
AUTUMN
DISCOVER | EXPLORE | EXPERIENCE
Curl up with a good bottle and uncork seasonal inspiration
IN THIS ISSUE...
6 bottles worth staying in for
Treasure hunting in Argentina
Elevate your autumn dishes
Find out what rock's got to do with wine flavour
THE WINE SOCIETY 1874



BACK TO *wine* SCHOOL!

Are you looking to improve your wine knowledge? Our Tasting Kits are a great way to explore the world of wine without committing to buying full bottles. Each kit contains six 100ml samples from some of the world's most celebrated wineries and come with full tasting notes and videos to help unlock the door to the next level in wine appreciation.

Discover the range at thewinesociety.com/kits

WELCOME TO YOUR AUTUMN MAGAZINE

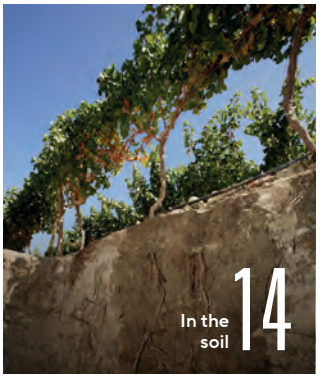
It's time to wave a fond farewell to summer and welcome in the perfect excuse to stay in and curl up with a glass of something delicious. In your new autumn issue, you'll find handy tips for giving seasonal suppers a glow-up! We're also embracing the back-to-school vibe, with simple tips on getting even more out of your membership.

Have you tried one of our hugely popular Tasting Kits? These clever 100ml samples give you the keys to some of the wine world's top addresses and offer the chance to try outstanding wines without committing to a full bottle. Our ever-expanding Exhibition range draws on our little black book of brilliant suppliers to come up with special wines at brilliant prices – a great way to dip your toe into the world of fine wine. Plus there's a beginner's guide to Bordeaux, a bedrock-shaking article on the influence of rocks on wine flavour, travel tales from Argentina and more!

Get in touch: email magazine@thewinesociety.com / call us on 01438 741177 / join in the conversation on The Community at thewinesociety.com/community and take to our social channels: @thewinesociety1874











SOCIETY NEWS

Record numbers at our AGM

More than 1,000 members attended this year's Annual General Meeting (827 in person and 180 online). Listen back to a recording, including members' questions at: **thewinesociety.com/agm**

60 Years in Stevenage!

July 1965 marked one of the most decisive events in our history – the move out of cramped cellars across London to purpose-built temperature-controlled premises in Stevenage, all built to our specification on a 60-year lease. More than one million bottles were transferred over one weekend. Not everyone was in favour at the time, as the move caused considerable disruption - but we wouldn't be the thriving business we are today if we hadn't taken this bold step!



New-style events

Check out all our tastings and events – we've introduced some exciting innovations from interesting venues to top-class dinners and more relaxed events with music and mingling. You can also book tours of our cellars in Stevenage and use us to host your own events.

6 AUTUMN BOTTLES

Wondering what to sip this season? Look no further – these are the six drinks we think are worth staying in for



MOVE OVER, FINO!

As the nights draw in, swap your crisp fino for the hazelnut tang and dried-fruit richness of a palo cortado – enjoy with some salted almonds and let the hidden (*escondido*) charms of this lovely sherry wow you. *20.5%* 3

Half bottle of Sanchez Romate Palo Cortado Escondido £19 (SH1622A2)





COMFORTING RED TO CURL UP WITH

Hold off putting on the heating and cuddle up with this warming red instead. Produced exclusively for us, this richly fruity grenache-syrah blend is all red berries and spice. *14%* D

Ventoux Les Traverses, Paul Jaboulet Aîné 2023, £10.95 (RH75441)

TAKEAWAY SUPERSTAR

Hail the hero of the impromptu Friday-night takeaway! This off-dry riesling combines gentle sweetness with zesty acidity comfortably coping with anything from fish and chips to korma or ramen. *9.5%* 4

Ruppertsberger Hoheburg Riesling Kabinett 2024, £8.25 (GE18391)

CROWD-PLEASING RED

Are you looking for an easy-drinking red that everyone will love and that goes effortlessly with whatever's cooking? This tried-and-trusted member favourite from southern France is packed with juicy ripe fruit. *14%* C Ve

Saint-Chinian, Domaine Raynier 2024
£8.75 (FC49341)

THE WINE TO KEEP THE SUMMER VIBE GOING

Not ready to give up on summer just yet? Keep the sun shining with this new Spanish beauty. This is made in the traditional *clarete* style, co-fermenting red and white grapes to make a deep-coloured pink wine. Dry yet rich, it's perfect with or without food. *12%* 2

Alto de Pioz Clarete Rosado 2023, £12.95 (SP22191)







ONE FOR SOPHISTICATED CIDER DRINKERS

It's apple season, so celebrate this traditional West Country crop by getting to know some proper, traditionally made Somerset cider. Polished red-fruit and sweetly spicy flavours are a great match for roast pork and even tarte tatin. *5.5%* 2

