

BIBENDUM TIMES

Tel. 0845 263 6924

tradesales@bibendum-wine.co.uk

www.bibendum-wine.co.uk

@bibendumwine

GETTING GEEKY WITH CHAMPAGNE

The charm of the growers

With Grande Marque Champagnes making up more than two thirds of total Champagne sales, it's no secret that this is a category dominated by the big houses. But with increased interest in, and favour for, hand crafted, artisanal wines, it's high time we pay more attention to Grower Champagne.

"In recent years we have seen the emergence of an important, growing, separate market for what you might term craft Champagne, made by both growers and independent Champagne businesses," says Richard Siddle, award-winning business journalist and owner of The Buyer. "They might only make up a fragment of the total Champagne category, but they are the Champagnes that can make a big difference to a restaurant or bar's overall offer."

Bibendum buyer for Champagne, Jamie Avenell, says, "At Bibendum we tend to focus on smaller, estate producers, who are connected to their land and create delicious wines. While we have a great range of both Grande Marque and independent Champagne producers, we were lacking smaller artisanal, Grower Champagnes. We've added two to our range, making sure our Champagne offering encapsulates the same depth of range from smaller artisan producers that we take for granted in other categories."

So what makes a Grower Champagne, well, a grower? Legally, the producer needs to use at least 95% grapes from their own vineyards to make their Champagne, in



Fabrice Pouillon and his father, James

order to put the RM (*Recoltant Manipulant*) classification on their label.

But there's so much more to making them growers than this. Jamie explains: "Great growers' operations are generally much smaller, with less marketing and brand awareness, offering more bang for your buck. Top growers are usually family owned and operated, crafting unique, individual wines - some from small, single-vineyard plots."

However, adding a Grower Champagne shouldn't be about replacing a Grande Marque. Bibendum wine development director, Willie Lebus, says, "If customers feel more comfortable selling Grande Marque, there is no reason to desist. But now that there is a growing group of inquisitive wine drinkers that are interested in discovering new flavours, it is the perfect time to offer the more individual flavours coming from Grower Champagne."

Lacourte Godbillon

Now in their third generation, family-owned Lacourte Godbillon is a top quality and well-known Grower Champagne from the Montagne de Reims. For current owner and winemaker Geraldine Lacourte and husband Richard Desvignes, their vision is simple: the wine must be an expression of its terroir.

They are true growers in every sense, owning all 8ha of their vineyards and working with a small team of only five people (except during harvest, of course). Lacourte Godbillon are in their second year of converting to organic production and have started to implement biodynamic practices.

95% of their grapes are grown on the Premier Cru terroir of Ecueil, on the extreme western flanks of the Montagne de Reims, an area well known for incredible Pinot Noir production. This varietal constitutes the majority of plantings across their 50 different plots.



Richard Desvignes, Lacourte Godbillon

R. Pouillon & Fils

A grower from the very beginning, Fabrice Pouillon continues to build on what his father and grandfather created, crafting truly unique and artisanal Champagnes.

Owning 6.5ha of land across the Grand Cru of Ay, and throughout the Vallee de la Marne and Montagne de Reims, Fabrice creates expressive and terroir-driven wines that are vibrantly aromatic. Dedicated to the vitality, energy and health of his vineyards, Fabrice began the conversion to organics in 2003 and today also incorporates biodynamic principles.

The wines age in a combination of older oak demi-muids and barriques, where everything undergoes complete malolactic fermentation. Reserve wines are aged for up to 18 months in wooden tanks and there is a 'solera' system in operation, with wines dating back to the late 1990s.



Forces of nature

Coping with the world's changing climate

Turn to [page 4](#)



Home-grown bubbles

The rise of English sparkling wine

Find out more on [page 6](#)



Biodynamics

Is it just a load of manure?

More on [page 18](#)

Continue reading about more of our new producers on [page 2](#).

NEW WINES FROM THE NEW WORLD

Our buyers have been busy...

South Africa

One of the most exciting New World countries right now, we've added two new producers from South Africa. "I was looking to add some artisanal, as well as new and exciting suppliers that offer true regional and elegant, cool-climate wines," says Paul Meihuizen, Bibendum buyer for South Africa. "Finding the right wines took a lot of exploratory work and we looked at over 20 different options before we chose Strydom Vineyards in Stellenbosch and Benguela Cove in Walker Bay."

Strydom Vineyards Stellenbosch

Rianie and Louis Strydom are a real powerhouse couple in the South African wine scene. Winemakers at well-known Stellenbosch producers and members of the esteemed Cape Winemakers Guild, they set up their own winery as a side project in 2012.

With Louis looking after the vineyards, Rianie is the real driving force and head winemaker, crafting unique and artisanal wines. Producing very small volumes, the wines are created from specially selected parts of vineyards around Stellenbosch. Most of these vines are planted on the Helderberg slopes, with a focus on Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah.

Benguela Cove Walker Bay

A magical part of South Africa, Benguela Cove is located in the cool-climate region of Walker Bay in Hermanus. With 70ha of vines, this is South Africa's longest stretch of ocean-facing vineyards, while also overlooking the majestic Palmiet Mountains and Bot River Lagoon. The south-easterly sea breeze is chilled by the Benguela Current flowing up from Antarctica, cooling the grapes during the sunny growing season.

With a focus on Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Syrah, esteemed winemaker Johann Fourie crafts wines of character and individuality, from both environmentally- and ethically-accredited vineyards.



Australia

Eden Valley & Clare Valley Rieslingfreak

Young gun winemaker and Riesling 'freak' John Hughes has taken the industry by storm with his on-point and diverse range of Riesling wines. His first vintage was in 2009 with a single vineyard Clare Valley Riesling, after which John expanded to the Eden Valley.

John's wines are seriously hot property and only available on allocation. He cleaned up on the Australian wine show circuit last year and won the coveted Winemaker's Choice trophy at the Young Gun of Wine Awards.

Barossa Valley Spinifex

"Spinifex epitomise a new wave of Artisan Barossa producers," says Matt Smith, Bibendum buyer for Australia. "Incredibly talented winemaker Peter Schell hand-crafts small quantities of elegant, complex wines based around classic red Rhone varietals. They also produce a deliciously-fresh and textural white, 'Lola', made from Semillon, Vermentino and Clairette."

Peter Schell and Magali Gely started Spinifex in 2001 and are part of the Artisans of Barossa, a group of like-minded producers with a common goal to protect and promote small-batch, sub-regional winemaking.

Argentina Mendoza La Posta

A new collaboration with wine pioneer Laura Catena, La Posta is about celebrating some of the incredible small growers across Mendoza. 'La Posta' is the tavern where growers gather to share a glass of wine and stories about the harvest before their daily siesta, and the single vineyard wines - crafted by winemaker Estela Perinetti - are all named after the individual growers: Armando, Glorieta and Pizzella.

These wines are from different sub-regions of Mendoza - Guaymallen, Tupungato and La Consulta - and are not just Malbec dominated, but include a 100% Pinot Noir and Bonarda wine.

... AND MORE FROM THE OLD WORLD

France

Sancerre, Loire Valley Alphonse Mellot

Alphonse Mellot is a beacon of quality in Sancerre, crafting excellent whites, reds and rosé in a very hands on, biodynamic approach.

Alastair Pyatt, Bibendum buyer for France, says, "Alphonse Mellot owns a lot of individual vineyard plots, with La Moussiere the most remarkable, from where they produce stand-out Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir." Located in the upper Sancerre, La Moussiere is a historic and beautiful site: a 30ha, south facing, single vineyard, with rolling slopes and deep, limestone-rich kimmeridgian soil.

Alsace & Costieres de Nimes (Rhône) Domaine Marc Kreydenweiss

In the 44 years of running his eponymous domaine in Alsace, Marc Kreydenweiss has evolved his viticultural practices and since 1989, they have been operating completely biodynamically. Their vineyards cover three of the Grand Crus of Andlau, where the vines benefit from a

continental climate and soils with a unique mosaic of terroirs. In 1999, Marc expanded their operations to the Rhone's Costieres de Nimes, where they produce Carignan, Syrah and Grenache.

Following in his father's footsteps, Antoine Kreydenweiss took over the vineyard management in 2007.

Savoie Jean Perrier et Fils

Savoie may be one of France's smaller and lesser-known regions, but it is big on personality. Bibendum buyer for France, Alastair Pyatt, says, "Jean Perrier is one of the leading producers in Savoie and our first addition from this Alpine region. It's a small, family-owned producer growing mostly indigenous grapes in various crus throughout the region."

With a long family history, the Perriers started growing grapes and bought a cellar in Savoie in 1853. Operated by brothers Philippe, Christophe and Gilles today, the vineyards are farmed organically, producing electrifying and fresh whites and reds.

