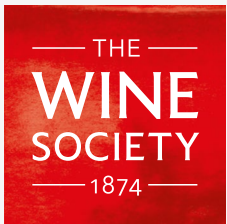


1874

ISSUE 1 SUMMER 2020



**A LIFE OF WINE**  
Sebastian Payne MW's  
career highlights

**A FRESH TAKE ON  
FRANCE**  
With three heavenly  
recipes

**AN ARGENTINE  
LOVE AFFAIR**  
Cupid's arrow meets  
cabernet sauvignon

**FINE WINE FOR  
SUMMER**  
Joanna Simon's  
top picks



# STEP INTO SUMMER

‘May is the month... when Mother Nature goes truly wild’...

...says Felicity Cloake (page 19) and in the vineyards at least, this is bearing out, with new buds unfurling and flowers poised to burst into life. There is a crumb of comfort knowing that, in these strange times, nature continues its ebb and flow, that ceaseless cycle of new life and fruitfulness, while we hunker down at home.

Reassuring too, we hope, is the news that The Wine Society is back to business (albeit with a slightly reduced service) to sustain you through these strange times, and not just with a glass of something delicious: welcome to *1874 magazine* (named in tribute to our quirky Victorian beginnings in the depths of the Albert Hall), in which we bring the very best of the wine world to you. Turn the pages to join Sebastian Payne MW on a globe-spanning celebration of his remarkable career, enjoy recipes and musings from two of the food world’s brightest stars, and be inspired by a touching paean to love and Argentine cabernet sauvignon, plus much more.

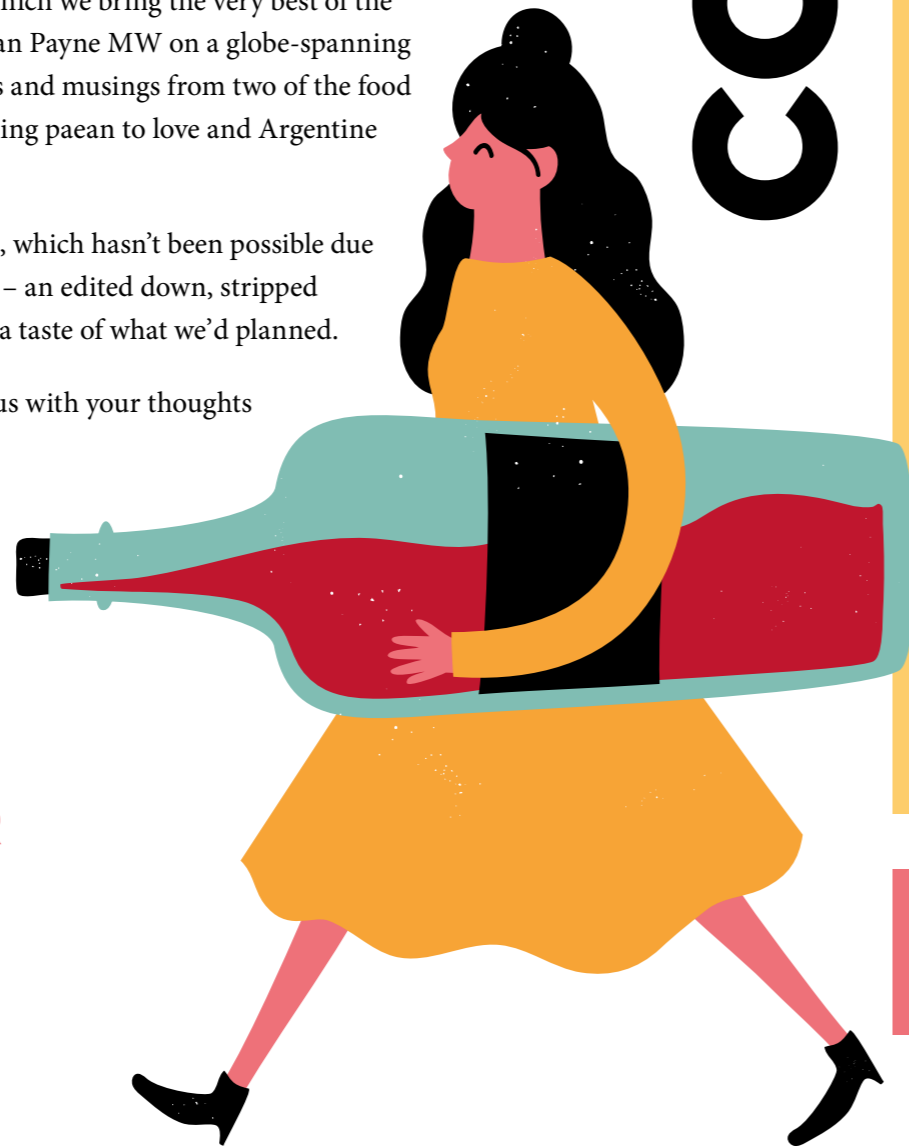
We’d originally planned *1874* as a print magazine, which hasn’t been possible due to the Covid-19 emergency; but we hope that this – an edited down, stripped back, but hopefully still enjoyable version – gives a taste of what we’d planned.

We’d love to hear your feedback, so please email us with your thoughts at [1874magazine@thewinesociety.com](mailto:1874magazine@thewinesociety.com).

Wishing you a safe and wine-filled summer from all at The Society.

## Enjoy!

**ROSIE ALLEN, EDITOR**



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Ⓢ screwcap

# CONTRIBUTORS



## GEORGINA HAYDEN

Food writer Georgina Hayden grew up above her grandparents’ Greek Cypriot taverna, and it’s here that a lifelong love of food was born. Having worked as part of Jamie Oliver’s food team, Georgina now writes for *Delicious Magazine*, *Sainsbury’s magazine* and many more.



## FELICITY CLOAKE

A regular contributor of delicious wine-ready recipes for our Discovery pages, Felicity is a freelance food and drinks writer and the brains behind *The Guardian’s* popular ‘How to make the perfect...’ column.



## JOANNA SIMON

Award-winning wine writer, broadcaster and co-founder of The Wine Gang, Joanna worked for 22 years as the wine critic for *The Sunday Times* and now uses her considerable food and wine matching knowledge to write for several prestigious publications.