The Newt No3 Yarlington Mill Cyder, Somerset 2023, £9.50 (BE2893V3)

Treasure hunting in ARGENTINA



Martin Brown travels through Mendoza and Buenos Aires, and risks upsetting the Argentine in-laws in his quest for a beloved bottle

Catena Zapata's awe-inspiring winery

Working in wine and having Argentine in-laws mean that my trips to the country have often taken on a hint of the *vacaciones del conductor de autobús*, complementing and shaping my exploration of the wines back home. Argentines are rightly proud of their malbec, just one string to the country's bow, but by far the most successful. A trip to Mendoza proved a fascinating chance to get under the thick skin of a grape that is more nuanced than many give it credit for.

Catena Zapata's Mayan-pyramid-inspired winery is a unique building. Indeed, part of its appeal is that, somehow, it does not look incongruous among Agrelo's rolling vines and snow-capped mountains. Breathtaking, imposing and daring though it is, seen in the flesh it conveys a sense of being as unforced as it is striking. Adjectives that could be applied to the malbecs that emerge from it.

Our **Exhibition Mendoza Malbec (£12.50, AR5111)** from Catena is an outstanding bargain, which I always recommend as the perfect introduction to what the grape is capable of once you ascend towards the £15-a-bottle area. It shows the plummy, protein-friendly qualities that made malbec's name, but also hints at the floral freshness and balance that have become more prevalent over the course of a quiet revolution in the past decade or so. This shift in focus to cooler areas such as the Uco Valley (where Catena now sources most of its fruit) has resulted in a more linear, fragrant and fresh expression of this famously robust style.

> 'it has power, ageworthiness and presence, but an unforced, elegant and cool feel to it'

One of the pioneers of this shift is former Catena winemaker Alejandro Sevanovich's Bodega Teho. Made from precious, low-yielding old vines in the cool Consulta region, the 2018 **Teho Malbec (£46, AR4571)** possesses all the qualities of the maiden 2010 vintage I fell in love with when The Society first stocked it. It has power, ageworthiness and presence, but also an unforced, elegant and cool feel to it, creating a sense of both freshness and complexity that, until I first tasted the debut vintage, I had not realised the grape was capable of.



Colourful La Boca in Buenos Aires


Dressed for the weather, Mendoza

Teho also do a fantastic white made from semillon, emblematic of the exciting old-vine examples that can be found in Argentina. Familial eyebrows were raised when I mentioned this, however. To many, the grape was synonymous with low-quality libation rather than sophisticated sipping, a point they illustrated by playing me some bawdy *milonga* (a jauntier precursor to tango). Hearing the dominant grape in Bordeaux's world-renowned Château d'Yquem being sang about in a depiction of dastardly drunkards acting in questionable ways under its influence in a *barrio* of ill repute acted as a further demonstration of wine's cultural versatility.

As many wine lovers know, the problem with forming an attachment to this particular agricultural product is that it is finite. Sadly, Teho's semillon is likely to be out of stock by the time this reaches you. However, it is worth remembering that Argentina does not have the monopoly on old-vine semillon in South America. One example currently in stock, from over border in Chile's Itata Valley, **Altamana Grande Reserve Itata Semillon 2021 (£12.50, CE12751)**, is made from 100-year-old vines and offers a stunning combination of fresh, floral fruit and mealy complexity.

Buried treasure - Catena's impressive barrel hall

'I now find myself hoping that my familia never read this'

I now find myself hoping that my familia never read this: the angriest I've ever seen them was when I confessed that I preferred the generally flakier pastry of the Chilean empanada over its Argentine counterpart. I also blotted my copybook somewhat when The Society ran out of my beloved Teho 2010 malbec, and I tried to find some in Buenos Aires (not as easy as it is now, given they were just starting out back then). I located a merchant on the other side of town that had a few bottles at a fantastic price and set off on foot with my wife and sister-in-law. However, in my excitement, I neglected to realise that there are 'other sides of town' and 'other sides of town.' Applied to a city described by one of its most celebrated residents, the writer Jorge-Louis Borges, as 'eternal as air and water', I was soon – quite rightly – receiving murderous glances from my sore-footed companions.

After the penitent payment of a taxi to get us back, I resolved to share a bottle of my precious cargo with my family and bring the remainder home. However, I hadn't reckoned on the experience of an Argentine football match in the interim. It transpired that everything Danny Dyer's Real Football Factories had told me was true: it was a cacophonous, intense experience and I needed to soothe my nerves with a good meal and a large glass directly afterwards. It remains one of the most memorable wine experiences of my life.

Discovering a wine on holiday is special, but anyone who's taken a life-changing bottle back to find it isn't firing on all the cylinders you remember on a dreich December weekend will know the tricks memory and meteorology can play on the tastebuds. Even if it involves ill-judged detours and flustering football fervour, taking the chance to soak up the physical and cultural contexts of a wine you've fallen for at home is, in my experience, a safer way to transcendence.

