

ASI MAGAZINE

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TIM ATKIN MW, KONSTANTIN BAUM MW,
JULIAN PERRY
AI, Social Media, and the Web



JANE ANSON,
SÉVERINE BONNIE
Bordeaux NFT

THE TECHNOLOGY ISSUE



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Welcome!



*William Wouters,
President ASI*

The Technology and Sommellerie Paradox

As I write this welcome letter, I am sitting in my kitchen basking in the morning light, overlooking a sweeping vista of vineyards in my home of Bairrada. With nature all around me it's easy to let myself think I am disassociated with technology. My wife (Filipa) and I farm our vineyards biodynamically, and work naturally in our cellars, with a minimum of modern intervention, to craft our wine. Yet as much as we strive to produce wine with as little outside influence as possible, our lives are also wrapped in technology. Our phones are constantly pinging with WhatsApp messages from clients and friends around the globe. Posting images to social media has become as normal and regular as making a cup of coffee in the morning.

There is a certain irony or paradox in that Filipa and I, along with a collective of modern winemakers and sommeliers are increasingly embracing the past in terms of the wines we make and recommend but are also governed by a reliance on technological advances in other aspects of our lives. Perhaps the most talked about and contentious issue currently is the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI). What will its future hold for the wine industry and sommellerie? Could there be a future where consumers rely on AI

as their source of wine information, inside and outside the restaurant? Guest Editors Tim Atkin MW and Konstantin Baum MW, along with contributor Dr. Lisa Thach MW don't think so. On the other hand, they do agree AI, and robotics, will change our work lives going forward. Rather than fear AI, sommeliers will need to embrace it and be willing to adapt their work lives to take advantage of the efficiencies AI can bring. Likewise, our contributors see consumers continuing to rely on, if not value more, the humanity sommeliers bring to an increasingly digitised world. Our very humanity and ability to understand the nuance of wine, spirits and other beverages and its relationship to mood, occasion and the individuality of each guest is our advantage.

One aspect of technology that is already a pervasive part of our world is social media, itself driven by AI. As social media becomes more prolific, and how and where younger consumers gain their knowledge of wine, will we have to adapt our understanding of what sommellerie is? In this issue Guest Editor Konstantin Baum MW, whose own social media presence has grown substantially over the years, talks about the role of social media in the new age of wine. Is social media a necessity for sommeliers?

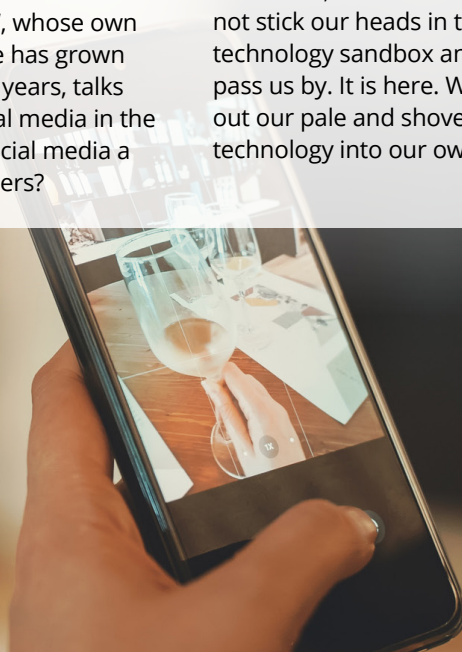
According to Konstantin it isn't for traditional sommeliers, but in a world when we need to be increasingly nimble and diverse, having a social media presence allows modern sommeliers to explore new opportunities and pivot their work life to embrace an everchanging world.

Technology is changing not only how we communicate about wine, but also how wine is sold. Julian Perry, CEO of Wine-Searcher, knows better than anyone the influence of technology on the wine world. We asked Julian about innovations at Wine-Searcher and how he sees the world of wine and sommellerie adapting as a result of new technologies such as advances in AI, and the increasing prevalence of wine NFTs. We asked Jane Anson, along with Séverine Bonnie of Chateau Malartic, to share their visions of NFTs particularly in relation to the sales of Bordeaux. Are NFTs the future or just one more way for elite wineries to control the sale and future of their wines?

In the end, we as sommeliers can not stick our heads in the proverbial technology sandbox and hope it will pass us by. It is here. We must get out our pale and shovel and shape technology into our own sand castle.

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

William Wouters, President ASI





ÖTW SINGLE VINEYARD SUMMIT

Austria's most prestigious wine tasting is back

The ÖTW Single Vineyard Summit, Austria's most exciting and demanding tasting, returns in 2023 with an unprecedented selection of single vineyard wines, spanning more appellations than ever before. From 4 - 8 September, around 500 wines will be presented to international trade media, importers, sommeliers and specialist retailers at Grafenegg castle.

The picturesque setting about 50 km west of Vienna is the perfect backdrop for this premium tasting organised by Österreichische Traditionsweingüter (Traditional Wine Estates of Austria). The annual event has been held since 2013 but this year nearly 80 ÖTW wineries along the Danube from Traisental to Carnuntum will take part. The five-day tasting also features site-specific wines from the guest regions of Styria, Eisenberg, Leithaberg and Wachau.

Singular wines with a personal touch

For five days, winemakers will personally serve around 500 site-specific wines. ÖTW wines can be tasted from Monday to Thursday, with Styria's STK wineries joining on the first two days. Burgenland's Eisenberg and Leithaberg are guests on Thursday, while on Friday the event moves to Dürnstein castle in Wachau.

'Silent tasting' format

Personalised tastings: attendees taste the wines they choose, at their own pace, all served by the winemakers themselves. The 'silent tasting' format offers the perfect professional environment. To ensure undisturbed concentration, admission is only granted at the beginning of the pre-booked tasting slots, either at 9 am or 2 pm.

Registration:

The event is only open to wine merchants, sommeliers and gastronomy professionals.

Sign up here:



Places are limited

Wineries joining from Traisental, Kremstal, Kamptal, Wagram, Vienna, Carnuntum, Thermenregion, Leithaberg, Eisenberg, Styria and Wachau

Guest Editors

AI, Technology, Wine Critics & Sommellerie: what's the future?

TIM ATKIN MW, KONSTANTIN BAUM MW, JULIAN PERRY

A DISCUSSION WITH...

Tim Atkin MW, Konstantin Baum MW and Julian Perry



Tim Atkin MW

Tim Atkin MW needs little introduction. The award-winning wine writer and Master of Wine has been a central figure within the industry for more than 35 years. He is a writer and critic for numerous publications, including *Harpers*, *Decanter*, *The World of Fine Wine* and *The Drinks Business* and is one of the Three Wine Men, a group of wine personalities that also includes Olly Smith, Oz Clarke OBE, and now also counts Tom Surgery and wise woman, Susy Atkins. He is also co-chairman of the International Wine Challenge. ASI asked him for his insights on the future of technology in the wine industry, particularly as it pertains to critics and sommeliers.

“Technology in the vineyard has also allowed winery owners and grape growers to manage production during labour shortages, a substantive issue in many countries.”

The wine world has historically taken a cautious approach to technology. Some might argue at times too cautious. While advances shouldn't be adopted without consideration, Atkin sees many positives in current technological advancements, especially as it pertains to the broader wine world, rather than the comparably small world of wine critics he inhabits.

