

	Welcome: Season 2024/25 Week 1: Return to the Vineyards	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
White Aperitif	<p><b>Amontillado Sherry “Don Gaspar” by Lustau, Waitrose No.1 range, Jerez, Spain</b> – We found ourselves with a bit of a budget surplus this week as a result of availing of some good offers on the wines, also we now have a bit more loot to spend since increasing the cover charge to £10 - and our room charge is very reasonable thanks to our contacts in high places at the Aero Club leaving more cash to devote to the bottles!</p> <p>A few of you had asked if we might make another foray into the world of Sherry and this week, we have therefore been able to do so - whilst still maintaining our usual 3 white/3 red format!! Strictly speaking, the style of Sherry we have brought along would qualify as one of our white selections as it is intended as an aperitif or tapas/starter course wine but as this was the first class of the season and we have a very high turn out, it seems only right to push the boat out. In the past we have tried a Manzanilla, a Fino and a dry Oloroso as well as a lovely sherry to enjoy at the end of a meal.</p> <p>With the explosion in popularity of Tapas, dry, chilled Sherry has an ideal foot in the door to enjoy a big resurgence, as in Spain, this really is the traditional drink to accompany Tapas. It remains celebrated by critics and probably remains the most undervalued wine on the market for the quality of product on offer –Waitrose now stock quite a range but it is probably true to say it is yet to achieve mass market appeal.</p> <p>Perhaps Sherry still has a perception amongst British consumers as something that would lurk in Granny’s sideboard to make an annual appearance at Christmas however a dry sherry should be treated very much as you would a white wine – i.e. chilled, drunk reasonably soon after opening and used as an aperitif or to accompany starters, tapas, soup courses - or if a sweet variety such as PX, then as a desert wine at the end of a meal. Certainly, it should not find its way back into the Sideboard to make an appearance some months later!</p> <p>Sherry is produced around the city of Jerez in Southern Spain which gives its name to the wine – it was known as “Sherish” to the Moors and was on the frontier between the Moorish and Christian kingdoms. There are <b>four basic styles of Sherry</b> – <b>Fino</b> and <b>Manzanilla</b> are pale and dry and should be served chilled and are ideal as an aperitif as they tend to dry the palate and increase the appetite. Manzanilla, in particular, has a saline quality which arises from its production in nearby Sanlucar de Barrameda which gets the salty air from the ocean and that makes Manzallia a great alternative wine to go with a starter/tapa of sizzling garlic prawns and similar.</p> <p><b>Amontillado</b> (the style of sherry we are trying today) is darker with a nutty character, potentially with a bit of candied lime, cara and caramelized sugar with a feisty palate with warmth and intense finish though still very much an aperitif or tapas wine. It is essentially an aged fino. <b>Oloroso</b> is darker still, richer and heavier and good with soups. Most of these styles are dry sherries but there are sweet sherries especially using Pedro Ximenez grapes (often you will see <b>PX</b> on the label) which can be treated as dessert wines or to round off a meal.</p>	Palomino	Waitrose normally £11.96 but less 20% on special offer and less a further 5% case discount so £9.09 per bottle(6 bottles) (and one bottle at £9.57