## ROSIE ALLEN BRAND MARKETING MANAGER

Rosie oversees our online content and Discovery pages, including videos, articles and *1874 magazine* itself, following a career in editorial and freelance writing. She’s happiest when drinking a glass of something aromatic and describing it as ‘haunting’.



## MARTIN BROWN MANAGING EDITOR

A Society employee for nine years and a professional scribe for much longer, Martin is responsible for much of our online and printed communications, and a regular contributor to our News and Discovery pages. Music, literature and a giant cat named Hades tend to fill the remainder of his time.



## JOANNA GOODMAN, NEWS EDITOR

Joanna Goodman first started working at The Wine Society in 1990, gaining her Diploma in wine from the WSET in 1994. She has had several roles within our Marketing Department over the ensuing years, but a love of words, wine and communicating led to her current position as editor of *Societynews*.



## SEBASTIAN PAYNE MW

A buyer for The Wine Society since 1985 (and member of staff since 1974), Sebastian Payne MW has uncovered gems from all over the wine world in his 46-year career here, as well as writing fascinating insights for our Last Word column in *Societynews*.



## PIERRE MANSOUR DIRECTOR OF WINE

Pierre joined the Buying team in 2003 before becoming our Director of Wine in 2019, and is responsible for buying our Spanish and Lebanese wine ranges.

# A FRESH TAKE ON FRANCE

Food writer, cook and food stylist Georgina Hayden puts a modern twist on three classic French dishes, with delicious regional wines to match.



Photo © Kristin Perers

As a food writer it is rare (unheard of perhaps) that you are asked to write and develop recipes and for there not to be a brief attached. Seasonality is a popular one, holidays and times of year another; writing about Christmas, Easter etc. However for me this has been one of the most interesting briefs to date, to try three popular and quaffable wines (one more unusual...) and write recipes to match, but also with a French vein. A double challenge if you will and one that got the creative juices flowing (excuse the pun).

The result is hopefully three knockout spring and summer dishes, evoking daydreams of sunny southern France, that work a dream when paired with the wines listed here. The lamb paired with the Val de Loire rouge is the sort of meal that will undoubtedly impress. And to be honest the Duo des Plages rosé is the sort of wine that would work with a plethora of spring and summer dishes - paired with this addictive salad I am instantly transported to a veranda in the sun. And finally an Alsace muscat, which is my new obsession, an interesting, complex wine that works fantastically with spice, making it quite a special meal alongside the monkfish and mussel bouillabaisse. A date night dinner if you will, or just something to be enjoyed amongst friends. Either way I hope you enjoy them as much as I did creating them. Bon appetit.

## SLOW COOKED LAMB WITH TAPENADE AND CRISPY NEW POTATOES

This is one of those wonderful one pot dishes that takes little effort but rewards you with intense, deep flavour - and potentially some of the best potatoes I have written about to date. Paired with this fresh Loire red, and perhaps a lemony dressed salad on the side, it would make a perfect lazy summer supper.

SERVES 4-6

### Ingredients:

- 2kg lamb shoulder, rolled
- 180g pitted olives, green and black
- 2 tablespoons small capers
- 3 anchovies
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Olive oil
- 750ml hot beef stock
- 1kg new potatoes
- A few sprigs of thyme
- 1 bulb of garlic
- ½ x 25g bunch of flat leaf parsley, chopped



To be paired with:

**Val de Loire 'Collection' Rouge J Mourat 2018**

12.5% ref LO15331 £8.50 bottle | £51 six

### Method:

Preheat your oven to 140°C. Take your lamb out of the fridge an hour before you cook it so it comes to room temperature. You can make the tapenade either by hand or in a food processor. Finely chop or pulse together the olives, capers and anchovies. Add the red wine vinegar, a good pinch of pepper and enough olive oil to make a spoonable paste. If you are happy to, unwrap your lamb and spread all over with the tapenade then re-roll and tie it up again. It doesn't have to be perfect. If it has been beautifully rolled and you'd rather not mess with it, pierce the lamb all over with a sharp paring knife and rub in the tapenade. Sit it in a large roasting tray - big enough to eventually hold all the potatoes also - and pour the hot stock in the base. Cover with foil and place in the oven for 1.5 hours.

After the initial 1.5 hours is up, carefully remove the tray from the oven. Scatter the potatoes all around the lamb in the stock and add the thyme. Roughly break up the garlic and add that also. Re-cover the tray and return to the oven for a further two hours. When everything is cooked, remove the tray from the oven, and turn the temperature up to 200°C. Discard the foil and ladle out most of the stock from the tray - leaving around 3cm behind. Using a potato masher lightly crush the potatoes, so they just break up and flatten slightly. Drizzle everything with a little olive oil, sprinkle a little salt on the potatoes and return to the oven for a final 30 minutes, so everything becomes crispy and golden, and there is a little juice left behind in the tray. Finish by scattering with the chopped parsley and serve.

## MONKFISH AND MUSSEL BOUILLABAISSE WITH A SPICED ROUILLE

When I first read about this Alsace muscat, I was fascinated by the claim that it complemented ingredients that don't normally work with wine. Spice is a tricky one, and keeping on the theme of a French inspired summer's day I couldn't resist trying to pair it with a bouillabaisse and spicy rouille. I can confirm it works perfectly, a really fascinating, delicious wine that I will definitely be trying with a wider range of foods.

SERVES 4

### Ingredients:

4 tablespoons olive oil	1-2 red chillies, halved and seeds removed
2 onions, peeled and chopped	1 garlic, peeled
1 fennel bulb, trimmed and finely chopped	2 charred red peppers
2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped	75g good quality mayonnaise
A pinch of fennel seeds, crushed	½ lemon
1 heaped tablespoon tomato puree	40g fresh breadcrumbs
5 ripe tomatoes, finely chopped	750g monkfish, cleaned
11 good fish stock	400g mussels or clams, cleaned
A pinch of saffron	½ x 25g bunch of flat leaf parsley, to serve
1 bay leaf	A loaf of French bread, to serve
A thick strip of orange peel	
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper	

To be paired with:

**Muscat Heimberger, Cave de Beblenheim 2018**

13% ref AL15521 2 £9.95 bottle | £119 dozen

### Method:

Pour the oil in a very large casserole or saucepan and place on a medium heat. Add the chopped onion, fennel, garlic and crushed fennel seeds and sauté for 10 minutes until they begin to soften. Stir in the tomato puree and chopped tomatoes, then add the fish stock, saffron, bay leaf, orange peel and season well. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 30 minutes.

