

	Welcome: Week 7: First of the Summer Wines– 23 rd April 2024	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
White	<p>Pinot Bianco – Alto Adige D.O.C. - by Piccozza – North Eastern Italy 2022 We have recently tried a Pinot Gris from Germany, a Pinot Grigio from Slovenia and they were both were very popular. This continues that theme of looking for some crisp, fruity, quaffable, fresh whites but in this case should step things up a gear or two!</p> <p>The Alps cut a swathe through eight countries and to the East of them is Italy’s Trentino Alto Adige region which makes fruity whites with bracing acidity giving mouth-watering aperitif wines but also food friendly wines, which are crisp, snappy and as fresh as Mountain Air which you would expect from these Alpine Valleys! Wines from the Alto Adige are generally priced at a premium and you will also find Pinot Grigio on Waitrose’s shelf with those two words on the label and you will notice they are at quite a premium to typical supermarket offerings or the bottles you get on pub wine lists.</p> <p>Pinot Bianco (or Blanc) is a mutation of the Pinot Noir grape and gives wines similar to a Chardonnay but milder. Fresh, mouth watering, elegant with ripe apple, white peach, citrus core and stony minerality and a stylish jasmine and nectarine aroma this Alpine wine is an ideal Spring Wine and would be stunning with a creamy pasta as it has a more fuller, rounded, Chardonnay edge but still good acidity. The world’s best Pinot Bianco comes from this region and arguably the region now produces Italy’s very best white wines.</p> <p>This wine won International Wine Challenge Gold in 2021. It was very recently plugged by Will Lyons of the Sunday Times and the Guardian also selected it. Parts of the region were historically Austrian and Germanic grape varieties predominate here.</p> <p>Decanter magazine bemoans that although Pinot Bianco makes for wines of sensual elegance and refinement, the grape variety seems unable to seduce international markets which are dominated by vastly inferior Pinot Grigio.</p> <p>Planting here is increasingly concentrated on the higher sites and the local co operatives which produce over 2/3 of Alto Adige’s wine are very savvy and set the standards very high although prices are competitive for the quality on offer – there are very top Pinot Bianco examples which are single vineyard cru wines. The quality of Pinot Bianco here is considered to be making exceptional wines way above their price point which are now both technically excellent but also truly reflecting the terroir. You will notice if you look carefully that the logo on the wine are ice picks and mountains reflecting the Alpine nature of the wine!</p>	Pinot Bianco (or Pinot Blanc if you prefer)	Waitrose normally £11.91 but on Waitrose 25% off all wines offer so an absolute bargain price of £8.93 (7 bottles) for the quality on offer here.

White	<p>Assyrtiko 2022 Zacharias Winery – Peloponnese P.G.I., Greece The Assyrtiko grape comes originally from Santorini and is regarded by Hugh Johnson of World Atlas of Wine fame as one of the best grapes of the Mediterranean, balancing power, minerality, extract of flavours and high acidity – it is grown elsewhere in Greece and also in California and South Australia.</p> <p>This example comes from the Northern Greek mainland, the Nemea Valley in Corinth and is more approachable and fruit forward than those from Santorini – it is full bodied, though not oaked having been aged in stainless steel and is harmonious with pear, green apple, a refreshing mineral streak and a salty saline bite with citrus aromas, peach, lemon and honeyed fruit. This example is exuberant enough to enjoy without food but the adage about Greek wines and food is that Greek wine demands food and vice versa! – that would be the zesty acidity which will cut through oily foods. Good with seafood, mature cheese. Grapes are handpicked.</p> <p>Zacharias Winery has been established since 1974 with sloping vineyards in an area where apparently Hercules defeated the Lion of Nemea (just for the Greek Mythology fans amongst you!) They have 40 hectares – they grow 13 varieties including indigenous varieties and some international ones – some of which we have already tried in the past.</p> <p>Waitrose stocks around 4 Greek wines and we have tried a few of these with very unpronounceable names but Greek wines are getting more and more popular and they have more than 1,000 wineries</p>	Assyrtiko	Waitrose normally £11.91 but less 25% as a result of across the board wine offer so £8.93 a bottle net (7 bottles)
