

	Welcome: Week 6: Wines with a Story – 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2024	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
White	<p><b>Verdicchio dei Castelli de Jesi D.O.C. by Piersanti (and one by Moncaro) – Marche region, Central Eastern Italy 2022</b> We often find ourselves trying an Italian white wine amongst our white selections and that is probably because there are numerous grape varieties producing numerous varietal wines for us to try from all over the country!</p> <p>In this case we have the grape variety, Verdicchio, which means “little green one” (stop sniggering at the back!) and it produces a straw coloured wine with a trademark hint of “green lustre” tinges (more pronounced in the grander wines). The aroma profile is also “green” with fresh apples, crisp acidity and an aftertaste of bitter toasted almond. This is a DOC wine but there is also DOCG version for Riserva wines and also a (theoretically superior) “Classico” sub zone which our examples fall into although it seems to cover most of the region!</p> <p>As we have seen in Italy, wines are often named with a combo of grape variety and the region they come from – so here we have Verdicchio from the region of “Castelli de Jesi” – “Castelli” is the plural of Castello (Castle) and refers to the numerous medieval fortified hill top villages in the area which surround the town of Jesi in the province of Ancona which provide the grapes for this wine and which originally formed a connected much large fortified city.</p> <p>The climate is temperate due to proximity to the Adriatic Sea and local rivers and valleys which funnel cooling breezes, onshore in morning and offshore in afternoon which help keep the grapes in good shape. The limestone rich soil help give mineral tinged white wines. It has been a DOC for over 50 years and there are 3000 hectares under vine. The rules of the DOC require 85% Verdicchio minimum – our example has 15% Malvasia grapes added for floral notes. Historically, the wine was known as the “White Barolo” although I don’t think this example will be quite at that level. We should get pear and a touch of honey and a fresh crisp wine, a bit of an alternative to a Pinot Grigio</p> <p>The unusual and very distinctive bottle shape (intended to resemble an Amphora) was the result of a competition in the late 50s to find an original design for the region’s wines to instantly set them apart! – however some producers have reverted to using standard type bottles as some poor quality wine in the region led to the unique bottle shape being instantly recognisable for all the wrong reasons! – although it did have the desired effect of making an initial great success of the wine. You will find many producers continue to use this shape but producers are now relying on the quality of the contents to sell the wine rather than a gimmicky bottle that was designed to complement the chequered table cloths and fishing nets on the ceiling and wicker flasks of Chianti of that era! Waitrose and M&amp; S sell an example in the classic bottle shape at a similar price</p>	Verdicchio, Malvasia	Co Op £7.75 but we get a 10% staff discount so £6.98 net to the Group (5 bottles) and Two bottles from Waitrose normally £7.33 but with benefit of 25% off all wines came in at £5.50! – wish I had known there was a Waitrose offer on its way !