Italy

Valpolicella, Veneto La Dama

"La Dama is an exciting find for us and a relatively new producer. Their vineyards are situated in the best commune of Valpolicella, where they make beautifully-modern and pure styles of Valpolicella Classico and Amarone Classico from their small 10ha estate," says Matt Smith, Bibendum buyer for Italy.

Owned and operated by Gabriele Dalcanale and his wife, 'la dama' (the lady) Miriam, their vine growing and winemaking approach is about doing things as natural as possible, and from the 2015 vintage, all La Dama wines will be certified organic.

Chianti Classico, Tuscany Castello di Ama

A top Tuscan producer, Castello di Ama is one of our most exciting additions this year. Family owned, they operate 80ha dominated by classic red varietals. Their vineyards surround the medieval hamlet of Ama, near the village of Lecchi in Chianti.

Matt says, "We are thrilled to have this prestigious Tuscan producer join our Italian portfolio. Their reputation precedes them, having formerly been voted Winemaker of the Year and Winery of the Year in Italy's most respected wine guide, the Gambero Rosso."

Spain

Rioja Alavesa Bodegas Baigorri

Neither modern nor classic Rioja, Bodegas Baigorri crafts terroir-driven wines with a unique freshness and elegance. Founded in 2002 and owned by the Martinez Hernandez family, their 100ha of old vines are planted on calcareous clay soils at high altitudes.

The winery is one of the most characteristic buildings in Rioja Alavesa: designed by prestigious architect Jesus Aspiazu, it is impressive and elegant on the outside, while equally spectacular and functional on the inside. The modern, state-of-the-art facilities reach 30m underground, enabling winemaker Simon Arina to rely completely on gravity.



"We are thrilled to have this prestigious Tuscan producer join our Italian portfolio. Their reputation precedes them, having formerly been voted Winemaker of the Year and Winery of the Year in Italy's most respected wine guide, the Gambero Rosso."

Matt Smith, Bibendum buyer for Italy, on Castello di Ama

FORCES OF NATURE

How wine producers are coping with the world's changing climate

By Richard Siddle

If you glanced through the biggest and most glaring headlines of 2017 you would be forgiven for thinking the world was going through the earliest stages of the apocalypse. Particularly as it seemed whole parts of the world were being ravaged by uncontrollable fires, devastating floods and the worst frosts experienced in 50 years.

The reality, of course, was a little less dramatic, and far more isolated than the initial headlines might have you believe. But however much spin you put on it, the vagaries in the weather resulted in world wine production falling to its lowest level since 1961, according to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV).

A drop in production of 8% might not sound too severe, but when you consider that is the equivalent of 2.9 billion bottles, or the equivalent of what France normally produces in one year, then you can see why changes in the weather on this scale are so worrying for the global wine industry.

The OIV's director-general, Jean-Marie Aurand, did not mince his words when he said "this drop (in production) is the consequence of climate hazards..."

Global changes

All over the world we are seeing warmer conditions resulting in grapes ripening quicker and winemakers harvesting earlier. Particularly in the warmer southern hemisphere, and key wine producing regions in South America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

But even in classic Old World regions like Burgundy and Bordeaux the harvest, in an increasing number of vintages, has moved forward from mid October to late September, with white wine varieties being picked even earlier.

Winemakers are increasingly having to adapt to both higher and also extreme fluctuations in average temperatures between day and night, as well as less rainfall and moisture to keep their vines healthy.

Just look at South Africa, which is going through its longest drought in over a century.

Producers are also successfully planting and growing vines in the northern hemisphere that were previously thought of as no go zones for wine production.

Now, yes, some of these trends are as much to do with changing consumer tastes for fresher, lighter, fruitier wines, and not the big extracted fruit bombs that late picking of fully-ripened grapes result in. But when local differences in weather patterns start to create global changes then we know there is something very real happening.

What winemakers think

Few wine producers in Argentina have done more to explore the impact of climate change on grapes and viticulture than the Catenas, and in particular, Laura Catena.

Laura is not sure there is enough evidence yet to say the climate is necessarily impacting directly on picking times. "Over the last 50 years we have seen a very gradual increase in temperatures, although in 2015 and 2016 we had two very cold years with a lot of snow in the Andes... So I wouldn't say there is a significant change in picking times."

Clemens Lageder, sixth generation of the winemaking family that has made wine at Alois Lageder in Alto Adige, North East Italy, since 1823, is in no doubt climate change is influencing the wines they can make.

"The extremes are changing faster (from cold to warm weather, dry to wet). In 2016 and 2017 we had frost problems, the first time since the early 1980s. Because of the warm winters the grapes started to shoot earlier, which meant when in April and May we had nights that brought temperatures under 0°C, many farmers lost up to 90% of their yields," he explains.



Catena Vineyards



Richard is an award-winning business journalist. Former editor of Harpers Wine & Spirit he now runs his own website (The-Buyer.net), looking at trends and analysis of the premium On Trade.

What are your thoughts on climate change?

Let us know on Twitter @bibendumwine

Water rights

Access to water and then an ability to retain it and use it properly, is a growing challenge for wine producers the world over.

Laura explains they are working hard to find new regions outside Mendoza, "such as La Rioja to the north and La Pampa in Patagonia, where there is greater water availability and extraordinary terroirs with well-drained, alluvial soils".

The issue of water is where the wine world collides head on with the needs of other industries. Laura says parts of Mendoza are suffering from "drought conditions" where the "underground water aquifers are being drained by uses related to construction and having an increased population".

Derek Mossman Knapp, who follows a traditional "garagiste" style of winemaking in Chile with his Garage Wine Company, says the recent devastating fires in Chile were not to do with the climate, but man's over-use of the land. "The bushfires last year in Chile were mother earth reacting to wanton and unregulated over-planting of pine trees and misguided management by our forestry industry. There was simply not enough water for so many trees. In a few short weeks after the bushfires, streams that had been dry for years began to run, wells refilled and indigenous plants began to bounce back," he says.

A better scientific analysis of soils and their surrounding area are much needed, says Laura. "We are studying the soil microbiome and I personally think that understanding how rhizobacteria help vines withstand water stress will be one of the keys to fighting climate change."

How high can you go?

Increasingly winemakers are having to plant vineyards higher - just to make wine at all, not just the wine they choose to.

Again it was the Catenas leading the way in cool-climate plantings with, as Laura says, steps taken by her father, Nicolas Catena, to "pioneer extreme high-altitude plantings in Gualtallary, Uco Valley". But she stresses that changes in harvest time for its cool climate vineyards are more "related to better vine health" and finding the right new areas with a cooler climate.

There are growing regions across Europe where wineries are looking to go higher and higher. For Clemens, the need to find cooler-climate vineyards is a stylistic one so that you can still "guarantee freshness" and "preserve a certain acidity level in the grapes", which is becoming increasingly hard to do at what were normal vineyard levels, he says.

But interestingly, he argues there are also hard commercial reasons for wanting to plant higher vineyards. "Today it's becoming a trend to look for higher vineyards. The reason to do so is often a financial one as the land on higher altitudes still costs less," he claims.

Nothing new

Climate change is not a new phenomenon. Winemakers for the last 20 to 30 years have been looking at planting other varieties, or using different clones with mixed sugar and acidity levels, to find the ones best suited to changes in their local weather. Rather than stick to the tried and tested, there is now a real need to look at what Clemens says are "exotic grape varieties that are more suitable for higher average temperatures and extreme weather".

"They will play an important role in the future," he adds. "Due to the climate changes, we began cultivating new grape varieties in the mid-1980s to determine which would be suitable for higher average temperatures and extreme weather conditions."

Back to the future

Winemakers are also responding to climate change by going back in history and re-adapting some of the ancient and historical vinification methods used by their predecessors.

It's an approach that is working successfully for Clemens. "We will focus even more on traditional vinification methods, which help us guarantee or even increase the perception of freshness in our wines."

Biodynamic winemaking is also allowing winemakers to pick their grapes earlier, says Clemens. "The physiological maturation of the grapes occurs earlier, which means that we can harvest them earlier. The grapes have a lower sugar content and at the same time a higher physiological maturation. The results are precise, fresh and lively wines."

At a crossroads...

The final word goes to Miguel Torres, the legendary Spanish winemaker and one of the world's leading voices on climate change. Writing in the Journal of Wine Economics paper on climate change he says: "Climate change is the greatest threat for the wine business in general, and for wine growers in particular.

"We are standing at a crossroad, and it is a crossroad about our future and the future of the next generations... Today, many of us act taking only this generation into account, but we should really start to act taking several generations into account. We need to act as individuals, as groups, as countries, but also as companies."



