

| | Welcome: Season 2024/25 Week 3: Wine Bottles Anonymous 19 th November 2024 | Grape Varieties | Cost £/Where from |
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| Fizz | <p>Cremant de Bourgogne “Blanc de Blancs” Cave de Lugny, Maconnais, Southern Burgundy As we had a very big budget this week – a record attendance and also a cohort of reds at great prices we could push the boat out and introduce a fizz as well – it is Christmas coming up after all! I originally went into Waitrose to get Graham Beck, a South African fizz made from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay which I previously had happened to notice was on a great offer and has a very good reputation – but when I went in the offer had ended – however my hand wringing, wailing and gnashing of teeth was short lived as I then saw that the Lugny Cremant was on an equally fantastic offer – so happy days!</p> <p>French cremant wines (fizzy wines that can’t call themselves Champagne because they don’t come from that region are getting to be the next big thing – a number of regions – Burgundy, the Loire and others produce quality crémant. Of course Champagne is getting prohibitively expensive to enjoy on all but the most special occasions – especially from the main houses – and some of the cheaper, lesser known Champagnes that feature in supermarket special deals are not always that great in any case.</p> <p>This particular fizz is a great alternative – firstly, it is made in the Champagne method (unlike Prosecco which just has gas added to it to make it fizzy) and is labour intensive so any premium you pay is justified. Secondly, it is made from Chardonnay which is the grape used to make Champagne – often alongside Pinot Noir and Petit Meunier - but if Champagne is only made from Chardonnay it is described as a blanc de Blancs – signifying only white grapes have been used – in this case the term has been used for this cremant as it is 100% Chardonnay. It also comes from the Maconnais which is part of Burgundy so Chardonnay is a natural choice as that is the grape behind all Burgundy white wines (apart from a few obscurities).</p> <p>The make up of the soil here is very similar to Champagne and the producer, the Cave de Lugny is a co operative of growers with an excellent reputation and they also make some top Macon Villages wines. This fizz will have that biscuit, brioche flavour of champagne and some nice fine bubbles. If you need a fizz for Christmas head to Waitrose where this is on a great offer of about one third off the price – if you want to add a bit of an indulgent touch to your party, dinner or even lunch or afternoon tea with a friend or two, it is very unlikely they would detect a major difference from an average Champagne – especially with all the excitement going on and you will be quids in.</p> | Chardonnay | Waitrose normally about £15 but on offer at £10.66 and less 5% discount for getting 6 bottles so £10.12 net |
| White | <p>Entre Deux Mers A.O.P., Chateau Puyfromage, 2023 Bordeaux, France This was a wine which we tasted at the Liberation event and Chateau Puyfromage had their own stall – this was a beautiful, refreshing white – rather unusually for Bordeaux this was not oaked but matured in stainless steel so is a very fresh wine – and has fine lees (the natural yeasts and deposits are left in the tank to add flavour) ageing for 2 months – the traditional bottle shape of Bordeaux makes you think it might be a bit of an old fashioned oaky white wine but it was anything but! – its grape variety is 45% Sauvignon Blanc but in France it is a very different beast to the fruit bombs it gives rise to in New Zealand – the other grape is 45% Semillon which makes for a typical Bordeaux white blend with 10% Muscadelle – eminently suitable for a glass of white on its own but also very food friendly.</p> | Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Muscadelle | Liberation Wines Admiral Park normally £12.35 but on offer at £8.75 (7 bottles) and one bottle of white Graves from Waitrose at £9.58 |

I do love the name of this wine which translates as “Between two Seas” – the lady from Puyfromage told me that the old Bordelaises didn’t travel very far and to them the rivers of the Garonne and Dordogne in which this region sits would have looked like seas to them – although there were some more prosaic alternative explanations on line that the name is a corruption of Entre deux “marees” and therefore more likely “between estuaries or salt marshes” – but I like to go with her more poetic view!. It is the largest Bordeaux wine region but historically it was felt its wines were not in the same league as neighbouring Graves or St Emilion. Whilst the red wines from this region can be hit or miss the white wines are a different story with crisp Sauvignon Blanc based wines made by a new breed of winemaker.

