

Summer 2007

# Grapestalk

The magazine of the Association of Small Direct Wine Merchants

## So how important is terroir?

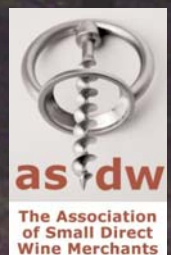
Paul Howard tackles the question that pits the new against the old

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Grapetalk is published quarterly for the Association of Small Direct Wine Merchants.

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# Consumers open their wallets

**BRITISH WINE DRINKERS** are increasingly spending more on their wines, according to specialist merchants and supermarkets.

An article in the Daily Telegraph recently reported that spending on wine in the UK in 2006 rose by over 2% to £4.32 billion despite the quantity being consumed remaining static at 827 million litres.

Tesco, which sold £987 million of wine in 2006, has seen sales of wine priced at £10 or more increase by 75% over the past two years. Waitrose reported sales increasing by 53% on bottle of wine priced at over £10 in the last year, and announced that the average price for wine bought through their stores has increased to £8.

Majestic Wine Warehouse has also benefited from this new trend, with sales of fine wine rocketed, with a 30 per cent rise in demand for bottles priced at £20 and more.

Smaller specialist mer-



chants such as ASDW members have also seen some customers willing to trade up in price, as they get more confident about wine and are willing to be a little more adventurous in their drinking and buying habits.

While specialist merchants often deal at the upper end of the price scale, it is rare to find wines at more than £20 in the supermarkets. Yet a quick scan found a few surprises.

Waitrose lists Penfold Grange 1999 at £123.50 per bottle and Krug Rose Non Vintage at £170 at £2,052 for a case of 12 bottles, while Majestic currently lists more than 20 bottles at over £100 per bottle.

## From the editor

**WELCOME TO THE** fourth edition of *Grapetalk*, which comes just in time for summer which perhaps signals a change in our usual drinking habits, with rose wines and chilled reds featuring as part of our seasonal vinous diets.

Paul Howard tackles the thorny issue of terroir in this issue, an issue that most serious wine enthusiasts undoubtedly have an opinion on. We also have a culinary tour of Zanzibar and a welcome article on sherry, surely one of the most underrated and underpriced of all wines available in the UK. Finally, Vincent Gasnier, a former Master Sommelier, looks at food and wine matching, and offers us his professional opinion.

As ever, we are very keen to hear from our readers and welcome contributions, articles and suggestions on features for future issues. Please email us at [grapestalk@asdw.org.uk](mailto:grapestalk@asdw.org.uk).

**Stefan Reynolds**

## Help needed!

**THE PUBLISHER OF** *Grapetalk* is looking for help from readers for a new book which is due to be published in 2008.

*Real Food England* will be a comprehensive guide to the best places to buy food in England, and hopefully the first is a series of books covering the whole of the UK.

The book will focus solely on independent retailers and include butchers, greengrocers, farm shops, speciality food shops and farmer's markets. There will also be a feature on online specialist food retailers and some of the various box schemes available.

We would therefore be very grateful to receive from readers details of all the independent food retailers that you would be happy to recommend for inclusion in the book.

Please submit your real food heroes to [info@vantagepublishing.co.uk](mailto:info@vantagepublishing.co.uk).

# Come and meet ASDW members

**A NUMBER OF** ASDW members will be showing a range of their wines at a couple of wine tasting events this year.

In addition to the traditional ASDW London tastings that are held twice a year by the association, there will be the chance to meet some of the members at the following events:

### **ASDW Canon's Ashby Tastings**

9th September 2007

10th November 2007

The ASDW return once again to Canons Ashby in Northamptonshire on both the 9th September and the 10th November 2007.

Both of these tastings will be ideal opportunities to taste ASDW members' wines and then buy your supply of fine wines from around the world, many of which are

unavailable elsewhere in the UK.

You can also take the time to visit the National Trust owned Canon's Ashby House, a beautiful Elizabethan house with fabulous gardens and a ruined medieval priory church.

For more information, please visit [www.asdw.co.uk](http://www.asdw.co.uk).

### **Newbury Wine Festival**

13th and 14th October 2007

There will be around 20 independent wine retailers including a number of ASDW members supporting the first ever Newbury Wine Festival, all of whom aim to bring visitors exceptional quality wines from around the world at sensible prices.

For more information, please visit [www.newburywinefestival.co.uk](http://www.newburywinefestival.co.uk).

# A Ray of sunshine in a Wine Merchant's day



Henry Speer

**SHORTLY AFTER I** gave up law practice and started my wine business, Champers, I came across the Association of Small Direct Wine Merchants. This group had very recently been formed by a core group of Warren Edwards, James Bercovici, Nick Dobson John Dickinson, Stefan Reynolds and Leon Stolarski among others. The group consisted of people like me who had set up wine businesses to run from home; some still kept on the day job and others had other interests besides their wine to help keep the wolf from the door – most of us had only just started, although one or two like James had been going rather longer and had more established businesses.

The group had originally come together to pool knowledge and make representations about the Licensing Act 2003, which was about to come in to force. The Act was designed for large organisations and its application to our micro businesses was enormously cumbersome and bureaucratic. It was after the initial representations had been made to James Purnell the Obergruppenführer at the Ministry and members were starting to exchange information about Premises Licenses and becoming Designated Premises Supervisors, that being under 6 ft, fairly forthright and having a cave full of bubbly zymic grape juice to sell, I thought I probably qualified and joined up.

One of the main attractions which many of us found was that being in business on

one's own is fairly lonely in the sense that one feels quite exposed, especially those of us who had spent a lot of our working lives in businesses with other people to bounce ideas around with and to call on in times of pressure. So when the Licensing Act was up and running and we had all worked out how we were going to fit in with it in our various ways, we felt there was still a lot to be gained by continuing as a group so we could exchange information, benefit from bulk buying and promote ourselves collectively on the basis that the membership as a whole was greater than the sum of the individual parts.

When I first started up, the *Daily Telegraph* had just appointed a new Wine Correspondant, Jonathan Ray, at almost the same time. Jonathan already had a number of years under his belt in the course of a distinguished career in the wine trade, but this seemed to be his first venture into top-flight journalism. Hoping he might feel a twinge of sympathy for someone else venturing forth into vineyards new, I cheekily sent him a few samples for him to try - and he got in touch and very kindly gave me a mention in his next literary masterpiece on champagne.

Now I don't know what it's

like being a busy journalist having to keep up a flow of interesting and varied pieces with weekly deadlines, but I can imagine that there must be times when it's difficult to come up with something fresh that will engage and entertain the readers. It seemed to me that in the ASDW we had a subject where all of human life was there, or at least enough of it to fill a wine page on a slow Saturday; courage to the point of foolhardiness, passion, human interest, and unusual and interesting wines might just be enough to help a busy wine journalist round one more turn of his treadmill. Or so I reasoned. I don't know if I was right or if it is just that Jonathan is an extremely decent chap and felt a bit sorry for a struggling bunch of grape freaks, but when I approached him he kindly said he would be happy to meet us and try some of our wines

This gave me a problem; ASDW has over 20 members, but if more than 6 of us came along at once, a tasting over lunch would be unmanageable; however it was invidious to have to choose between members. Ultimately we achieved a group of 6 by identifying areas of specialism and balloting where there was more than one possible candidate within that specialism. This gave us

the six members who are mentioned in Jonathan's article.

So that everyone in the Association had an opportunity to put forward a wine, we agreed to taste the wines of those meeting Jonathan on the day along with the wines of 6 other members, and I also let him have 12 other wines for separate sampling. This way every member who wanted to put forward a wine was able to do so.

We met up in a private room in a hostelry close to the Law Courts in the Strand, and you can read about it in Jonathan's article which follows.

Jonathan proved to be an extremely likeable and convivial guest and was genuinely interested in ASDW and our various enterprises; in particular I hope we impressed him with the variety of excellent and unusual wines which ASDW members can supply, often unavailable elsewhere in the UK.

He generously suggested that we should put together a £99 ASDW case, a superb feat of organisation orchestrated by our Chairman Nick Dobson which met with great success – but that's another story.

*Henry Speer runs Champers Ltd, a specialist Champagne importer, and is a leading member of the ASDW.*



Original ASDW members at their first trade tasting in 2005

# No hanging around for the grape bunch

Jonathan Ray

**WE ALL HAVE** our dreams.

There are the Don't-Be-So-Daft dreams, where you score a hat trick at Wembley or a century at Lord's, write a bestselling novel and star in a Hollywood blockbuster. And there are the What-The-Hell-Is-Stopping-Me? dreams, where you chuck it all in to renovate a decrepit château in the Dordogne or peddle pedalos on a sun-baked Sri Lankan beach.