Of technological advancements in the vineyard, Atkin says “technology as it relates to data collection in the vineyard, via satellite imagery and sensors that give indications as it relates to things such as climate change and irrigation decisions in the vineyard has been very positive. We’re living through a period of enormous change and unpredictability. **Good data and something that can analyse that data objectively has been very positive.**”

Technology in the vineyard has also allowed winery owners and grape growers to manage production during labour shortages, a substantive issue in many countries. Atkin elaborates saying “I remember years ago, David Hohnen, who was then the owner of Cape Mentelle and Cloudy Bay said, ‘he picked almost everything by machines.’ In reply I said, ‘why do you do that?’ His response was ‘because they turn up on time, they don’t get pissed (drunk) on a weekday night, and they don’t get bitten by spiders. There are good things about machine harvesting, in the same way that there are about robots picking grapes, or, pruning vines, but most of the negative side is societal.”

Atkin’s reference to societal impact is one that reverbs across many industries, and communities, as the line between technological advancement and broader negative socioeconomic impact is very real. In the case of many European wine countries, picking, whether it is done by local or even migrant workers, is part of the economy. Atkin worries “about the impact that having robots in the vineyard would have on the local economy of some of these places.”

Societal concerns aside, Atkin sees the positive and negative applications of technology on the winemaking side, **potentially taking much of the monotony out of things like doing pump overs, racking, moving barrels around,**

“His response was ‘you know, they (AI) can’t do magic. They can’t cry, and they can’t watch a sunrise. You can never replicate that.”

monitoring fermentations, and other winemaking duties. Atkin elaborates “all of those things can be done by AI as well, if not better than, human beings can do them. However, what you don’t have with AI is judgment, the ability to deal with, for examples, emergencies or things that haven’t happened in the past. The downside of AI in general is that it is backward looking. What it does is based on an aggregation of things that have happened in the past, which doesn’t help you when something arises which requires outside the box thinking.”

What other potentially negative consequences could a reliance on AI in the vineyard and winery have? There have been generations of winemakers who have learned their craft from the very monotonous task AI, technology, robotics seeks to eliminate. What are the future consequences, if winemakers are not given the opportunity to learn



their craft via a tactile understanding of winemaking?

Perhaps it all goes back to the question of AI, technology's ability to be intuitive, and the positive contributions being human can provide. To which Atkin brought up a discussion he had with a friend whom he describes as an 'advertising guru.' Atkin says, "I asked him, 'what do you think?' His response was 'you know, they (AI) can't do magic. They can't cry, and they can't watch a sunrise. You can never replicate that.'" It's a powerful, thought-provoking statement.

Are our winemakers, wine critics, sommeliers' very humanity, our past experiences, our intuition, our heart irreplaceable?



Roberto Olivan

Atkin continues: "I think where AI is potentially very good is in terms of things like sales, analysing data, even doing some onerous functions such as replying to invitations, even certain online tools like Vivino that provide beginners, new wine consumers the confidence to buy a wine in a store or restaurant can be very good. Thinking of myself, as I am going to buy a new car to adhere to reduced emission regulations coming to London, I am looking online for somebody else's opinion,

who knows more about it than I do. I don't think there's anything wrong with that, and I think AI potentially can help in this situation. The worry is will somebody get hold of it and distort it. In the end, the real issue is who controls the AI? I think the concept of who is controlling the message is incredibly important."

Perhaps controversially Atkin isn't opposed to the concept of using AI generated data when judging. "I think having a robot that could give you accurate information on things like residual sugar, alcohol levels, pH, has potential. Is the wine from the vintage it says it is? Technology could be a useful detection tool, as well as a way of assisting judges on a preliminary round." Atkin even goes so far as to suggest AI could replicate the tonality, style of individual wine writers for tasting notes, as an example.



Cobquecura

"Technology could be a useful detection tool, as well as a way of assisting judges on a preliminary round."

But “while I think the language is something that a robot or algorithm could replicate, there is also the question of judgment. For example, knowing I've used the same line three wines back to describe a Malbec. I will think of a different way of saying it, but would AI?”

How does past experience play into the equation? A computer can't tell you how you know when standing in a vineyard how the breeze in one corner feels, nor can it relate wine to other human experiences. Atkin says “you might say, ‘this wine reminds me of - and I'm being very pretentious now - a Fellini film or something. It is probably a ridiculous comparison, but it tells you something about the taster's emotions or frame of reference.” It's the same for a sommelier. Life experiences play a vital role in the effectiveness of

a sommelier to convey the emotion of a wine, deliver customer experience, and infuse a glass of wine with their vision, their understanding of the world.”

Atkin closes “I don't think I'm closed-minded enough to think that AI is all negative. I think there are definitely positive things about it, if we harness them properly. It's never simple.

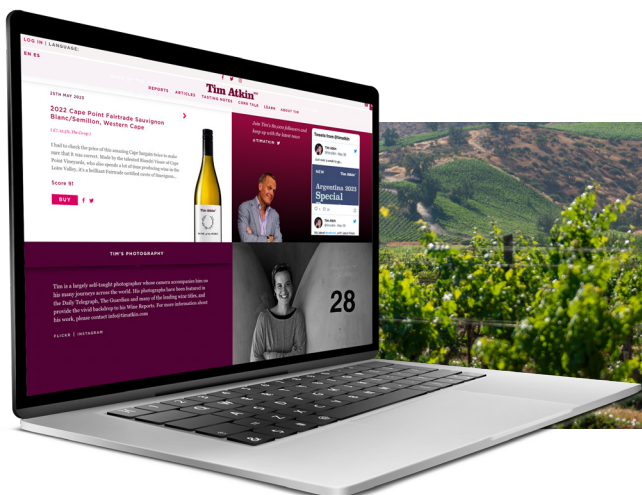
These things are always more complex, more varied, and more nuanced than we like to pretend they are. I think anybody who says “I hate AI” is not thinking it through. In the same way, if anybody says there are no downsides to AI, they are also not looking at the way the world could go and is going, in some cases.”



Rogelio Rabino



Aludena Calvo



Maipo Valley

Konstantin Baum

Master of Wine
and YouTube



Konstantin is a Master of Wine. In fact, he is Germany's youngest Master of Wine, but he is also an entrepreneur running his own successful online wine company, an educator, and a social media personality, although Baum is reluctant to say influencer as despite his hundreds of thousands of social media followers Baum chooses not to promote his own business on his platforms, nor does he actively market brands.



“Go on a platform you enjoy consuming content from as that just makes it easier for you to produce the right content for that platform.”

As for his goals, he says on his website “my mission is to make sure that ‘the world tastes better’ - to shape the choice of wines in retail and gastronomy and to improve people's ability to taste and appreciate wine.” Was Baum’s journey into social media stardom altruism, ego or business savvy? According to Baum, who has one hundred and twenty-five thousand followers on YouTube and tens of thousands of others on other platforms “It’s a bit of mix of all those elements. I started my social media journey quite early. I got into Facebook quite early, when it was hip and new, and then I started posting some stuff on Instagram. I started watching YouTube, first as a consumer, and as I got more and more interested in photography, and making little videos I started sharing them. I realised that there is an opportunity to reach an audience who will be the consumers of wine in the future... in this way social media is becoming more and more important. I wanted to make sure people got the right information

A DISCUSSION WITH...