	<p>Rarely will the Sherry tell you about Grape variety but for dry sherries it is the Palomino (white) grape. There is also normally no year shown – that is because Sherry is made in the “solera” system where vats of ascending ageing wines are never actually emptied but topped up with wine from the previous generation after each annual blending, so year on year there is a constant supply of aged wines for blending and all sherries are therefore a blend – that said, there are some moves towards having “Vintage” sherries or those containing very old wines being designated VOS or VORS to raise the perception of Sherry. There are also new developments including so called “single vineyard” sherries and other specialities.</p> <p>Sherry facts include – the Arabs brought the concept of distillation to Spain which led to the fortification of wine. The Poet Laureate will be honoured with a barrel of Sherry (equivalent to about 720 bottles to last them their 10 year tenure ! In Tudor times, the English drank “Sack” – this was similar to Sherry and the name came from the Spanish “Sacar” - to “take out” – i.e. exported wine ! In Spain you should ask for a Copa de Jerez – originally Tapas originated in the form of a bread crostini or similar nibble placed over the Copa in bars to keep bugs and flies out whilst the drink was delivered to the table – of course, these were often nibbled at (by the patrons that is, hopefully not the bugs!) and so the custom grew for Bars to produce ever more interesting accompaniments to go with the sherry and tapas were born and they have been bed fellows ever since in Spain !</p> <p>A very good price on the discounted offer for an authentic and special treat for your guests if you are having a bit of a Tapas night! Our wine comes from the premium Waitrose No.1 range and is in association with one of the top Sherry Houses, Lustau. This Sherry bridges the gap between the warm rounded flavour associated with Amontillado and the grown up experience of a dry Fino Sherry and therefore has a bit of a split personality! Although it should be treated and regarded as a wine, we must bear in mind it is fortified and at 18.5% volume, so, you won’t need quite as large a glass although some table wines are hitting 14.5% quite easily these days. Jancis Robinson says this is a great wine, transparent, star bright and tawny amber with a cheese and pop corn nose! Not bone dry but mellow with impressive persistence – subtle and gorgeous – delicate and ridiculous value for money.</p> <p>Our buffet table will enable you to go up and select something suitable to nibble on to recreate that authentic tapas experience. In this week’s GP, Richard Allisette talks of a street in Logrono in Northern Spain where there is a street with 80 tapas bars and each one typically only produces one or two tapas speciality dishes rather than the usual counter full – the idea being you amble from one bar to another to achieve your favourite tapas selection over the course of an evening – no doubt with a glass of dry sherry or Albarino in each one – although presumably not all 80!</p>		
Rose	<p><b>A.O.C. Cotes de Provence St Victoire - Mas de Cadenet Estate “Heritage” Sainte Victoire, Provence, France by Famille Negrel 2023</b> This is a bit of a treat for our Rose Fans – normally £14.50 – apologies that the Summer is over - but Rose wine is more of a year round wine than we may think, even if we do associate it as a very chilled wine on hot sunny days!</p> <p>In fact, debate rages amongst experts that we drink Rose far too cold – many producers suggest 8/10 degrees so you don’t close off the aromas but cold enough to feel less acidity – many feel it should not be below 7 degrees in any case and other experts suggest as high as 12 degrees to get the full flavour – in fact, they say if the Rose is too cold it is merely a cold drink</p>	Not stated but indications on line are 45% Cinsault, 45% Grenache and 10% Syrah (Grenache often features in Rose wines owing to its	Co Op normally £14.50 but on offer at £11.50 and we save a further 10% so £10.35 net to the group.

and not a serious wine! That said, I suspect some of us would send our wine back and complain it wasn't properly chilled at that temperature!

Most experts also frown upon the practice of dropping an ice cube into the wine- this is known in France as "Le Rose Piscine" (or swimming pool rose) as you have a big glass to accommodate ice cubes and wine – critics make a valid point that, if you do this, you will dilute the wine which rather defeats the efforts of the winemaker in getting the blend, balance and flavour just right and ice cubes may well contain calcium from the water and other trace elements and impurities that will mess with the taste – winemakers regard it as an "interdit" and an insult to the winemaker!- however Will Lyons of the Sunday Times is a little more relaxed – he suggests if you must do it, you pop in an ice cube, swirl it round a bit, then fish it out to avoid any dilution or taint! He suggests putting a chilled bottle of Rose wine on the side for about 20 minutes after being in the fridge before drinking to lose the extreme chill.

Many consumers believe the paler the Rose, the better the quality (not the case) and darker styles have definitely gone out of fashion. This wine, unsurprisingly given its origin, has a classic Provencal pale hue, in a very understated bottle, giving a refined Rose with peach, bitter grapefruit zest and juicy cherry on the palate with pepper spice and crisp minerality and a long finish – the Negrel family is one of the oldest families of winemakers in Provence and has been running the Mas de Cadenet Estate that gives this wine since 1813. Under their "famille Negrel" banner Maud and Matthieu Negrel produce various wines from different vineyards in Provence which they want to reflect the nuances of the terroirs of Provence.

The French are obsessed with the concept of "terroir" in relation to wine, regarding where the wine comes from as the overriding factor – there is no direct equivalent translation of "terroir" in English as it encompasses basically, vineyard location, angle of vineyard to the sun, effects of cooling winds, microclimate, weather, soil type and features such as pebbles, clay, granite, limestone, drainage – in fact everything that gives a wine a "sense of place" – hence, equally, why the French are not obsessed with grape variety.

As far as they are concerned it will just be the variety best suited to a region and as the Appellation rules will dictate which grapes can be used if a wine is to be named after the appellation it comes from, they see little need in giving details such as grape variety on bottle labels – although that is starting to change a bit as New World wines are virtually all sold as "varietal" wines – i.e. the grape variety will be prominent on the front label and consumers will often look to buy a Malbec or a Sauvignon Blanc (even though the styles will vary hugely depending on where they come from) so the French are starting to pander to this – although not in this case!

Generally, Provence Rose is no bargain and despite their price, many examples are not necessarily any better than cheaper alternatives from the Languedoc or elsewhere but this Co Op offer enabled something a little special to be brought along.

