

# A GUIDE TO WINE

written & read by

**JULIAN CURRY**



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**Total time: 5:14:31**

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## Julian Curry

### Oh, go on then. I don't drink as a rule, but as it's your birthday...

My earliest vivid wine experience hardly bears thinking about, it was so bad. In 1948 I was 10. My parents adored France, and rushed back for a summer holiday soon after the war. Dad had an inspiration. He bought a small barrel of Bordeaux to bring home in the back of the car. The customs men at Dover gathered round, scratching their heads in amazement. Dad offered to pay the duty, but they were suspicious: what if the barrel contained not wine but cognac, liable to higher duty? We must leave it with them to verify its contents.

Fair enough. We return to Devon, and set about collecting empty bottles and corks. Gleeful anticipation. After a week or so, the customs are satisfied that the barrel does *not* contain cognac, and send the appropriate invoice. Dad sends a cheque. The customs dispatch the barrel. It travels by train to London, then on to Totnes. We get it home, and Bottling Day arrives. Well yes, you've probably guessed. The hot summer, the hotter customs shed; air let in as wine is drawn out for analysis; the long train journey from Dover to Devon. We are left with a barrel of the very finest wine vinegar, made from the legendary 1947 vintage Bordeaux. For ages afterwards, salad

dressings were sensational.

\* \* \* \* \*

Years later I was on a small island in the Italian Mediterranean. I'd bought a cave dwelling in the most stunningly romantic setting, above vineyards cascading down to the sea. The locals made wine in stone troughs, in dark recesses of their kitchens. Walking down the village street in autumn, you'd inhale glorious fermentation aromas, wafting from each doorway. No two brews were the same. Fining and filtration were not high on the list of priorities, and some were as hazy as rough cider, and similarly frisky round the gums. Others were heady and delicious, and frequently provoked the strangest dreams.

The retired fisherman Agostino became a special friend. He'd invite us in for a chat and a glass of wine. *Voi bere spumante?* he asked one day, producing a spring-topped beer bottle of home-brewed fizz. He gave it a vigorous shake and released the catch, spraying half the contents onto the ceiling. He laughed happily and filled our glasses with the remainder. What was it like? Cloudy, to be sure. Semi-sweet, with a



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terrific mouthful of rich ripe fruit, good and fizzy, and alcoholic. Yessir! A glass of that stuff and we had the world at our feet. A feature of each year's visit to the island was discovering what births, marriages and deaths had occurred in the interim. There was no sadder moment than learning that Agostino's wife had gone out into the garden one fine day, to find him stretched out cold between the rows of vines, felled by a comprehensive stroke.

\* \* \* \* \*

One day the local matrons announced that they were coming to use our bread oven. They were built like sumo wrestlers, so who was I to argue?

They must have begun at dawn. By the time we staggered into the kitchen rubbing sleep from our eyes, magnificent tongues of flame were gushing from the open oven door and up the enormous chimney. The matrons bustled about, sleeves rolled up, sweating profusely, stoking the fire with further armfuls of kindling. A large wooden trough of dough was rising nearby. Bottled tomatoes were diced, salted anchovies washed and filleted, and serious quantities of garlic peeled and rough chopped. Olive oil, oregano, and black olives stood by. And a cluster of unlabelled bottles of wine. And hey, this was only breakfast time! The morning sun, still low in the sky, streamed in through the open doorway.

Was the ensuing meal really as delicious as I remember? Or have the exceptional circumstances bewitched my recollection? And does it matter! Breakfast that day was one of my life's gastronomic highlights. Pizza tastes altogether different from a wood-fuelled oven, especially when baked in virgin olive oil, rather than on a bed of flour.

As for the wine, I've been lucky enough to drink rare, prestigious and expensive bottles from time to time. But none gave me greater pleasure than the local peasant wine we drank that morning. A zesty and exhilarating pale red wine; an alarm call to the taste buds and a perfect partner for the succulent savoury crispness of the pizza.