Bushfires in Chile last year

HOME-GROWN BUBBLES

Is English sparkling wine the next Champagne?

“English sparkling wine is a rising star!” says Tamas Toth, Bibendum business development manager for luxury hotels. With increased investment from producers, the quality of English sparkling wine continues to sky-rocket – while sales are growing at double-digit figures. But is this just a flash in the pan, or the rise of a style that can rival Champagne?



Ridgeview's Simon Roberts



“I think people have started to look at English sparkling wine in a different way. Before it was always sceptical, but after certain events like the tasting in Paris, for example, people enjoy English sparkling wine a lot more and the attitudes towards them are much better, much more positive.”

Zareh Mesrobian, Sommelier at Ormer Mayfair, Flemings Hotel Mayfair

A wine-producing country at the northern latitudinal limits for producing wine, English growers are no strangers to struggling in the name of creating something special. Frost is a big concern during flowering and ripening, and producers often have to go to extremes to protect their vines and crop.

Unpredictable rain can cause further headaches, while the generally-cooler temperatures can hamper ripening of certain grapes as well as lead to lower yields and raised acidity levels. Once considered extreme, climate change has nudged England to become a prime location for sparkling wine growers from all over the world – most notably Champagne.

Tamas explains, “We can see more and more Champagne Houses buying land in the UK. Colder and more stable, the grapes ripen to perfection to produce one of the best sparkling wines in the world.”

In addition to England's increasingly suitable climate, the soils are ideally chalky – in fact, there's little difference between the chalk soil found in Champagne and that of England's Downs. Unsurprisingly, traditional-method bottle-fermented sparkling wines – the best of which are based on traditional Champagne grapes – remain England's strongest suit.

Sparkling success

Considered an oddity not that long ago, the quality of English sparkling wine keeps improving. Producers are regularly winning prestigious awards and gaining international acclaim, even standing up to Champagne in blind tastings. In April 2016, a team from Britain's WSTA travelled across the Channel to challenge some of France's most influential figures in the food and wine industry to a blind tasting. The panel concluded that the English sparkling wine was better in two out of three categories, drawing equal with Champagne in a third.

According to the WSTA's Rebekah Kendrick, this is only the beginning. “There's a huge amount of potential still to come from the English wine industry: more planting of vines, more investment, more innovation, more awards, and more ambition. The total area under vine has more than doubled since 2009 and we are on track to produce over 10 million bottles by 2020.”

Sales are equally impressive. During the last year, we nearly doubled our value and volume sales of English sparkling wine at Bibendum, while selling to an increased number of customers. And we're not alone. CGA reported that value sales of English and Welsh sparkling wine increased by 63% year on year, while volume sales rose by 77%.

Times are a-changing

So can English sparkling wine take on Champagne? Considering the WSET handbook doesn't even mention English sparkling wine, or list England as a producing country, it's fair to say the category remains rather niche on the world scene. This is the case even locally – and despite the recent improvements – as English wine constitutes less than 1% of wine sold in the UK.

But Tamas believes that more and more people are open-minded to try English sparkling instead of Champagne or Cava. “Champagne is becoming an extremely expensive joy and consumers have identified this already. English sparkling is a great, traditional-method sparkling wine extremely similar to Champagne. And it's made locally, making it a win-win situation!” says Tamas.

Last year, we nearly doubled our value and volume sales of English sparkling

TWO ENGLISH SPARKLING PRODUCERS TO TRY



Ridgeview | Sussex

Now run by winemaker Simon Roberts and his sister Tamara (Ridgeview's CEO), their journey started in 1995 when their parents, Mike and Chris Roberts, found a piece of land in England's South Downs and planted some Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier vines.

A stone (and a half's) throw from Brighton, their vineyards benefit from the best of British terroir: clay-loam top soil with a deep limestone ridge to bring crispness and freshness to the wines. Their philosophy is simple: minimal intervention in order to allow the fruit to speak for itself.

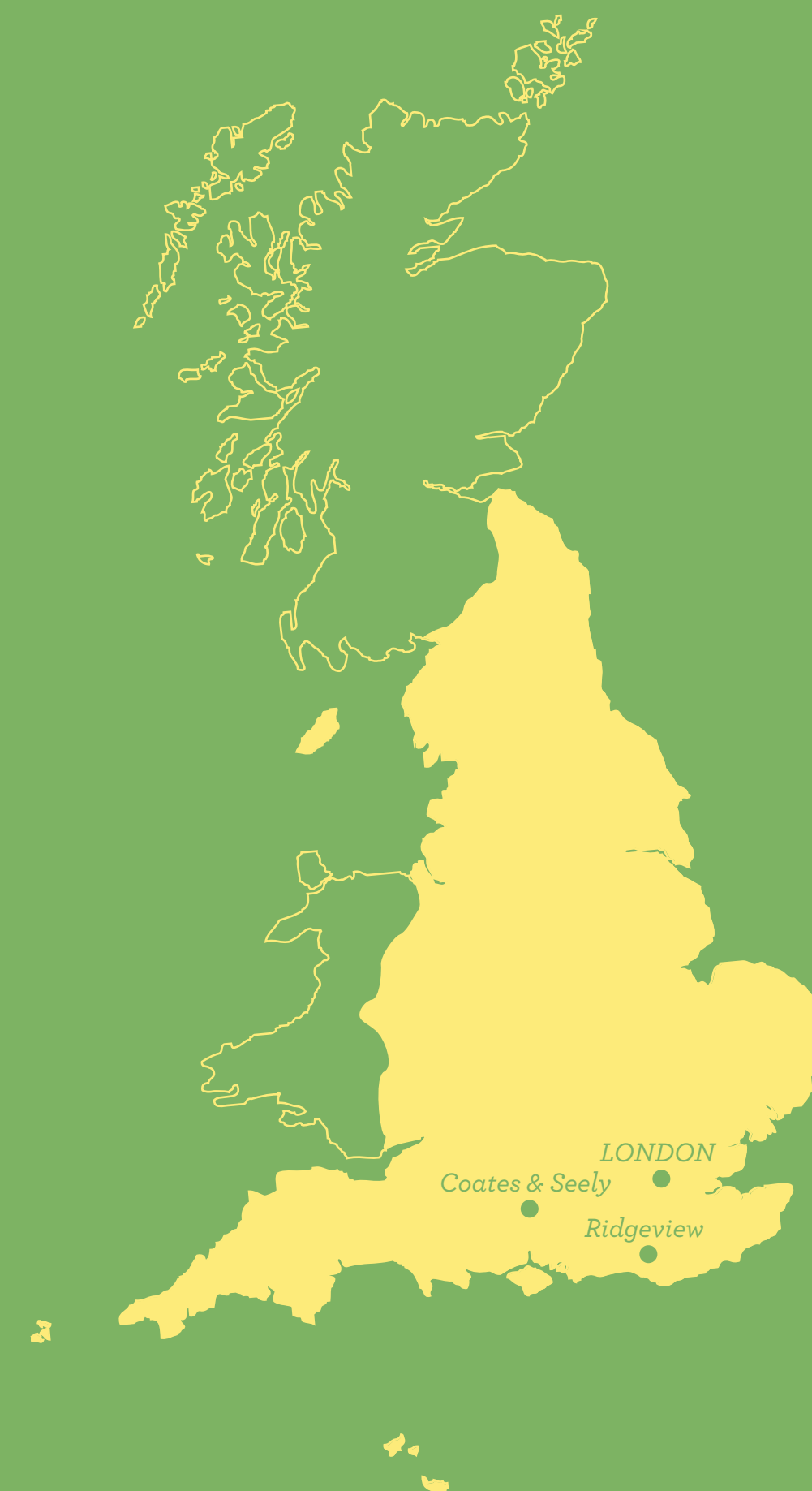
In just 20 years their wines have become a beacon in the English wine industry and they've been awarded over 250 medals and 27 trophies in both international and national competitions, including the prestigious English Wine of the Year title no fewer than four times.

Coates & Seely | Hampshire

When two old friends, Nicholas Coates and Christian Seely, came across the chalk-rich Wooddings vineyard in the North Hampshire Downs, their plan was simple: use traditional Champagne methods alongside cutting-edge winemaking technology to reflect the unique terroir of this corner of southern England.

Situated just 80 miles north of the chalk hills of Champagne, the area enjoys virtually identical soil, geological structure and a substantially similar climate to its French cousin, which provide the ideal conditions for growing great Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

In the Autumn, grapes are carefully hand harvested and taken to the winery, where a variety of modern and traditional winemaking techniques are employed, including the use of well-aged French oak barrels and concrete eggs to produce Coates & Seely's award-winning Blanc de Blancs, Brut and Rosé sparkling wines.