ASDW pals have formed to conquer the wine industry: (from left) Nick Dobson, Andrea d'Ercole, Henry Speer, Jim Monks, John Dickinson and Leon Stolarski

Lodged somewhere in between these castles in the air are the distractingly persistent wine-related reveries in which you live the good life tending your Languedoc vineyard, set up a glitteringly successful wine bar or make a fine living pottering around the world ferreting out exquisite wines to sell to a clamour of loyal customers.

Happily enough, for the engaging collection of wine-obsessed optimists and eccentrics loosely bound together in the Association of Small Direct Wine Merchants (ASDW), this latter dream has, to varying degrees, become a reality.

'They do say that the best way to make a small fortune in wine is to start with a large one,' says Henry Speer, a retired lawyer who set up Changers, the mini Champagne specialist, in 2003. 'I didn't have the large fortune to start with, sad to say, but I did have a passion for wine and saw a niche in providing personally-labelled, top-quality Champagne for special occasions. And I'm delighted to say that we're doing pretty well.'

The ASDW comprises about 20 independent wine merchants such as Changers - one-man-band enterprises on the whole, dotted around the country - which specialise in specific regions and wine styles, importing direct from



the producer and selling either by phone or over the internet. Most of the members have, or had, other jobs entirely unconnected with the wine trade and are united only in their passion for the grape.

I join Speer and some of his fellow members at one of their regular get-togethers. I not only want to know whether it is possible to make a living selling wine from home, but also whether their wines are worth buying.

'Some of us who are trying to do this full time have found it tricky,'" admits Jim Monks, formerly in software but now of Decanter Wines, specialising in Spanish wine. 'For me, though, it's really a lifestyle thing. I only have 18 wines on my list and import about 1,000 cases a year. But I have no difficulty selling them and have built up a very loyal clientele.'

Also at our tasting are: John Dickinson of French Regional Wines, who sensibly gave up logistics management in favour of scouting out treats from Alsace, the Loire and the south-west; and Nick Dobson (Nick Dobson Wines), a former software engineer who now specialises in Swiss and Austrian wines; Andrea d'Ercole, whose company, Italy Abroad, is one of the larger member merchants, with more than 150 wines as well as olive oils and pasta sauces; and

Leon Stolarski (Leon Stolarski Fine Wines), who, when he is not working at his day job with HM Land Registry, focuses on sourcing and selling wines from Languedoc-Roussillon.

'My buying trips are part business and part pleasure,'" says Stolarski, "and the internet is ideal for what we do. Supermarkets have only tiny 'shelf talkers' alongside their wines, whereas we can wax lyrical on our websites about any particular bottle, adding tasting notes or customer endorsements as we go.'

I can see why companies such as theirs might attract disaffected supermarket customers, I say, but why should I buy from them instead of well-established merchants such as Justerini & Brooks, for example, or Lay & Wheeler?

'Well, I'd argue that such companies are, by their very nature, generalists, whereas we are experts in the tiny, often obscure, areas that we know backwards,' says Nick Dobson. 'We can buy small amounts from small producers, whereas larger merchants are obliged to buy only from producers big enough to supply them. You can also call us up, day or night, and we'll be there.' Jim Monks adds: 'I also think that there's a certain amount of exclusivity value attached to buying from people like us. My customers love the

fact that I've flushed out these treasures on their behalf and that they're not available anywhere else.'

These ASDW chaps put a persuasive case and it's now time to taste their wines. I work my way through the dozen or so bottles on the table, starting with a delightfully refreshing Prosecco and a toasty and characterful Champagne. Among the other highlights are a charming Austrian Grüner Veltliner, a brace of zesty New World Sauvignon Blancs, a stunning Jurançon Sec, a fruity, jammy Cabernet Franc from the Loire and a cracking Rioja Reserva.

There isn't a dud among them. Well, perhaps just one, a curiosity from Macedonia. But the remainder are first rate - excellent examples of their grape varieties and terroir and all exclusive to the merchants presenting them, bought and sold with care and passion.

'It's not a bad life, tootling about in search of wine,' says John Dickinson with a smile. 'After all, the worst-case scenario is that I fail to sell what I buy and end up having to drink it.'

*Jonathan Ray is wine correspondent for The Daily Telegraph. This article first appeared in the paper on the 7th April and is reproduced by kind permission.*

# Travels in the Spice Isles

**HAVING LIVED EIGHT** years in Kenya and several in the Arab world, I have developed a love for the Swahili cuisine of East Africa. Allowing for an oversimplification, this cuisine is a variant of the Arabic cuisine, but made with whatever materials are found locally and with a hefty dose of Indian influence added. The resulting mix of influences is more than the sum of its parts. Hence, on my recent trip to Stone Town, Zanzibar, I was busy eating.

Close by the Old Fort of Zanzibar is a nice restaurant, *Archipelago*, which is owned by a local Arab of Omani descent. The setting is quite lovely: an open-air restaurant that looks out to the sea. No alcohol is served but they do allow BYOB. Prices are ridiculously cheap (main courses are about 4-6€).

I ate the traditional dish of Swordfish in coconut sauce, *samaki ya kupaka*, which the restaurant prepared to perfection and served it with pilau rice and a side of spicy spinach.

Here is a recipe that a local acquaintance gave me. There are so many variants to this dish that this is just to give an idea of what the dish is like:

1 kg white fish; 2 cloves garlic; 2 green chillies, chopped; juice of one lemon; 1 onion chopped; 1 tomato chopped; 0,5l coconut milk; 2tbs oil; coriander.

Mix garlic, salt, pepper and lemon juice and marinate the fish for 2 hours plus. Oil the baking dish and bake the fish lightly. Mix the onions, chillies, tomatoes and coriander in a blender and fry the mixture in 2 tbs of oil for a couple minutes. Add coconut milk and stir until sauce thickens. Pour over fish and bake in the oven for 10-15 mins at medium heat. Serve with coconut rice.

I liked the restaurant so much that I went on a couple other occasions. I heartily recommend trying the *Whole Changu*, which is prepared steamed with a sauce of lemon, chillies and herbs. *Changu* is a delicious fish and is very popular with the locals. The only problem is that it is a very bony fish, but I thought the flesh so lovely and juicy that I didn't mind that too much.

There is a fancy new hotel called *Chavda* which is very pricey. The restaurant on the rooftop, with a lovely view of Stone Town, is however priced just as nicely for a student budget as the rest of the restaurants in town. I went to eat another traditional Swahili dish, *Masala*

## Otto Nieminen

kingfish, *samaki wa salo*.

1kg fish fillets; juice of one lemon; 1 onion chopped; 2 cloves garlic; 1 tbs ginger beaten to a pulp; 1 green chilli chopped; 1 tbs garam masala; 1 tomato chopped; some oil for frying; coriander; mace.

Marinate the fish in salt, pepper and lemon juice for a couple hours. Fry the onions. Add all the spices until well blended. Drain the marinade from the fish and fry it in the oil until brown. Put the dried fish on a baking tray and pour the cooked sauce over it. Bake for 10 mins at moderate heat. Garnish with mace and coriander. Usually eaten with spiced potatoes.

Some days I went to the fish market at 6am to buy some fresh fish to make for myself. For Christmas Eve, I found some nice looking tuna which I prepared in two different ways. First of all I did the *masala* recipe I noted above and then a simple recipe from Sicily. I took fillets of tuna, poured a bottle of white wine over them, added two tomatoes, salt, pepper, juice and skin of one lemon, coriander and capers into the marinade and let it sit for 8 hours. I then fried the pieces of fish in olive oil, and reduced the marinade to make a sauce for it.

Zanzibar is not a place to go for wines. All I managed to find were a handful of South Africans. With this Christmas

dinner we had a bottle of *Buitenverwachtig Buiten Blanc 2006* which was a full bodied, but rather nicely acidic wine. The nose did show a bit of oak, and it wasn't particularly light on its feet, but was fresh tasting anyway. It was too heavy with the Sicilian dish, and the Swahili dish was too spicy for wine anyway. Not good matches.

It wasn't only a food related holiday. I also did some perfectly touristy things like going to Kizimkazi to swim with dolphins and went several times on Dhow rides.