While the base is cooking make the spiced rouille. Roughly chop the chillies and garlic and place in a mini food processor or blender with the red peppers, mayonnaise and a squeeze of lemon (you can always start with one chilli then add more depending on how spicy you like your food). Blitz until smooth, then pulse in the breadcrumbs. You can do this in advance and store it in the fridge. It will make the rouille thicker.

When the veg is cooked, you can either carry on with a chunky bouillabaisse, or blitz the base for a creamier, smooth soup (I prefer the latter). If doing so, remove the bay and orange peel and use a stick blender to blitz until thick. Cut the monkfish into 3cm chunks and add to the pan. Add the cleaned mussels (discarding any that are still closed), cover with the lid then reduce the heat and cook for five minutes. The fish should be opaque and the mussels should have opened (any that are still closed should be discarded). Stir through the chopped parsley and serve the bouillabaisse with fresh crusty french bread and the spicy rouille on the side.

## ROQUEFORT, ROASTED GRAPE AND ENDIVE SALAD

This has to be one of my favourite summer salads, a classic combination of ingredients and flavours heightened by roasting the grapes for maximum sweetness and resulting in a slightly jammy texture. It works perfectly with this Duo des Plages rosé too. However, as it is such a refreshing, easy to drink wine, I feel it will work with a huge range of summer foods.

SERVES 4-6

### Ingredients:

500g red grapes on the vine  
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon honey  
40g walnuts  
120g Roquefort  
½ x 25g bunch of chives  
90g lambs lettuce  
2 endives  
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

To be paired with:

**Rosé Duo des Plages, Pays d'Oc 2019**

12% ref FC38321 2 £6.95 bottle | £83 dozen

### Method:

Preheat the oven to 220°C. Lay the grapes out in a roasting tray and drizzle with a little olive oil, 1 tablespoon of red wine vinegar and the honey. Season and place the tray in the oven. Roast for 15 minutes, then remove and leave to one side to cool a little.

Roughly chop the walnuts, roquefort and finely chop the chives. Pick the lambs lettuce and endive into a large mixing bowl. Cut the end off the endive and put the leaves into the bowl also. Scatter over the chopped walnuts, roquefort and chives.

In a jam jar, or small bowl, make the dressing by whisking or shaking together the remaining extra virgin olive oil, red wine vinegar and the Dijon mustard. Spoon in 1 tablespoon of the grape roasting juices from the tray, season well and mix until creamy. Drizzle over the salad and toss everything together until well dressed. Scatter most of the grapes on a platter and top with the dressed salad. Finish with the remaining roasted grapes and serve.

# SUMMERTREASURES



Joanna Simon takes her pick of under-£20 fine wines.

One of the bonuses of being in a country that's much more of an importer than a producer of wine is the choice at our fingertips. Living in a wine region has obvious compensations, but if it's an area that focuses on a single grape variety or wines of a strikingly distinctive style, might you not occasionally want something else? A diaphanous, cool, ultra-refreshing white in unflinching summer heat, for example, or a warm-blooded powerhouse of a red in snow-bound riesling-country? Perhaps not. There are certainly people who always drink the same one or two wines, just as there are individuals who go bare legged all year whatever the weather and others who bundle themselves up in woollens, never mind the season. I marvel (or at least I'm bemused) but I don't want to join them.

The same goes for wine. One of the great pleasures is living and drinking with the seasons: in summer, opting for white wines more often, and in breezier, more aromatic styles, or replacing some of winter's fullest-bodied, oakier reds with lighter ones.

The weather may demand it, but so does the cycle of seasonal ingredients and dishes. We eat lighter, fresher, less earthy food in the summer months. From the green snap of asparagus to salads and herbs, from grilled red peppers, tomatoes, aubergine and fennel to plates charged with charcuterie and other cold meats. More fish and seafood? Me too, especially crab, wild salmon and octopus. The carnivorous don't abandon meat but it tends to switch from rib-sticking casseroles and slow-cooked roasts to the

lure of the barbecue or a quick sizzle in a pan or grill. We shift with the season from beef daube or cassoulet to ribeye, lamb kebab or spatchcocked quail. We eat spicy food, but not the heavyweight curries that populate colder months.

The other thing we should do, at least some of the time, is adapt serving temperatures to the season. I drink reds on the cooler side, but in summer I serve more of them lightly chilled: not just Beaujolais, pinot noir and Loire cabernet franc, but reds made from grape varieties or in regions that we seldom saw except in situ in the past; and familiar reds now being produced in a fresher, lighter way – less alcoholic, less oaky, less tannic – and sometimes also benefiting from climate change. I'm thinking of Bordeaux and wines

such as Château Thieuley 2015, which is delicious cool (although not chilled). You could even, dare I say it, pour a little over a bowl of strawberries and drink the wine alongside (but you'll need to forego the cream).

May I finish by putting in a plea? If you're enjoying wine al fresco, cover the bottles or keep them well out of bright light. Damage to wine by light-strike, producing off-smells and flavours ranging from the faintest whiff of cabbage to full-on drains, can start in under 20 minutes. The good news is that it needn't happen: you're in control.



## JOANNA RECOMMENDS



### Sancerre La Reine Blanche, Domaine Vacheron 2018\*

Unerringly, deliciously Sancerre, but riper, fleshier and denser than usual, with smoky, herbal aromatics, juicy lime fruit, a hint of mint and a mineral, salty finish. A match for a broad spectrum of fish and seafood, from crab to gravadlax to fish pie, for tomato, red pepper and aubergine dishes, and asparagus, among others. Drink now to 2023. 13.5%

ref LO15741 <sup>1</sup>  
£20 bottle | £240 dozen



### Orvieto Classico Superiore Castagnolo, Barberani 2018\*

If you haven't had an Orvieto for a while, let Niccolò Barberani's organic Classico be your reminder. Blossomy, almond-cream aromas, gentle herbal freshness and a powder-soft palate of sweet apple, yellow plum and delicate, grapefruit-zest freshness. A model aperitif or with spaghetti carbonara, quiche Lorraine or simple squid, scallop or white fish dishes. Drink this year and next. 12%

ref IT29851 <sup>2</sup>  
£10.50 bottle | £126 dozen



### Cayetano del Pino Palo Cortado Solera

Intense, rich, dry and tangy with walnut, marmalade and salty crème fraîche flavours – a stellar example of this rare sherry style. If you don't necessarily think of it as a summer wine, try it with jamon or other charcuterie, green olives and salted almonds, sticky barbecued quail, spicy southeast Asian dishes, Manchego or other sheep's cheeses, Cheddar or Comté. 20%

ref SH671 <sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup>  
£16 bottle | £192 dozen