IS FINE GOOD ENOUGH?

By Gergely Barsi Szabo, Bibendum fine wine sales

Fine wine by definition usually extends as far as the vineyard borders of Bordeaux and Burgundy. Despite the fact that these two regions represent a huge chunk of the cake – almost a third each – we cannot look at them as the exclusives of the category. The final third consists of a very colourful collection of wines, from Umbria and Ljutomer Ormoz (in Slovenia), to the remote vineyards of Robertson in South Africa.

So what makes these all fine wine?

I've been trying very hard over the past decade to come up with a definition – and for me there's one word that says it all: unrepeatability.

Unrepeatability means a unique terroir, a one-off prime spot on planet earth where you can produce grapes that can't be replicated anywhere else. Fine wine also carries the unrepeatability of time. It encapsulates every little meteorological detail of the year the grapes were grown – and rather obviously all the years that have passed since the grapes were harvested.

With certain labels, just a few years on from the current vintage can mean dramatic differences, both in drinkability and price. Instead of having to carefully select young wines, store them for a few years, and only list them once they are really mature and ready to go, you can get them straight out the box and right on the wine list. Like the 1998 Tignanello on our fine wine list: it was carefully stored for the past 20 years, and is now perfectly ready to drink, to say the least.

It may be the best-quality fruit and the most ideal vintage, but if it falls into the wrong hands, you won't get much joy from

it. The person behind the label – whether that's the owner, viticulturist or cellar master – really makes a difference. That is the reason why certain producers' bog standard Bourgogne Blanc sells for the price of a less prestigious house's Grand Cru. I am looking at you Coche Dury!

Unrepeatable origin, unrepeatable time, and the right people's care. If all these match up with rarity in volume, the price has a guaranteed exponential growth. Oh, and it kind of helps if it tastes good.

The weird and wonderful

I remember the first real cellar I walked into a decade ago. It was my first somm job in London in a very, very French luxury brasserie. It had everything I held dear at the time. All the wines I had read about. All the labels I saw at the bottom of the pages of my weathered World Atlas of Wine copy. Top Bordeaux: anything from the 1855 league up to Margaux, Mouton, Lafite,

Latour, and "Ho Bryan". Rare Burgundy: LeMoine, Coche Dury, JN Gagnard and the gang. Super Tuscans: Tig, Sass, Mass. Grange. Special imports of Catena Zapatas from Mendoza – you name it!

In my last hospitality job nine years later at one of Hackney's legendary wine establishments, the shelves were full of rarities from the weirdest, quirkiest and wackiest small producers, many from the peripheries of the marginal side of our wine world. Cru Beaujolais like Lardy and his mates. Etna. Unknown villages of Jura and the Loire. Slovenia, Utah and Southern Chile with the Garage community.

Would I call these fine wine in the very classic, penguin-suited, sommelier sense? Not quite. But were they unrepeatable anywhere else? Sure thing. Did they pack a punch with originality? They did. With tiny allocations, most of them were even harder to get than the most highly regarded Bordeaux or Burgundy estates. These bottles were fine wine by all means: quite costly, unique and totally unrepeatable.

Interested in fine wine? Contact our fine wine team to find out more about our offer, as well as our upcoming Fine Wine Cellar Tastings and Fine Wine Cellar Sweep sales. Email FineWineTrading@bibendum-wine.co.uk



"It may be the best-quality fruit and the most ideal vintage, but if it falls into the wrong hands, you won't get much joy from it. The person behind the label – whether that's the owner, viticulturist or cellar master – really makes a difference."

Gergely Barsi Szabo, Bibendum fine wine sales



SAKE MEETS CHAMPAGNE

The art of blending: an interview with Regis Camus



The elaborate houses of Champagne and minimalistic Japan may seem worlds apart, but not to Regis Camus. Cellarmaster at Piper-Heidsieck, having been winemaker there since 1994, Regis has turned his hand from vines to rice in a Franco-Japanese venture to create the 'world's purest alcohol drink'.

The result? Heavensake – a luxury sake with low acidity and no sulphites, preservatives, added sugar or gluten. The two sakes in the range are produced in partnership with two of Japan's leading sake breweries, Dassai for the Junmai Daiginjo and Urakasumi for the Junmai Ginjo.

We spoke to Regis to find out more about this unique collaboration.

What drew you into the world of Champagne?

I should have been a teacher. I started to study science at university, where I met oenologist students. Talking to them, I thought 'what about studying that?' So I did.

Piper-Heidsieck is having something of a renaissance and is gathering momentum in the UK. What is the reason for this?

Piper-Heidsieck's quality has been getting better for years now. Since the early 2000s we've changed the blend a little, year after year. Today, the quality is recognised and awarded – our Brut Vintage 2008 was awarded World Champion Vintage Brut Blend by the Champagne & Sparkling Wine World Championship.

What's the biggest change that you've seen during your time at Piper-Heidsieck?

The biggest change at Piper-Heidsieck for me has been its quality. Since I've been cellar master, I've worked on the blend a lot. My objective was to improve the Champagne's quality and reinforce Piper-Heidsieck's style.

What do you think the future holds for the Champagne market?

The competition is getting tougher – especially because of the new sparkling wines. Champagne is the top of this category, but to keep this place, only very premium Champagnes can keep going.

How did you get into sake, from a background in Champagne?

I discovered and started to enjoy sake following my travels in Japan. As Piper-Heidsieck cellar master, I've been there 12 times and met a lot of wine and sake lovers who shared their knowledge with me.

Can you remember the first sake you tried?

I can only say it was a late night... (laughs).

Where did the concept for Heavensake come from?

The founders' love for Japanese culture and the discovery of all the benefits of sake: low acidity, no additives, no gluten, etc. Their idea was to promote a clean and pure alcohol alternative to the Western world that people could recognise and build a relationship with. The name is playful, easy to pronounce and memorable.

What was the inspiration for the look and feel?

The Heavensake team developed the bottle in France in collaboration with renowned design agency Sebastien Servaire. We aimed for an iconic and timeless design: modern, sleek and chic. The Japanese-inspired elements of the design convey the power of purity and minimalism.

What is unique about Heavensake?

The collaboration between France and Japan at this level of craftsmanship is

absolutely unique. The combination of masterful Champagne blending and Japanese sake making has never been done before. The idea of drinking sake like wine is also a distinctive element of the brand.

How is making sake different (or similar) to making Champagne?

As with Champagne, we must blend to make sake. And you have to know that one plus one does not always equal two. You never know what you'll get, you can only imagine. So we have to taste – it's very different from what we learnt at school!

Making Heavensake was like making Piper-Heidsieck Champagnes. I wanted to produce 'easy to drink' products that make people smile. I wanted to produce sake with floral and fruity notes, that is light and elegant. The most important thing to know is that blending is a team effort: I never work on my own to taste and make Champagne blends. It's the same with Heavensake.

What are the challenges for sake in the current market?

I think sake will become an increasingly-trendy drink over the next five to 10 years, but first of all we have to change sake's image. Too many people still think sake is hard to drink and full of alcohol, which it is not.

What is the most common misconception about sake?

We have to teach people that sake is not a strong spirit. In fact, sake is an atypical drink that pairs very well with elegant dishes.



How does Regis take his sake?

- Floral and fruity
- Not too high in alcohol
- Paired with shellfish and fine cuisine

PROVENCE AND BEYOND

How 'pale pink' became a brand in itself



When we think of wine branding in France, we naturally think of Champagne. But head south to the Mediterranean coast and you'll find a region developing intriguing similarities. Pale pink rosé is as vogue in Southern France as it ever has been – but interest in this style has seeped out of this corner of France and its summertime favouritism, and into the rest of the world.

The south of France has had unique success in creating rosé brands in a relatively short space of time. The importance of branding in Provence is comparable to that in Champagne, with some of the most successful rosé brands not even owning their own vineyards.

From Chateau D'Esclans to Chateau Miraval, this success has been spearheaded by celebrity endorsement and the ideal of a chic summer in the French Riviera. Sacha Lichine, owner of Chateau D'Esclans and the critically-acclaimed Whispering Angel, is credited with having "brought the St Tropez rosé lifestyle to the world". And now St Tropez, the epitome of luxury and glamour, is also synonymous with pale pink rosé.

This rise in celebrity endorsement for the category is coupled with a rise in big brands. However, this does not necessarily mean a drop in quality, in fact, quite the opposite.

Bibendum's Provence-born supplier manager for France, Emilie Blanc, comments, "We are seeing a distinct premiumisation of the category with some

great-quality examples out there. The popularity of pale rosé is not only linked to the fact that the product is very easy drinking and has an attractive colour, but it is also due to the idea that we are exporting the lifestyle that comes with it to the UK. The consumer is drinking the whole experience as well as a delicious, great-quality wine – you can picture yourself, glass in hand, lying around the swimming pool in the south of France."