Another interesting trip was to see the Slave caves where the infamous slave trader Tippu Tip hid the slaves he would sell to the Near East. The entrance to the cave is very well hidden underneath copious vegetation and could not be seen until we were standing just above it. The cave itself is two kilometres deep and could hide tens of thousands of slaves at one time. The cave used to exit at a bay where the slaves would be put on Dhows heading north. It was a very interesting trip to see about a cruel period in history. Slavery was 'abolished' in the mid 19th Century, but slavers like Tippu Tip continued using such caves to hide their 'merchandise' until the early decades of the 20th Century.

Perhaps more interesting from a food perspective was my trip to the inner parts of the island to look at what made these islands famous: spice! Clove especially is what made the islands famous in the days of yore. Even today, the two islands produce approximately a tenth of all the cloves sold in the world. But cardamom, nutmeg, mace and vanilla are also impor-





tant for the economy, and the recipes I did!

It was also lovely to eat fruit that actually tastes of something more than generic blandness: it happened to be the season for passion fruit and pineapple and I naturally gorged myself on them. A most satisfying dessert is a fresh piece of fruit. Though the legendary café *Zanzibar Coffee House* makes some equally legendary cakes which would make anyone with a sweet tooth drool, I still found fresh fruit the best of all.

There are a few other interesting restaurants in Stone Town. *Pagoda* is a Chinese restaurant that makes excellent Peking duck. But perhaps more aligned with my tastes is the Indian restaurant, *Maharaja*. The Amritsari fish is divine and very, very hot! Despite my lactose intolerance, I risked a sleepless night and ordered the Amritsari fish:

Fish fillets that are good for frying; 200g flour; 1tbs garlic paste; 1tbs ginger paste; 1tsp ajwain; 1tbs chilli powder; juice of half a lemon; 1 egg; 100g yoghurt; oil; salt.

Cut fish into bite sized cubes. Put on the lime, ginger, garlic and chilli. Keep the pieces in this mixture for half an hour. Meanwhile make a batter from the flour, yoghurt, egg, ajwain, salt and water. Keep the already ½ hour marinated fish pieces in this batter for a further 15-20 mins. Heat some oil in a wok-like pan, and fry the fish pieces until crispy brown.

*Perhaps more interesting from a food perspective was my trip to the inner parts of the island to look at what made these islands famous: spice! Even today, the two islands produce approximately a tenth of all the cloves sold in the world.*

*Plaza* is a cosy restaurant owned by a Belgian who reputedly makes the best lobsters in Zanzibar. I'll admit I was pretty pleased with the one I had for New Year. It cried out for a white Burgundy, but I didn't manage to find one on the island so we made do with a frankly very lovable white from South Africa. *Klein Constantia Riesling 2005* had a very petrol nose with lots of ripe, tropical fruit (passion fruit). The palate was very full bodied and had nice acidity and even a touch of minerals, but again the sheer exuberance of pure Riesling fruit was the most memorable aspect. It was perhaps a touch inelegant for Riesling, but with the food in question this sort of more full bodied wine was just right.

On another occasion I went to *Plaza* to eat another legendary food: Crab in coconut pili pili sauce. It is a very rich dish with coconut milk bringing a lovely creamy texture which is balanced by the acidity from the tomatoes and lemons and spices. *Plaza* did this dish to perfection.

For the Pili pili: ½tbs garlic paste; ½ tea spoon turmeric; ½tbs chilli powder; 1tsp ground cumin (jeera); 1tsp ground coriander; 2tbs tomato puree; 2tbs oil; lemon juice; pinch of sugar and salt; coriander to garnish.

For the crabs: ½dl coconut milk; garlic; as many medium sized crabs as you can afford.

Wash the crabs and boil them for 10-15 mins until tender. Let them cool and then remove the meat. Sauté the onion and tomato. Add coconut milk and the crab meat (and salt and pepper) and cook for a further 5-10 mins. Put the warm pili pili sauce on top. Usually served with rice or ugali.

On my last evening I went to a very atmospheric restaurant, *Monsoon*. I ate King Prawns marinated in lemon and spices with spiced rice, mango pickled in chilli. The restaurant was ok, and as a building it was just lovely. One of the prawns was just perfection; the others were a little too dry – hence me saying it was only an ok experience. The chilli mangoes were great though!

*Otto Nieminen is a student living in Finland. His interests include classical music and cursing the Finnish alcohol monopoly and its very limited stock of fine wines. Bordeaux and Rieslings from practically everywhere are his main wine loves - to say nothing of Musar!*

# Talking terroir

**Is terroir really important or is it something manufactured by the Old World to challenge New World competition?**



**Paul Howard**

**TERROIR (TAIR-WHAR) IS** a French word with no direct translation. It's hard to pronounce and the entry in the latest edition of the Oxford Companion to Wine takes nearly two pages to define it.

Terroir is a belief that wine can be made that communicates a sense of the place that it came from. Furthermore, this can on a scale as small as a single field with a few vine rows. Terroir becomes an ingredient in the wine, a signature of individuality and sometimes of greatness. It is an expression of nature and the environment revealed by the hand of the winemaker, the very emotion of the land.

Burgundy is the cradle of terroir, a place where there can be astounding differences in quality and style from neighbouring vineyards growing only Pinot Noir or Chardonnay. Yet because the winemaking practices used are very similar regardless of the individual winemaker the differences are attributed to the complex influences acting on a precise vineyard site, in other words, terroir.

To take a Burgundian example, the very apogee of fine Chardonnay is from five Montrachet vineyards, each with a separate Grand Cru - *Le Montrachet, Bâtard Montrachet, Bienvenues-Bâtard Montrachet, Criots-Bâtard Montrachet* and *Chevalier Montrachet*. Together they

cover less than 33 hectares and are farmed by many different owners. Yet each Grand Cru has a recognisable character because of subtle differences possessed by each vineyard. This phenomenon can be found throughout Burgundy at every level.

Not only in Burgundy does terroir exist. The great French wine producing regions of the Loire, Rhône, Alsace and Bordeaux also claim it. In fact terroir is implied by the French Appellation system, where quality and labelling is defined by geographic origin rather than by grape variety or by brand. By extension therefore it is also fundamental to the similar European quality classifications of Italy, Spain and Portugal, and they have terroir too.

Appellation systems have plenty of inconsistencies and it would be ludicrous to suggest that every appellation wine shows its origins! However, we are comfortable with the idea that the best local food products can be defined by geogra-

phy. In the UK, Stilton cheese, Jersey potatoes, Colchester oysters, Scottish salmon or Welsh lamb are renowned for their quality and their origin helps define and communicate their excellence. Indeed some of these products are protected by law from ersatz copies. So it is then with many wines.

But terroir is much more than a rigid quality classification or simple regionalism and is the subject of much heated debate. Is it an abstraction or can you taste it? Where can it be found? And given that wine's first duty is to be delicious does it even matter? What really is terroir anyway?

Terroir is a summation of all the influences on a vineyard, captured in the grapes at harvest and then revealed by the winemaker as wine. On a macro scale this will include climatic conditions that govern the amount of warmth, water and sunshine available to allow vines to grow and flourish. The underlying geology of the rocks will determine basic soil types and the structure of the land-

scape. On a smaller scale, the slope and aspect of the vineyard, the vine varieties planted, weather patterns and drainage all play their part, as do vine density, trellising, rootstocks and pruning methods. Local fauna and flora - insects, animals and natural vegetation are also influential.

On a micro scale, the soil itself is fundamental. And this is not just the general composition, such as whether it comprised of sands, loams or clays. Depth, fertility, organic matter, drainage, mineral content, chemical processes and microbial life all make a huge contribution, though what happens underground is even today still not fully understood.

In short, the vineyard is a complex web of life, an ecosystem. This holistic approach suggests that each vineyard potentially has unique characteristics that cannot be precisely replicated elsewhere.

There is also one further fundamental aspect to terroir and that is man himself.

Man is the key to terroir -



wine does not make itself. But not only is man the winemaker, man holds the key to the ecosystem too. 'Great wine is made in the vineyard' is an oft-quoted expression. But how is this done? Is it a natural process, where man acts as a catalyst for nature? If so this may ultimately lead to terroir. The wine will be as it is because of where it comes from, a signature of the land.

Conversely is it by technology, where man seeks to control or improve upon nature's gifts? This can lead in the opposite direction - the manufacture of a beverage that could theoretically be made just about anywhere. The wine is then an artifice, with terroir obliterated by the industrialisation of viticulture and the technical manipulations of winemaking.

In a sense then terroir is a philosophy of actions that ultimately has real impact on the wine we drink. This was once politicised into an argument about the merits of old world versus new world wine.