Tim Atkin MW, Konstantin Baum MW and Julian Perry

on social media, and wanted to create things that I would want to watch so I began posting videos on YouTube. It obviously helped increase my profile and allowed people to become interested in what I do, so there were lots of benefits from it, but I still didn't do it to make money. Even now, I still don't promote my business on YouTube. It's more about sharing information."

As for the choice of platform, Baum suggests aligning content to the most appropriate social media outlet, which in his case was YouTube. "On Instagram it's more about funny memes and short clips... There are some people out there that want to get real information and that's why I am on YouTube. I am also active on Facebook and Instagram, but YouTube has always been my favourite platform and the best match for the type of content I produce. There is no other (social media) platform where you have, the opportunity to communicate

with people for longer periods of time. It gives me the opportunity to talk in detail on subjects where as Instagram, for instance, I can't."

Despite his own personal success, Baum doesn't believe having a social media presence is necessarily important for sommeliers. "I don't think you have to be on social media. For me a sommelier is still someone working in a restaurant... in order to do that properly you don't have to be on social media. Obviously, if you want to extend your reach and be able to inspire a wider audience of people, or branch out to other aspects of the industry, it does help to have a social media presence."

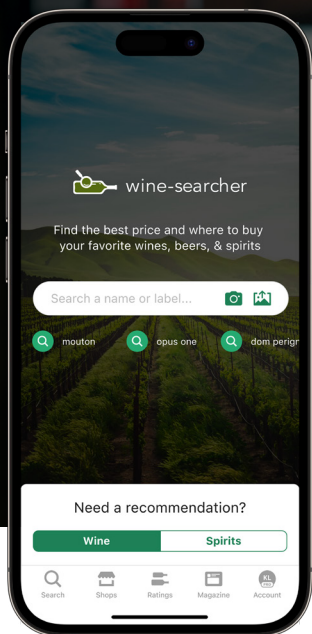
For those sommeliers who are seeking to increase their image and diversify their career path using social media Baum says to "use the right platform. Go on a platform you enjoy consuming content from as that just makes it easier for you to produce the right content for that platform. Whether its TikTok,

Instagram, or Youtube, they all work slightly differently and there are differences in terms of what works or doesn't work on them. Then it's about finding your own voice, which can be difficult. You need to find the right rhythm, the right topics to discuss, the speed to communicate your information, the images you show etc. It all is important, and it takes time to learn all that stuff. It's really about patience. It takes a while to get used to the equipment and the tools you use. I played around with cameras for years before gaining any traction on my YouTube channel.

Ultimately, it's about patience... You must be committed to it and stick to your schedule and make sure you have a replicable format. If you produce a video with a huge budget once and then are not able to do the same every week, your audience won't stick around. Find the right format, that is achievable for you, to go the distance."



Julian Perry CEO Wine-Searcher



At twenty-four years old Wine-Searcher is an elder statesperson of wine-centric technology companies, but despite the comparable old age of the company, under the direction of CEO Julian Perry, it continues to innovate and change the

online wine landscape. Wine-Searcher was established in 1999 by Martin Brown. Perry and Brown first collaborated while Brown worked at English wine retail giant Berry Bros & Rudd. Perry had launched a software development and hosting company, building websites for a variety of businesses, including Berry Bros & Rudd, Sainsburys, and others. Over the years, given the depth of their wine (and spirits) pricing data, the company has in many ways become a veritable tickertape of the wine

industry as the de facto reference for valuation. While the company shares their data publicly through their website, they also offer to the trade automated data services enabling analysis and integration.

Just last year (2022), the venerable website picked up a Golden Vines Innovation Award. Of the award Perry says "it is interesting that such a long-established company is being recognised for innovation. We feel it is entirely justified, as we are constantly improving our systems and services. Recent developments primarily revolve around data, making more information available through our website and App to consumers, though it is our data services to the wine industry that have seem the most development and growth. We are able to offer global structured data supporting analysis and insights that are unique in the wine and spirit's trade. Also, innovation is a consequence of the online world in which we operate, a world which can change quickly – just a few months ago no one had heard of ChatGPT."

For a piece of technology, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, to go from almost no recognition to immense interest in mere months underscores the rapid advancements occurring in the tech space. Of the impact of AI, Perry says "it

"We are able to offer global structured data supporting analysis and insights that are unique in the wine and spirit's trade."

A DISCUSSION WITH...

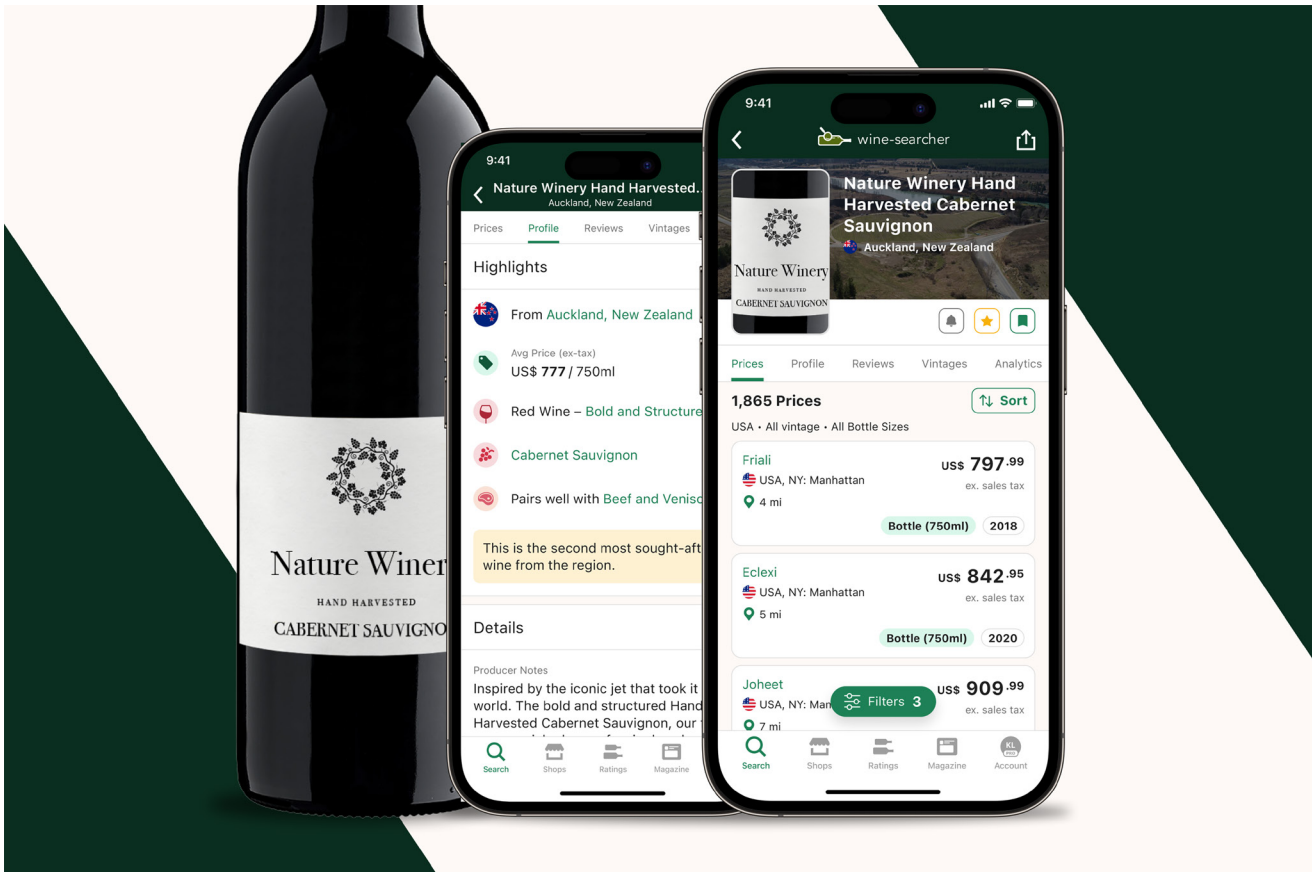
Tim Atkin MW, Konstantin Baum MW and Julian Perry

will transform our personal lives and the way we do business. We have been building and using AI for many years – and we will continue to find and integrate with tools that help consumers and allow us to provide more useful services to the trade. It is too early to predict the outcomes, though it seems likely that the pace of development and change will not slow down. The trade will need to work together at different levels if technology is to be accepted effectively.”