And it's not just Provence that's seeing success from pale pinks, or even just France. The hashtag #roséallday is testament to the world's love of pale pink, an Instagram gallery awash with shades of salmon that has gained over 30,000 new images in the last six months alone. Provence has opened up winemaking styles in other regions and countries, owning its very own brand of rosé, 'Provence-style', that others want to emulate. Emilie says, "We've seen a change in the rosé winemaking process in a lot of regions that were originally making deep-coloured rosé through maceration, such as Rioja."

So what defines this 'Provence-style' brand? Aside from the obvious pale colour, there's a complex palate of red fruits, citrus, and herbes de Provence, plus a distinct minerality in the best examples. We've picked out six of our favourites from Provence and beyond.



"The consumer is drinking the whole experience as well as a delicious, great-quality wine – you can picture yourself, glass in hand, lying around the swimming pool in the south of France."

Emilie Blanc, Bibendum supplier manager for France

PICK OF THE PALES

Provence

Chateau La Coste Chateau Rosé

Twenty kilometres north of Aix-en-Provence, Chateau La Coste is a vast domaine of 200ha, of which 123 are devoted to the production of organically-cultivated vines. The chateau also focuses on biodynamic principles, protecting the terroir and creating wines with real provenance. This rosé is characterised by finesse, freshness and minerality. White fruits dominate the palate alongside floral notes and hints of red fruits.



Chateau D'Esclans Garrus Rosé

Perhaps one of Provence's most well-known wineries, the house of Chateau D'Esclans sits proudly on elevated land near the Gorges de Pennafort, 25km northwest of the Mediterranean coast. Quality is key here, and winemaker Patrick Leon has made wine for some of the most prestigious names in the industry, including Chateau Mouton-Rothschild and Opus One. Produced from 8-year-old Grenache vines, the Garrus Rosé has amazing floral and mineral aromas. It has a lovely creamy texture, with strawberry, apple and lemon flavours, and a touch of lemon cream on the finish.



Domaine Pastoure Cotes de Provence Rosé

Domaine Pastoure is based in the town of Flassans-Sur-Issole towards the south of Provence. Surrounded by hills and the cooling influences of the River Issole, alongside limestone soils, this area lends itself well to the freshest styles of rosé. A classic blend of Grenache, Cinsault and Syrah, this bright wine is floral and fruity on the nose, with cherry on the palate and a long finish.

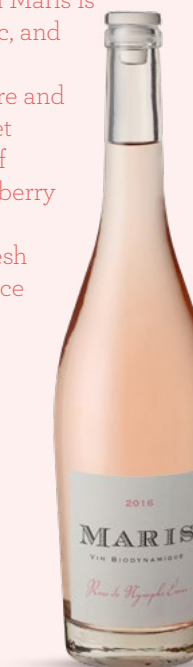


Rest of France

Chateau Maris Rosé de Nymphé Grenache Noir

Minervois La Liviniere

Purchased by British ex-pat Bertie Eden in 1997, the 50ha domaine of Chateau Maris is 100% organic and biodynamic, and wines are produced in a self-cooling hemp winery. Pure and fresh, this rosé is a delicate yet complex wine with flavours of apricots, eucalyptus and raspberry brambles. Made from 100% Grenache, the palate has a fresh acidity with white pepper, spice and a distinct minerality.



Domaine Lafage Miraflores Cotes du Roussillon

Perpignan

The Agly Valley, with its black shale and layered schist soil in the shadow of ruined Cathar castles, is one of Europe's most exciting terroirs. Eliane and Jean-Marc Lafage specialise in growing old vines that impart pronounced minerality and concentration to their wines. This rosé is a blend of Mourvedre and a small amount of Grenache Gris. Grown on terraced plots along the Roussillon coast and aged in concrete, it is decidedly Provencal in style. It is juicy, with pure strawberry, citrus and orange peel flavours. The wine has a distinct minerality, and a super fresh finish.



Alphonse Mellot La Moussiere

Sancerre

The Mellot family started making wine over 500 years ago, and the rich family history includes a stint as wine advisers to none other than Louis XIV. In 1970, Alphonse Mellot took the control of the estate and started focusing on quality rather than quantity. Now the 47ha estate has vineyards across the upper Loire Valley, farmed organically and biodynamically. This rosé is made from 100% Pinot Noir from the La Moussiere vineyard. An elegant, fresh and structured wine, with aromas of red berries and spicy hints, it is mellow and full bodied. A great wine to enjoy both as an aperitif or throughout a meal.



GET WINE CONFIDENT

...with our first blended learning course

The thought of 'e-learning' is enough to put anyone off. But actually, we do it every day, every time we Google something. Our training team thought it was time that hospitality training, specifically around drinks, was more about inspiring passion and confidence in individuals to help them sell better drinks, and ultimately progress in their career.

As a result, we've added a unique, industry-first online platform, allowing users to dip in and out at their convenience, forming part of our 'blended learning' experience.

What is blended learning?

Blended learning is a two-pronged approach to learning, where students gain knowledge both in the classroom and online. Our new e-learning platform enables users to access classroom materials, quizzes, films and articles, and allows them to dip in and out at their own convenience. Managers can track engagement and measure success by reporting on quiz scores and resource completion, while learners can also rate topics and leave chat comments.

Bibendum head of customer training, Julia Bailey, says: "In a fast-paced, information-overloaded and convenience-led world, it's increasingly challenging to engage staff and keep training relevant. As a result, we've added a digital element to our training offer through this new e-learning platform."

Balance

While e-learning is increasingly important, it's not simply a matter of taking it online. Julia explains, "It's about an entirely new approach to the way we help people to learn. Blended learning is our way of combining e-learning with traditional classroom methods and independent study to create a unique new learning experience."

Simplicity is key

Content is available in bite-sized chunks and easy to navigate. Users can take learning at their own pace and in an order that suits them, with lots of quizzes along the way to test their learning. We expect the vast majority of our users to be learning on the job, so an on-the-go mobile solution was vital.

Wine Confidence: the lowdown

Wine Confidence is the first specifically-designed blended learning course, incorporating a one-day classroom workshop, alongside three months' access to our digital learning service. The course has been designed to help learners increase their knowledge in order to confidently recommend wines to customers, as well as providing practical skills and knowledge to anyone who works with wine. Following the course, students can access the digital resources to continue to refresh and top up their knowledge.

Course topics focus on getting confident talking about wine, how to read a wine label, why wines taste different, why some wines are more expensive than others, wine service, food and wine, and answering customer questions.

Need something bespoke?

Effective e-learning must appeal to users and meet their needs. Our platform offers the flexibility to create bespoke content specific to every one of our customers. We have worked with learning consultants and test groups to develop core content that is concise and useful. Learners want to upskill themselves in the shortest time possible, and we've researched and developed content that those working in hospitality need to know to be successful.

We also have the flexibility to work with customers who already have their own e-learning platform to ensure everyone gets the opportunity to use the technology to enhance their training offer when it comes to wine.

Want to know more about Wine Confidence?

Visit the training page on our website, or contact your Account Manager.



A QUESTION OF DISTILLATION

Gin beyond the juniper

There's no denying that the gin craze has hit London once again, only now bathtub gin is the height of fashion rather than a crude corn spirit. Where in the noughties bottles of vodka stood proud on the back bar, now we see hundreds of craft gins ranging from small batch to strange flavours and liqueurs.

We know that gin must be juniper led, and can probably name one or two of the key botanicals in our favourite bottle. But what else differentiates one gin from the next? This is where the distillation methods come in. To some the holy grail, to others a mere gin-making requirement, distillation methods vary wildly from producer to producer. We take a closer look at three:

Steeping

This is the traditional and most widely-used method of gin distillation. It involves steeping the botanicals in a highly rectified spirit, otherwise known as the base spirit. Some steep, or macerate, the botanicals before distillation, which helps to fix the flavours in the liquid and give a higher intensity of flavour. This is said to help the liquid retain these flavours throughout the distillation process.

Vapour infusion

Spearheaded by Bombay Sapphire in the 80s, and now used by the likes of SipSmith, this method uses a carter head still – a pot still with a copper 'basket' suspended inside near the neck. The base spirit is heated, and as it evaporates the vapour passes through the basket on its way out through the neck, only picking up delicate flavours from the botanicals.

"The key idea behind vapour infusion was that it could form a bridge into the gin category for historical vodka lovers," says Bibendum wine and spirits educator Emily Humphreys. "This method produces a lighter, more refined flavour profile, which was more appealing to those not accustomed to big, bold botanical-heavy gins."