Autumn glow-up

Discover simple tips and special bottles to elevate autumnal dishes throughout the week

Make it marvellous...

...by adding a swirl of double cream and a sprinkle of toasted pumpkin seeds or chopped walnuts. This viognier-dominant white brings extra fragrance and complexity along with soft pear, peach and a touch of honey.

Côtes-du-Rhône Blanc, Guigal 2023
£12.95 (RH71901) *14%* 2



Roasted pumpkin soup

Roast peeled chunks of pumpkin in a hot oven until soft and just caramelising, blitz with a little stock and cream. This fruity Languedoc white from two Rhône grapes is fresh, round and full-flavoured, and marries well with the creaminess of the soup.

Les Pierres Bordes Marsanne-Viognier, Pays d'Oc 2024, £7.75 (FC49081) *12%* 2



Baked cod with garlic mushrooms



Spoon a mix of sautéed wild mushrooms (girolles, chanterelles, ceps) cooked with olive oil, butter, chopped parsley and garlic over freshly baked cod. Serve with new-season kale and this charming Austrian 'bistro' white. It's crisp, fresh and relatively light, from a mix of grapes based around gourmets' favourite grüner veltliner.

Familie Mantler Gemischter Satz, Niederösterreich 2024
£8.75 (AA5081) *11.5%* 2

An elegant upgrade...

Transform this simple supper dish by marinating the fish for 30 mins in a mix of miso, sherry and a pinch of sugar before roasting. It pairs perfectly with this classy white-peach and herb-scented white from the foothills of the Italian Alps, whose pure crystalline flavours and character will elegantly handle the earthiness and sweet flavours of the dish.

Pinot Bianco, Südtirol-Alto Adige, Hofstätter 2024, £14.95 (IT43971) *13%* 1

Seared venison steaks with grain-mustard mash & gravy

Sear your steaks to your liking and leave to rest. Slice and lay alongside the mash on warmed plates, the gravy spooned over. With so much depth of flavour, this silky, creamy porter will work a treat with the venison.



London Black Nitro Porter, Anspach & Hobday, Bermondsey, £3.50 (BE2843) *4.4% 470ml*

Elevate the everyday...

For a fancier rendition, serve with a sauce made with Port and damsons or sloe gin on celeriac and potato mash. Bring out the big guns with this star performer from the southern Rhône. Rich, with lashings of plum and cherry that riff on the flavours of the sauce.



Massif d'Uchaux Grand Réserve, Château Saint Estève 2019, £14.95 (RH60891) *15%* D

Autumn fruit compôte

Sauté a mix of plums, blackberries, blueberries, apples and pears in butter and sugar with spices such as star anise, cloves and cinnamon. Add a squeeze of lemon juice before serving with whipped cream. Pair with this heady, Portuguese sweet treat. The exotic barley sugar, honey and orange blossom flavours dance with those of the compôte.

Casa Ermelinda Freitas Moscatel de Setúbal
£10.95 (PW7711) *17.5%* 8



For a more decadent treat...

Add a dash of sloe gin to the compôte and serve with a generous dollop of clotted cream and toasted almonds sprinkled on top. Indulge with this sweet fortified red from a top estate in south-west France that's very black, very fruity, and very delicious.

Maydie Tannat 2018, £17 (FC47441) *17%* 6



GET TO KNOW BORDEAUX



Bordeaux is the world's most famous fine wine region, but the headline-grabbing grand châteaux represent a tiny proportion of production. Small family producers and innovative merchants produce a wealth of excellent-value wines in a variety of styles. 88% of its output is red (known to British wine lovers as 'claret') but white (dry and sweet) and rosé is also produced.

A mix of grape varieties is grown – each with different ripening times and characteristics – to ensure good wines can be made no matter what the weather brings. If you stand in the city of Bordeaux and look out to where the Gironde meets the Atlantic, the vineyards to the left are known as the left bank, those on the northern shore, the right bank. Those between the Rivers Garonne and Dordogne are the Entre-Deux-Mers – 'between two seas'.

FAMOUS NAMES

CHÂTEAU PÉTRUS
VIEUX CHÂTEAU CERTAN
CHÂTEAU CHEVAL BLANC
LE PIN

LEFT BANK: CABERNET SAUVIGNON IS KING

KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Blackcurrant, cedar, green pepper
- Robust tannins and thick skins give lots of flavour and the ability to age
- Soils: sand and gravel

IN NUMBERS

94,700 HA VINES
65 APPELLATIONS (AOCS/AOPS)
88% RED
6,000 APPROX CHÂTEAUX
500 MILLION BOTTLES PER YEAR

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR THE FULL GUIDE

FAMOUS NAMES

CHÂTEAU LAFITE
CHÂTEAU MARGAUX
CHÂTEAU LATOUR
CHÂTEAU MOUTON ROTHSCHILD

WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU

If you're unsure where to start, we are on hand! Call us on **01438 741177** or email us at: **memberservices@thewinesociety.com**