Land here is much cheaper than the prestigious adjoining regions and yet the soils and climate are excellent for white wines. The white wines are generally a blend of Sauvignon Blanc which gives freshness and perfume and Semillon gives weight and structure and layered, interesting flavours and add an extra dimension to Sauvignon Blanc Wines. Until very recently only the white wines of Entre Deux Mers could be sold under that Appellation name – anyone growing and making red wine there (and more red than white wines is produced within the boundaries of AOC Entre deux Mers) had to sell it as Bordeaux or similar but it seems from 2023, red wines produced there can also be sold as Entre deux Mers.

The vines are typically 55 years old and the soil is limestone (which gives filtering qualities to the vines) and clay (which gives freshness) and Semillon is particularly adapted to such a soil type and thrives in the gravelly, silty deposit soils bordering the great rivers of Bordeaux. It is possible that the grape Semillon gets its name from St Emilion which is nearby and where it was historically grown, the town’s name being pronounced “Semillon” in the local dialect – we should get lemongrass, fresh grapes (! – normally wines seem to be described as tasting of everything but grapes!) apricot, with a round, silky palate.

Puyfromage suggest the wine as ideal for aperitif – great if you have friends around who like a glass of Sauvignon Blanc but you want to open something that is a little more two dimensional and also able to go with any food offerings - from chicken, seafood, cheese and salads to tapas. Has won gold medals in the past.

The Chateau Puyfromage is owned by the Marque-Albert family who have been involved for 10 generations – it is located on the same rocky plateau as Saint Emilion and also produces red wines under its Cotes de Bordeaux appellation. Frederic Marque the winemaker deploys an environmentally friendly approach with relevant certifications and is terroir driven – the unusual name of this Chateau does not appear to have anything to do with cheese but is apparently a corruption of a part English/part French phrase “Puy” /and “from edge”

Unfortunately, although Liberation put on an absolutely first class and enjoyable wine tasting event, many of the wines they were showcasing were not ones they currently stocked and that was not made clear at the event! So, I was one of many disgruntled punters who placed orders only to find the wines would not be available for some weeks. Your Convenor explained how disappointed the Wine Group would be at this turn of events as I had earmarked a number of super wines for our white selection this week – in the event they managed to locate two of my selections although could only muster 7 bottles of Puyfromage Entre deux Mers – given we ultimately found ourselves with a record 8 tables I decided to get an alternative white of equally good quality, with similar grape varieties used and from a nearby region in Bordeaux, Graves, with identical