### Château Thieuley Rouge, Bordeaux 2015

Just what one hopes for from this excellent Bordeaux vintage and estate. Supple, ripe and juicy with the blackberry and blueberry sweetness of its dominant merlot component, the crunchy, blackcurrant incisiveness of cabernet sauvignon and a soft, classically cedary, graphite finish. Don't be afraid to drink it cool. Drink now to 2022. 13.5%

ref CB5381  
£10.95 bottle | £131 dozen



### Mount Koinga Central Otago Pinot Noir 2016

A barrel-fermented pinot noir combining mouthwatering fruit purity and generosity with graceful evolution: cherry, raspberry and pomegranate, a silky, oak-softened texture and a delicate bitter-sour cranberry note to refresh the finish. Served cool to keep its precision, it's an easygoing partner for tuna or salmon, roast chicken, duck or barbecued meat. Drink now to 2022. 14%

ref NZ9791 <sup>5</sup>  
£19.50 bottle | £234 dozen



### Chianti Classico, Riecine 2017

From vineyards at higher altitudes, Riecine is always elegantly shaped and has one of Chianti Classico's prettiest perfumes. The 2017's floral and red berry aromas unfold in a harmony of sweet, tangy, red-cherry fruit and earthy, spicy, forest-floor flavours lightly wrapped in lace-fine tannins. Versatile with both meat and vegetables. Drink now to 2026. 13.5%

ref IT27531  
£18 bottle | £216 dozen

# AN ARGENTINE LOVE AFFAIR



**Martin Brown**  
MANAGING EDITOR

Cupid's arrow and a career in fermented grapes have conspired to give Martin Brown a deep love for Argentina and its wines. And of the latter, Bodegas Weinert has always stood out...

## "Love moves in mysterious ways"

Though politeness often stops them from telling you, I can assure you the question most people who work in wine dread the most is, 'what's your favourite?' Or in my case, its occasional second cousin: 'what about your other half – does she have a favourite?'

Not only is my wife a lifelong teetotaler, she is also an enthusiastic eater of meat, whereas I happen to be a lifelong vegetarian. On paper it's a disaster, but we have always adopted the 'all the more for me' principle to our steak and our wine respectively, and happiness wins.

Her Argentine father has no such aversion to alcohol. Good red wine has been a part of the blend in many of our most important and enjoyable conversations over the years. If the bottles of Bodegas Weinert we've enjoyed could talk... But in another sense, they always do sing.

## "Love is unexpected"

On paper, Weinert's debut 1977 vintage was at one point shaping up to be a disaster too. Despite the excellent situation in Mendoza's Lujan de Cuyo and the obvious quality of the crop, calamity appeared to strike when

the building of the winery became delayed, meaning the grapes had to remain on the vine. As it turned out, they too employed the 'all the more for me' principle but with sunlight; and the extra ripening, combined with the efforts of founder Bernardo Weinert and renowned winemaker Roberto de la Mota ended up producing something very special. Vinous tastemakers of the day, quite rightly, took notice, and the winery's name was made in part by this happy accident.

Aged generously in large oak *foudres* in their underground cellars, Weinert's reds strike a balance many don't: they are fascinating, but they are also fun. On first taste, I was impressed by their almost paradoxical mix of cask-aged European-like funk and full-throttle dark Argentine fruit. They wear their often high alcohol percentages lightly, and are made available at quite remarkable prices.

## "Love can unlock many secrets"

But it was a trip to Buenos Aires, a city that's hard not to fall in love with, that revealed a new side to these wines. It took Jesús to show me the way: a lovely, knowledgeable and very accommodating wine-shop proprietor. After I mentioned Weinert, he put down the extraordinarily heavy bottle of similarly heavy wine he had been recommending ('forget this') and ushered me to a darker corner of his establishment.

There at the bottom of a wine rack lay a treasure trove of dust-covered 1990s Weinerts, available for about a tenner a go. It seemed too good to be true, but I took the punt, the neck and the cork and lugged them home to investigate.

The aged wines were beautiful: like claret, traditional Rioja or Lebanon's legendary Musar, they had acquired a haunting, delicate and smoky quality that sits somewhere between

slipping into a comfy armchair in a leather-bound-heavy library and a bracing walk through autumn woodland. My Argentine love affair had gained another new colour and it was the brick-like red of Weinert.

## "Love is blind"

Weinert's idiosyncrasies are never more apparent than when you line the reds up next to their fellow countrymen (or, for that matter, continent-men). As I write, we are preparing for the 20th edition of our Wine Champions blind tastings, a process I've been lucky enough to be part of for some time. Along with Elio Perrone's off-dry frothy moscato d'Asti and that dessert red that comes in the stumpy bottle meaning it couldn't be anything else, there is no wine that leaps out for simply being what it is, and with such delightful unabashed distinctiveness. It's simply a case of whichever taster reaches it first. 'Ah, Weinert'.

## "My love is your love"

If you'd like to invite one of Weinert's wines over for dinner, romantic or not, then the 2008 cabernet offers an excellent introduction to the house style: 12 years young but still full of rich ripe dark fruit, jacketed in the suave, leathery, smoky hallmarks of the winery.

I drank a bottle with my father-in-law just before lockdown, in fact. It sang.

### Weinert Cabernet Sauvignon 2008

Drink now to 2025. 14%

ref AR4131

£13.95 bottle | £167 dozen



# NORTH & SOUTH

## A TALE OF TWO HEMISPHERES



**As nature springs to life in the north, winemakers are doubling down in the south. Rosie Allen speaks to four growers from around the world about the challenges and consolations that each of them experience in the month of May.**

May in the northern hemisphere is when nature is at its most enigmatic: hawthorns are garlanded with clouds of frothy blossom, birds are in full song and hedgerows and allotments alike flourish in the emerging heat of early summer. But, these idyllic signposts aside, for the winemaker it's no month for lazing and dreaming. Here's where the hard few months leading to harvest begin, and they must prepare for the challenges of the growing season, whether potential sunburn, excess vegetative growth, pest control or even a late frost.