With the availability of detailed wine information which includes both physical characteristics derived from chemical analysis to identify amongst other parameters alcohol, acid levels, residual sugar, but also flavour and aroma compounds, in combination human derived analysis in the form of product reviews and descriptions, AI can make recommendations. However, Perry suggests “the challenge is

to delve into the psychology of what different consumers expect in each scenario. Do they want an AI prediction? Or do they want person-to-person advice? Or would they rather explore for themselves? Or possibly all those things. Science can tell us a vast amount about the chemistry – it’s not clear whether science could predict how our senses, emotions and the situation will combine with the chemistry to create the experience. I don’t think the goal is to find the best wine and only drink that – the delight in wine, and food, is in discovering new tastes and new experiences. An everyday wine can delight in the right circumstances as much as a top-flight wine. The production of wine is a human endeavour, and the enjoyment is a human pleasure and so it seems right that humans should be involved in reviewing and helping people choose.”

“The trade will need to work together at different levels if technology is to be accepted effectively.”



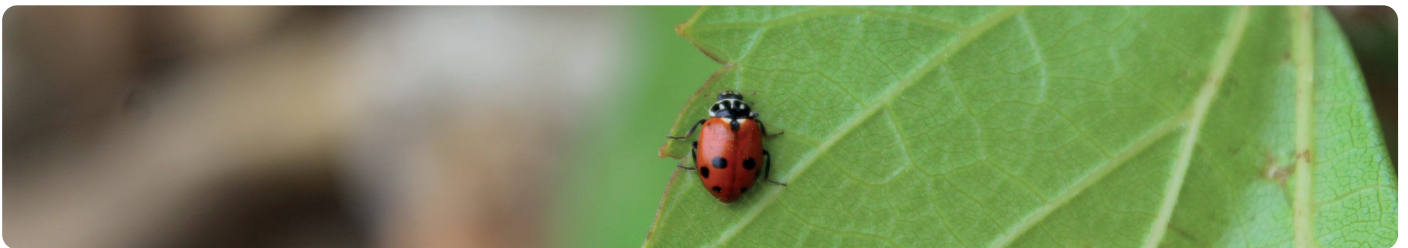
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DES VIGNOBLES & DES HOMMES

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**We are dedicated to sustainable development
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in 100% of our vineyards.**



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NFT: The Future of Fine Wine?

In recent years, the Bordeaux wine industry has witnessed a dramatic rise in the adoption of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFT). What are NFTs? NFTs are defined as unique digital assets that represent proof of ownership and the authenticity of, in the case of the wine industry, it is typically a digital asset linked to a bottle, or barrel of wine, although it doesn't have to be associated with a physical asset. It could be simply a video clip or an image of art, or it could be an experience such as a cellar tasting. In addition to being able to share detailed information about the wine, NFTs are also allowing producers an unprecedented level of understanding of the whereabouts of each bottle of wine sold with an NFT. According to Séverine Bonnie, Director Marketing, Communications, and Hospitality at Château Malartic-Lagravière, an estate which has recently jumped into the NFT pool, "NFT can obviously prevent from fraud practices because they are secured by the Blockchain. With total transparency. The wines (in the case of Château Malartic- Lagravière) stay at the estate until they are redeemed. So, the NFT is a token of security, a certificate of authenticity." Regardless, if kept at the estate, or not, NFTs are in essence technology-driven "smart contracts" recorded on a blockchain. This means it is impossible to forge and once the product is consumed, the NFT vanishes.



Jane Anson

“I think that NFT propose a very efficient way to preserve the quality of the bottle, kept in the château’s cellar instead of traveling around the world from wineshop to cellar.”

– Jane Anson

While there are many non-monetary benefits about NFTs such as protection against fraud according to Jane Anson there are also economic benefits as she says, “they are primarily seen by the producers as a way of accessing new markets and a different profile of high net-worth consumers.” Bonnie says of their decision, “we decided to create an NFT collection because it is innovative, and disruptive. It gives us a direct access to futures and to the final consumer, reaching a new audience, often younger and different from traditional wine lovers.”

The potential positives are given, but like any new technology and way of trading there are risks. According to Anson “the primary risk is paying more than the wine is worth simply

because there is an NFT attached. Most of the sellers are also newly established, which carries its own risk, particularly when buying En Primeur. What happens if the NFT platform goes bust? We’ve seen this in several instances recently in the wider crypto market, where the crypto coin owners are last in the list for repayment as they are classed as unsecured creditors. In theory a château should honour the NFT as proof of purchase no matter what, but this has not yet been tested out.”

There is also an argument that in the hands of elite estates, NFTs could further push the super premium wine market further down the road of being little more than a commodity for exchange rather than a consumable product.

Will the fine wine NFT buyer see their purchase as wine to eventually be consumed and savoured, or merely as another asset in their portfolio?

The highest echelon of the wine world, particularly Bordeaux's revered Classified Growths, historically have been seen by many as exclusionary, elitist. It begs the question, if the creation of NFTs by top château will only perpetuate this? Are NFTs simply one more way for the top Château to further control the sale of their wine and layer an additional profit center beyond their already ingenious En Primeur offerings, further widening the economic gap between Bordeaux's top estates and the rest of the industry even further?

On this question Anson says, "the first estate to do a wine NFT was Château Darius in St. Emilion, not a classified property. They had good success with it, but there have been some more high-profile instances of things like an entire barrel from Château Angélus. The NFT industry, inevitably looks to the big names to build up their own platforms, so for now yes it probably is another thing that is widening this gap, but it is far from the only thing. Bordeaux is extremely polarised between the successful estates and the many smaller properties who are struggling. It would be great to think this is a technology that can help narrow the gap. I would love to see some examples of this so that I can talk about it." Anson adds "please let me know if you find any good ones!"

Bonnie, unsurprisingly, is more positive, explaining the benefits of reaching new consumers, "NFT gives a real advantage for the estate to reach the final consumer. It is not typical for a top Bordeaux château to create this link with the final consumer, especially speaking of futures. As far as I know, very few top estates have entered the Web3 World so far. I have seen some smaller estates, with very dynamic marketing, that create NFT to stand out. In both cases, it is a very innovative way to communicate and to target new audience, as other luxury brands, such as Chanel, Balenciaga, Louis Vuitton etcetera are doing too. The NFT experience will definitely open Bordeaux wines to a younger and wider audience, that are super connected and international.

"The NFT experience will definitely open Bordeaux wines to a younger and wider audience, that are super connected and international."