"Distillation at a lower temperature using vacuum distillation means the chemical composition of each botanical's flavour is not altered, so the flavours really come through to create a lush, fresher style of gin."

Ian Hart, Sacred Gin



Vacuum distillation at Sacred Gin

Vacuum or cold distillation

The unique thing about this method is that the presence of a vacuum lowers the boiling temperature of alcohol, meaning distillation can take place at a lower temperature than in a pot still. This preserves the oils and delicate flavours of distillates, meaning fresher ingredients can be used without being ruined by heat.

The first to pioneer the method on the London Dry distilling scene was Highgate's Sacred Gin, founded in 2008 by Ian Hart and Hilary Whitney. "Vacuum distillation gives our liquid a unique taste and freshness as the botanicals are distilled separately and have not been affected by heat," says Ian.

"Another key advantage of vacuum distillation is that botanicals are distilled individually, stopping one element from absorbing the flavours and aromas of its neighbouring botanical and impacting the taste of the entire gin," he says.

Taking things one step further is Hepple Gin, whose founders include Walter Riddell, Valentine Warner and world-renowned barman Nick Strangeway. Hepple Gin uses three different distilling techniques and apparatuses: a copper pot, a vacuum still and a supercritical CO2 extraction system, normally found in perfume production. The vacuum captures the freshness of the green (unripe) juniper and other fresh ingredients, while the latter adds extra depth of flavour.



Nick Strangeway, Hepple Gin

Distiller's battle: recipe vs still

Alex Kammering: It's all about the recipe

You may know Alex as the creator of Kamm & Sons British Aperitif. Alex has been working in the drinks industry for over 22 years, and now he's turned his creative hand to making gin (in his kitchen, of course). For Alex, recipe is everything.

"I've never noticed a difference between distillation methods. 95% of the recipe and the biggest difference for me is using dry versus fresh botanicals.

"The recipe is not just about botanical ratios, but the total weight of botanicals versus the amount of alcohol and water, how long they macerate for and at what temperature. Juniper is really important, but you need to balance it. The flavour of gin is just a combination of four key botanicals – juniper, coriander, citrus and liquorice – and how they work together."

Alex Lawrence: You've got to distil it right

Alex is the head bartender at London's Dandelyan bar, and founder of Porter's gin. As part of the new wave of gin-making mad scientists, he is a cold-distillation convert. For Alex, it's all about experimenting with the still – so long as you do it right.

"I've always done cold distillation," he says. "The differences between a pot still and rota-vap are amazing: If you distil camomile in a pot still you get robust, earthy camomile, but in a rota-vap it tastes like peach. However, if you put some botanicals through a pot still the result will taste dirty, muddy, bitter and horrible. These are the ones you have to treat very gently.

"I'm sure vapour distillation is probably a lot nicer for some botanicals that don't work in a pot still, but I'm not convinced that it delivers that full flavour – or even uses every part of the botanical you can. It's all very subjective!"

UNEXPECTED SPAIN

Discover the fresh, aromatic and surprising wines of Galicia

The rain in Spain falls mainly... in the North-West. The region of Galicia is not stereotypical Spain – its green rolling hills are more reminiscent of Ireland than they are of Madrid.

Nicknamed 'Green Spain', this region in the North-Western corner of the country has a cool, maritime climate with over 1,300mm of rainfall per year. This, combined with the 2,000 hours of sunshine it receives a year, creates humid conditions that allow for the lush green landscape to prosper, and for vines to flourish.

Indeed, the environment in Galicia is ideal for vine growing and the yields are unsurpassed anywhere else in Spain. However, quite like the landscape, the wines that are made here are not what you'd typically expect of Spanish wine. The region's most popular wines are delicate and aromatic whites – a far cry from the intense reds of Rioja.

All about Albarino

The hero grape of the region, Albarino thrives in the humid climate and has become synonymous with the Rias Baixas sub-region on the South-Western coast of Galicia. Here, the vines are traditionally trained on pergolas: horizontal trellises that rise up to well above shoulder height. This allows for the ventilation of the vines, important in such a wet climate. But for the small farmers, who grow vines for themselves, the high canopy allows them to use every single last square foot of land – their vegetable gardens are often planted beneath.

Despite being practically unheard of until the late 1980s, an injection of funds transformed the Galician wine industry and Albarino has been growing in popularity in the UK. With a 43% value and 40% volume increase year on year (to November 2017), there is a growing thirst for this lively, aromatic white.



Adega Algueira

Bibendum wine buyer for Spain, Jamie Avenell, thinks there's no stopping Albarino. "In this region, undoubtedly Albarino has been the star of the show, growing hugely in both volume and recognition. Given its crowd-pleasing, fruit-forward profile and crisp, refreshing acidity, it's a trend that is unlikely to abate this year, with Galicia being one of the few regions in Spain to have had a good harvest in 2017, both in terms of quality and quantity."

A third* of top London bars now list Albarino

More to discover

But North-West Spain is about more than Albarino and the other indigenous white and red grapes have a lot of potential. Jamie explains, "North-West Spain has a treasure trove of varieties unique to the area – of which Godello and Mencía are the most significant. Red grape Mencía certainly deserves to be explored more; the wines are deliciously fragrant with a definite spicy element that gives them real character. Even better, these can be some of Spain's best-value reds."

The Ribeira Sacra region, further inland, has become famous for these varieties and also for their extreme and archaic winegrowing techniques. The vines grow on impossibly steep slate terraces, dating back to Roman times, meaning that the harvesting has to be done by hand. However, with improved drainage and maximum exposure to sunlight, the dizzy heights are absolutely worth it.



A Coroa

Our favourite Galician producers

A Coroa

A Coroa is a stunning winery in the heart of Valdeorras, built on the foundations of a Roman camp. Here the team create complex, elegant and intense examples of Godello, packed full of mature fruit flavours. The wines of A Coroa are full bodied, yet very fresh, with fantastic acidity.

Top pick

A Coroa Godello 2015

Adega Algueira

Located in Ribeira Sacra, the vineyards of Adega Algueira are set in impossibly-steep slate slopes, where it is only possible to pick the grapes by hand. Growing vines at such heights allow the winery to utilise biodynamic practices across its land, meaning the wines undergo minimum intervention.

Top pick

Adega Algueira Mencía 2016

Bodegas Castro Martin

Castro Martin is run by Angela Martin and her husband Andrew McCarthy in Rias Baixas, on Spain's Galician coast. The production of Albarino at this bodega can be traced back to 1887. However, the current cellars were constructed in 1982, before the D.O. of Rias Baixas was created.

Top pick

Bodegas Castro Martin Family Estate Selection Albarino 2015

Rodrigo Mendez

Rodrigo Mendez's vineyards are not typical Galician vineyards: they're hidden away up in the mountains, surrounded by pine forests. This isolation means that Rodrigo is able to farm using organic methods, as he does not have to worry about diseases, or pesticides drifting in from neighbouring vineyards.

Top pick

Rodrigo Mendez Cies Albarino 2015

*According to our Mode insights tool, which expertly analyses the latest wine lists for over 60 industry-leading venues.

SPEED, SPACE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Bag in box is back



Gone are the days of bag in box wine being code for cheap goon. Convenient, economical, and more sustainable than traditional glass and cork, the credentials of boxed wine take it out of its former student house party vibe, and into the sphere of the conscious London On Trade.

London's Parisian-inspired, burger restaurant, Haché Burgers, recently took the plunge with bag in box. Opening in Camden back in 2004, Haché Burgers began life in a derelict former falafel house on Inverness Street. Now they have six locations across the city's trendy hotspots, from Balham to Shoreditch, and are renowned among London foodies for their top-notch burgers.



Seriously sustainable

Lizzy Barber, head of brand and marketing, tells us more about Haché's vinous offering and why boxed wine was a good choice for their customers. "Our wine list has been carefully curated with the help of Bibendum. It's a tight range of easily-quaffable wines that have been picked to complement our burgers – so much so that Bibendum have created tasting notes for specific burger pairings. We wanted our entry level wine to give our customers the best value for money, and bag in a box is a great way to do this while also allowing us to be more environmentally friendly."

"Our customers have generally become more environmentally conscious over the years, so this has been a good way of communicating to them that sustainability is something we take seriously. The option for us to have a specially-curated 'Haché blend' in the box itself allows us to demonstrate Haché's signature attention to detail."

Back to basics: space

Having a solution that would help their efficiencies in small spaces was a particular concern for Haché, whose sites range from railway arches to a pop-up-turned-restaurant. Although not perfect, the bag in box is much more efficient to store than cases upon cases of bottles, and with less risk of breakage. "Storage has been both a good and bad thing – for the restaurant space it's great, but a box will take up more space in the fridge than a bottle," says Lizzy.