In much of the new world, winemaking attitudes were in opposition to terroir. Some new world commentators derided terroir as akin to mysticism. New vineyards were created from scratch from virgin land with an admirable pioneering spirit and a sense of experimentation. For some the soil became a simple medium to hold a vine upright to the sun and provide water. Following this line, good wine can come from growing vines hydroponically with modern technology compensating for any deficiencies.

Furthermore, they argued, isn't terroir just a form of old world protectionism designed to defend against excellent new world wines that have gobbled up market share? Terroir became mere market-spin.

Terroir can also be used as an excuse for some damn poor wines. If I had a Euro for every time I've heard 'C'est terroir' uttered to defend a wine of poor quality I'd have a fair chunk of change by now. A classic case is the presence of *Brettanomyces*, or 'Brett', the spoilage bacteria that produces off-flavours in wine. A high level of Brett is foul, yet at very low levels it can actually add some welcome savoury complexity. So is Brett part of terroir or just dirty winemaking? That's another debate! And please don't claim terroir if you add artificial sugar or

acid to your wine to compensate for the harvest!

Raising the ante, the anti-terroir position was even recently described in French literature as an Anglo-Saxon plot designed to undermine French culture and values! Beyond the hyperbole from both sides the situation is actually more complex. Indeed, the terroir argument is no longer about new world versus old. This is because the new world is increasingly practising some of the best aspects of old world tradition, while the old world is embracing experimentation and innovation.

Many of the top new world winemakers are striving to find their terroir, to show their own uniqueness and expression of place. There are plenty of single vineyard wines emerging from the likes of California, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Chile where terroir is the goal. Most of the winemakers involved would be the first to say that they don't have it yet but that terroir is their grail.

Furthermore, some new world wine regions are creating or at least considering geographical appellation systems of their own to demonstrate their unique identity. To take just two examples, Clare Valley in Australia is currently discussing the formation of sub-regions and Hawke's Bay Gimblett Gravels in New Zealand is well established.

Clearly even the oldest new world vineyards had not had the time to reveal terroir compared to the most ancient in Europe and given the myriads of complex factors involved,



terroir cannot spring forth fully formed. The noblest vineyards of France, Italy and Spain have had much longer to work out terroir. And yet ironically, modern winemaking knowledge and technology is capable of accelerating the process by replacing trial and error.

Back in the old world, regions that previously only produced bulk table wine and never previously aspired to terroir (e.g. Languedoc-Roussillon and Sicily) now have terroir-obsessed winemakers using modern practices.

The move to more technological wine making has also meant that the overall standard of the wine we drink is now of a far higher general standard and that is to be welcomed!

The commercial reality of the global wine market is that wines are more easily sold when identified by grape variety or brand rather than by origin. But the criticism now is that these wines may be technically excellent but they frequently taste as if they could have been made anywhere. Winemaking guru's such as Michel Rolland are either fêted for their technical accomplishments or derided for producing soulless wines that all taste the same. Which stance you adopt will depend in part on your attitude towards the role of terroir.

So terroir in the 21st century is no longer about the old world versus the new. Rather, there is now a two-speed global winemaking culture on all continents. One is based on individuality, nature and tradition, while the other is based on globalism, industrialisation and technology. Clearly there is some overlap and one could argue that as long as there is room in the market for both then wine drinkers can only benefit from having a choice. However it is questionable as to whether terroir wines could become an endangered species when faced with ever increasing globalisation.

Time to return to the questions posed earlier and suggest some answers. For me terroir is an abstraction, a state of mind, but it can also have material existence and can be tasted. Clearly it does not exist everywhere and yet in every wine growing region there is the potential to reveal it. Whether that potential is realised depends on the goals and approach of the winemaker.

But to pose they key ques-

*The anti-terroir position was even recently described in French literature as an Anglo-Saxon plot designed to undermine French culture and values!*

tion again - if wine's first duty is to be delicious does it matter? In my opinion wines based on terroir or on technology can both be delicious and today virtually every wine producing region has examples of both. Conversely, neither terroir nor technology is itself any guarantee of enjoyment.

So, does it matter? Whether this makes a difference to you is a purely personal decision. All other things being equal, (like price and quality) I'll side with the terroiristes, on whatever continent they happen to be. Wine should be more than just a beverage no matter how nice it tastes. Wine also has a duty to communicate that special sense of place, of individuality, of difference. Terroir is the ingredient that makes a good wine great.

Finally, terroir is also emotional. In 1939, famous American author John Steinbeck wrote about migrant dustbowl farmers, not about 21st Century wine growers, yet this quote from *The Grapes of Wrath* sums up the meaning of terroir for me:

'For nitrates are not the land, nor phosphates; and the length of fibre in the cotton is not the land. Carbon is not a man, nor salt nor water nor calcium. He is all of these, but he is much more, much more; and the land is so much more than its analysis. The man who is more than his chemistry, walking on the earth, turning his plow point for a stone, dropping his handles to slide over an outcropping, kneeling in the earth to eat his lunch; that man who is more than his elements knows the land is more than its analysis.'

But the machine-man, driving a dead tractor on land he does not know and love, understands only chemistry; and he is contemptuous of the land and of himself.'

*Paul Howard is a freelance writer on wine and is the publisher of [www.winealchemy.com](http://www.winealchemy.com).*

# Sensational sherry

## Jeremy Carne on the forgotten wonder of Jerez



### Jeremy Carne

**HARDLY ANY WAS** made, hardly anybody has tried it, and since 1935 it's been evaporating at the rate of 5% a year. It has now concentrated to an alcoholic strength of 25% by volume and a single sip stays on the palate unchanged for fully half an hour. I'll tell you what it is in a moment.

First I want to talk about rebujito.

Early in May every year Spain's equestrian class holds its Feria del Caballo in Jerez de la Frontera to celebrate all things hipical. It's a winning combination of Royal Ascot with the village fete - and rebujito is its Pimm's. Grand carriages drawn by Andalusian horses transport dolled up revellers around a temporary wooden city of ornate drinking dens but as the afternoon heats up rebujito is the only defence.

Rebujito is, roughly, a long glass filled one third with ice, levelled up with fino sherry and then the same depth of Sprite. It should be disgusting but the locals know what they're doing. Drink sherry all afternoon and you'll probably end up the worse for wear so

*The palomino fino grape is responsible for fino and manzanilla but also for amontillado and oloroso*

cut it like this with fifty percent lemonade and cool it.

Towards six o'clock as the day's heat begins to lessen, the exodus begins of those with tickets for the bullfight and rebujito gives way to straight dry sherry - usually fino or manzanilla rather than the more powerful oloroso. Oloroso usually weighs in at around 17.5% alcohol while fino and manzanilla shade 15.5%. Fino is a little darker and made inland by bodegas (wineries) in Jerez or El Puerto de Santa Maria while manzanilla is made by bodegas in Sanlucar de Barrameda, half an hour's drive North West on the coast. Sanlucar locals talk of a salt tang to manzanilla and attribute it to the sea air.

I find manzanilla often more delicate and easier to drink in quantity or with seafood. But to my mind fino

goes slightly better with meat, particularly Jamon Iberico, the world's greatest ham. It also makes a pretty good foil for chicharrones, the delicious Spanish equivalent of pork scratchings which are served in many Jerez bars.

Whichever your preference, manzanilla or fino served icy cold is in my view the most versatile accompaniment for Mediterranean food in hot weather.

On Sanlucar's beachfront strand opposite the Coto Donana national park, considered by many to be Europe's most important bird sanctuary, lies a string of tacky looking canopied seafood restaurants serving fried fish and crustacea. Our informal tasting of ten manzanillas here one afternoon placed *Aurora* top (manzanilla can translate as "little apple" and this was the most

appley of all). *La Guita* came second and *La Goya* third but there are many more still to try.

A happy discovery for me that day, better eaten here than at the bars in Sanlucar town, was deep fried sea anemone or, as described by one member of the party, snot-in-batter. The pleasingly sinus-clearing Spanish word for this delicacy is 'ortiguilla'.

The most confusing thing about sherry is the sheer variety of styles.

The palomino fino grape is responsible for fino and manzanilla but also for amontillado and oloroso, of which there are both dry and sweet variations. There are also sweet wines made with the Pedro Ximenez grape (widely called PX) as well as moscatels (heavier and darker than French 'muscat').

Add to these the cream





sheries or amorosos which are combinations of oloroso with an admixture of PX or moscatel.

There is also the mysterious palo cortado which goes quite well with foie gras and according to many Jerezanos occurs spontaneously in the wine making process but cannot be deliberately made. And if you wanted to complicate things you might even include the unfortified Cordoban sherry-like Montilla to the list.