The other side of the globe, meanwhile, is experiencing an equally important change: the days are slowly shortening, temperatures have begun to gently drop, and winemakers and their vines are preparing for the sun to relinquish its powers of warmth and sunlight for another year. The toil of harvest is over and – if all has gone to plan – healthy grapes are now undergoing their

near-magical metamorphosis from fruit to ferment in oak barrel or steel tank. The pace of life in the vineyard is slowing, nearing to a hush: it's time to prepare for winter.

But while nature begins its slumber, activity in the vineyard doesn't completely shut down: preparations for next year's vintage are well underway, fuelling the vines with the nutrients they'll need to emerge next spring; well-fed, rested and ready for the process of producing ripe, healthy fruit for the new vintage. And with the hottest succession of years on record transforming springs and autumns around the world, growers are increasingly preparing for the freak weather events that now punctuate the traditional ebb and flow of the winemaker's year.

We asked four growers across two hemispheres what May looks like for them.



### Northern Hemisphere: New shoots and darling buds

**In the vineyard:** In early spring, sap begins to rise in the vines and buds will begin to emerge. By May flowering will have begun, with flowers gradually growing bigger until they're ready for pollination and fertilisation, culminating (with any luck) in a crop of healthy fruit.

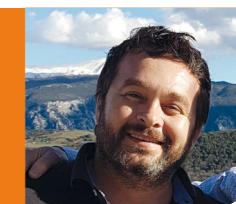
#### Christina Wess Wachau, Austria



While burgeoning green shoots lend nature a sense of invincibility, the threat of damage to new buds lingers ominously in the vineyard at this time of year. 'In spring it can actually be a very sensitive time, because it's when flowering begins,' says Christina Wess, whose joint venture with father Rainer Wess has been producing some of Austria's most exciting wines (no mean feat in a country whose wines are so ripe for discovery). 'While it's a very special time because the vine is 'opening' up so that new grapes can eventually emerge on the other side, it also means that diseases could enter the bud very easily during the flowering and could cause a lot of harm, especially the mildew fungus which is most likely to infect the vine during flowering.' Monitoring vines to make sure there's a good amount of air flowing through is crucial to preventing the onset of these diseases, which can easily ruin or taint a whole crop.

'The neuburger grape, for example,' says Christina 'is a very old and temperamental grape variety. The clusters are very dense and as we don't want any botrytis influence on our wines, it presents a big challenge in keeping the air flowing and rot at bay. This year we'll be managing the berry clusters by using our spraying machine filled just with air (not with any chemicals), spraying during flowering, so the chance of botrytis is minimised naturally.'

#### Apostolos Thymiopoulos Naoussa, Greece



'Nature respects you if you respect nature' is the philosophy of Greek winemaker Apostolos Thymiopoulos, a proponent of biodynamic methods who maintains that a deep respect of the soil is the key to creating wines with real character. It's this belief that lies at the heart of his springtime preparations.



By the time May rolls around, Apostolos has already done much of the hard work that will get the vines into good shape for bud-break and flowering to come, undertaking yield-taming pruning, which will encourage smaller yields of more concentrated berries – 'crucial,' says Apostolos 'for a very productive variety such as xinomavro and best avoided on cold days because the wood is harder when temperatures are low and the risk of damaging during pruning is high'. This process is followed by the application of nutrient-rich composts ensuring the vines are thriving in time for the growing season.

'Organic principles combined with a use of biodynamic practices gives us a real advantage. By completely avoiding pesticides and chemical fertilizers, we allow the growth of micro-flora, making the soil healthy and well aerated. This means that the roots tend to go deep into the soil to find water and other necessary elements; deep roots make the vine durable and tolerant to other hazards later in the year.'



#### Try: Rainer Wess Grüner Veltliner, Kremstal 2019

An Austrian star from a father-and-daughter operation in Krems, this ripe, focused grüner veltliner is a must-try, with flavours of stone fruit and spice, and the grape's signature pepper-pot twist on the finish. 13.5%

ref AA2951    
£9.95 bottle | £59.50 six



#### Try: Xinomavro Jeunes Vignes, Thymiopoulos 2018

Resembling a cross between a pinot noir and a nebbiolo, this pure and elegant Greek red comes from the master of the xinomavro grape, Apostolos Thymiopoulos. Friendly yet complex with a wonderful perfume of red fruits and a hint of mint. Drink now to 2023. 13%

ref GR1571  
£10.95 bottle | £65.50 six



## Southern Hemisphere: A vintage of heat and smoke

**In the vineyard:** It's a bitter irony that as winemakers return to a way of agriculture that's more attuned to the ebb and flow of the seasons that Mother Nature herself is shifting dramatically out of kilter from traditional farming patterns. It's in the southern hemisphere that the effects of our warming planet are being most profoundly felt, as the devastating recent bushfires in Australia have proven.

### Mac Forbes

Yarra Valley, Victoria, Australia



'Obviously Australia was devastated by the fires over Christmas,' says Mac Forbes, the man behind our Blind Spot range and his own Mac Forbes label wines. 'However, in the Yarra Valley we had an extraordinary harvest with cooler temperatures, regular rain and perfect balance in the vines. We did also have a bit of smoke hang around the valley, so we just need to keep assessing the wines for any signs of smoke taint. Fingers crossed our babies are going to be ok. We certainly tried numerous approaches to minimise any pick up of such compounds.'

In autumn and winter, we're already working really hard to build greater soil health: we're busy applying undervine compost as well as reseeding any mid rows with perennial grasses or some clover undervine that will naturally die off in spring. We'll also conduct soil analysis and begin pruning.

Towards the end of the process, as the cellar gently warms in early spring, we really start to see the wines come to life. At this stage we begin preparation of bottling of rieslings and give the pinot and chardonnay wines longer to wake. Sometimes doing nothing is the most powerful thing. Something we humans find very hard to do. It's a bit like cooking with great produce. Don't mess around with it too much!