Getting creative with service

A sophisticated setting like Haché requires sophisticated serves. Keen to add carafes to their by the glass offer, but conscious of the wastage caused by a 50cl carafe versus a 75cl bottle, bag in a box provided yet another possibility for the group.

"The carafe has been a popular option for tables who don't want to commit to a full bottle. We see a lot of couples in Haché and it's especially popular with them," says Lizzy. "Serving carafes allows us to offer more choice for our customers, as there is less wastage than we'd have with glass bottles. The fact that we are using reusable carafes rather than wasting bottles has an environmental benefit, too."

The design team at Bibendum produced bespoke branded stamps, so each carafe comes with its own neck tag and tasting note. "The wines look great when decanted in a beautiful bottle with a Haché tag on it," says Lizzy.

Creating an experience

Haché have been getting creative with more than just their carafes, and a newly-launched menu encourages customers to get involved with their house wine.

"Our house wine has been a big feature of our newly-launched Monday Date Night menu, which encourages tables of two to celebrate a reason to get together on a Monday night. The set menu includes a bottle of our house wine, and at the end of their dinner we encourage guests to write down their reason for visiting on their bottle, which we then display in our restaurants."



"The quality of the bag in box juice truly exceeds all expectations. To have fruity, easy-drinking wines from France at this price point make a great option for house pours. Preservation is very efficient – it lasts longer than an open bottle of wine. When bar staff aren't 100% confident with their wine knowledge, having a firmer guarantee on freshness is key."

Sophia Charow, Bibendum London Account Manager

Just one 10L bag in box holds the equivalent of more than 13 bottles of wine

ALL THINGS CHARDONNAY

Waving goodbye to the ABC club

Dubbed 'the winemaker's grape', Chardonnay is loved by wine aficionados the world over for its sheer versatility. But somehow in the past few decades, this same varietal became public enemy number one.

Big, sickly, over-oaked styles from the New World have a lot to answer for. Those working in both the On and Off Trade will have experienced, at least once, the customer who hates Chardonnay point-blank. The irony? They often like Chablis. But absolutely not Chardonnay.

Easy as ABC

Despite the boom in interest in wine in England from the 1960s onwards, there was still a general lack of knowledge among consumers. Chardonnay was a lucky grape – it's easier to say than Gewurztraminer, there's no regionality to confuse you (in the New World, anyway), and it was widely available. So one could open a wine list and order a Chardonnay confidently.

Bibendum wine educator Monica Allan explains: "Back in the 1980s, Australia in particular was mass producing big, often crudely-oaked Chardonnays full of vanilla, and overtly buttery." By the noughties, consumers were tired of these heavy styles and their sweet, unsubtle oak – even if they couldn't identify the problem.

This wave of consumers was grouped into the so-called 'ABC club', or Anything But Chardonnay. But this group is slowly ageing, becoming more educated, and diversifying their dinnertime repertoire.

No more haters

The average list price of Chardonnay increased by 10% in the last year in premium On Trade outlets*, recognising a shift in consumer preference. "Gone are the days of 'Anything But Chardonnay,'" says Paul Brown, Bibendum business development manager. "Opinions around Chardonnay are changing – and this is largely due to wineries, especially in the New World, evolving their styles to be leaner, with minimal use of oak.

"Premium Chardonnay from Burgundy has always been around at fine dining venues, but the category has suffered in pubs and casual dining. This is changing and we're seeing Chardonnay move back onto restaurants' core lists, becoming one of the preferred wines again."

Monica agrees: "Nowadays when I ask my

students about the ABC club, particularly the younger generations, they usually haven't heard of it. There is a look of incredulity on the young somms' faces as they consider why anyone would rule out this awesome variety entirely."

A changing New World

We're seeing more and more of an affinity with Chardonnay, and winemaking practices are returning to the balance and elegance perhaps more associated with the Old World.

"Now many Australian producers in particular are keen to claim their vineyards are cool climate, since this term has become synonymous with higher quality," says Monica. "These areas (such as Yarra Valley, Tasmania and Mornington Peninsula) are moderated by Antarctic winds and/or higher altitudes, producing wines that are refined and elegant, with mouth-watering acidity, ripe fruit and a lean body. In reality, very few regions can be described as genuinely cool climate, but this is one way to move away from the connection of their wines to those that brought about the ABC club."

Cooler-climate Chardonnay

Fresh and lean

Flavours:

- Citrus fruit like lime and lemon
- Green fruit like kiwi and green apples
- Lean styles

The oak:

- Tends to be used more sparsely
- Toasty, butty and smoky
- Light vanilla

Warmer-climate Chardonnay

Rich and ripe

Flavours:

- More tropical citrus fruit like grapefruit
- Riper, tropical fruit like mango and banana

The oak:

- Brighter, more vibrant
- Vanilla-led
- Butterscotch and cream

From crisp to creamy



Domaine Jean Defaix Chablis (Chablis)

Bright and refreshing, this classic Chablis is the epitome of fresh and lean.



Domaine Robert-Denogent Pouilly Fuisse Les Reisses (Maconnais)

Lemon, apple and ripe peach – just a hint of oak.



Fraser Gallop Parterre Chardonnay (Margaret River)

On the edge: Burgundian in style, Australian at heart. Fresh acidity and lightly-toasted French oak.



Josef Chromy Chardonnay (Tasmania)

Fresh citrus, bright grapefruit and nectarine with subtle hints of walnuts.



Norman Hardie Chardonnay (Niagara Peninsula)

Light, full of citrus, and one of the most mineral-focused Chardonnays around.



Catena Alta Chardonnay (Mendoza)

Much riper. Pear, apricot and lemon meet flowers and smoke.



Walter Hansel North Slope Chardonnay (Russian River Valley)

Getting hotter... Ripe, elegantly buttery, and full of tropical fruit.



Black Stallion Chardonnay (Napa Valley)

A Californian thoroughbred. Zippy lemon zest and green apple, with hazelnut and vanilla.

*Analysis of the latest wine lists for over 60 industry-leading venues, by our trend-forecasting tool 'Mode'.

A THIRST FOR BEER KNOWLEDGE

Interest in beer is growing almost as fast as new breweries are emerging. Now with several hundred certified professionals in London alone, certification programme Cicerone is leading the way in beer education. Brewdog staff were the first in the UK to undertake the exams in 2013. Now, 100% of their crew are Cicerone qualified.

"Previously beer training was more service led, whereas Cicerone is more akin to the WSET," says Bibendum beer educator Emily Humphreys. "It's a reflection of people's growing interest in the category, not just in the trade but consumers too."

Beer poses an interesting point of difference to the wine category. "Beer drinkers tend to be more experimental, because the cost is relatively low so they can afford to risk making a bad choice. Even if you spend more on something interesting, you can go for a half or even a third of a pint just to try it out," says Emily.

"Likewise, staff are often more open to learning about the category: they're less afraid to have an opinion."

The challenge for those in the trade now comes in making space for their recommendations in a world where consumers often know just as much as those changing the kegs.

"There's an assumed level of knowledge about wine with sommeliers," says Emily. "But beer drinkers now often assume they know more than those serving it!"

Interested in some bespoke beer training? Contact our award-winning training team at trainingadmin@bibendum-plb.com



EVENTS AND TASTINGS

We have a busy calendar of smaller, tailored events taking place all around the country this year – making sure we get the right products to you in an informative and engaging way. From London and Edinburgh, to Leeds and Bristol, we'll be bringing a host of different events to a city near you.

Look out for our tastings, where you can meet our passionate producers and discover new and interesting wines. Our Supper Club series is a gastronomic collaboration with some of the most esteemed chefs and restaurants, bringing together carefully-crafted tasting menus with lustworthy wines.

We will also be hosting various Taste & Feast events, which are great for socialising and enjoying delicious drinks and food in a relaxed setting.

Visit our website bibendum-wine.co.uk for a calendar of events.

BIODYNAMICS – A LOAD OF MANURE?

Whether you love it or think it's just clever marketing, biodynamics is here to stay

Gergely Barsi Szabo, Bibendum fine wine sales, and James Millton, New Zealand biodynamic producer, debate this complex topic.

Something had to change

"Biodynamism is here to stay," says Gergely. "Most of us in the wine business have thankfully passed the phase of ridiculing sane people for stirring manure in a cow horn with silica. If you take a look around the market, more and more key players are applying some or all of its principles, and more and more consumers are looking for biodynamic wine. The main problem is that the debate still feels a bit sectarian.