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| | <p>soil structures and also stainless steel maturation on fine lees with no oak influence giving a very fresh wine -so, one table has a bottle of white Graves which should give a very similar experience to the Entre deux Mers – however if you do get a chance, do try a bottle of the Puyfromage when it becomes available as it was a lovely wine - I do try if at all possible to make sure we are all tasting the same wines and this is a very near match in all respects !</p> | | |
| White | <p>Apostrophe '22 – Larry Cherubino Wines Western Australia 2022 As I couldn't get many of the wines we had diligently selected at the Liberation wine tasting I was left with having to make a new selection with a view of trying to find something a little different to the norm. I happened to spot this interesting Aussie number – I am not sure if “Alsace blend” is an official wine term but this would likely be a candidate!</p> <p>In Alsace you would normally find these grapes in single variety wines – Gewurtztraminer, which on its own can be a bit of an acquired taste – although generally spot on with Asian food, lends its floral, aromatic, exotic spice – Pinot Blanc brings softness and Riesling (pronounced Rees-ling – not Ryes-ling, just to be clear!) gives a backbone of citrus acidity – it is described as “like a cool breeze on a summer's day dancing with notes of citrus zest, crisp orchard and stone fruit with a hint of minerality” and “shimmering with the vibrancy of a summer garden, think lime zest, crisp peaches and fragrant spice – an Alsatian inspiration in Western Australia”.</p> <p>Will you detect any hint of aircraft fuel on the nose, which is Riesling's trademark? - it may be subdued by being part of a blend – or maybe its just that Aurginy that has taxied past!</p> <p>Larry Cherubino is a legend in Western Australia – he has worldwide experience in wine production and makes both his own wines and lends his services to other big brands and lives and breathes winemaking and this shows in the quality of his wines.</p> | Gewurtztraminer, Pinot blanc, and Reisling | Liberation – normally £13.79, but less 15% case discount - £11.72 per bottle .8 bottles |
| White | <p>Old Vine Chenin Blanc, The Bernard Series, Coastal, Bellingham 2022– Franschhoek, South Africa. Mark was in his element at the Liberation Group Wine tasting on Wednesday 6th November as they had Reps from 16 of their suppliers each with a stall showcasing some great wines. Despite even my best efforts and enthusiasm, it would have been impossible to try them all but it eventually we managed to narrow a list down to 10 wines we just have to bring along to the Wine Discovery – they were all on very good deals and it was great chatting to the people who were so knowledgeable and enthused about their wines. I was also pleased to bump into 4 Wine Discoverers there too! – so gold stars to Nick Brett, Tina Guille and Ian and Susan Souter.</p> <p>This was one of several outstanding wines we tasted on a stand which comprised entirely South African wines, especially from Franschhoek region. When we think of South Africa we tend to think of the Dutch influence but it turns out that in the late 1600s French Huguenot refugees (probably relations of many of our forebears in Guernsey!) arrived to begin a new life in what the Dutch Governor of the Cape at the time called a wild and desolate land and the South African wine industry developed on the shoulders of those few hundred refugees who arrived in 1688 and planted the first vines.</p> <p>The area they settled in was Franschhoek which unsurprisingly translates as “French Corner” - and there are many Wine Farms (Vineyards) there that have French names, albeit sometimes with quirky spellings! Here you will find Bellingham which makes</p> | Chenin Blanc | Liberation Wines – Admiral Park normally £23 but on offer at £16.95 (8 bottles) |

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| | <p>this wine, as well as the well-known Boschendal Estate and Rickety Bridge Wine Estate (once both parts of the historic Huguenot “La Provence” Estate) whose more recent owner used to have connections to the Aval du Creux Hotel at the top of Harbour Hill in Sark (now sadly looking very sorry for itself having been closed up for some years) which used to have a wide selection of Rickety Bridge wines on its wine list.</p> <p>Bellingham are an absolute top-drawer producer. The vineyard was originally established in 1693 by a Dutchman and his French Huguenot wife and it was at that time called “Bellinchamp” – translating to “pretty field” (you see what I mean about the quirky French spelling!) – which became anglicised to Bellingham. The “Bernard Series” is a tribute to Bellingham’s modern day founder Bernard Podlashuk who was a trail blazer and he established this winery’s stellar reputation and helped shape the modern SA wine industry – this is a hand crafted, individual, terroir driven wine and a top end Chenin Blanc – which is of course South Africa’s signature white grape/wine – also known as Steen.</p> <p>We absolutely loved this wine and were not alone – my friend Ed was with us and he pulls no punches with his outspoken opinions on wine (and just about everything else!) and ordinarily he is not a great fan of white wine – but he was bowled over by this wine.</p> <p>Whilst it is not inexpensive – normally £23 but on a great offer at £17, it really punches way above its price tag with a long finish, fruit driven and the feel of a top Burgundy white – or at least a great alternative to one! Bellingham place a lot of emphasis on the “mouthfeel” of their wines, with a subtle oak maturation to give complexity and structure and minimal intervention.</p> <p>I think this could be one to go with the Turkey (or Salmon) on Christmas Day – or you could just keep it all to yourself and savour a glass or two! Decanter gave the wine 97 points and a platinum award in 2021 saying it has “a big, inviting nose of spicy new French Oak, honeysuckle, tarte tatin, river stones and smoky quince – a lovely, creamy, slippery texture with a touch of tannin and a long tangy finish”</p> | | |
| Red | <p>Cotes du Rhone A.O.P. “Pont de Fleur” Les Chais de la Grange- Southern Rhone Valley 2023 The appellation of “Cotes du Rhone” is the generic entry level of the hierarchy of the Rhone wines. However, it is too simplistic to say that wines falling into this category will be necessarily less of a wine than those of Cotes du Rhone Villages or the Cru wines. Guigal for example produces a top end “basic” Cotes du Rhone as alluded to in these notes which will be more expensive and superior to many wines in the upper classifications. Also in some cases growers may choose to declassify their wines to a more basic appellation if it gives them more flexibility in grapes they can use, production techniques – or they may feel their vines are too young to make the so called better wines.</p> <p>Perhaps a little unusually for France this label actually tells us what the grapes are – the French are obsessed with “Terroir” and where the wine comes from, grape variety is to some extent of academic interest – they would in case likely know a Southern Rhone wine will be Grenache dominant as each appellation has strict rules as to which grape varieties can be used in its wines, and percentages of each - so a grower cannot just decide to plant say Malbec vines in the Cotes du Rhone and sell it under that appellation’s name – it could be probably sold as a simple table wine – but in truth the French have been producing wines for so long they have by trial and error concluded which grapes thrive in each region so growers will largely stick with</p> | Grenache, Syrah, Carignan and Cinsault | M & S £6.00 but less 10% case discount so £5.40 net to group |