#### Try: Blind Spot King Valley Garganega 2019

Australia's King Valley is a home from home for many Italian white wine grapes. Garganega, the Soave grape, thrives in this part of Victoria, offering bags of personality, spice and enticing stone-fruit flavours. 13.5%

ref AU22231 £9.50 bottle | £114 dozen



## Cristóbal Undurraga Colchagua Valley, Chile



Just as humans turn to nutrient-dense foods to see us through the biting winds and lashing rains of autumn and winter, so too does the soil: 'The vines have worked all spring and summer season to produce these unique grapes, so it needs to be fed,' says Cristóbal Undurraga, who spent many years at his family winery, Undurraga, before setting up his new venture, Viña Koyle, in Chile's Colchagua valley.

'In this way, we return a hand back to the soil that is the vine's source of food. The biodynamic compost we prepare in our vineyard is the balanced nutrients we give to increase the soil biological life, to make them strong and healthy to go to sleep well fed during the recess cycle.' Cristóbal's vineyards have seen unprecedented unsettled weather conditions, meaning the grapes need thorough assessment pre-vinification to make sure the very best wine can be made from them.

'The decision and preparations that we will undertake in the winemaking process will depend on what each grape variety turns out like after the harvest season,' says Cristóbal. For example,



2019 has been the most extreme year of a ten year cycle of dryness. This has resulted in very fatigued vines with low yields, terribly affected by the past 2019 winter, the driest winter of Koyle's 14 years of history, where we had 50% less water than the driest year before, and with 20% of the rain that we expected. Considering this, the yields will be dramatically low and the concentration very intense, making this season a very special one, but one where we have to fine tune both viticulture and vinification.

Making sure the winery itself is fit for purpose is probably the least glamorous aspect of autumn preparations, but vitally important. 'For the vinification process all of our stainless-steel tanks, barrels, foudres and concrete eggs must be scrupulously clean. Most essential of all is to make sure we've got a robust winemaking team. During the year we are three winemakers in charge of the winery, but during the harvest time and vinification process we reinforce our team with six more winemakers who will help in each process of the vinification, to make sure the wine is perfect.'



#### Try: Undurraga Finca Las Lomas Leyda Sauvignon Gris 2019

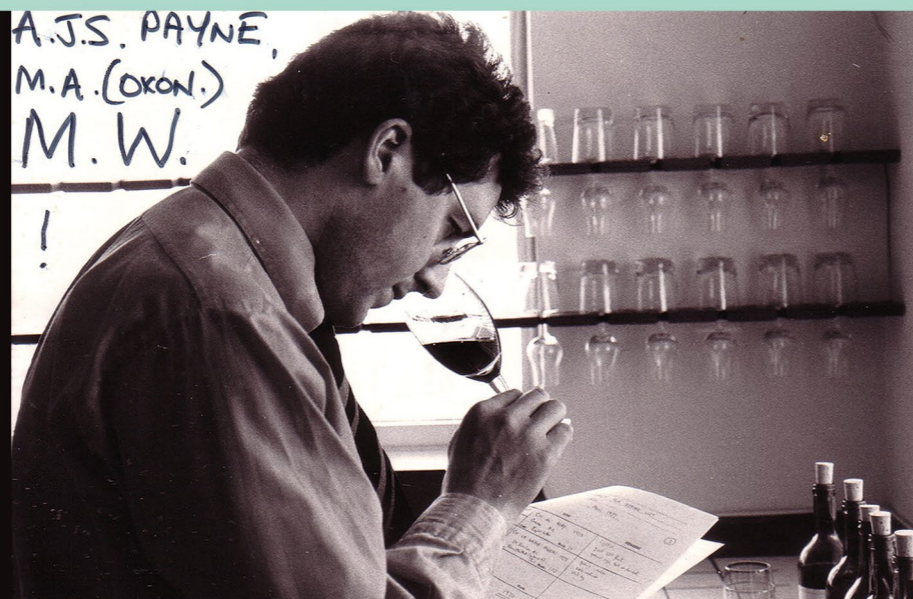
Chilean sauvignon with a twist! Sauvignon gris is the pink-skinned variation of sauvignon blanc, sharing its familiar zesty crispness but overlaying it with a light, musky, peach scent and a slightly rounder palate and flavour. Intriguing and delicious. 13.5%

ref CE10921 £7.95 bottle | £95 dozen

# TRAVELS WITH A BUYER

On the trail of wine with Sebastian Payne MW

With more than 45 years' experience scouting for wine on behalf of Wine Society members, Sebastian Payne MW shares some of the highlights, from Hungary to Tasmania, and charts some of the more significant sea changes along the way.



Travelling in wine regions near and far, meeting growers, walking through vineyards and cellars and tasting wines on the spot where they are made is one of the best parts of a wine buyer's job.

A mass of information on websites can help. Cold analysis in the Stevenage tasting room is essential, but there is no better way to learn and find good buys than by talking with people who make the stuff on their home ground.

## Uncovering Hungary

My first wine-trade job was the skivvy and office boy who took orders, got wine out of bad-tempered London bonds, and saw it delivered round the country. Fred May had the exclusivity of wines from the Hungarian monopoly at the time. We shipped Bulls Blood and Balaton riesling and furmint in beautiful Hungarian oak barrels and bottled it under the railway arches near Waterloo. Though Bulls Blood was Fred's top seller, Hungary's most original wines are white. Fiery, spicy, full dry furmint is unusually Hungarian. In Tokay it can be magical, but so too can whites from the isolated volcanic hill of Somló, and the vineyards along the north side of Lake Balaton, the favoured resort of many apparatchiks under communism, make admirable flavoursome whites too.

## Travels in Australia

*'Perhaps the revelation for me was a later visit to the isolated East Coast of Tasmania.'*

Though The Wine Society has bought and listed Australian wine almost since its inception, I did not visit down under as wine buyer until 1992. The Brajkovich family at Kumeu River north of Auckland and the late Greg Trott in McLaren Vale, South Australia, were incredibly generous founts of information on the New Zealand and Australia wine scenes. John Duval at Penfolds' Nuriootpa Winery, Barossa shared his unrivalled knowledge of Australia's best vineyards with a huge memorable tasting. Perhaps the revelation for me was a later visit to the isolated East Coast of Tasmania. Freycinet Vineyard, as it was called, after Freycinet Bay, until bullied by Freixenet in Spain to change its name, created by ex-abalone fisherman, Geoff Bull, was making exciting pinot noir and chardonnay in vineyards near the sea, protected by high wire fencing from invasive possums. His successor there, Claudio Radenti, makes our Exhibition Tasmania Chardonnay, still a personal buy. Tasmania remains for me an enchanting, beautiful destination.