"In 1988 French microbiologist Claude Bourguignon declared Burgundy's vineyard soils completely dead on a microbial level, due to decades of synthetic fertiliser, pesticide and herbicide usage," he says. "Since biodynamic viticulturalists did not use any of these, microbial life was thriving in their vineyards compared to their neighbours. He did not claim to have a scientific explanation, but the differences were visible.

"So what happens, when a bunch of people start questioning the whole system? What happens when someone points out that we live in a rather destructive and unsustainable way? Some will pay attention, but without reliable evidence about these practices, most see these whistle-blowers as a bunch of (agro)-extremists.



"But what I see in the biodynamics movement is a group of forward-thinking, peaceful people, with great ideas about agriculture, meticulousness in what they do, and pretty convincing wines," he explains. "It is certain that the way we live is not sustainable, even for the near future. At least the biodynamic wine producers are actively seeking and testing an alternative that seems to have good results."

In harmony with nature...

One such biodynamic producer is James Millton, artisan winegrower in New Zealand's Gisborne. James and Annie started Millton on the banks of the Te Arai River, near Manutuke, in 1984. Inspired by their time working for various Old World producers and the natural techniques being used there, they became the first

producer in New Zealand to attain Bio-Gro certification for organic wine production.

"I have always worked with wine and when, at 28, I was given the opportunity to grow and bottle my own wine, biodynamics was central to it all," James says. "The rhythm of the four seasons and the enhancement of the five senses meant there was little need for makeup or disguise. It was the opportunity to work with my head, heart and hands."

At Millton, they assemble and use preparations made from herbal, mineral and animal materials. James explains: "These involve cow manure (from our own cows), silica in the form of quartz (from the mountains and the sea), as well as a range of local flowers from yarrow, chamomile, nettles, oak trees, dandelions, valerian and

equisetum. These preparations help the soil and microbes communicate through the mycorrhizal fungi.

"As the growing season commences, the branches, leaves and fruits communicate with the sun and moon, thereby getting their light energy from the influence of the quartz (much like your cell phone!)," James says. "The resulting fruits and grape juice have a balance of nutrients for healthy fermentations and the sediment, which consists of yeast and bacteria, are the protective life that contributes subtle, supple flavours."

The proof is in the bottle

At the end of the day, it's about what's in the bottle and James believes that the resulting wines have a special taste, a taste of 'somewhereness' - of their place. "These wines appear to have a shine or reflection when poured into a glass. We call this luminosity, a measurement of light intensity. So, while all wine can travel thousands of miles from the producer to the consumer, we think that the final few feet from the glass to your mouth are the most important. We believe that before a wine can be great, it must first be true."

What are your thoughts on biodynamics?

Tweet @bibendumwine to let us know!

Two other biodynamic producers to watch:

Chateau Maris

Minervois La Liviniere
France

From their hemp winery to the barley, bulgur and mustard that grows between rows and is ploughed into the soil, Chateau Maris is biodynamic through and through. "We believe that the plant itself has a soul- we believe in the individuality of the plant," says British ex-pat Bertie Eden who owns the chateau.

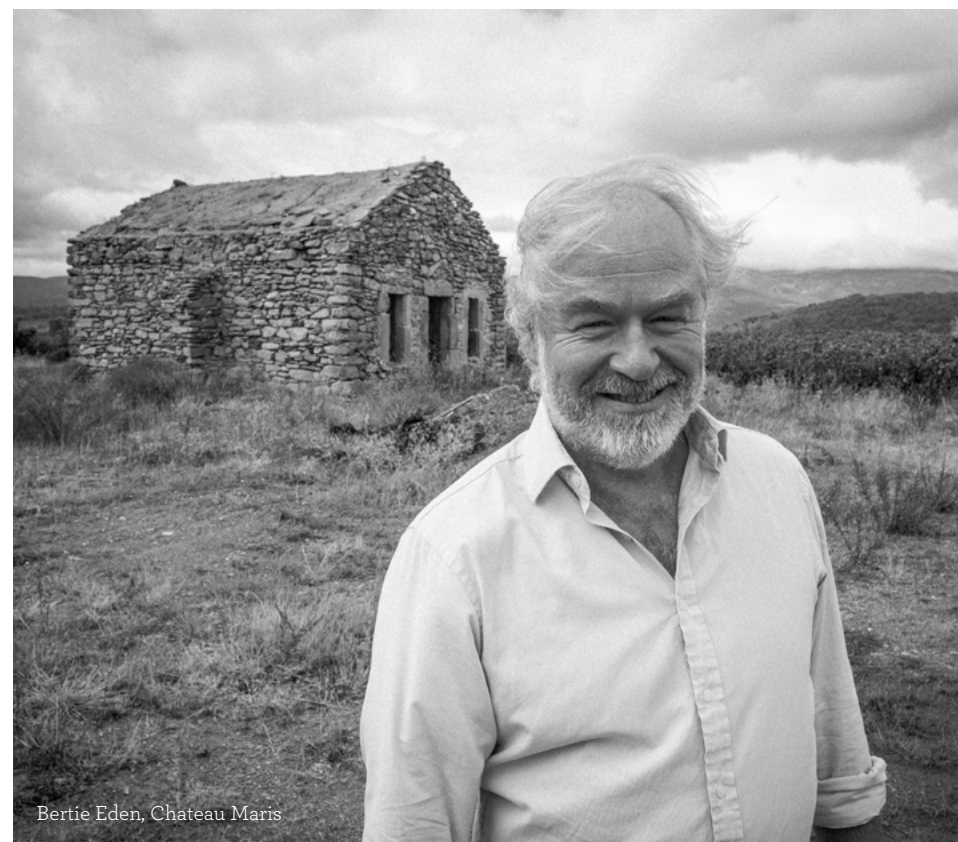
Chateau Maris covers 50ha in Minervois' La Liviniere in Languedoc and was certified biodynamic in 2002, completing the Demeter certification in 2008. They make all their wines in a 'vegetable' building, made from hemp bricks that consume CO₂, breathe, and therefore control humidity and temperature. The winery never changes more than 5-6°C in temperature. Chateau Maris produces a white, rosé and various red wines from grapes including Grenache Gris, Carignan, Syrah and Grenache Noir.

Alois Lageder

Alto Adige
Italy

Alois Lageder is an ultra-sustainable biodynamic estate established in 1823 and now run by father and son Alois Lageder and Alois Clemens Lageder. In 2012 they were named Sustainable Winery of the Year by Italy's influential wine guide, Gambero Rosso. Alois is a pioneer of biodynamic principals and has farmed biodynamically since 2004, ensuring that everything that happens on the farm is guided by the forces of nature - including their gravity-fed, carbon neutral winery.

At the top of the range, the single-vineyard estate wines are fantastic expressions of both grape and terroir, and display the brightness and beauty that are the hallmarks of great Alto Adige wines.



Bertie Eden, Chateau Maris

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE

Celebrating our award-winning producers



Catena
Mendoza, Argentina

Catena was named Best Argentinean Winery in Robert Parker's 2017 Wine Advocate Extraordinary Winery Awards. A significant recognition for the pioneers of high-altitude Malbec, from one of the industry's most respected figures.



Black Stallion
California, USA

The Napa Valley winery received the top honours at 2017's International Wine and Spirits Competition - walking away with USA Wine Producer of the Year. Seven wines from Black Stallion also received individual awards.



Graham Beck
Robertson, South Africa

This iconic South African sparkling producer won big at the Veritas Awards - one of South Africa's most respected wine competitions. Their Blanc de Blancs 2012 won a double gold medal while their Brut Rosé 2012 won a gold medal.



Spy Valley
Marlborough, New Zealand

It was a double victory for Spy Valley at the 2017 Sydney International Wine Competition: their Sauvignon Blanc 2017 won a blue gold award and it was also named in the Top 100 Wines.



Chateau Changyu Moser XV
Ningxia, China

Huge recognition for Chateau Changyu Moser after they scooped the International Wine and Spirits Competition Best Chinese Wine Producer 2017 award. We're sure there will be more success to come - watch this space!



Journey's End
Stellenbosch, South Africa

This South African winery has won many awards this year, including a double gold medal for their Cape Doctor 2011 at the Michelangelo International Wine & Spirits Awards and a gold medal for their Griffin Syrah 2015 at the local Veritas Awards.



Chateau d'Arche
Bordeaux, France

Chateau d'Arche's 2010 Sauternes won the Platinum Best in Show award for the best sweet at the 2017 Decanter Asia Wine Awards.



Royal Tokaji
Tokaj, Hungary

This Hungarian winery has had a very successful awards season - scoring gold medals for their Gold Label 6 Puttonyos Aszu 2013 and Blue Label 5 Puttonyos Aszu 2013 wines at the Decanter World Wine Awards 2017.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

SIGN UP TO OUR NEWSLETTER



@bibendumwine