	<p>Top examples can be aged and will develop for 5 to 10 years. Legend surrounds many Italian wines and in this case apparently the Visigoths drank barrels of Verdicchio when they marched on Rome to maintain their strength! Prior to that the Romans would perform rituals in the temple of Cupra (the Goddess of wealth and abundance) in Jesi for which they would also supposedly drink Vericchio!</p> <p>Olly Smith says this is Britain's best value white and you should nip to the Co Op and grab as much as they have! And Will Lyons of the Sunday Times Wine Column also recently gave it a plug! A good wine as an Aperitif but probably demands a summer pasta and seafood! We have two bottles of an example from Waitrose as Co Op only had 5 bottles at the time – relax they have since restocked- but the wine should be pretty much identical and all the above notes apply equally to the Waitrose example – also their Wine Offer of 25% off all wines made for an absolute bargain on their example.</p>		
White	<p><b>Mauzac – Cotes Du Tarn IGP 2022 “Hidden Vine” series – SW France</b> If the bottle looks familiar, we have tried another grape variety from the Hidden Vine series in the recent past – this range focuses on obscure, little known or rediscovered varieties and gives us a chance to sample something a little different – and presumably gives producers of these little known varieties the chance to market their wines under a recognisable, over arching brand.</p> <p>There are believed to be no less than 8,000 grape varieties but only 15 will regularly appear on restaurant wine lists or supermarket shelves (Richard Allisette, GP Wine columnist) so there are plenty of possible opportunities for discovering hidden gems!</p> <p>The Cotes du Tarn is in SW France and Mauzac appears in the Tarn's AOC Gaillac white wines and also in Limoux crémant or sparkling wines so it is not a completely obscure variety but certainly not common and whilst we will find Gaillac wines in the vast wine aisles of French Supermarkets they will not likely be stocked here. The Cotes du Tarn IGP umbrella region covers wines that fall outside of the Gaillac AOC appellation and covers 117 towns and communes in the NW of the Tarn Department with an Ocean influence in winter and spring with Mediterranean climate in Summer and Autumn. The Atlantic winds and dry Mediterranean breezes keep the vineyards cool and help to avoid mildew developing. Most Tarn wines are red, mainly from Gamay.</p> <p>We are promised a crisp wine with apple and pear, a hint of nuttiness and smooth finish. Most of SW France's wines are excellent value and there is some very good quality so I don't think this will disappoint.</p>	Mauzac	Co Op - £8.25 but we get a 10% staff discount so £7.43 net to the Group (6 bottles) and 1 bottle at net £7.88 as the price seems to have gone up to £8.75 in a week – that's inflation for you eh!?

White	<p><b>Sancerre A.C. Domaine Roblin “Les Cotes” 2022 – Loire Valley, France (Co Op)</b>  <b>- also Sancerre A.C. Hubert Brochard 2022- Loire Valley, France (Waitrose) -</b></p> <p>Sancerre is a wine normally outside of our humble budget but we had some bargains elsewhere today and a budget surplus from last time so we decided to push the boat out a little and have a bit of a treat! We tried another quality Loire Valley classic white, Vouvray, recently, made from Chenin Blanc, so it is nice to continue a bit of a theme.</p> <p>Perhaps surprisingly, the grape behind this, along with some other well-known Loire Valley white wines, is Sauvignon Blanc but it will be a much more food friendly and slightly more subdued expression of the grape than the fruit bombs of NZ we are all familiar with – although we are still told to expect gooseberries, lime and freshly cut grass aromas which is Sauvignon Blanc’s trademarks!</p> <p>In true French tradition, no mention is made of Grape variety on the front label (or even the rear in the Roblin example) – the French consumers (allegedly!) have little interest in the variety of grape their wine is made from, which they regard as simply a conduit for the flavours imparted by the “terroir” of where the wine comes from - which they believe imparts all the characteristics of the wine and is their over-arching consideration – and they would instinctively assume a consumer would know that Sancerre would be made from Sauvignon Blanc grapes as that is the permitted grape variety of that Appellation!!</p> <p>If a wine is to go under the name of its Appellation Controlee it must adhere strictly to a (in some cases, very limited) choice of grape varieties permitted in that Appellation- many Appellations only permit one variety to be used as in the case of Sancerre White.– a grower cannot simply add or use grape varieties of their own choosing – unless they are prepared to sell the wine as a simple Vin de Pays. In fairness, labelling it Sauvignon Blanc may not assist a consumer who is used to very “fruit forward” New Zealand Sauvignons as this will be quite different.