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| | <p>those varieties - so Grenache thrives in the intense heat of the Southern Rhone and dominates Southern Rhone wines, whereas Syrah prefers a cooler climate so Syrah dominates wines of the Northern Rhone.</p> <p>In this case rather than Mourvedre we have several other permitted varieties in the blend – Carignan and Cinsault which are also classic Rhone varieties. So is a wine which is a blend of grape varieties less of a wine than one which is a single variety – in short, no! Grape varieties are used in varying proportions with each lending a particular quality to the wine – as we have described in these notes! In some cases all the grapes used will be vinified together – in other instances the producer will vinify each individually and then blend the resulting wines together to create the blend – the proportions used of each variety will need to conform with Appellation rules although there is generally a degree of flexibility provided minimums are met</p> <p>This is the wine that inspired our Basic, Better, Best theme today – Ian and Susan Souter have been enjoying this wine and thought it might make a selection for one of our red options – it is very good value indeed and I am always open to suggestions so if you do find a wine you think others should know about, let me know! Do keep in mind this wine is almost half the price of the other wines at their normal shelf prices but we thought it would be fun to have a week where we effectively focus on the red wines from one specific region and incorporate the fun of a bit of a blind tasting to see if those more expensive wines justify the extra investment! The likelihood will be I suspect that each style will have its fans! Rhone wines come into their own at this time of year as we start to enjoy hearty casseroles and stews and rich spag bols!</p> | | |
| Red | <p>Sainte Cecile - Cotes du Rhone Villages A.O.P. Chateau De Ruth, Southern Rhone Valley, France 2023 The Cotes du Rhone Villages appellation is the middle tier of the three theoretical quality levels of Cotes du Rhone wines. The Cotes du Rhone Villages AOP classification was established in 1966 following earlier efforts in 1953. (Cairanne was in fact one of the original five villages that fell into this category as their wines stood out from the rest). Producers are required to adhere to stricter wine growing and making rules than those for basic Cotes du Rhone.</p> <p>This wine in fact falls into that superior category described above of the 20 villages which use a hybrid combination of their village name and the words “Cotes du Rhone Villages” on their label – for our purposes we will regard this as our middle ranking wine - although in theory it should be better than a straightforward Cotes du Rhone Villages wine though not quite the standard of a full Cru wine like Cairanne!</p> <p>This wine was one of very few awarded a full five stars by “The Telegraph” in its review of the best (and worst!) Cotes du Rhone reds – it is from an old Estate that faces Mont Ventoux and the Dentelles de Montmirail, a darker, more dense style of Rhone Red – more on the black fruits with bramble, black pepper, thyme and violets that unfold slow and satisfyingly with finesse. This wine has won silver at the International Wine Challenge this year.</p> <p>The winemaker is Vincent Moreau who sold his family business to retrain as a vigneron at 37 and now owns one of the largest private estates in the Cotes du Rhone, Chateau de Ruth and is revitalising this ancient estate – it has been a wine estate since at least 1680 and the Romans were there 2,000 years ago. It was in a poor state when Vincent bought it in 2010 and he has replanted 90 out of 110 hectares with Syrah also planted on the Grenache dominant estate – he has retained some of the oldest vines for his very top cuvee – winemaking techniques are right up to date and his focus is on making “highly drinkable</p> | Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre | Co OP - £10.00 but we are lucky to benefit from a 10% staff discount thanks to Karen’s mum so £9.00 net to the Group |