If the average wine-loving Joe knows one thing about how sherry is made it is that there's no such thing as vintage sherry due to the solera system of topping up the original cask with young wine each year to replace the volume lost through evaporation. What you buy today could easily be a blend of thirty different vintages.

The solera system makes sure that Sherry Brand X will always taste the same. In this respect of constancy it's like a blended Scottish whisky.

Variety and change are part of what makes wine so interesting but in truth the predictability of sherry is quite convenient for everybody. The wine maker doesn't have to cut prices to shift the produce of weak years, the wine merchant doesn't have to trek out to Spain to assess the vintage

*I wouldn't be surprised if we one day even see en primeur campaigns for single vintage olorosos. That would be justice at last since to my mind sherry offers the greatest complexity per pound of any wine in the world*

before ordering and the consumer gets what he wants. Or she, since by the 1980s sherry was dismissed as a before dinner drink for old ladies.

In truth there's a fashion problem which goes beyond the association of sherry with maiden aunts. High alcohol wines seem to be in vogue throughout the wine drinking world but fortified wines are not. In my experience a £7 unvintaged fino of 15.5% alcohol is far more likely to be a balanced wine than a vintaged £30 pinot noir of 14.5%. Drinkers who gauge a wine with their palate rather than their wallet will satisfy both by choosing the £7 sherry. Nevertheless fashion victims favour vogue over value and the single vintage sherry remains almost a mythical beast, a unicorn of the wine world.

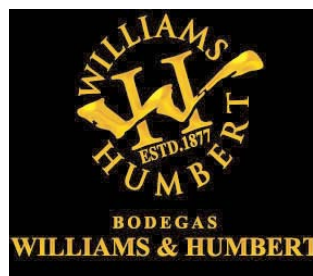
But from across Spain's

Western border comes another fortified wine, Port, which by the 1990s had been dismissed as an after dinner drink for old men. In great declared vintages such as 1994 Port still manages to be sold en primeur twenty years before it's ready so shouldn't it be possible to sell single vintage sherries?

The answer of course, is that it should be, but these añada sherries, the word añada indicating that the wine is from a single year, are available in minute quantities and from only a few bodegas.

I was tipped off about a hidden hoard of añadas by John Radford, author of 'The New Spain', a very useful book on the extraordinary Spanish wine renaissance. Back in Jerez after my day at Sanlucar's beach the friendly and considerate William Craven-Bartle of Williams & Humbert agreed to let me taste some.

Williams & Humbert first



set aside one cask of single vintage oloroso seco in 1920 to celebrate the birth of a child and the custom continued more or less unbroken until the past few years when the number of butts was increased to 30-50 a year with a view to commercial sale. Sherry is affected not just by the locally occurring flor or yeast which helps give it that particular nutty tang but, like other wines, also by its specific terroir. All the Williams & Humbert añadas come from the Los Alamos part of the admired Balbaina vineyard in Cadiz province.

On my visit I was privileged to taste wines from the period 1935 to 1995. I very much liked the tangerine and animal fur notes of the 1985 but the wine whose identity I withheld from you at the start of this article is the añada 1935. It is so powerful in its almondy richness and alcohol level that you wouldn't want to drink more than a glass at a time but every wine lover should try something of this staggering complexity before they die. Six of you could get through a bottle quite happily although the extreme flavours might deprive you of speech.

There have already been auctions of some of these wines at Christie's in London and New York. Might wine merchants in ten years' time be worrying themselves over the difference between sherry vintages rather than relying on the solera system to smooth out vintage variation?

I wouldn't be surprised if we one day even see en primeur campaigns for single vintage olorosos. That would be justice at last since to my mind sherry offers the greatest complexity per pound of any wine in the world.

*Brought up on claret bottled by his father Jeremy Carne moved to Logroño aged 21 and fell for the wines of La Rioja. Later came a fascination with Burgundy and still later German riesling and at last the fortified wines of Jerez. A writer and marketing consultant for twenty years he has narrowly avoided employment in the wine trade in order to keep the pleasure pure.*



## Crème de Cassis

**WHAT TO DO** with black currants? In Britain they just tend end up as Ribena. France has an altogether better solution - Crème de Cassis. The black currants of England and Holland were introduced to France centuries ago. They are grown widely there today, especially in Burgundy, as "noir de Bourgogne", in the woods and on the hills above the vines.

Originally black currants were highly prized for treating various ailments. Then in 1841 a liqueur maker and distiller from Dijon produced the first Crème de Cassis liqueur after noticing how fruit was added to rough wines in Parisian Bars to make it more palatable.

In France, most Cassis is widely used to create Kir, an aperitif that makes delicious summer drinking, ranking alongside Pastis in popularity. It's also a staple used in many a nouvelle cuisine dish.

Kir was originally just known as blanc-cassis. Then, at the end of World War Two it was popularised by Chanoine Felix Kir, Mayor of Dijon and ex-resistance leader. Notably served to De Gaulle and Khrushchev, the drink was renamed after Kir in his honour. About 10ml of Cassis adds interest and vitality to an otherwise dull glass of white wine (traditionally burgundian Aligoté was used, but virtually any supermarket plonk will do). There's also the upmarket Kir Royale, which uses sparkling white wine to create a fizzy version (again, do use cheap fizz rather than Krug).

You could just go and buy Vedrenne Super Cassis from the likes of Tesco or Waitrose. Made from burgundian black currants, the world's best Crème de Cassis is around £6-£8 per 50cl bottle. Vedrenne is fantastic quality, but as the constituents are only Blackcurrants, sugar and alcohol, why not make your own Cassis?

My home is not surprisingly rather too cold for grapes. Instead we have black currant and red currant bushes that act as proxy vines. They need the same kind of attention that a vine does. Grown organically and pruned on a waning moon in early spring they produce abundant fruit, even in cool years, in July. Cassis is the perfect way of using up the fruit without resorting to jams or jelly. And it's so easy even I can do it, just allow a couple of hours spread over 2-3 days.

I adapted my Cassis recipe from one

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### Paul Howard

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given to me by Andy Leslie. In turn he got it from Jane Grigson's Fruit Book, where she states it came from her Burgundian great Aunt. So it's pretty authentic and well road-tested.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1kg (2lb) black currants
- 1 litre red wine (I use something with fruit in a lighter flavour spectrum and without much tannin, cheap Valpolicella does the trick)
- 1.5kg (3lb) granulated sugar
- 750ml brandy, gin or vodka (of these I prefer vodka, it's neutral and cheap. Brandy or Gin add their own flavours and get in the way)

Just keep the ratios according to how much fruit you have.

#### RECIPE

Use the freshest fruit you can. Our fruit is picked and immediately washed. We destem them but this is optional. Soak the black currants in the wine in a bowl for 48 hours. Then feed the currants and wine mixture into a liquidiser. Tip the resultant mush into a large bowl lined with doubled-up muslin.

Pull the muslin together and twist it so the liquid is squeeze out into the bowl. You'll need a little strength to press it through the muslin, but don't use too much force else you'll get too much pectin, which will make the final Cassis too gloopy. If necessary, sieve the liquid to



remove any pips.

Measure it, put it into a preserving pan (I use a pressure cooker base, but ensure whatever pan you use doesn't react with the fruit acids). To each litre of liquid add 1kg of sugar. Stand over a low to moderate heat and stir - the sugar is easily dissolved.

Note the level and slowly bring up the heat so that the liquid is around 80 degrees C, plus or minus 5 degrees. On no account let it boil! Set a timer for 15 minutes, then check the temperature and give stir thoroughly. Repeat this three more times, then after one hour set the timer to 30 minutes between stirs, and check twice. After 2 hours in total the liquid level will have reduced slightly and it will have become slightly syrupy. Leave to cool, overnight if necessary.

Now add the vodka. In a bowl add 1 part vodka to 3 parts black currant syrup. The easy way is to measure how much syrup you have and divide the number by three for the amount of vodka you need. Once the spirit is added it's time to bottle it using a funnel. Wine bottles with screw caps are ideal.

This Cassis keeps very well; the 2005 vintage is still going strong a year later. You can broach it after only 2 days, but the longer you leave it the better it becomes.

As well as Kir or Kir Royale, Cassis is remarkably versatile. Here are some other ideas for using your Crème de Cassis up:

- Cassis diluted with iced mineral water makes a great long drink
- Add to cheap red wine instead of white wine -and create a Cardinal.
- Pour the Cassis over vanilla ice cream for a no-effort superb dessert, or add it to a bowl of summer fruits (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, red currants and black currants all benefit). It can even pep-up Melon.
- Add small quantities of Cassis to hearty winter stews, (yes, really!) or use as a base for a sauce with meats such as Duck.