– Séverine Bonnie



Séverine Bonnie



Malartic Lagraviere Bottle

The Web3 community is young and loves to discover new things. With the release of Malartic NFT, we reached this audience, mixed with traditional wine lovers. It was interesting to see how the Web3 community is entering this wine experience with great enthusiasm.”

Ultimately the top estates of Bordeaux play in an economic stratosphere that questions of commerce and economic benefit, for the estate and the investor, consumer can't be separated from the discussion. Will NFTs push Bordeaux prices higher? Should a Bordeaux estate make additional revenues in perpetuity on the resale of its NFT wines? Are NFTs good investments?

Anson believes the commission on resale could be positive. As she says, “I absolutely think this is an important aspect of NFTs that does seem fair reward to châteaux for creating the wines in the first place. But it would be great if that could translate into lower prices, in the

knowledge that they can 'take' the added value later down the line. We have seen no suggestion of this happening so far!”

As for any upward price pressures, Bonnie says, “I don't see a real danger as NFT remain for limited edition and special collections.

Of course, the wine in NFT assets can stay unconsumed, but this is also the case of regularly sold wine and many fine wines stay in a wine collectors' cellars and could be resale for speculation. But this concerns a very small number of wines.” Anson says, “I think that NFT propose a very efficient way to preserve the quality of the bottle, kept in the chateau's cellar instead of traveling around the world from wineshop to cellar. It limits the carbon footprint too. One question that arises is retention of value after the wine is consumed. There are suggestions around this, such as a metaverse wine cellar, but still plenty of questions to be answered. It's fascinating but remains an evolving market.”

As far as investing in NFT wines Anson says, “I would try as much as possible to ensure 'utility NFT' where you are getting access and an experience alongside the wine, something that makes the premium price worth it. Also, it is better to be buying an NFT that is directly organised by the chateau, such as what Malartic did recently, rather than a third party (even though there will of course still be an intermediary).”

Of the future of NFT, the jury is still out, but undoubtedly, when it comes to new ways to sell wine, expect Bordeaux producers to lead the way. If you missed Malartic's first NFT release – it sold out within an hour – Bonnie says, “I still haven't decided when will be the next one, but there will be a next one, for sure. It will probably be before the end of the year. The idea is to find the right way to propose an interesting and original new limited edition.”



FAMILLE PERRIN



The Perrin family has always fought to protect its guiding philosophy, which is to place the vine, the soil that supports it and the people who work it at the center of its operations.

Although new technologies bring interesting tools to the wine world and need to be studied, we prefer to draw our strength from a winemaking process that combines ancestral techniques with current know-how.

The vine is a complex ecosystem, both robust and fragile, which does not override the laws of nature but adapts to it. And rather than trying to address the various constraints with energy-intensive technological solutions, we prefer to focus on the knowledge of men and women who care about nature and are inspired by it.

It is important to remember that, in order to preserve the richness of our terroirs, the memory of our ancestors and the quality of our wines, it is up to us to adapt our tools to our parcels and not the other way around.



Sommellerie: a human touch in a tech driven world

An interview with Dr. Liz Thach MW, and Julian Gore-Booth, Executive Director, The Institute of Masters of Wine



FEATURE ARTICLE

Sommellerie: a human touch in a tech driven world

Unless you are living the life of a hermit sommelier you have undoubtedly heard of and even started to think about Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as OpenAI, ChatGPT, Bard and their potential influence on the future of sommellerie. Recently VinePair, The Drinks Business, and others reported that ChatGPT had passed three levels of the Court of Master Sommeliers Master Sommelier exam.

The news was salacious, but was it very provocative? According to Dr. Liz Thach MW “I have to admit, at first, I was a little alarmed by the news because I'm a professor too. I tried doing some of my essay questions using ChatGPT and it did a pretty good job, but it wasn't perfect. There were some errors.” Julian Gore-Booth, Executive Director The Institute of Masters of Wine says, “we need to be aware of what AI can do, what it does that is positive for the MW programme and for the world of wine, and what it does that is (potentially) negative. This will also inform how we, as an institution, manage our response to AI.”

The Institute of Masters of Wines has protections currently in place. Exams are invigilated, and according to Gore-Booth “the exam software that we use prevents candidates accessing the internet during exams, and candidates do not have access to their mobile phones, or smart watches whilst sitting the exam. Technological responses to AI – such as anti-plagiarism software being able to recognise AI generated text – are also becoming more advanced.”

While AI's ability to take examinations is provocative, on a level, it is certainly a minor consideration compared to the

“I don't think technology is ever going to replace the need for a professional sommelier or wine store wine expert, because it can't taste...”

- Dr. Liz Thach MW



“So that brings the personal side of the equation into it. I think there’s always going to be that human side that needs to come in.”

- Julian Gore-Booth

greater potential impact of AI and robotics on the roles of sommeliers, wine writers and critics in the future. Thach says of the potential of AI, robots replacing sommeliers “I don’t think technology is ever going to replace the need for a professional sommelier or wine store wine expert, because it can’t taste... The other piece, especially with respect to the ‘somm’ part of the equation, AI can’t replace the aesthetics, the beauty a ‘somm’ brings to serving and presenting the wine, selecting the right glass, and the conversation that goes back and forth between sommelier and guest.”

Perhaps it is a sommelier’s very humanity that in itself prevents us from ever being supplanted by robots. Is wine more than just a summation of flavours? Gore-Booth says “whilst I do not think that AI can replace the nuance required to understand wine in the way we expect of an MW, we do need to be aware of what it can do in terms of machine learning and chemistry. Claims that AI can “taste” are often presented in inverted commas, and this really highlights the key point for me, chemical analysis, identifying flavour compounds and faults – these science-based analyses will be extremely useful to winemakers – they already are - but understanding and interpretation of that data will still be massively enhanced by the human experience and the knowledge of experts. AI is a tool, and if used responsibly and well, a very useful one, but the human palate, knowledge and expertise will remain essential to a full understanding of wine for the foreseeable future.”

Thach also suggests human connection, culture and storytelling brings life and pleasure to the wine experience. “Recently, I was in Las Vegas at Michael Mina. So, I decided to experiment with what I ordered there. I had to see if ChatGPT could come up with a good recommendation. I asked it what would go with a lobster pot pie? It came up with three different recommendations Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and sparkling wine, but it couldn’t see the wine list. So, in this case it couldn’t recommend anything specific... ultimately ChatGPT recommended that I talk to the server. To quote ‘as always your personal tastes preferences will ultimately determine which dish you choose, feel free to ask your server at Michael Mina restaurant for their recommendations.”

Perhaps the underlying word at play here is ‘trust’. At our human core we trust each other more than we do technology. Gore-Booth says “wine has been made, enjoyed, discussed and interpreted for thousands of years. The MW exam has been going for 70 years.

I think there is an intellectual curiosity in the wine world that seeks out knowledge and expertise, and trust forms a key part of that journey." Thach concurs noting "in terms of a critic or wine writer's use of AI in general. While we can give it a topic and it can write about it, we will still have to get personal interview quotes, and add our own personal opinion as well. So that brings the personal side of the equation into it. I think there's always going to be that human side that needs to come in."

"Perhaps it is a sommelier's very humanity that in itself prevents us from ever being supplanted by robots."

As AI becomes more pervasive, the whole issue of authenticity could become even more important in the future.