</p> <p>With climate change this insistence on permitted varieties may need to be widened/relaxed as some will no longer thrive in their historic regions or produce the style of wines they historically did – in South Africa for example Verdelho which is naturally high in acidity is tolerant to rising temperatures and is being added to Chenin blanc wines to add zip and vigour.</p> <p>The Domaine Roblin example is a real boutique wine produced by the highly regarded brothers Matthias and Emile Roblin in the hamlet of Maimbray in Sury-en-Vaux a few kilometres NW of Sancerre in the Loire Valley. Their Mother and Matthias’ wife do all the Admin and Marketing while the brothers focus on the vineyards- they believe good winemaking starts in the vineyard and have control over every stage of the process – they are not certified organic but are committed to an approach that respects the environment. They have 40 plots covering 20 hectares on steep slopes on chalky, calcareous clay – so called</p>	Sauvignon Blanc	<p><b>Co Op</b>  normally £16.50 but less 10% staff discount so £14.85 net to group. (3 bottles) and <b>Waitrose</b> normally £19.25 but less 25% off all wines offer comes in at £14.44 (Four bottles)</p>
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Red	<p><b>Minervois A.O.P. – Domaine La Reze, 2021 Languedoc SW France</b> The Languedoc region of SW France provides some of France’s best value and best quality wines – but prices are going up as more people become converts! Minervois, has been elevated to a specific AOP within Languedoc, so wines here go under that name rather than the more generic Pays d’Oc or perhaps Cotes du Rousillon .</p> <p>We should get some typical garrigue herb flavours – think thyme, rosemary and maybe just a hint of mint with some dark chocolate on the finish with some spicy, cedar, red fruit on the nose.</p> <p>This wine has been bottled at the Domaine (Estate) where the grapes are grown which ranks similar to bottled at the Chateau if the Estate is entitled to call itself that, although quite often it will be nothing like your mind’s vision of a Chateau – especially in Bordeaux! This is always considered to be an indication of a quality wine – terms such as bottled “dans nos caves” (in our cellars) or “dans la region de production” mean very little!</p>	Likely a blend of Syrah, Carignan, Mourvedre, Grenache (the rules of the Minervois AOP state that the wine must be a blend of at least 2 approved varieties – so you could not have a pure Syrah wine from here, for example, unless you simply	Co Op – normally £10.50 but on offer at £8.50 and less a further 10% staff discount so £7.65 net to Group! (7 bottles)

	<p>We have tried a couple of superb Minervois wines in the past but not this example which was on a very tempting offer at the Co Op and I don't think we have ever been disappointed by a Languedoc red so it is great to be able to bring another along especially for the Group's most recent attendees!</p>	<p>called it a basic Vin de Pays.</p>	
<p>Red</p>	<p><b>Sedoso – IGP Duriense, Porto, Portugal 2021</b> The wines of Portugal are exciting – they are generally all good quality wines, at very good prices and have a USP in the form of the use of indigenous grape varieties rather than slavishly using well known “international varieties”, so you get something a little different for your weekly wine spend! – we are also blessed that the Co Op St Martins seems to stock a disproportionate number of them! – we have tried examples in the past from the Alentejo which are always great, the Dao and also the Douro amongst a few others.</p> <p>This example is from the Duriense region which in fact covers the same area as the Douro DOC and Port Wine region but is a lower designation, closer to a French “Vin de Pays” so will encompass the simpler - or less typical wines of the Douro region – this is not necessarily a bad thing – quite often the alternative, lower, classification will give a Producer more of a free hand in what grapes they can use, production methods, ageing etc than the more prescriptive higher classification so quite often a producer will opt for that lower category to sell their wine and flexibility to pursue their preferences - other similar examples in Portugal include the designations of Alentejo and Alentejano which essentially cover the same region but allow flexibility at the lower category of designation. There are some expensive examples of IGP Duriense wine around so it is by no means a poor relation of Douro.