## Discovering South America

*'... 60% of Argentina's wine production went to Buenos Aires and there was even a plan to build an underground wine pipeline all the way from Mendoza to the capital.'*

Chilean cabernet, shipped in bulk, was a Society staple when I joined The Wine Society in 1967 as a member; in the seventies we imported fine Argentine reds from Toso. My first memorable visit to South America tasting in all the most interesting wineries was with a party of other opinionated, experienced but entertaining Masters of Wine in 1989. Pinochet's toxic regime was still in control and most of us suffered Montezuma's revenge (stomach upset for a couple of days, treated with horse pills!) just after we crossed over the Andes into Argentina, but it was great to be there at the beginning of an era of change in the vineyards. Poor-quality vinestock for whites, in particular, would be replaced by proper chardonnay and sauvignon blanc. New sites were being found. At this period 60% of Argentina's wine production went to Buenos Aires and there was even a plan to build an underground wine pipeline all the way from Mendoza to the capital. But the bulk wine market was shrinking and the largest blending vat in the world with a capacity of 5.2 million litres at Trapiche was empty. By 2010 Argentine home wine consumption had dropped from a dizzying annual 95 litres per head to 38 litres, and only 15% was exported. Malbec, their trump card remains great value and our buyer Toby Morrhall knows where to source the best.



## Adventures in Europe

*'The famous vineyards of Bordeaux and Burgundy have an aura from the wines they produce, but I have special affection for the vineyards of the south of France'*

Unsurprisingly, I have spent most wine-buying hours in France and lately in Italy; many visits to Germany and Greece, never enough to Spain and Portugal. The famous vineyards of Bordeaux and Burgundy have an aura from the wines they produce, but I have special affection for the vineyards of the south of France; Gigondas and Vinsobres,



for example, in the Rhône. Minervois and Corbières at their best are almost unrivalled value for wines of such character. The land and climate of Corbières are fairly unforgiving and yields are lower than in grander districts which charge so much more but you may find wines with a wonderful sense of place.



Barolo country and Chianti Classico have some spectacular scenery and gorgeous wines, but exploring Italy's south can be just as exciting. Basilicata is one of Italy's least-visited regions but Oronzo Alò's aglianicos make the journey well worthwhile, and the long drive onwards to Calabria's Santa Venere was worth it for Giuseppe Scala's lovely Cirò wines from beautiful organically cultivated vineyards overlooking the sea. Regaleali in central Sicily is an oasis of superbly managed green cultivation supporting the local community. Don't approach it from the north, as we did the last time we visited. The narrow curly road is seriously degraded by land slips. We were faced at one point by what looked like a skateboard ramp.

Wherever next?

You too can take in the delights of some of the regions Sebastian talks about with the globe-spanning selection below:

### The Society's Exhibition Tasmanian Chardonnay 2018

Drink now to 2024. 13.5%

ref **AU22101**  

£14.50 bottle | £174 dozen

### The Society's Hungarian White 2018

12.5% ref **HU1401**  

£6.95 bottle | £41.50 six

### The Society's Exhibition Mendoza Malbec 2018

Drink now to 2024. 13.5%

ref **AR4211**

£10.95 bottle | £131 dozen

### The Society's Corbières 2018

14.5% ref **FC38541**

£8.50 bottle | £102 dozen



## Rediscovering Lost Vines The Story of Gascony's Saint-Mont

Joanna Goodman, News Editor



I know some people just think of wine as a pleasant drink, but for me it's often the stories behind the bottles that intrigue as much as the liquid inside. I have a particular soft spot for those wines eked out in the harshest of environments, or those that have overcome adversity and survived against all odds; the underdogs of the wine world.

And if there's one wine that could legitimately call itself the card-carrier for such vinous endeavours, it has to be Saint-Mont, Les Vignes Retrouvées from Producteurs Plaimont, the excellent co-operative in south-west France. 'Les vignes retrouvées' translates as 'rediscovered vines' and this is the tale of how this ancient grape-growing region, situated well off the beaten track in the Gers region, revived its old vineyards after the dual ravages of phylloxera and war. Clinging onto their agricultural heritage, veterans returning from the war banded together into co-operatives to help commercialise their crops better; for grape growers in this part of France that meant sending your produce off to be distilled into Armagnac.

Following the oil crisis of the seventies and the prospect of a decline in the spirits' market, the future of the vine growers of Gascony was looking uncertain. It was at this time that a young man called André Dubosc took over as president of his local co-op. A native of the region and a man full of energy, vision and charisma, he set about persuading his fellow growers that they needed to re-evaluate their native grapes and terroir. Old, long-forgotten bottles revealed the former glory of this region's wines and Dubosc was quick to recognise the rich diversity of his region's vine

stocks and how precious few were remaining. He convinced the growers to nurture their old vines and to reduce yields; he rightly predicted that the survival of his region's wines depended on marketing their unusual indigenous grapes. He also recognised that in a global market awash with cheap foreign wines, often from the same ubiquitous grapes, those of his native land needed to wear their eccentricity with pride – something, luckily the Gascons are renowned for!

### Security in numbers

In order to become more commercially assertive, Dubosc persuaded three local co-ops (Plaisance, Aignan and Saint-Mont – hence PL-AI-MONT) to join forces, allowing for a greater professionalism and a fairer deal for all. He invested in new equipment and travelled the world promoting the group's wines and emphasising their individuality and value for money. He also invited scholars to analyse the region's grapes; the grape detective work revealed more than forty varieties, including some ungrafted pre-phyloxera vines in someone's garden!

The introduction of the Vin de Pays category in the seventies couldn't have come at a better time for Plaimont. Dubosc seized on the opportunity and worked tirelessly to regain recognition for 'Côtes de Saint-Mont' wines (now Saint-Mont and an AOP – appellation d'origine protégée) allowing blends to be made from the quirky old vines in the region which hadn't been grown commercially for generations. The old varieties – gros manseng, courbu and arrufiac, for whites and tannat, pinenc (fer servadou) and both cabernets – were lovingly brought back from the brink and also carefully replanted on suitable slopes, chosen much more selectively than in the past. It was a

huge task, encompassing 42 villages and over 1,000 hectares.