Thach says "already young people are becoming

skeptical about things that are out there. I think we're going to see people providing more of their personal experience with wine than

we have in the past, versus just describing a wine by its aromas, tannins, alcohol etcetera. Personal opinions may become more important in the sense that as AI becomes pervasive, consumers may actually want to align more to a specific person rather than autogenerated content."

While a sommelier's humanity, trustworthiness, and ability to a tell story about wine is what will keep sommeliers working the floor as they always have, it is entirely plausible, even probable, that how they work will change.

Thach says "ultimately, I think there is going to be a nice blend of artificial intelligence, human intelligence, human heart, storytelling, and of course, the aesthetics and the beauty of the sommelier coming together." Where AI, even perhaps robotics, will be reducing the amount of time sommeliers spend on inventory, ordering, writing wine lists and more. In conclusion Gore-Booth says "It's about how you use AI. Used responsibly and well it will provide a complement to the human experience whilst not replacing it."



FAMILIA
TORRES



Ancestral grape varieties adapted to climate change

Forty years ago, Familia Torres embarked on an exciting project close to its heart: the resurgence of ancestral varieties that were believed extinct after the devastating phylloxera plague of the late 19th century. This is a project that recovers Catalonia's wine-growing heritage and which, today, thanks to the impetus of the fifth generation, is in full swing, with five wines already available on the market.

With more than 50 varieties discovered, efforts are placed on only six of them, those with the greatest oenological interest and capacity to adapt to climate change because they are long-cycle varieties resistant to high temperatures and drought.

"We have been experimenting with these varieties for many years, getting to know them little by little and becoming aware of their full potential. I am convinced that, with them, we can make unique wines, with an excellent acidity, that recover our history and at the same time help us adapt to climate change", said Miguel Torres Maczassek, fifth generation of Familia Torres.

The latest exponent of this project is Clos Ancestral Blanco, an organic white wine made in Penedès with the pre-phylloxera variety Forcada and a small percentage of Xarel-lo. It is the new wine in the Clos Ancestral range, which already includes a red organic wine made from the ancestral Moneu and the native varieties Tempranillo and Garnacha, also from the Penedès region. Grans Muralls was the first proposal by Familia Torres with the ancestral varieties Garró and Querol, planted in Conca de Barberà, one of the winery's most iconic wines. The grapes Forcada from Penedès, and Pirene from the pre-Pyrenees, are the stars of two limited production single-varietal wines that complete, for the time being, the range of Familia Torres' ancestral wines.

Sommelier's Social Network

FEATURE ARTICLE



Enjoying and telling people about it. In a way, our task as sommeliers could be summarised as this: it is to enjoy ourselves and to enjoy the enjoyment of others. As hosts in the restaurant, it is our job to transmit the joy of experience and knowledge.

When a sommelier plays the role of a link between the winery and the customer, a well understood and intelligently used social media presence can become an invincible ally, breaking barriers, amplifying the message and expanding their customer base. But how much do we usually think about this? How important do we really see digital media, not only for our businesses but also, and more importantly, for our personal brands?

Instagram, a podcast, LinkedIn, a blog, our own website, Twitter, emails, Facebook, TikTok. Each channel has its own voice, audience, and way of understanding. And, while it is true that it is not necessary to be in all of them at the same time, there is a mantra that I personally love which says, 'we must be there where our customer is.' Then comes the fundamental question: what do we want to achieve with our digital presence? And from there begins the task of going deeper, understanding what our strengths are, who we are going to talk to and where those people are.



Mariano Braga

Sommelier's Social Network

Six Strategies for Success in Networks

1. ▶ **YOU MUST TREAT SOCIAL MEDIA AS A JOB.** Like any project it needs to be undertaken seriously. It is vital to dedicate hours of work, patience and professionalism when performing the task.
2. ▶ The second key aspect of good social media is perseverance. **THERE ARE NO OVERNIGHT MIRACLES.** To see results, the horizon must be set in the medium- and long-term. It is a brand building process. It takes years.
3. ▶ **THE NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS DOES NOT MATTER.** It really doesn't. Nor does how many "likes" a post can garner. The focus should always be on the community, because even a good business plan can be set up if we have three figures of followers.
4. ▶ Forget about quantity, because the only important thing is **QUALITY CONTENT.** Information should be consumable, meaning the user can read it, understand it and learn from it. Remember the three pillars: educate, inform, and entertain.
5. ▶ **OMNICHANNEL IS ESSENTIAL.** All of us use multiple tools simultaneously. We read emails, listen to a podcast, surf a social network, and watch videos on YouTube. Be where the customer is, with commitment, perseverance, and professionalism.
6. ▶ **FINALLY, TRAIN YOURSELF.** Social networks evolve and it is up to you to adapt to these changes. The future is digital, and if we are not there, others will be... you better be there too.

Three Accounts Which Have Mastered Social Media



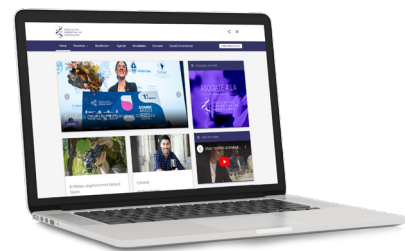
Sonal Holland MW

I think she is one of the figures with the greatest, most varied and sustained over time digital presences. She has managed to decode wine terminology to bring it closer to a massive and international audience.



Marc Almert

Marc has made a noticeable turn in his Instagram and LinkedIn accounts after being crowned World's Best Sommelier, and with even greater dynamism beginning in mid-2021. He spices up his personal and restaurant service experiences with informative posts, videos in vertical format, and technical knowledge seeking a knowledgeable audience.



Argentine Association of Sommeliers (AAS)

This is a beautiful demonstration of a well-applied networking strategy in the case of a corporate account, which is often more difficult than a personal account. This association of sommeliers achieves a very interesting balance of informing what it does to its members, but also how it represents facts about the viticulture and viniculture of their country.

A Wine-Soaked Social Network

There's a new app that wants wine lovers to connect with sommeliers. A veritable Facebook for those that want to meet likeminded people and connect over a glass.

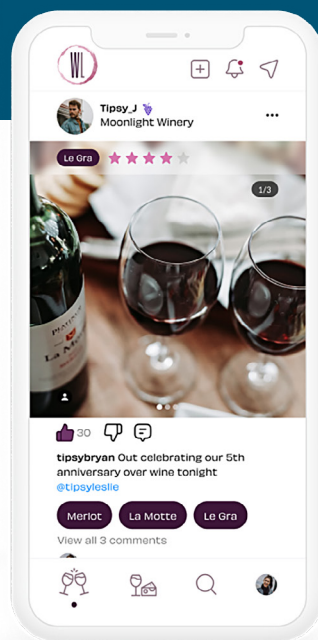
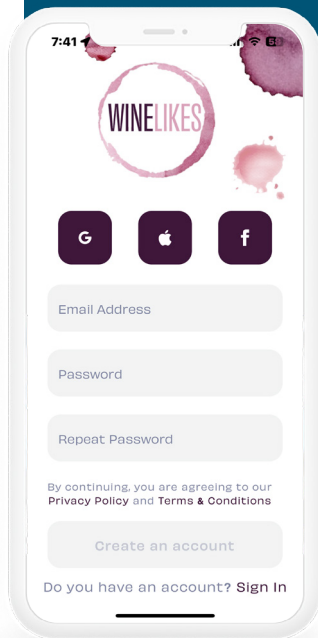
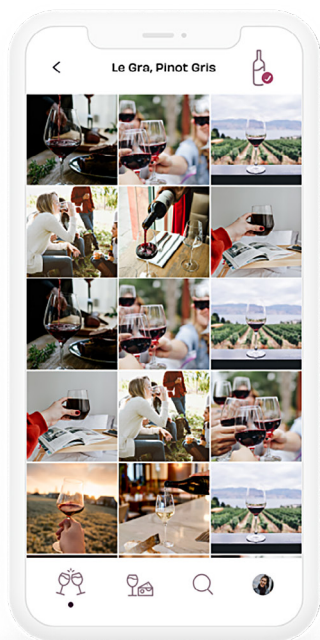