White	<p>Viognier “Vendanges Nocturnes” Laurent Miquel 2022 - Pays d’Oc, Southern France We definitely have a few Viognier fans in the Group and it is always a popular selection – its trademark is that it is an aromatic wine which lends itself well to mildly spicy Asian dishes, runny cheeses and is also simply great when you just want a glass of white wine to enjoy! We have had examples from Yalumba in Australia in the past and this is a classic French example from the Languedoc which region gives us some great value and well made white and red wines. It is an ultra fashionable grape variety at the moment. In the Northern Rhone it gives the hugely expensive wines of Condrieu.</p> <p>First things, first, if you do order a bottle in a restaurant, remember the “g” is silent so it is pronounced “Vee-on-yee-eh” - not Vee- og- nee-eh!</p> <p>Laurent Miquel is a young winemaker but his land has been in the family since 1791 when was it was acquired after the Revolution but monks had grown vines there for many years. Laurent was given a plot as a very young man from his Father and the first Viognier vines in this region were planted here in 1992 – Laurent left to study engineering but returned to winemaking with his wife to be. However, his engineering background led to him becoming a “thinker” – he solves winemaking problems before people realise they are problems that need solving and believes everything can be improved upon in the vineyard and is one of the best examples of the new way of making wine in France.</p>	Viognier	Waitrose, normally £9.16 but less 25% on across the board wine offer so £6.87 net (7 bottles)

	<p>This wine is a “night harvest” wine as the cooler temperatures ensure the delicate Viognier grape is in top condition and immediate pressing ensures a crisp, balanced and aromatic wine with apricot, pear, honeysuckle. He is not unique in this and you will find various wines that have a name that references harvesting the grapes in the cool of the evening.</p> <p>Will Lyons of the Sunday Times coincidentally featured this wine as his “Bargain of the week” last week! Also coincidentally, Jenny Dunning contacted me to say she had been enjoying the Rose offering from Laurent Miquel (very similar looking bottle and label) – without knowing that his Viognier was one I had just selected! – the Rose certainly gets her thumbs up so we may well give that a try in the future – or look out for it in the Rose section at Waitrose! – The Viognier seems to be a bit of a regular best seller at Waitrose so keep in mind for your next Asian feast!</p>		
Red	<p>Ventoux A.O.P. Remy Ferbras 2022 Southern Rhone Valley, France This wine comes from around Mont Ventoux which is famous from the Tour de France. This is a blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre, (so called GSM wines) with some Cinsault - absolutely typical of Southern Rhone wines which of course also encompass Cotes du Rhone, Cotes du Rhone Villages and the 22 named Cru Villages and Remy Ferbras produce those wines too as well as Chateauneuf du Pape, also a Southern Rhone wine.</p> <p>The high altitude of the vineyards here make for fresh and vibrant red wines and we should get cherries on the nose with silky tannins and a well balanced, fresh wine. Each grape variety is vinified separately before being blended together. They have won numerous awards for their wine. A slightly different take on Cotes du Rhone!</p>	Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre, Cinsault	Waitrose normally £9.16 but less 25% on across the board wine offer so £6.87 net (7 bottles)