OTHER RED GRAPES:

- Cabernet franc
- Petit verdot
- Malbec (côt)
- Carmenère

RIGHT BANK: MERLOT

IS MASTER (AND IS THE MOST WIDELY GROWN GRAPE ACROSS BORDEAUX)

KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Red fruits, plums, summer pudding, chocolate
- Ripens earlier, thinner skinned, higher sugar/alcohol, soft and rich
- Soils: clay and limestone

FAMOUS APPELLATIONS

SAINT-EMILION
Rich, full, spicy

POMEROL
Rich, almost velvety in texture

VINTAGES

Because of the marginal climate, vintage variation (how the crop performs from one year to the next) can be considerable. Top producers can afford to discard grapes and keep differences to a minimum, but the varying vintage characteristics are what make collecting Bordeaux such fun.

WHITE WINE

Bordeaux makes both dry and sweet whites from sauvignon blanc and semillon. The former brings aroma and freshness, while semillon has a waxy lanolin character. Semillon's thinner skin is more susceptible to noble rot (botrytis), essential for the great sweet wines of Bordeaux, Sauternes and Barsac.

FAMOUS APPELLATIONS

PAUILLAC
Intense, powerful, full-bodied, fine

MARGAUX
Perfumed and refined

SAINT-JULIEN
Harmonious, combining power with finesse

SAINT-ESTÈPHE
Fruity, muscular, earthy, excellent value

GRAVES
Fresh fruit and fine bouquet

SIX KEY STYLES

GENERIC BORDEAUX AC



The Society's Claret 2023
£7.95 (CL321)

A member favourite made to our own spec by the Sichel family from grapes sourced across the region. Majoring on merlot, this is light and bright for drinking now. *14%* C

FAMILY PROPERTY



The Society's Reserve Claret Côtes de Bordeaux 2021, £11.50 (CL281)

Produced by family-owned Château de Pitray from the slopes *(côtes)* on the right bank. Merlot-based again but with more tannic structure and a little oak ageing before release. *13.5%* D

ENTRE-DEUX-MERS



Château Thieuley Rouge, Bordeaux 2019
£12.25 (CB6991)

From the Courselle's family property in the Entre-Deux-Mers region. From 75% merlot, 25% cabernet sauvignon and 5% petit verdot, this has lovely perfume and balance. *13.5%* C

LEFT BANK



The Society's Exhibition Saint-Julien 2019
£24 (CM27451)

A classic left bank blend of 75% cabernet sauvignon and 25% merlot from a prestigious property. Classy with elegant structure, cassis notes and lots of delicious red fruit flavours. *13.5%* C

RIGHT BANK



Château Grand Corbin Despagne Saint-Emilion 2018, £34 (CS11371)

75% merlot, 24% cabernet franc and 1% cabernet sauvignon from a grand cru (top-rated) family property that neighbours Pomerol. Seductive layers of rich, ripe fruit that can keep. *14.5%* D

DRY WHITE



The Society's Bordeaux Sauvignon 2024
£9.25 (BW7981)

A pure unoaked sauvignon that is sourced from across the Bordeaux region to provide consistently fresh, citrus, gooseberry flavours that work with or without a meal. *12%* 1

IT'S IN THE SOIL



Professor of geology, wine lover and winemaker, and Wine Society member, Alex Maltman challenges everything we thought we knew about rock's relationship with wine flavour

'*The rain quit and the wind got high, a black old dust storm filled the sky*' sang Woody Guthrie, about the awful 1930s Dust Bowl in the American prairies. In my book it's how I open chapter 15, 'Four elephants in the tasting room', in this case referring to the unacknowledged importance of the organic matter in soil, properly called the humus.

The weathering that unlocks the crop nutrients in the soil's geological minerals takes place far too slowly to produce a fresh suite each year, so it's vital that the soil's organic content is maintained. Its natural recycling not only provides the essential nutrients year on year, but they are much more readily available from humus than any geological mineral.

A calicata or excavation pit in Chile's cool Limarí region where they have struck limestone - rare in Chile

So, the answer does indeed lie in the soil

Some wine commentators like to claim that the nutrient minerals taken up by the vine roots reach the wine for us to taste, and enthuse about different kinds of source geological minerals and rocks. But in practice any soil nutrients that do get through to a wine will have largely come not from the geology but from the humus. And when did you last see humus mentioned in a vineyard description or in a wine-tasting note?

Geology is so much more charismatic. Wine lovers don't really want to read about rotted insects, decayed vegetation and the like so, well, the role of humus is simply disregarded. In other words, it seems to me, we have here an 'elephant in the room' (defined in my dictionary as a huge topic that is uncomfortable for people to talk about and so is ignored).