One thing that sets Winelikes apart from other social media apps is that human interaction is placed first and technology is second, said Jeff Gillis, founder of Winelikes. The site doesn't use algorithms, AI to drive people to certain posts; instead, it focuses on showing people content from those they follow. That gives wine professionals, who will be certified as experts on the app, a clear pathway to identifying themselves, and potentially monetising their use of the site.

"The Winelikes community can follow them and be guided by their choices," said Gillis. "With influencing tools such as quizzes, sommeliers can begin teaching users, then take that off the app to offer classes. They can post pictures of wines they like and begin getting sponsorships within the app with wineries or wine companies as their followers grow." Other opportunities will develop as the site grows.

For the general wine lover on the app, they can take quizzes designed to help them develop their preferences and learn about grapes, regions, and terminology. A food pairing feature also helps individuals determine what wines will go best with meals. It also encourages to connect with wine loving friends and colleagues, learn about places to visit when they're traveling and arrange in-person meetups at restaurants and wine bars.

FEATURE ARTICLE



Sommelier's Social Network

Study Wine Online

By Xeniya Volosnikova

Studying wine online is a debatable topic. What about tasting, visiting the region, meeting the winemaker? All of this was taken away by the pandemic, but what the pandemic has taught us is that we can travel the world from the comfort of our home, and via a good wi-fi connection. Though many of the selected courses below existed before, with a few appearing during the pandemics, we can say that they have never seen such a surge of interest as there was during the global lockdown. If you have a few spare hours and want to zoom in on a certain region, these online courses are your solution.

Discovering Bourgogne Wine e-learning by BIVB

“Modern, dynamic, and interactive, this online tool is a fun way to improve your knowledge of Bourgogne wines in just 90 minutes.” It offers a condensed e-learning opportunity with videos, quizzes, and producer interviews. A great way to start you off on the region.

Cost: Free

Available in: French, English, Japanese, and Mandarin

Certification: A digital certificate upon completion

Capstone California by the California Wine Institute

This is a profound course developed by industry professionals with increasing complexity at each level. Capstone takes you through the region's history, geography, viticulture, AVAs, iconic wineries and provides key statistics.

Cost: Fees range by level, starting at \$175 USD

Available in: English and Mandarin

Certification: Digital certificate upon completion of each level

Cava Academy by D.O. Cava

A deep dive into the region that is experiencing a lot of changes recently (new regional denominations, labeling terms, categories, etc.) with a special focus on Cava's versatility and gastronomy.

Cost: Fees apply by level, starting with Cava Expert for free and Cava Educator at €160 (tasting samples and shipment within the EU included). An onsite advanced level is also available

Available in: English, Spanish, and Catalan

Certification: Digital certificate upon completion

Champagne MOOC by Comité Champagne

Four educational modules focusing on the Champagne making process, the terroir, history and economy, as well as diversity and tasting.

Cost: Classic version is free and premium level priced at €49

Available in: English, French, and Japanese

Certification: Official statement of completion available at premium level

Sherry Academy by D.O. Jerez-Xérès-Sherry & D.O. Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda

A well-structured education of the region, with infographics, videos, quizzes and interviews at hand for a blended learning, reviewing historical aspects, introduction to viticulture, production techniques and aging of all types of Sherry.

Cost: Free, basic and advanced levels

Available in: English, and Spanish

Certification: Digital certificate upon completion

Rioja Wine Academy by Rioja DOCa

A concise and intensive course on Rioja's territory, grape varieties, styles of wine and classification, DOCa regulations and various aspects of production, gastronomy and history.

Cost: Free

Available in: English, Spanish, and Mandarin

Certification: Digital certificate upon completion

School of Port by Symington Family Estates

The Essentials Video course – a 16-episode video series by educator Isabel Monteiro, on the key topics about port, including: the history, terroir, sustainable initiatives, ageing process, serves, cocktails, pairings, etc.

Cost: Free

Available in: English

Certification: Digital certificate upon completion

Swiss Wine Campus by Swiss Wine

A free online training about Swiss wines, with 3 levels of complexity (beginner, amateur, expert) discovering 6 Swiss wine regions, with the peculiarities of the local grape varieties, their blends, and the best way to serve them and to match them to the local dishes.

Cost: Free

Available in: English, German, French, and Italian

Certification: Digital certificate upon completion

Wines of Portugal Academy by Wines of Portugal

Discover 14 wine regions and their unique terroirs through six informative modules that cover a variety of topics related to the Portuguese wine sector, from history, wine regions, grape varieties, wine styles and food pairing.

Cost: Free

Available in: English, Portuguese and Japanese

Certification: Digital certificate upon completion

Wines of South Africa Online Wine Course by Wines of South Africa

Six informative modules cover a variety of topics related to the South African wine industry, from history, varieties, wine styles and winegrowing areas to sustainable production and tourism.

Cost: Free

Available in: English

Certification: Digital certificate upon completion



In conclusion, only a few online courses offer a tasting opportunity, so be prepared to source samples yourself. In addition, generally there is no personal feedback provided, as most of the online courses are built as one-sided communication, with the tests, and quizzes in the end to check your knowledge. It is an excellent way to get started on a region or a wine style, that can be done at your own pace. Plus, it saves travel time and costs, all you need is motivation and discipline to finish it!

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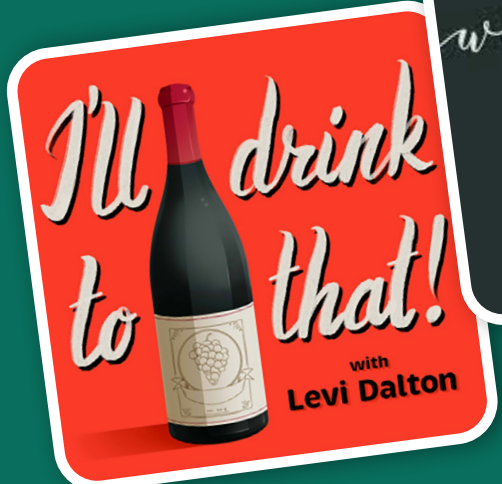
New Consumers - Innovations
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The Sounds of Wine

Podcasts exploded in popularity during the global pandemic. Now listening to these audio shows, are part of many of our daily habits, and can be a great way to get solid wine education without attending a class.

FEATURE ARTICLE

10 Wine podcasts worth listening to



10 Wine podcasts worth listening to

1 Spanish Wine Experience

Luke Darracot and Roque Madrid lead listeners on a fun, yet educational, journey through the Spanish world of wine.

2 The Tim Atkin Cork Talk Podcast

Tim Atkin MW chats with the wine world's most influential people.

