spanish Heroes Awards 2016

Recently, we won the Wholesaler of the Year award at Harpers Spanish Heroes Awards 2016. We won this award due to our great Spanish portfolio, Harpers had this to say about us:

“With its national account reach, Matthew Clark has heartily championed Spain as a core part of its portfolio, continuing to add more wines from the country and wielding the influence of the Matthew Clark name to the benefit of the category as a whole.”

We list a range of award winning Spanish wines including MMM Macho Man Monastrell, Jumilla, Casa Rojo which won Gold at the Sommelier Wine Awards and silver at the IWC Awards; Contino Rioja which won Silver at the Decanter awards and Losada Bierzo Tinto which won silver at the IWSC awards.

Speak to your Account Manager today to enquire about our great range of Spanish wines. Salud!



IWSC Wine Importer of The Year 2016

Established in 1969, The International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC) was the first competition of its kind, set up to seek out, reward and promote the world's best wines, spirits and liqueurs. What sets the IWSC apart is the formidable reputation of its judging process.

Their panels of carefully selected industry experts comprise Masters of Wine, buyers, sommeliers, WSET qualified educators and respected wine journalists. Every single wine is assessed on its own merits within the context of its class. Currently receiving entries from around 90 countries, the IWSC is truly international in its reach and recognition.

At the IWSC Annual Awards Banquet on November 16th 2016 at Guildhall, London, we picked up the Wine Importer of the Year Award. We won this award due to having over 1400 wines, from entry level to premium wines, including Champagne.

Of these, over 600 are award winning wines, including 17 trophies. Our range also encompasses wines from 17 countries including wines from emerging countries such as Romania, Hungary and Greece.

Vini musings

with Fiona Stephens



Since I announced in Vini that I am embarking on the self-study programme to become a Master of wine, I have been studying and doing all sorts.

I've attended tutored tastings on Chardonnay and Italian wines, partaken in some judging for the International Wine Challenge and attended two course days, which saw a room full of fairly confident adults shrink to scared children after having to blind taste numerous 12 wine flights!

One of the most interesting seminars I attended was regarding minerality in wine. Now we all know 'those' people who talk about wines poetically and bang on about chalky Chablis, flinty Sancerre, wet-stone aromas and pepper all sentences with 'elegance' and 'minerality'. Minerality is normally a default term for a wine which has a taste which does not fit into a fruit or savoury descriptor and often allows the user to sound like they really know wine. I am sure, like me, many of you have used the term without really thinking about what it actually means.

For a wine-lover who has to describe wine every day of their life, having the Geologist Prof. Alex Maltman stand up and start the seminar with a slide entitled 'Why "minerality" is not the taste of vineyard minerals' is tantamount to the memory of being told Father Christmas does not exist.

We all love the romantic idea that wines taste different all over the world because of the varying climatic conditions and terroir the vines grow in — soils being a large factor of the terroir. Professor Maltman proceeded to debunk this over the course of the following hour and reduce minerality to being "good for marketing". He finished and observed the dejected, bereft audience before him.

I will try and summarise why he came to this conclusion as succinctly and painlessly as possible. Of the 100 chemical elements in nature, vines only use up to 8 of them. Compounds of these elements form minerals and compounds of minerals are ionically bonded (code for tough as old boots) forming rocks. Are you with me so far?

The trouble is that the nutrients (minerals) in rocks need to weather over years and years to then become part of the soil and then soluble in water to be soaked up by anything. This only affects the top layer of soil and not the deeper layer where water-seeking vine roots exist, so the roots and dissolved minerals never come into contact. The next problem is that vines are selective, they only take on the nutrients they need, rather than different minerals from each soil types, so this can't account for the variations in wines from different areas.

Furthermore, anything they do 'suck' up is used in all parts of the vine, not just the grape and the winemaking process involves many additions e.g. yeasts, sulphur etc. before many elements are filtered out... so the final glass has very little connection to what the vine originally took on board.

If that wasn't enough nails in the coffin, the brutal Professor then pointed out that the levels needed of minerals such as calcium to reach the taste threshold is so high, it is scientifically impossible for us to taste chalk, silica (flint) etc. Therefore when we say we taste minerals it is a metaphor, or an allusion to a flavour we cannot pinpoint, rather than a literal term.

A number of experts followed the Professor to say 'it's OK minerality isn't in your imagination, we are tasting something in less fruity, more citrusy, or lesser flavoured wines which we label as minerality, the problem is one of semantics, so we need to find other words to describe wines.' Joy! We then carried out a large tasting, where nobody agreed on the type or level of minerality, which they said is normal, the term is too broad. Although we can't currently reduce it into enough components that are helpful for universal use, we can't abandon it, but must use it with caution.

By way of conciliation we were then told the term 'fruity' was a term that used to be widely used but that means nothing now as we have replaced it with more meaningful terms, so there is hope.

Overall, it was interesting but fundamentally burst my bubble a little in terms of the magic and romance of why wines differ. All the more reason though to get out there and keep tasting wines to try and build my vocab! I will try and steer away from science next time I give you an update. Until then, may your glasses and your wine vocabularies be overflowing.

Get in touch

Do you have passion, enthusiasm or something interesting to share with the wine geeks?

Like to share the success of your outlet with our readers?

Want to share how your passion for wine began?

Do you have a wine hero in your outlet you'd like to put forward for a feature in Vini?

Give us a bell on: **0344 822 3910**

Drop us a line at: winesofdistinction@matthewclark.co.uk

Get in touch with us via social media:



vini- a combining form meaning
"wine": viticulture, vinification
[Latin vini-, comb. form of vinum]

—

Vinification is the production of wine,
starting with selection of the grapes
or other produce and ending
with bottling the finished wine

Matthew Clark

the experience matters