*Paul Howard is a freelance writer on wine and related topics and is the publisher of [www.winealchemy.com](http://www.winealchemy.com).*

# Wine with food



Vincent Gasnier

**WHEN IT COMES** to matching wine with food, there are no rights and wrongs, just opinions and suggestions. Many of the old 'rules' are being eroded by the spread of world cuisine and fusion cooking. And wine styles, too, are evolving: big, oaky New World Chardonnays, for example, go just as well with roast chicken as the traditional choice of a light red wine. Of course, you can enjoy a delicious bottle of any wine that may not have anything in common with the food you are eating. But, believe me, it is one of life's greatest pleasures where the wine is in perfect harmony with the food. I knew from my earliest years that the right wine could turn the simplest family meal into an occasion - and ever since, I've been on a quest matching good food with perfect wine to create unforgettable meals.

## DISPELLING THE MYTHS

There are no strict rules that say you cannot eat what you like with whichever style of wine you choose. The long-established myth that white wine should be drunk with fish and red wine with meat is just that - a myth! It may have held some truth some two hundred years ago when meat was roasted and fish was poached. And it is certainly true that tannin in red wine reacts poorly with fish. But these days we are blessed with a much wider range of meats and fish from all over the world, as well as a greater variety of wines. There are light, lively reds that make a fantastic match for

meaty fish such as fresh tuna, and heavier, oak-aged whites that go superbly well with chicken.

## EQUAL PARTNERS

The first factor to consider when looking for a perfect wine and food match is the relationship between the density of the food and the body of the wine. If the food is heavy, such as a stew or casserole, then you need to match it with a ripe, full wine, probably a red such as a Merlot or a Shiraz. The strength of flavour of a dish, as a general rule, should be matched by the intensity of flavour in the wine that accompanies it. Chinese and Asian dishes, for example, which use a wide array of spices to create complex and intense flavours, need to be matched with wines that are also flavour-intensive; whites such as Gewürztraminer or Riesling make a far better match than soft, oaky Chardonnays.

The acidity in the food is another important factor to consider. Dishes that include lemon, apple or vinaigrette need to be matched with wines with high acidity. Fatty or oily dishes - smoked salmon, or fish served in a *beurre blanc* sauce, for example - also require wines with a higher level of acidity, to cut through the oili-

ness of the food and add an extra taste dimension.

Some foods are notoriously difficult to match with wine: chillies, asparagus, eggs and soup. The general rule would be to opt for a fairly neutral wine with not too much acidity. The problem with chillies is that often you can taste very little else, so don't choose an expensive wine! The flavour of asparagus is quite intense and needs a fairly intense wine to match, such as an oaked Chardonnay. It is best to avoid trying to match red wine with egg, but there are so many different egg dishes that experimentation is a must. A good starting point, however, would be an unoaked Chardonnay or white Burgundy. With soups, obviously the best wine match will depend on the soup's flavour. In general though, I usually recommend wines with high acidity to cut through creamy soups, or perhaps a fuller red wine with its strong tannins.

The cheese course can be a tricky one; not all cheese goes well with red wine. Generally the harder the cheese the better it is with reds; soft cheese such as Camembert and Brie match well with white wines and, of course, there is the famous marriage (made in heaven, in my view!) between goat's cheese and Sauvignon Blanc.

## SAVING THE BEST FOR LAST

One of my favourite wine styles is dessert wine and it is a shame that so many people choose a white wine with their starter, a red for the main course, and then go straight to coffee with dessert. They are really missing out, as some of the best wines in the world fall into the dessert category - Barsac, Sauternes, and Montbazillac to name but a few. Delicious! The basic rule to follow is that the wine should be as sweet or even sweeter than the dessert it is paired with; if not, it will taste pallid.

My 'ten golden' rules on the following page will give further ideas on how to successfully match food and wine styles.



### SALTY DISHES NEED WINES WITH NATURAL HIGH ACIDITY

It is no coincidence that tangy Fino sherry goes so well with tapas - salted almonds, salted fish, and spicy, salty chorizo sausages, for example - because this combination of appetizer and aperitif evolved together in the same part of the world. Salt in food has the effect of neutralising acidity in the wine and allowing the underlying fruit flavours to come to the fore - just as salt brings out the flavours in food. It is therefore best to choose wines that are naturally high in acidity to match salty dishes.

**TRY** Fresh anchovies or pissaladiere with Australian Riesling; moules marinieres with Muscadet or Sancerre; Thai fish soup with Pinot Grigio.

### MEATY DISHES CAN TAKE A LIGHT RED

Whoever had it laid down on tablets of stone that white wines are for fish and red wines are for meat should be put on bread and water rations for ever and a day! While it is true that tannins in red wine can create a nasty metallic taste when drunk with fish, there is fish and fish! Light, fruity reds with low tannins can match very well with fish with a dense 'meaty' texture, such as fresh tuna, salmon and swordfish, especially if the wine is served slightly chilled. White fish, by contrast, tend to be light in texture and served with light sauces. These do need to be partnered with delicate white wines or, if the flavours are more intense, more juicy, aromatic wines.

**TRY** Roasted salmon fillet with a Chinon; grilled swordfish steak with a Californian Pinot Noir; pan fried monkfish wrapped in Parma ham with a chilled Dolcetto from Piedmont.

### OILY FOODS NEED ACIDITY OR TANNIN

Some food-and-wine rules are about pairing like for like - sweet wines with puddings, for example - but others are about matching opposites, and this is certainly the case when choosing wines to complement oily foods. If dishes are



oily, they are likely also to be fairly rich, sometimes creamy, but certainly with a cloying opulence that needs to be tempered by the wine you choose to drink with them. If you are selecting a white wine, make sure it has a high degree of acidity, to cut through the fattiness or oiliness of the dish and leave a clean feeling on your palate. Tannin can do the same job; if you are choosing a red wine to match an oily dish - cheese fondue, for example - it will need to be fairly tannic to avoid tasting flabby.

**TRY** Smoked salmon with a Sauvignon Blanc; cassoulet with chunky Barossa Shiraz; roast lamb with an Italian Barolo.

### SMOKY DISHES CLASH WITH OAKY WINES

Oak and smoke, in my opinion, is just too much of a good thing to make a good match. If you try to pair an oaked wine with a smoked meat or fish dish you are in danger of overpowering your taste buds with too many similar smoky, oaky flavours, so that they will not be able to recognise anything else. Also, smoky dishes, by definition, have a strong flavour, and strong flavours in food need to be matched with a crisply fruity wine that refreshes the palate. Oaked wines have an oiliness and opulence that do not help to do so. White grapes to look out for that should guarantee an oak-free zone include Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Chenin Blanc, and Pinots Blanc and Gris (Pinot Grigio in Italy). For smoked meats, choose a lively, fruity red; any more tannin, however soft, may join forces with the smoked flavours to create a 'hard', woody taste.

**TRY** Smoked mackerel pate with a Riesling; smoked chicken salad with a chilled Fleurie; smoked ham with Italian Barbera d'Asti.

### MATCH RICH, DENSE FLAVOURS WITH SIMILAR WINES

If your chosen dish is rich because it is creamy, try a crisp white wine to cut through the richness and refresh the palate. But rich dishes with greater weight and intensity of flavour normally require wines whose flavours and body pack a similar punch. If the wine is too light it can be overpowered by the flavours and textures in the food. There are some classic extravagant pairings of food with white wine in this vein - foie gras and Sauternes and, less often served these days, lobster Thermidor with a Corton Charlemagne white Burgundy. But in the main we are talking rich, dense reds to partner hearty meat dishes here, especially those based with game or offal, where you need a wine with good complexity of flavour to compete on equal terms.

**TRY** Pan-fried chicken livers with Monbazillac; game casserole with a Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape; cot-

tage pie with New World Cabernet Sauvignon.

### SPICY DISHES NEED REFRESHING WINES

Some people find that spicy dishes can overwhelm lighter styles of wine and prefer to match them with richer or even sweet wines. I find that Chinese dishes generally work well with aromatic whites, such as a German Riesling or Alsace Gewurtztraminer, while more spicy Eastern cuisine benefits from being partnered with quite simple, crisp, dry whites, such as New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc or - the best choice in my view - a Pinot Grigio or a Chablis. These wines help to refresh the palate. Curry is not easy to match with wine. There are some good white partners for the lighter, more fragrant curries, but beware of ordering reds; most curries tend to knock back the fruit in a red wine, so the tannins become dominant. If the food is extremely spicy it may be better to - just this once - forget the wine and stick to water or beer.