</p> <p>As you probably know the Douro region (named after the famous Port River) is historically more well known for producing Port but its table wines have been gaining in popularity and are of very high quality – Port no longer sells in the quantity it once did and so producers are turning to using their grapes for table wine rather than producing Port. This is probably an example – Van Zeller is the oldest Port Wine company, established in 1620 and grapes are likely to be Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Alicante Bouschet, Tinta Barroca – grapes traditionally used to produce Port and could well be hand harvested as most of the grapes here are grown on the precipitous terraces that line the Douro river where mechanisation it not possible – so likely a well made wine at a bargain price for the quality.</p> <p>Frustratingly I couldn't find much more detail on this wine – I hadn't spotted it before at the co op either – but its name means silky so we hope to have a very smooth wine with dark fruit flavours – if I read the label correctly it is only 11% alcohol so this could be a nice wine to go with a mid week pizza or pasta when you don't want to wake up with a sore head!</p> <p>I couldn't help noticing the use of white painted lettering on a dark bottle which, quite apart from giving the bottle quite a funky, modern uber cool look also I assume is a bit of an “homage” to those Vintage Port bottles of old which traditionally had white painted names of the Port House/dates etc on the bottle.</p>	<p>Grapes associated with Port, so likely Touriga Nacional and others but most definitely indigenous grape varieties!</p>	<p>Co Op - £7.25 but we get a 10% staff discount so £6.53 to group (6 bottles) and 1 bottle of Altano Douro alternative from Waitrose at £11.91 shelf price but with 25% off under their wine offer so net at £8.93 net for that bottle.</p>

	<p>I went back to get a seventh bottle but the Co Op seemed to have sold out for now, so to keep as closely in line with the IGP Duriense theme I have bought one bottle of <b>“Altano” 2021 by Symington from the Douro D.O.P.</b> from Waitrose which is described as “Ethereal, lightly floral and very fruity – Douro without the weight” – so hopefully a very close match to our Sedoso – normally £11.91 so, quite a bit more expensive than our Sedoso, which you would expect given this is the higher “Douro” designation but in fact with the 25% off Waitrose offer it came in at £8.93, so not too dissimilar at the bottom line. Like Van Zeller, Symington are also an old established Port House so the comments above about the Port Houses now turning their attention to Table Wine apply equally as Port no longer sells in the quantity it did, especially among younger consumers. This comes from exactly the same region but is strictly the higher quality level designation.</p>		
Red	<p><b>Barbera d’Asti Superiore D.O.C.G. Co Op Irresistible (Araldica) 2020, Piedmont, Italy</b> – this wine comes from Piedmont, the province closest to France and the name means literally, at the foot of the mountains – i.e. the Alps. This gives the region a hot growing season and misty autumn. This is also the region of the great wines of Barolo and Barbaresco – both of which are considered worthy enough to be allowed to take the name of their respective village. The other wines of the region have to just go with the name of the Grape used to make them so “Barbera” is the grape – the addition of the word “Asti” means the Barbera grapes in this wine come specifically from the Asti district (hence you also had that 1970’s favourite, “Asti Spumante”, a fizzy wine from the Asti region) and therefore they are allowed to append the district name to the Grape variety. (Gavi also comes from this region and makes Italy’s equivalent to White Burgundy).</p> <p>Although it is not referred to on the label, this is made by the respected producer, Araldica, which also makes wines under its own name sold at Waitrose. It is a huge DOCG. The fact the region is designated DOCG rather than just DOC indicates that the region is regarded as one of Italy’s best although this is all a bit theoretical!</p> <p>Barbera, tends to be dark, but with elegant tannins, plummy, mocha chocolate but acidic wine making it ideal to go with rich food and to cut through fatty meats – this example should have bracing acidity making for a very crisp wine with a blast of fruit with a sour cherry finish. It’s quite high in alcohol at 14.5% so not for the faint hearted ! Its Superiore designation means higher quality but it can sometimes be over oaked if the producer is trying a bit too hard!</p> <p>So, this is one to pair up with maybe an Easter Leg of Lamb or some Lamb shanks or maybe with some minted Spring lamb neck fillets on the BBQ when the weather improves! It is normally £9.75 but was on offer at £7.75 and we fortuitously get a further 10% off so comes in at just below £7.00! It has won various Decanter and Wine Challenge awards in the past.</p>	Barbera	CO Op – normally £9.75 but on offer at £7.75 and less a further 10% staff discount so £6.98 net. (7 bottles)