Without Dubosc's determination, this ancient wine would undoubtedly have died and along with it the region's precious old vines. Today Plaimont is made up of more than 1,000 growers and has five wineries as well as iconic historic châteaux across the region. It is a main player in Gascony accounting for 98% of the Saint-Mont appellation which it revived single-handedly, and half of Côtes de Gascogne, Madiran and the once obscure Pacherenc du Vic-Bilh appellation.

### Preserving the past for the future

Making the most of all the investigative work in their vineyards over the past three decades, Plaimont have created a 'living library' to conserve and protect their ancient vines, some of which are yet to be identified. And those pre-phyloxera vines discovered in a back garden have now been officially dated back to 1871, before The Wine Society began! In 2012 these were recognised as a 'monument historique' by the French government, the only vines in France to receive such an accolade!

### Taste the story

Far from a relic, Plaimont's Saint-Mont, Les Vignes Retrouvées 2017 is a thoroughly modern-tasting wine and a great alternative to more expected staples. Dry, but full-flavoured with hints of grapefruit and a suggestion of honey, it's entirely food-friendly as you'd expect from this gastronomic corner of south-west France. 13.5%

ref FC37231  
£8.95 bottle | £53.50 six

# MAKING THE MOST OF MAY

May heralds the most abundant of seasons for our home-grown produce and Felicity Cloake for one can't wait to make merry with the fresh new flavours



FELICITY CLOAKE  
“May is the month when...  
Mother Nature goes truly wild”

For those shivering under the grey weight of a northern winter, with all the storm-tossed drama that now seems to imply, May feels rightly like a new beginning; a time to throw off those thermals for good, unfold the garden furniture and perhaps even dare to slap on some sunscreen.

May Day was marked by our Celtic forebears on these islands as Beltane, a fire festival celebrating the fertility of the land and the harvest to come that still burns bright in some parts. In the kitchen too, it's an exciting time. Despite the signs of new life springing all around us from February onwards – the snowdrops and daffodils, new lambs and fledgelings – the seasons can be frustratingly slow to turn for the impatient cook.

March and April are traditionally known as 'the hungry gap' for good reason; their main crop is chocolate. The first shoots of hope are, appropriately enough, asparagus spears, which traditionally start to push their way on to our shelves on St George's Day – if you've already had your fill of them simply dipped in melted butter and salt, then they're also delicious paired with creamy

cheeses, smoked fish or meat, or stirred into softly scrambled eggs; anything that allows their grassy flavour to shine.

The other harbingers of warmer weather to come, of course, are new potatoes; startlingly creamy compared to the fluffy flour bombs that have kept us warm all winter, and all the more welcome now that salads are finally back on the menu. Pair with lightly steamed asparagus, a piece of poached trout and a dollop of tangy hollandaise and feel the sunshine seep back into your soul.

May is the month, however, when after this restrained start, Mother Nature goes truly wild, throwing out new ingredients with merry abundance. Salads such as rocket, radish and beetroot can't help but suggest big colourful crunchy platters to serve with nothing more complicated than a hunk of bread and a drizzle of oil, though this is also the perfect time to enjoy the delicate flavour of the brown crabs which scuttle quietly around our coastlines growing plump and sweet. Simply dressed with mayonnaise, they turn such a meal into a feast.

They also pair well with the first, fingernail-sized broad beans, small enough to eat raw and whole before they develop their tough outer skins; patiently popping them from their fleecy sacks, or tackling a bowl of bulging pea pods is one of the chief joys of early summer for me. A glass of homemade elderflower cordial (gather the lacy flowers while you still can!) makes the task even sweeter, especially diluted with a splash of crémant.

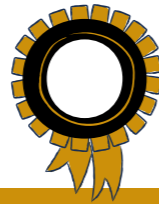
Once you've finished, raise a toast to what's to come in the weeks ahead; cherries, currants and berries, artichokes, wet garlic and fennel, French and runner beans as well as tomatoes, courgettes and all manner of more Mediterranean treats, the soft, perfumed pleasures of peaches and apricots included. Summer may have taken its time coming, but such treasures are well worth waiting for.

Felicity is an award-winning wine and food writer with several cookbooks to her name and a regular column in *The Guardian*. Felicity also supplies us with joyous dishes to make more of our wines in a regular feature in our *Societynews* and in our *Discovery* pages online.



COMING SOON  
THE **ULTIMATE** BLIND TASTING...

# WINE CHAMPIONS



As I write this at home, my memory casts back to early March when we completed our 2020 Wine Champions blind tastings in Stevenage. Little did we know during the excitement and anticipation that this would be the last activity our tasting room would see for a while – however, we’re very excited to be unveiling Wine Champions this June, so that you can experience some of the magic for yourselves.

Our eight-strong team of buyers – with some of the best palates in the business – whittled down the best of the best for drinking now from over 1,000 wines, all vying for a place in our line-up of winners. To say this is a Herculean effort is an understatement. Months of preparation go into our ultimate blind tasting, which takes place over just three weeks and in which our buyers put both their palates and endurance to the test. Tasting up to 130 wines a day from regions spanning across the globe is no mean feat, and choosing our Champions is especially difficult given the quality of wines on offer (which, in my opinion, just gets better every year). There was fierce competition, wonderful surprises and old favourites re-crowned as the bags were pulled from bottles and winners revealed. Most importantly, there’ll be a wonderful selection of wines for you to enjoy at the end of it, safe in the knowledge that these bottles really are the best that we have to offer. For me, Wine Champions epitomises everything that’s unique about The Wine Society: no other merchant would (or could) set aside the time and resource for a blind tasting on this scale, but for us it’s worth it to give our members the ultimate drinking experience when the winners are unveiled in June. Until then, keep an eye on our social media where we’ll be posting snippets to ramp up the excitement!

*Pierre Mansour*

Director of Wine





**S**tep into summer with *1874*, The Wine Society magazine packed with wine inspiration, expertise and advice. From fine wine picks for summer to a fresh twist on French food classics, exploring the stories of ancient vineyards and the wizardry of Weinert along the way, we've got your wine inspiration sorted for the season ahead.