**TRY** Beef in a black bean sauce with a Chablis; Szechuan pork with a German Riesling; chicken tikka with a Pinot Grigio.

### MATCH WHITE MEAT WITH FULL WHITES OR LIGHT REDS

The flavours in white meats are, on the whole, much more subtle than those in red meats, and so chicken, pork, and turkey dishes in which the meat is roasted, poached, or grilled in quite a simple style, rather than heavily flavoured or richly sauced, work really well with more subtle wines, such as light reds. However, over the last few years, there has been a trend for whites to become fuller and more opulent, especially the big oaky-fruity New World wines, and those heavier whites have also proved good partners for white meat dishes, probably because their complex aromas and oily opulence balances and harmonises with the mellow flavours in the meat.

**TRY** Roast chicken with Australian Chardonnay; roast loin of pork with a white Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape; chicken breast with girolles mushrooms with a chilled New Zealand Pinot Noir.

### RED MEATS CAN TAKE ON STRONG TANNIN

For lamb cutlets or shepherd's pie, I'd choose a fruity Merlot-based wine, but heavier fare gives bigger-bodied reds a chance to shine. Protein-rich food softens the tannin in red wine so that the fruit flavours are able to come to the fore more easily. Red meats can therefore be successfully matched with big, strong reds with firm tannins without you having to worry that the fruit in the wine will be overpowered. Cheese also has a similar effect on wine; the tannins are absorbed and the wine tastes more mellow and easy to

enjoy. The more austere tannic wines can be made much more food-friendly by decanting; temperature helps too - serve them slightly warmer than usual.

**TRY** Rare steak with a Cote-Rotie Syrah; steak and kidney pie with a Spanish Ribero del Duero; spicy sausages with Cahors.

### MATCH WINES TO SAUCES, NOT WHAT'S UNDERNEATH

The maxim 'red wine with dark meat, white wine with light' is a little misleading; most wines can, in fact, be served with most meats. When trying to make the perfect wine and food match, it is much more likely to be the sauce served with the meat, be it chicken or beef, that takes precedence. Lemon chicken, for example, goes well with a Chablis from Burgundy, but the same wine would never be a good match for coq au vin, which needs a fruity, unoaked, lightly tannic red. Similarly, a steak au poivre needs a medium-bodied, low-tannin red, but a beef goulash can be matched with a rip, full-bodied, fruity white. With wine-based sauces, it's often true that the wine you cook the dish with makes the perfect accompaniment to the meal, which makes life a little easier.

**TRY** Beef bourguignon with earthy Pinot Noir from Burgundy; beef stroganoff with Brunello di Montalcino; duck a l'Orange with St. Estephe from Bordeaux.

### MATCH DESSERTS WITH THEIR WEIGHT IN WINE

The weight and sweetness of a dessert wine needs to match the weight and sweetness of the dessert. It's obvious, really - would you want to drink the same wine with a raspberry fool as you do with a sticky toffee pudding? It may sound unlikely but it's true that the intensity of sweetness in a sticky toffee pudding can be enhanced by a really rich, sweet dessert wine; if you tried to drink a light, flowery wine with it, you can easily imagine that the flavours in one would destroy the flavours in the other. Don't forget, however, that sparkling wines can also be perfect matches for fruity summer desserts, particularly the semi-dry and sweeter styles. And strawberries have an affinity with red and rose wine, particularly if the wine also has strawberry flavours. Try them with a light Beaujolais, a blush Zinfandel, or even a sweet, sparkling red Lambrusco.

**TRY** Sticky toffee pudding with a Hungarian '5 puttonyos' Tokaji; chocolate bronies with a chilled Maury or a Ruthglen Muscat; pear tart with a Moscato d'Asti.

*Vincent Gasnier became the youngest ever recipient of the title 'Master Sommelier' at the age of just 22 and now runs a consultancy, with the Houses of Parliament and Soho House among his clients.*

# Recipes

## Italian Risotto

Stuart Colmer from *Fasol Menin UK* offers us his take on risotto

Auguste Escoffier, 'Emperor of Chefs and Chef To The Emperors' described the preparation of Risotto as All'Italiana.

Around the world, rice is boiled sautéed, dressed or kneaded. Italian Risotto, however, is made by gradually adding the ingredients and broth (with a little prosecco of course) to the rice and continually stirring to ensure a uniform absorption of the liquid. As such Risotto is a 'simple' dish that allows the chef to balance sweet with sour and hard with soft.

Some experts believe that Risotto has evolved from the ancient and popular Italian rice soup; but that along the centuries the balance of rice and broth has changed until we have the Risotto that we know and love today. The rice used in Risotto is cultivated in northern Italy, where together with the hard wheat used for pasta it represents one of the major ingredients of Italian cooking. We often start to cook Risotto (following the instructions given to us by Massimo and Silvana!) without knowing exactly what type of Risotto we want to prepare. We know that just by opening the fridge we'll always find some ingredients, whether simply mushrooms, or fish/meat for a more complex Risotto, that will allow us to prepare a fantastic dish.

Risotto is also a brilliant alternative for vegetarian diets.

### BASIC INGREDIENTS

Italian families always have the basic ingredients needed for the preparation of a risotto, such as:

- Rice: always use the Italian rice (Carnaroli, Vialone Nano or Arborio) - average 80 g per person
- shallots or white onions
- unsalted butter: personally we prefer to use extra virgin olive oil
- vegetable or chicken stock
- Parmesan cheese: the original "Parmigiano Reggiano" or Grana Padano
- salt
- *Fasol Menin Valdobbiadene DOC!*

### THINGS TO KNOW - TIPS AND TRICKS

The basic recipe is nearly the same for all risotto types:

- 100g of chopped shallots or white onions, chopped.
- 1 litre of hot stock
- 2 Glasses of *Fasol Menin Valdobbiadene DOC*
- 80g grated Parmesan cheese

▶ The average cooking time should always be between 15 and 20 minutes, but will ultimately depend on the type of rice

▶ Tradition states that at the end you have to add some but-

ter, but personally (following great advice from our friends at *Fasol Menin*) we use grated parmesan cheese, for vegetable and meat risotto's and nothing for fish risotto

▶ Use a non-stick or ceramic cooking pan at least 20 cm high

▶ Use a big wood spoon to mix!

▶ Cooking Risotto demands the attention of the chef - don't abandon your Risotto and you'll guarantee a great dish

▶ Personally, we finish the rest of the Prosecco whilst we're cooking

▶ Ensure that the flame is small to medium size or low heat on electric hobs

▶ Never overheat the pan

▶ Continuously mix the rice ensuring that it is not allowed to dry out

▶ Have another bottle of Prosecco ready for the meal!

Let's start!

1. Pour 2 to 3 table spoons of olive oil into the pan. Lightly warm the oil and add the chopped onion or shallots - continue to stir.

2. Cook the onions until they become glassy. Don't burn

them - continue to stir..

3. Add the rice and continue to stir.. and then set the clock for 15 minutes

4. Gently 'toast' the rice but don't burn it

5. Add the *Fasol Menin Valdobbiadene DOC* - continue to stir..

6. Mix until all the prosecco is absorbed by the rice

7. Start adding the hot broth just covering the rice - continue to stir..

8. Mix until all the liquid is absorbed by the rice

9. Repeat this operation for 10 to 12 minutes

10. Taste the rice with a tea spoon and add salt as required

11. Continue to add the hot broth in smaller quantities - be careful not to let the rice cook fully before you have added all the broth

12. Deciding when the dish is finished is now a personal decision - we tend to make sure that the rice has cooked consistently throughout the heart of the dish and the surface

13. Turn the heat off and add the grated cheese. Mix for a short while until it becomes creamy and serve immediately - don't leave the Risotto in the pan as it will continue to cook and spoil

Well done - you've prepared your first basic Risotto - if you like you can add some finely chopped parsley.

## From the cookbooks

*In the Mood for Food* by Jo Pratt (9780718148584) is published by Penguin and this recipe is reproduced by kind permission of the publisher.

## Chocolate, Cherry and Walnut Brownies

### INGREDIENTS

200g unsalted butter  
200g dark chocolate (70%)

3 large eggs  
300g granulated sugar  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
125g plain flour  
1 pinch of salt  
100g dried cherries  
100g walnut pieces

Makes 9-12 brownies

Preheat oven to 180c/Gas 4.