Here's another 'elephant'. When did you last see names such as Franz Richter, Georges Couderc, Federico Paulsen and Antonino Ruggeri in wine writings? They may be unfamiliar yet it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that if it was not for the work of these individuals then wine as we know it might not even exist today. For they were the pioneers of grafting vines onto phylloxera-resistant rootstocks. And still today, most vine rootstocks have names like 110Richter, 3309 Couderc, and 1103 Paulsen.

The uncomfortable truth about rootstocks

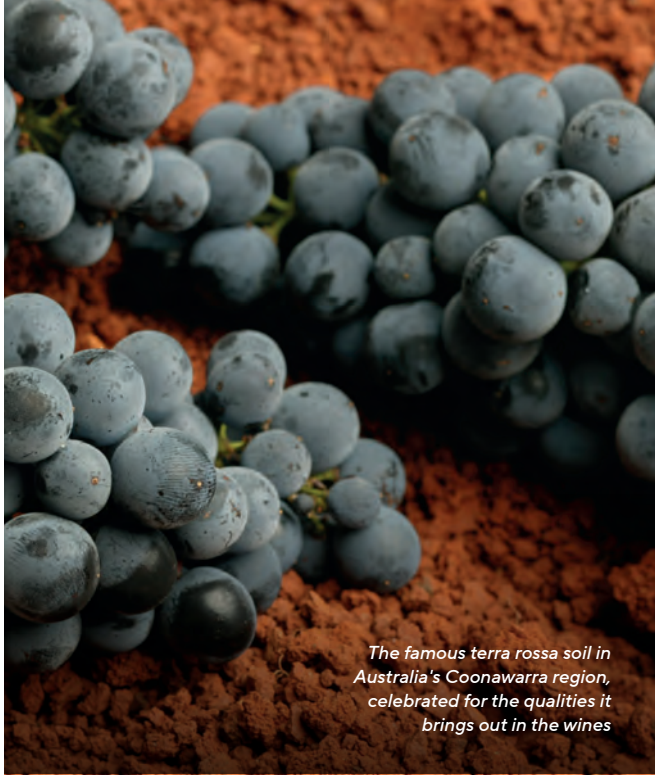
Although during the phylloxera crisis the grafting solution was promoted as not affecting wine flavour, over time evidence otherwise has accumulated. For example, in one experiment wines from shiraz vines grafted on to 110Richter rootstocks relative to those grown on their own roots, had a more intense colour, darker berry aromas together with more intense and coarser tannins. In another test, 140Ruggeri rootstocks gave wines with relatively more acidity and higher anthocyanin/tannin ratios but were lower in polyphenols. For sure, the rootstock names hardly trip off the tongue but in view of all this shouldn't they be getting some mention in wine reports?

It's similar, it strikes me, with yeast. A supplier's catalogue notes that 'choosing the right yeast for your wine impacts the taste, aroma, and overall quality of the wine'. One yeast strain, for example, is said to produce wines that have a 'distinctive intense berry, graham cracker nose and a jammy, rich, very smooth complex profile', another gives 'bready aromas with vanilla notes'.

...and what about yeasts?

So the logic seems plain. Winemakers are choosing yeasts to help them achieve the kind of wine they're striving for, so coming at it the other way round, a wine we are tasting must reflect the yeast that was used. And after all, it's the yeast, i.e. the fermentation, that produces the majority of the compounds that give wine its flavour. It's why wine doesn't taste like grape juice. So why isn't yeast mentioned in wine reports?

Most wine enthusiasts will know about extraneous factors that can affect taste perceptions. Best known probably is what we already know about a wine, its pedigree, cost, critics' ratings, etc. They're all in our minds as we taste. So the 'elephant' here isn't about a factor that is quietly impacting the wine itself but one – psychology – that influences how we perceive it.



The famous terra rossa soil in Australia's Coonawarra region, celebrated for the qualities it brings out in the wines

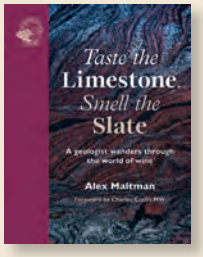
Don't look now – the power of autosuggestion

The paramountcy of wine colour has been demonstrated in numerous studies; some have shown how easy it is to fool even wine experts simply by deliberately miscolouring a wine. The shape of the wine glass can be influential, as can the weight of the wine bottle. One analysis compared bottle weight and wine price and found that on average as the shelf price increased by £1, the bottle weight increased 8g. Put another way, for every additional £1 you pay you get an extra 8g of glass (a preconception The Wine Society is taking steps to counter with its lightweighting bottle initiative).

Our taste perceptions are affected by a whole host of other factors, including the tasting ambience, our eating habits, medications, age, even our very genes. It's perhaps surprising that there's any consensus at all on wine tastes! But then, when we read a report on what an expert says a wine tastes like, given the suggestive psychological power of the placebo effect, it's likely that's what we will taste.

The Society's Community is a space for members to interact with each other online, and discuss all things wine with fellow enthusiasts! Visit community.thewinesociety.com to get involved.