It is stated to be "a stunning Provence Rose and one of the best at its price point and features on the wine lists of many Michelin starred restaurants in France. A delectable wine best served at around 10 degrees" (*you see! – a fridge is at 4 degrees*) "and the microclimate and calcareous soil of Sainte Victoire bring a magnificent tension to the wine which although able to be drunk as an aperitif, its texture and long finish mean it can easily be a gourmet wine to go with delicate cuisine".

thin skin and oxidisation qualities) Rose wine is essentially white wine made from red grapes, all grape juice being clear and it only the skin contact during vinification that gives the colour – the shorter the period of time of skin contact, the paler the wine – if left indefinitely the result will be red wine!

White	<p><b>Albarino, Codorniu – D.O.P. Costers del Segre, Raimat, Lleida Spain</b> We have enjoyed Albarino’s before but they have mostly come from Galicia in North Western Spain, especially Rias Baixas which is generally regarded as the region to look for on any bottle of Albarino as a rule of thumb.</p> <p>This is something a little bit different – it is produced by the Spanish Company, Codorniu, who are better known for their fizz, Cava but this goes back to the Company’s origins of producing table wines, in this case from their vineyards in Costers del Segre which is in North Eastern Spain in the inland region of Catalunya near the Mediterranean. This is a certified organic wine and was on a great offer at the Co Op – Albarino is increasingly expensive (even in Spain) as it is a very “on trend” wine, especially in Guernsey where it goes great with our shellfish so it will be good to see if this matches up to a Galician example! The tasting notes certainly hint at citrus flavours dominating and mineral notes so this should be great to go with some garlic prawns . I could not see a vintage year on the wine.</p>	Albarino	Co Op – normally £8.50 but on offer at £7.00 and we get a further 10% off through staff discount so net £6.30 to the group!
White	<p><b>Viognier – Jean Claude Mas 2023 – St Gabriel, I.G.P. Pays d’Oc, Southern France</b> We 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!</p> <p>We have had examples from Yalumba in Australia (who are renowned for it and their “Y” series Viognier is a great buy at a similar price point) and also one from Laurent Miquel (also in the Languedoc) in the recent past. This rather unassuming bottle is from the Co Op (from its premium “irresistible” range) and we haven’t tried it previously that I can recall - but the real clue on the label that this could well be worth picking up is that it is made by Jean Claude Mas who is a major force in winemaking in the Languedoc and is one of the winemakers who has led the Languedoc to having a renaissance in recent years – and many of the region’s wines remain relative bargains for the quality on offer. The region produces some very quaffable whites and top end reds.</p> <p>We have tried quite a few wines produced by Jean Claude Mas either under his own name or produced by his company on behalf of supermarket own brands. Viognier is a very 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 (and more particularly one in France), remember <b>the “g” is silent</b> in French, so it is pronounced “Vee-<b>on</b>-yee-eh” (not Vee- og- nee-eh!) – otherwise you will have the French waiter grimacing, rolling his eyes and muttering about “Les Rosbifs”!</p> <p>This wine has won Silver at the International Wine Challenge 2024 (it has won similar awards in the past) and its tasting notes are scents of baked apricot, clove and cream with ripeness and hints of coconut, sweet spice and nutmeg. It is described as another belter from the Domaines Paul Mas – rich, delicious, honeyed with zingy acidity making it very fresh.</p> <p>Perhaps, rather unusually for France, it is a wine prominently sold under its Grape Varietal name rather than the place it comes from although this is true for a number of Jean Claude Mas wines such as Marsanne and others – it is likely he is being a bit more canny in recognising how consumers especially in the UK select their wines! Also an IGP like the Pays d’Oc will encompass a huge number of grape varieties and styles of wine so just using the name of the region is not particularly helpful.</p>	Viognier	Co Op £8.75 but less staff discount, less 10% (thanks Karen’s Mum) so £7.88 net to the group