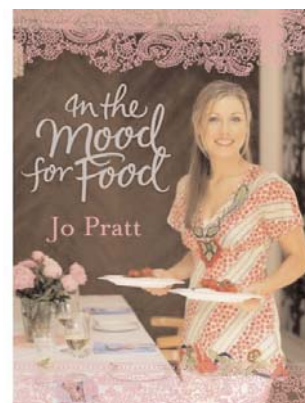
**GREASE AND LINE** a 20 x 30cm rectangular baking tin, 3-4cm deep, with greaseproof or parchment paper. Melt the butter and chopped chocolate either in a bowl over a pan of simmering water or gently in

the microwave.

With an electric hand whisk, beat together the eggs, sugar and vanilla extract until they are lovely and thick and creamy. Mix in the melted chocolate and butter. Finally stir in the flour, salt, cherries and walnuts.

Pour into the baking tin and cook for about 25 minutes until the top is cracking and the centre is just set. Leave to cool in the tin for about 20 minutes before cutting into squares.

Serve warm or, if you can resist them, cold.



# Current members

## ASDW members as at the 1st July 2007

### Amordivino

Geoff Ponter & Annalisa Baj  
[www.amordivino.co.uk](http://www.amordivino.co.uk)

Amordivino wines present to you the best wines that Italy has to offer. An enormous range of interesting and exciting Italian wines, many of which are not normally available outside top London restaurants.

### Cathar Wines

Katrina Balmforth  
[www.catharwines.com](http://www.catharwines.com)

Cathar Wines sells special wines from small producers in the Languedoc-Roussillon area of France. Our aim is to supply interesting, quality wines which you wouldn't find in the supermarket but without charging an arm and a leg!

### Champers

Henry Speer  
[www.champers.net](http://www.champers.net)

Champers specialise in champagne, particularly personalised label champagne for corporate brands and social events. They also supply the range of Champagne du Mont Hauban, and a range of half bottles.

### Decanter Wines

Krystyna & Jim Monks  
[www.decanterwines.co.uk](http://www.decanterwines.co.uk)

Independent specialist importers of Rioja and other quality wines from Spain, including Cava and Spanish brandies.

### Devigne Wines

Mike & Pat Robertson  
[www.devignewines.co.uk](http://www.devignewines.co.uk)

Devigne Wines are specialists in Rosé, Méthode Traditionnelle (Champenoise) & wines from Gaillac, the Jura and the Languedoc.

### F & F B Wines

David Riach

F&FB Wines specialises in internationally recognised red wines from Tuscany, holding stocks of mature vintages from the 80s onwards. Sales are by mail order or collection by arrangement.

### Field & Vine

Stefan Reynolds  
[www.fieldandvine.co.uk](http://www.fieldandvine.co.uk)

Field & Vine specialises in selling a range of hand-picked quality wines to organisations, businesses and corporate clients as well as providing wines to private individuals for every type of social occasion.

### French Regional Wines

John Dickinson  
[www.french-regional-wines.co.uk](http://www.french-regional-wines.co.uk)

An ever expanding range of French wines with familiar names and exclusive imports. Quality and affordable wines for every occasion.

### Harlequin Wines

Martin Bayne  
[www.harlequinwines.co.uk](http://www.harlequinwines.co.uk)

Harlequin Wines, established in 2000 by Martin Bayne, is a company dedicated to quality. We started selling wines of the Franken region of Germany. This region remains our speciality.

### H C Wines

John Hattam & Andy Clarke  
[www.hcwines.co.uk](http://www.hcwines.co.uk)

H C Wines imports a range of interesting, individual and affordable wines with a special emphasis on south-west France. We also conduct tailored tastings for a wide variety of clients.

### Hopscotch

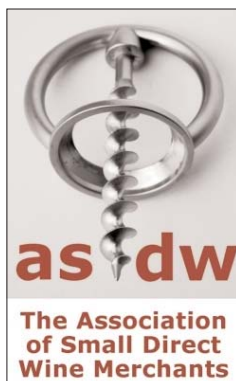
Stuart Colmer  
[www.fasolmenin.co.uk](http://www.fasolmenin.co.uk)

Hopscotch Enterprises represent the Fasol Menin winery, of Valdobbadiene, in the UK. Our key product is a Prosecco DOC (Brut and Extra Dry) though new wines will be added over time.

### Individual Wines

Richard Loadman  
[www.individualwines.com](http://www.individualwines.com)

The aim of Individual Wines is to bring you fine wine at low prices. Most of my wines are about 20% lower than the next cheapest retailer I can find, with some significantly cheaper.



# Current members

## Italy Abroad

Andrea D'Ercole  
[www.italyabroad.com](http://www.italyabroad.com)

Italyabroad.com imports some of the finest Italian wines. We are passionate about wines and our team travels the whole Italy looking for hidden gems that we then make available to the English public.

## Leon Stolarski Fine Wines

Leon Stolarski  
[www.lsfnewines.co.uk](http://www.lsfnewines.co.uk)

New classics from Languedoc, Roussillon and southern Rhone. An impressive range of red, white, sparkling, dessert and fortified wines from some of the best producers these regions have to offer.

## Marta's Vinyard

Malcolm Falconer  
[www.martasvinyard.com](http://www.martasvinyard.com)

Marta's Vinyard deliver the very best quality wines from our estates in Argentina – directly to your home.

## Nick Dobson Wines

Nick Dobson  
[www.nickdobsonwines.co.uk](http://www.nickdobsonwines.co.uk)

Mail-order specialist offering wines mainly from smaller estates in Southern Burgundy (Beaujolais, Mâconnais, Côte Chalonnaise) and Germany (mainly Mosel). Also the UK's widest selections of Swiss and Austrian wines.

## South African Wines

Susan Weerts  
[www.southafricawines.co.uk](http://www.southafricawines.co.uk)

We specialize in selling quality South African wine from some of the best Cape estates. We offer our customers award-winning wine, friendly & efficient service, delivering throughout the UK.

## Step Up Wines

Nick Willcocks  
[www.stepupwines.co.uk](http://www.stepupwines.co.uk)

Step Up Wines Limited are specialists in offering wines hand crafted by small, dynamic producers. By setting up exclusive partnerships with the Vineyards we aim to bring you wines that you will not find elsewhere.

## The Big Red Wine Company

James Bercovici  
[www.bigredwine.co.uk](http://www.bigredwine.co.uk)

BRW imports wines from leading estates throughout France with a special focus on the Southern Rhône Valley. Quality, value and helpful, friendly service are its aims.

## Vinpromo

Bill Laverick  
[www.vinpromo.co.uk](http://www.vinpromo.co.uk)

Vinpromo has a range of some 80 wines. Sourcing wines principally from international companies who do not generally deal with the multiples, the list has a strong Latin focus.

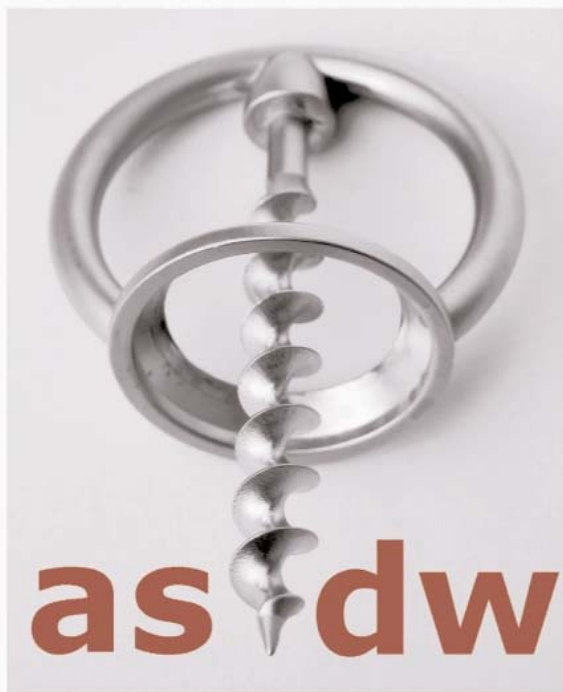
## Wine for Spice

Warren Edwardes  
[www.wineforspice.com](http://www.wineforspice.com)

Wine for Spice's naturally semi-sparkling wines Very Dry Viceroy White, Quite Dry Raja Rosé and Off Dry Rani Gold, are cool refreshingly sparkling, fresh & fruity wines to accompany curries and spicy food.



*we open up a  
world of fine wine*



**as dw**

**The Association  
of Small Direct  
Wine Merchants**

**[asdwww.org.uk](http://asdwww.org.uk)**