Alex Maltman is Emeritus Professor of Earth Sciences at Aberystwyth University, in Wales. He has a decorated career in university teaching and research and a long-standing interest in wine: for nearly fifty years has grown vines and made wine at his home in Wales.



Alex's new book Taste the Limestone, Smell the Slate *is available at in hardback from* ***academieduvinlibrary.com*** *for £35 with a* ***special 15% discount*** *for members (quote* ***WINESOCIETY15*** *at checkout).*

YOU'RE INVITED!

What can you expect when you come to one of our tasting events? (The short answer is a great time!)

By Catherine Housden, Tastings & Events Manager





One of the perks of your Wine Society membership is having access to tickets for our varied and extensive range of events. They're open to all members (and you're welcome to bring guests as long as they're over 18 and a member has purchased the tickets). At every event you'll meet at least one of us from the Tastings team (we're a friendly bunch!) and often other colleagues, and there is no required level of wine knowledge: simple curiosity is plenty enough!

Walkaround tastings

Our most popular and most regular events. They'll either be a mixed theme chosen by the Tastings team, or themed to a particular region. For regional walkarounds, we're joined by the respective winemakers and reps of the wines being shown – you'll see these tastings titled as 'growers' tastings. On arrival to the venue, you'll be given a glass, booklet and pen, and then you are free to enjoy between 30-45 wines at your own pace. Water and crackers (including gluten free) are always available, as are spittoons. The team's always on hand for help and guidance, and you'll also find enthusiastic and encouraging fellow members, too.

Tutored tastings

These are seated events where you'll be provided with glasses and tasting notes, and the speaker will present the wines. They're a great way to get under the skin of a theme or region, and the speakers vary from winemakers, buyers and the Tasting team. While a bit more detailed than walkaround tastings, all are welcome, from beginners to afficionados.

Stevenage events

Our Members' Room is a great event space for lunches, dinners and Saturday morning workshops. You can even add a warehouse tour to your visit, so you can learn more about your Society before sitting down for lunch. There's parking if you're the designated driver, a fully pedestrianised 10-minute walking route from the train station and nearby hotels.

Special events

We also host restaurant dinners with great winemakers, and increasingly more relaxed and informal 'night-out' events giving you the chance to mingle and mix with members and friends while enjoying the wines and good vibes.

Online events

Born out of necessity but continued on their own merit, our online Zoom events offer you a wine tasting from the comfort of your own home! And if it's not convenient for you to join us live, you can always find the recordings on our YouTube channel to view at your leisure.





good intent

Why the way we buy our wine is different and how this benefits you

Pierre Mansour, Director of Wine



We're often asked what makes The Wine Society different. The quick answer is that we're a mutual, owned by you, our members, whose satisfaction is our primary goal. But in practice, what does this mean for our community of wine lovers? It starts and ends with the wine in the bottle, and the way our buying team source it is a little different from most. It's not the bottom line that they chase, but our goal to offer our members the best range in the country.

How do we do this?

It's all about trust. Confident in our buyers' abilities, we ask them only to buy wines they truly believe in. Wines that taste good and will give pleasure, are of excellent quality and offer true value for money. Unlike many of our competitors, our buyers buy across all prices, from weeknight £6.50 bottles to collectors' items in the hundreds.

The power of relationships

Being a good buyer is as much about establishing mutually beneficial relationships with suppliers – some go back several generations, but we're equally keen to work with new producers and foster win-win situations which translate into enjoyable wines.

Unlike others in the trade, we do not act as distributors and are not tied into agreements with suppliers, so we can cherry-pick the wines we want. We spend more time than any other buying team out in the vineyards and cellars, and believe the best wines come from digging deep into a wine region.

Our buyers are accountable for selecting which suppliers to work with and for their ranges; the personal connections are particularly appreciated by smaller, family producers. Extensive travelling in each region gives our buyers the chance to catch on to trends, learn more about the character of each vintage, create bespoke blends and snap up small parcels of wine.



The faces of the Society

We encourage our buyers to let their personalities shine through. They write their own tasting notes and articles (many in the trade don't!), they present at tastings and on social media and are often asked to judge in wine competitions.

'The Climate and Nature Programme, launched in 2024 before I started, made me realise that this is a business that does things differently, putting people and planet ahead of profit, and I really wanted to be a part of it. The long-term vision of investing in our growers is inspirational. It's a small but important step that shows that we are all in it together and is testament to collaborative, rather than extractive working relationships.'

Victoria Mason MW, joined May 2024





'I relish visiting the growers I work with. Seeing the vineyards and the winery in person is crucial to understanding the philosophy of the estates and their wines. Tasting from barrels and tanks, I have come across unique, one-off parcels that can offer our members something special. I have been impressed with how supportive and encouraging the business is towards this.'

Fiona Hayes, joined March 2024



'Few wine-buying roles let you buy with integrity, heart and independence. At The Wine Society, I'm trusted to be myself, follow my instincts and work with purpose, not for profit, but for people. That kind of freedom brings out the best in you.'