3 The Wine Conversation

Host Sarah Kemp explores the wonderfully complex world of wine, full of amazing people and places.

4 Wine Love Story by Wine Paris

Wine Love Story by Wine Paris brings to life the memory of great lovers of gastronomy and wine by immersing them in their memories of their first glass. They talk about their first impressions, their feelings, their desires for discovery and even sometimes about this not necessarily sensational memory!

5 The Inside Winemaking Podcast

Napa Valley winemaker, Jim Duane, hosts interviews with some of the top winemakers in California and beyond.

6 Wine Blast with Susie and Peter

Married Masters of Wine, Susie Barrie and Peter Richards, bring wine to life with a smile via interviews with amazing people, provocative chat, food, tips, giveaways, your questions, gentle bickering and a certain amount of over-sharing.

7 UK Wine Show

The UK Wine Show is all about wine and the UK wine scene. Chris Scott interviews winemakers, consumers, wine bar owners, scientists, you name it. If it is about wine in the UK they will cover it.

8 I'll Drink to That

A former sommelier, Levi Dalton, interviews incredibly famous and knowledgeable wine personalities in his tiny apartment. He gets them to talk candidly about their lives and work, and then shares the conversations.

9 Wine Ghosts

The Wine Ghosts Podcast is about giving voice to passionate professionals in the wine industry. All content has been created with the pure passion of the sommelier behind the site: Máté Vass.

10 Matthew's World of Wine and Drink

Matthew Gaughan is an Englishman in California soaking up the sun and educating the world about wine.

Click on any title and start listening today!

Make Me a Match

The Somm Bot Battle

AI such as ChatGPT has revolutionised the world, but will it impact our roles of sommeliers? While it may improve efficiencies, it can't replace the human experience. To see the difference between AI and sommeliers we asked ChatGPT to provide a recipe and pairing for two classic dishes. We then asked two sommeliers for their pairing recommendations. Judge for yourself.

The Dish

Classic Beef Wellington

The Sommelier

Alejandra Gavigán, Paraguay

ChatGPT Pairing

2015 Château Montrose Saint-Estèphe

A classic choice to pair with Beef Wellington is a full-bodied red wine, such as a Cabernet Sauvignon or a Bordeaux blend. These wines pair well with the rich flavour of the beef, the earthy tones of the mushrooms, and the buttery puff pastry. For this dish, I would recommend a 2015 Château Montrose. This Bordeaux blend from Saint-Estèphe, France with a black fruit aroma is perfect for pairing with the tenderloin beef, and the tannins in the wine complement the richness of the dish. It's a great vintage year for this wine, with a balance of fruitiness and structure that will enhance the flavours of the beef without overwhelming them.

Alejandra's Pairing

2020 Zorzal Wine Eggo Filoso Pinot Noir, Gualtallary, Mendoza, Argentina

When it comes to such a noble cut of meat like beef tenderloin accompanied by earthy mushrooms, some Dijon mustard and buttery pastry puff, I like pairing



this dish with a delicate Pinot Noir like this one that Juan Pablo Michelini makes to perfection.

This is a yummy Pinot Noir with a lot of red fruit aromas, great graphite-like minerality, and great acidity. The tenderness from the meat and round tannins bind perfectly, as well as cleaning the palate from the buttery richness of the pastry and complementing the mushrooms to perfection.

The Dish

Lobster Thermidor

The Sommelier

Erica Taylor, South Africa

ChatGPT Pairing

2018 Domaine Roulot Meursault Les Vireuils

With Lobster Thermidor, you can't go wrong with a classic white Burgundy from Meursault. Specifically, a great choice would be the 2018 Domaine Roulot Meursault

Les Vireuils, which has a rich and creamy texture with bright acidity and flavors of hazelnuts, lemon curd, and butterscotch. This wine will complement the richness of the dish and its buttery and creamy notes while also cutting through the richness and cleansing the palate.

Erica's Pairing

2018 Raats Family Wines Chenin Blanc, Stellenbosch, South Africa

For those seeking the perfect wine pairing to complement Lobster Thermidor, Raats Family Wines Chenin Blanc 2018 stands out for multiple reasons. This particular varietal is renowned for its high acidity and refreshing qualities, making it an optimal match for the dish's richness. The acidity of this wine melds perfectly with the creamy sauce in a delightful contrast that elevates each element.

Moreover, the scent profile of this Chenin Blanc contains undertones of white peach, apricot, and pear

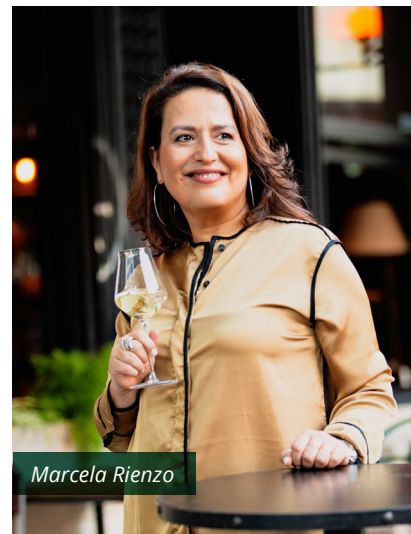
that provide a simultaneous balance between delicate sweetness and crisp effervescence, perfectly harmonising with the Lobster Thermidor. Notably, the Raats Family Wines Chenin Blanc 2018 perfectly balances its refreshing acidity and rich texture, making it a perfect pairing for Lobster Thermidor.

Also the wine's crisp minerality highlights the coastal flavours of the dish while complementing its creamy sweetness. Moreover, its full-bodied character supports and enhances the richness of the lobster meat, delivering a satisfying dining experience.

Member News

The Argentine Association of Sommeliers Announces New President

Marcela Rienzo is the new president of the Argentine Association of Sommeliers. Rienzo is a graduate of the Escuela Argentina de Sommeliers (EAS) and has more than 15 years of experience working in the industry as an independent sommelier for wineries and restaurants. She is also a television personality as the sommelier on the TV programme 'Cocineros Argentinos'. Of the decision Rienzo says "it came up naturally because of my role in the last board of directors. It is an honour for me to hold this position and I hope to continue the path marked by Matías Prezioso." Of her outlook for the future, she says "our job will be focused in keeping and generating activities that give visibility to sommeliers, working more every day with producers and wineries, and also in training our members and supporting our international candidates."



Marcela Rienzo

Valentin Bufolin Ascends to President of Slovenian Sommelier Association

After nearly seventeen years leading the Slovenian Sommelier Association Ivan Peršolja has passed on the responsibilities to Valentin Bufolin. Bufolin will be supported by Vice-Presidents Davorin Škarabot and Peršolja. Bufolin is no stranger to the ASI family, as he represented the country most recently at the ASI 2023 Best Sommelier of the World contest held in Paris earlier this year, and has worked with the ASI Communications team in the past.



Ivan Peršolja (right) with Valentin Bufolin



The First Steps on the Road to Portugal

Last month, members of the ASI board met with the team from the Portuguese Sommelier Association who will be hosting the next ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in 2026. Although, the last contest is barely three months behind us, ASI President William Wouters says "the scale of this contest is now so big, it is imperative we as a board and our host country begin the planning very early. We had great discussions with the team in Portugal. As a consequence, I have full confidence we will have another great showcase of sommellerie as we just witnessed in Paris."



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