Red	<p><b>Primitivo “The Hidden Vine series” 2023 North Macedonia</b> The bottle may well look familiar as we have had several wines from this series which all essentially use the same label design but the concept of this brand is to reinvigorate interest in “lost” or obscure grape varieties. Of course, Primitivo is by no means obscure – we have tried a number of excellent Italian examples over the course of our Wine Discoveries as well as a few Zinfandel reds from the USA which we now know to be the Primitivo grape.</p> <p>In this case, the emphasis here is on the original source of the Primitivo variety which it seems is now understood to be North Macedonia and this wine is intended to reflect the original style of Primitivo. North Macedonia produces quality wine – ideal with a BBQ but we are a bit late for that although good with rich tomato dishes so maybe something to quaff with nice home made Lasagne.</p> <p>As we have learnt before, Primitivo does not mean the grape is primitive or in some way one of the first grape varieties (although who knows, that may be the case!) but in fact simply alludes to the early ripening qualities of the grape, in a similar way to the variety, Tempranillo.</p> <p>If you do enjoy this and go looking for this wine at the co op (top shelf), do take care as they have placed it right next to another one in the Hidden Vine series, Mazuelo which features in Rioja so do double check you have got the right one as the labels are almost indistinguishable!</p> <p>At our net price of £5.85 it is a great opportunity to bring it along and previous Hidden Vine wines did go down well as I recall.</p>	Primitivo	Co Op normally £8.50 but on offer at £6.50 and less a further 10% so £5.85 net to group.
Red	<p><b>Malbec – Cabernet Franc “Artesano” by Bodega Argentio 2022 – Agrelo, Mendoza, Argentina</b> The Co Op has recently had a “Fairtrade Fortnight” promoting their Fairtrade products (which include a fair number of, especially, South African and Argentinian wines) -and in fact they even had a wine tasting of a selection of their Fairtrade Wines (which I now confess I wish I had gone along to as it featured a representative from the Riojana Wine co operative who came all the way here to attend!)</p> <p>One of that co operative’s wines is called Tilimuqui Malbec and it was on a great special offer for the event and I had already tried it and liked it a lot but when I went to get the wines for this week it was back to full price! – however all was not lost and another very good quality Argentinian Malbec was on offer, also with Fairtrade certification!</p> <p>It is said to be an absolutely cracking Argentinian red – here we have a blend of Malbec and Cabernet Franc rather than a straightforward Malbec – the Cabernet Franc adds a dash of freshness and zip to the smooth plummy Malbec so it has the feel of a bit of wild berry taste rather than a wine made from commercially grown grapes.</p> <p>It is also organic – the waters of the Andes are free from pollution and the brilliant sunshine and dry weather mean fungicide is unnecessary so they do have a bit of a head start in this respect! – in general terms, organic wines tend to be more expensive as producing them is more labour intensive, yields can be lower as fungicides, pesticides and chemical fertilisers can’t be used and diseases are therefore more common. However, organic wines tend have lower sulphite levels (which are linked to allergic reactions) and mean the wine can have a finer texture. Coincidentally, apparently, we have just had “Organic</p>	Malbec, Cabernet Franc	Co Op normally £9.50 or thereabouts but was on offer at £7.75 and less 10% staff discount so £6.98 to group.

	<p>September"! It is ideal to go with steak (no surprise) but that cabernet franc blending makes it more versatile and would go great with lamb and even those dishes with Chorizo in – maybe a chorizo and butter bean tapas!</p> <p>Artesano wines come from organic vineyards located in the High Agrelo in central Mendoza in the foothills of the Andes (<i>which are located at the end of the wistees – sorry I couldn't resist that – the old ones are the best</i>) and this is a handcrafted wine.</p> <p>Although many would almost assume Malbec to be an Argentinian grape variety as it is so synonymous with that Country, it is the grape behind the wines of Cahors in France – and Cabernet Franc is behind most of the Loire reds such as Chinon, St Nicholas de Bourgueil etc.</p>		
Red	<p><b>Bread &amp; Butter Pinot Noir 2022– Napa Valley, California USA</b> We don't often bring along American wines – the selection in the Supermarkets is generally limited and many, especially those from the Napa Valley (which is regarded as the top, premium wine growing region of North America) are pricey but this was on an offer and just about sneaked into our budget! It is a fruit forward, smooth wine with cherries, raspberries and cassis but with soft oak giving a long smooth finish with a hint of bay leaf, cedar and sweet vanilla subtle smokiness from the use of oak and even some hints of a damp hedgerow. The winemaker is Linda Trotta – (<i>I almost typed Lyndon Trott!</i>) who has 30 years extensive winemaking experience. The climate is sun drenched but with daily morning mist off the Pacific and coolness from the Sacramento river delta which is perfect for Pinot Noir which is a pernickety grape to grow.</p> <p>To find a good quality, classy Pinot Noir around the £11 mark would be good and this has all the credentials – French Burgundy (all Pinot Noir) will come in well above this price, even for the most basic level and at least twice this price for anything from a specific Burgundy appellation. The other option for quality Pinot Noir is generally considered to be New Zealand Central Otago or Martinborough but again, these will not be cheap either.</p> <p>It would seem the "Bread and Butter" branding is to convey that the Company feels that we should not overthink wine and enjoying a glass of well-made wine should be an uncomplicated, straightforward experience – well at least that's how I have interpreted the Company's mission statement! In any event, I really do like the understated label which looks like the bottle could appear on the wine list of any uber cool wine bar!</p> <p>Napa means "Land of Plenty" in the language of the Wappo Indians and the name was adopted by future settlers. Its first commercial winery was established in 1861.</p>	Pinot Noir	Co Op – normally £13.50 but on offer at £12.00 and less a further 10% staff discount so £10.80 net to group.