Harriet Kininmonth, joined April 2024



Working with nature

Our recent initiative to highlight the growing trend in winemaking of producing wines with high attention but low intervention is just one example where we're leading the field.

While the natural wine movement has its fans and detractors, it does chime with the zeitgeist for more authentic, unadulterated, artisanal products. We're on board with this, just as we support the principles of organic/biodynamic viticulture and the avoidance of additives and heavy-handed interventions in the winery. That's why we're excited by the move towards wines made more thoughtfully, with high attention and low intervention.

While this infers a hands-off approach, nothing could be further from the truth. When it comes to making delicious, soulful wine, less intervention in the winery means doing more in the vineyard. It's a change of mindset that balances expertise with the confidence to be restrained, reconnecting with traditional methods in a modern context and working with, rather than against nature. The goal is to nurture more resilient vineyards and healthier grapes which result in more balanced wines. As Kooyong winemaker Tim Perrin from Australia's Mornington Peninsula told us on a recent visit to Stevenage: 'After all the hard work that's gone in to producing a healthy crop, my job is to not stuff it up in the winery!'

Better wine, better for the environment and us?

This careful stewardship of vineyards means healthier grapes and soils and fewer treatments and additives. It isn't just better for the environment, it results in purer, more expressive wines which might just be more nutritious, too. Winemakers who embrace this approach often speak of their wines as having more energy and a kind of resonance.

How do you find these wines?

We highlight a few here and you can find more online under 'Natural Wine'. Given the absence of a universally acknowledged definition of what 'natural wine' is, we've used the French appellation system's criteria for Vin Méthode Nature to highlight those that qualify.

Just the start

We see this as part of a bolder movement that also considers broader sustainability factors, such as bottle weight and social responsibility. You can be sure that what you drink is responsibly produced, traceable, fair and, as it's on The Wine Society's List, always reliably excellent quality.

Vin méthode Nature

- 100% organic and hand-harvested grapes
- Spontaneous fermentation (natural yeasts)
- No additives (except for minimal sulphites in finished wine)
- No technological manipulations (such as reverse osmosis)

Four of our high-attention, low-intervention wines

Whistler Wines Divergent Barossa Valley SGM 2023, £16 (AU27131)



Australia's Whistler are winners of our 2024 Climate & Nature fund, embarking on a project to control weeds without chemical treatments or tilling. A bright, fragrant red offering succulent plum and blackcurrant fruit. Drink now to 2029. *13.4%* C

The Society's Exhibition DO Colchagua Andes Carmenère 2023 £11.50 (CE13341)



Chile's Koyle estate's vineyards are a beacon of biodiversity having been farmed biodynamically from the start. Lovely, easy-to-drink savoury-style red. Drink now to 2029. *14%* B Ve O

Côte Roannaise Éclat de Granite, Domaine Sérol 2022 £14.95 (FC44841)



Light filtering, natural yeasts and old, carefully tended vines make for a fresh, cherry-fruited gamay from the far reaches of the Loire. Drink this year and next. *12.5%* C O

Birgit Braunstein Ried Glawarinza Leithaberg Blaufränkisch, Burgenland 2019, £19.50 (AA4711V1)



Unfined, unfiltered, minimum sulphur, natural yeasts – Birgit's wine has natural grace and purity and is somewhere between malbec and sangiovese in character. Drink now to 2028. *13.5%* B Ve O

A GLASS WITH...
Helen McGinn

Wine writer, Saturday Kitchen regular, international wine judge and best-selling author Helen, aka 'The Knackered Mother', takes a breath to share some wine tales with us.







HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INTO WINE?

I joined Exeter University's wine society as it was one of the cheapest ways to get four half-glasses of wine once a month on a Thursday night! I soon discovered that wine was about so much more than what's in the glass and decided to try and get into the industry, joining a supermarket on a graduate scheme a week after my last exam. I then spent a decade as a wine buyer before writing and talking about it.

AS AN AWARD-WINNING FICTION WRITER, DOES WINE INSPIRE YOU OR FEATURE IN YOUR NOVELS?

Yes, they're getting increasingly wine-soaked! I love to weave wine into the stories, describing the wine in my characters' glasses, but in the latest one, *Under A Riviera Moon*, I went all in, setting it in Provence. There's a falling-down château and an old vineyard that needs rescuing...no spoilers but the winemaker is lovely...!

IS THERE A WINE THAT HELPS TO GET THE CREATIVE JUICES FLOWING WHEN YOU'RE WRITING?

There's no way I could drink wine while writing, despite what Ernest Hemingway allegedly said! But often it's when I'm relaxing with a glass in the garden or on the sofa that I have ideas. I make notes on my phone or scribble them down in my notebook before I forget them.

DESERT-ISLAND BOTTLE?

Krug 1988. We were given a bottle when we got married and saved it until our first child was born. I had a sip about five minutes after giving birth and it was the most delicious thing I'd ever tasted. I've only ever had it once since then and just sniffing it was enough to bring tears to my eyes (in a good way)!