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| | <p>wines” - rich, supple with a balance of juicy fruit, spice and freshness. The terroir is pebbles and this make it dry giving powerful wines and this is exemplified in Sainte Cecile wines which tend to be deep, smooth and harmonious.</p> <p>The “Cotes du Rhone Villages Sainte Cecile” classification was established in 2016 and covers five communes including Sainte Cecile les Vignes which gives this sub region its name and coincidentally Cairanne is just to the East. It comprises three co operatives and fifteen independent wine producers spread over 740 acres of vineyards.</p> | | |
| Red | <p>Cairanne A.O.P. Cru Village of Cotes du Rhone “Carius” Les Grandes Serres – Southern Rhone Valley, France 2020 As we will discover this afternoon, the wines of the Southern Rhone are classified into three (strictly, four – see below -but let’s try and keep things as simple as possible!!) theoretical quality levels – the word theoretical is important as there are outstanding wines at all levels – e.g., a Guigal “basic” Cotes du Rhone wine is more expensive than many of the “top” cru wines for example and is often compared favourably to Chateauneuf du Pape!</p> <p>At the top theoretical level we have the so called “cru” wines of the Cotes du Rhone – these are the villages allowed to use their own village/commune names on the wine (rather than the more generic “Cotes du Rhone Villages” designation) One of those with full Cru status is Cairanne, which is one of nine full Cotes du Rhone “Crus”</p> <p>To complicate things however, there is a further category of 20 villages which effectively can have their village name on the label as part of a hybrid title of their village name and the words Cotes du Rhone Villages. These 20 village wines rank between those villages with full Cru status like Cairanne and Cotes du Rhone Villages.</p> <p>Cairanne was elevated to its full “Cru” status in 2016 with its very own “A.O.P.” and is a picturesque hilltop fortified village close to the Rhone River – hot, dry summers are ideal for ripening Grenache and Mourvedre which are the principal grapes of the Southern Rhone but Cairanne’s cooler microclimates also benefit Syrah which generally prefers the cooler climate of the Northern Rhone.</p> <p>Soils are limestone – Grapes are the classic Southern Rhone blend of “GSM” - Grenache gives complexity, depth and softness - Syrah adds the colour, fruity flavour and floral hints – Mourvedre gives spice and tannin and gives ageing potential. Maison Grandes Serres which produces this wine was established in Chateauneuf du Pape in 1976 and in 2014 it partnered with Cairanne’s main co operative winery and is one of the leading producers in the village with excellent wines. Olly Smith says this is a “gorgeous, romping red with dusky exotic hint – sky high quality for the price” We are told to expect plum, raspberry, cherry and smokiness a touch of earthy mushroom on the nose, elegant palate with great fruit definition, silky tannins and long finish at the softer, fresher end of the spectrum. On a “no brainer” offer at the Co Op.</p> <p>Other full Cru villages include Gigondas, Vacqueyras, Lirac, Rasteau, Vinsobres – you will also find wines such as Visan, Seguret, Sablet in the hybrid name category and we have tried some of these in the past – Gigondas is a particularly well known top cru wine but you will find others on supermarket shelves if you look hard.</p> | Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre (so called “GSM”) | Co Op normally £10.50 but on offer at £8.50 and less 10% staff discount so £7.65 net to the Group |