Red	<p>Freisa d’Asti D.O.C., Venturina (Terre da Vino) 2022 – Piedmont, Northern Italy This is a relatively new wine for Waitrose and will be a great wine for a Summer’s balmy evening (which we hope is not too far away). This will be bright cherry red in the glass with some ripe raspberry and strawberry juiciness – presumably that is how the Freisa grape got its name! It is fleshy but fresh with purity of fruit but has not been aged in oak so is light and breezy – it should also have a stony edge – as it should be a bit of a lighter, fruity wine it is strongly suggested it is <u>lightly chilled</u> before opening just to really open up those fruit flavours – this always works well with fruity red wines, especially in the Summer which makes them much more refreshing and a little too gulpable!</p> <p>Again, today, a bit of an obscure grape variety which is always great to discover to bring along something different and the wine follows that Italian tradition of naming better wines with the Grape Variety it is made from followed by the name of the place the wine comes from so this comes from the Asti region in Piedmont where we also find Barbera d’Asti – Barbera grapes from the Asti region.</p> <p>The Guardian wine column recommended this wine as ideal to drink with fruity food – that is to say, savoury dishes that have a fruit element to them – Spaghetti al limone or a feta/brie fruity salad. The wine comes from the same region that gives us some of Italy’s great red wines, including Barolo.</p>	Freisa	Waitrose normally £10.08 but less 25% on across the board wine offer so £7.56 net (six bottles)

	<p>Freisa is an old Piedmontese grape variety from the hills of Asti and can make either dry or sweet wines and maybe not surprisingly, for this area, Spumante or sparkling wines. In the sixteenth century it was considered a grape of the first quality and in fact is a direct descendent of the Nebbiolo grape that gives us Barolo. Asti gives the best conditions for cultivating this grape variety. Olly Smith likes this wine too and suggested it as ideal with Greek mezze platters.</p>		
Red	<p>Santa Tresa Rina Russa – Frappato – Terre Siciliane I.G.P. 2022- Vittoria, SE Sicily – Italy Well, full marks to Waitrose for stocking this – we often associate supermarkets with stocking only well known, international varietal wines – and this is understandable – many consumers will go in looking for a Malbec, a Pinot Noir, Shiraz or such like! But Supermarkets are increasingly stocking lesser known or “rediscovered” grape varieties from France, Italy and Spain and elsewhere – the Consumer is always on the look-out for something “new” or a bit different and this is especially true of your Convenor who likes to bring along a few wines hopefully you (and we!) may not have tried before!</p> <p>Italy, especially, has a huge number of indigenous grape varieties – some of which, of course, are behind well-known wines – so you will almost certainly have heard of the wine - but not necessarily know the grape behind it! – so Nebbiolo grape is the one behind Barolo, Corvina is behind Valpolicella, Garganega behind Soave etc. There are also a myriad more Italian grape varieties which have made it on to supermarket shelves under their own name and are now reasonably well known as a result, so, we often also see Italian wines labelled by their variety – such as Negroamaro, Fiano, Greco, Vermentino – and more. But of course, there are also countless varieties we have probably never heard of or see over here and this is a bit of a niche example as not only is it native to Sicily but to the specific region of Vittoria in the SE of the Island!</p> <p>Rina Russa means “red sand” in the Sicilian dialect, a reference to the soil type and the grapes are all hand picked. The wine is aged on its lees (its natural yeasts etc) in stainless steel so I can’t see any use of oak here so this should be a very fruity wine with a light colour! There should be hints of strawberry on the nose a balanced palate with silky smooth fruit and freshness right through with a long finish. It can be served at room temperature with meats and cheeses but can be lightly chilled and served with fish so if you are not a white wine fan and fancy red with your fish, this would be a great option – especially as we head into summer and a refreshing, lightly chilled red is great on a hot summer’s day with some Tuna steaks seared quickly on the BBQ!</p> <p>The label design is a nod to Greek vases and reflects the Greek influence on the culture of Sicily. It is made by the acclaimed winemaker, Stefano Chioccioli and is a very new addition to Waitrose’s shelves. This is something a little bit unique and continues a theme of teasing out unusual Italian grape varieties from the shelves of the supermarkets – we have had an Aglianico red from the Co Op recently which was a great wine!</p>	Frappato di Vittoria	Waitrose normally £11.00 but with 25% off on its across the board wine offer so £8.25 net (7 bottles)