BEST OR MOST MEMORABLE FOOD MATCH?

Until recently I'd say aged Champagne and still-warm gougères but having recently tasted Guinness and Cheese & Onion Tayto crisps in an Irish pub, that match has been given a serious run for its money.

THE WINE YOU'D MOST LIKE TO TRY BUT HAVEN'T (SO FAR)!

I'd settle for anything from DRC (Domaine de la Romanée-Conti).

WHAT'S THE ONE GRAPE OR WINE STYLE YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE WOULD TRY?

Darker, dry rosé wines but with food. They tend to scare people without it. I'm always recommending them on Saturday Kitchen to go with particular recipes despite presenter Matt Tebbutt's eye-rolling!

Helen's latest novel, Under A Riviera Moon *is out now. Keep up with Helen by visiting knackeredmotherswineclub.com*



Get in touch

As a Society member, this is your magazine. We'd love to know your thoughts (good or bad) on this second issue and any suggestions and ideas you might have. Send us an email: **magazine@thewinesociety.com**

YOUR COMMUNITY

Have you seen our online member-to-member discussion space? It's a great place to chat with fellow members about wine and much, much more! **community.thewinesociety.com**

KEEP THE TAGS COMING!

We LOVE seeing your photos and hearing about the bottles that have been on your tables. Feel free to send any photos in, and do give us a tag on your social posts.

@thewinesociety1874

YOUR NEXT ISSUE

Winter

We are excited to be planning your next issue which will be coming to you in February 2026



CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Our seasonal selection of specially prepared cases and hampers of food and wine will launch mid-November, so keep an eye out!



THE WINE SOCIETY MAGAZINE

PRODUCTION

Cover & lifestyle photography Johnny Stephens | Design Louise Stettler | Production & marketing manager Hannah Tandy | Editorial Jo Goodman

FREE DELIVERY

All orders are delivered free within the UK, whatever the quantity or spend. T&Cs apply.

THE SOCIETY'S PROMISE

If you haven't enjoyed a wine we want to hear about it and will offer a credit, replacement or refund.

Prices valid at time of publication but may be subject to change.

WHITE WINE DRYNESS SCALE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Bone dry		Dry but rich		Medium dry		Dessert grade sweetness		

RED WINE BODY SCALE

A	B	C	D	E
Very light	Light to medium	Medium to full		Full/ very full

V Vegetarian
Ve Vegan
O Organic
Biodynamic
S Screwcap
P Synthetic closure
† New vintage

bedrinkaware.co.uk

The Society's
EXHIBITION RANGE

A risk-free portal into the world's top wine regions

Ready for your next wine 'wow' moment? Our flagship Exhibition range is waiting. The names behind this bespoke selection read like a roll-call of the wine world's A-listers, drawing on our close relationships to offer you unique gems at unbelievable prices. If you want to dip your toe into the world of fine wine, this is the end to head for!

And this year we've added more Exhibition wines to delight your senses and spark your curiosity than ever before. Some come from up-and-coming growers our buyers have discovered recently; others come from old friends with the best track records and loftiest reputations; all are at the very top of their game. Add a bottle or two to your next order and look forward to finding a new gem.

Browse the full range and get to know the people behind the wines at thewinesociety.com/exhibition







'South Australia's Clare Valley is one of the world's great classic riesling sites and this elegant, mineral, bone-dry 2024 is the bee's knees... a glass of this green-flecked riesling will put a smile on your face.'

Jane MacQuitty, *The Times* July 2025
(The Society's Exhibition Clare Valley Riesling 2024)



Class of 2025

No fewer than **10 new wines** have joined the range this year...

SPARKLING, WHITE & FORTIFIED

- Spain **Cava Gran Reserva 2021**
  Sumarroca | £12.50 | SG4841
- Australia **Clare Valley Riesling 2024**
  Adelina | £11.50 | AU27521
- Spain **Valdeorras Godello 2024**
  Virgen de Galir | £14.50 | SP23031
- Spain **White Rioja Reserva 2018**
  Vintae | £13.50 | SP21391
- France **Jura 2020**
  Arbois Co-op | £19.50 | JU2151

RED & FORTIFIED

- Australia **Barossa Shiraz 2023**
  Whistler | £14.50 | AU27581
- France **Moulin-â-Vent 2019**
  Dépagneux | £16 | BJ10751
- Germany **Spätburgunder 2023**
  Eymann | £13.95 | GE18441
- Italy **Brunello di Montalcino 2020**
  Val di Suga | £28 | IT43271
- Madeira **Bual Madeira Colheita 2016**
  Blandy's | £41 | MA741

Shop the full range by scanning the QR code opposite:

Or visit:
thewinesociety.com/exhibition



COMING SOON...

We're compiling the next issue of our List, containing more than 900 bottles selected by our buyers especially for you. Look out for it over the coming weeks...

THE WINE SOCIETY 18 74

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