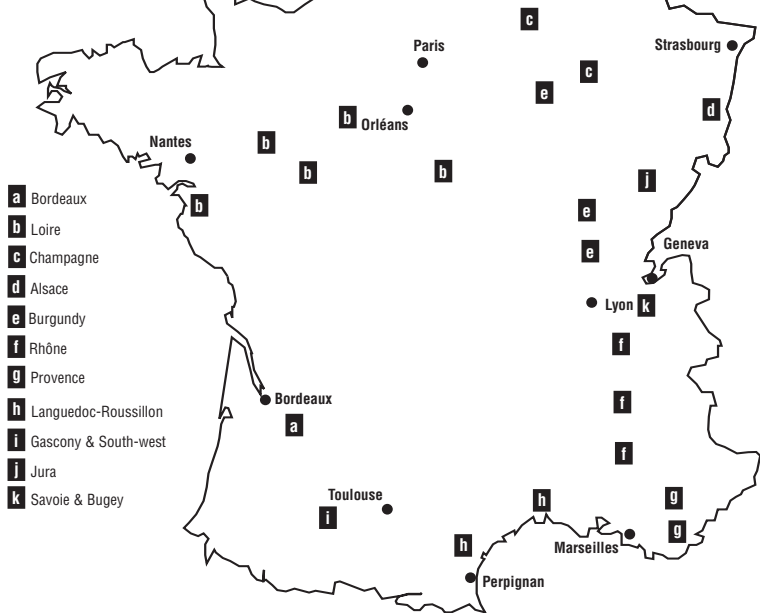
\* \* \* \* \*

As an actor and a wine nut, I've always relished opportunities to combine the two. In the TV series *Rumpole of the Bailey* for example, my character Claude Erskine-Brown finds himself in a blissfully silly scene, criticising a wine's 'nose' to Horace Rumpole, who misunderstands and indignantly defends his own nose. Heaven.

So when a friend suggested I write an entertainment about wine, he opened the door to a true labour of love. The result was *Hi! or The Entire History of Wine (abridged)*. I've been amazed and delighted by its popularity.

# FRANCE

50°



# ITALY

## NORTH-WEST

- a** Piedmont
- b** Valle d'Aosta
- c** Liguria
- d** Lombardy

## CENTRAL

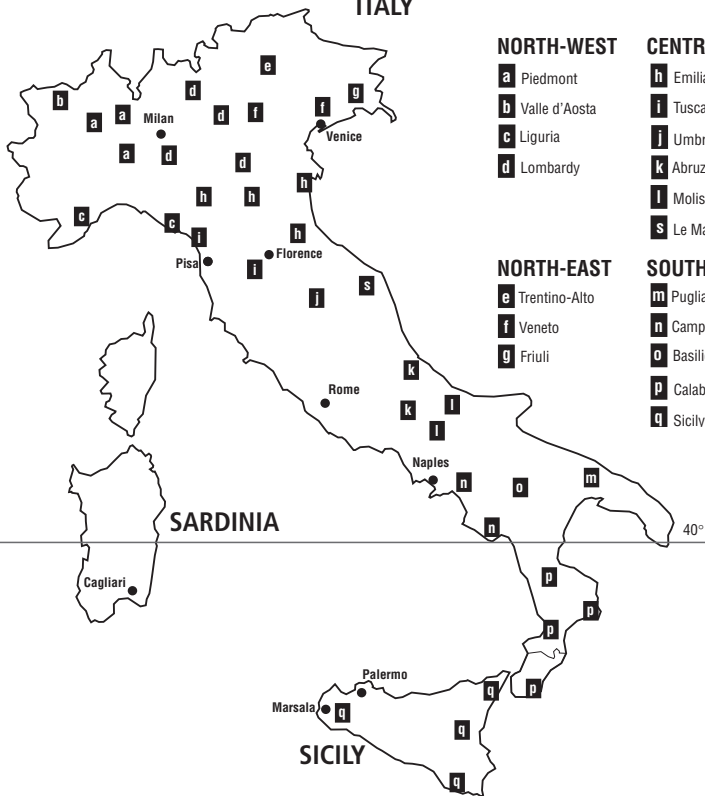
- h** Emilia-Romagne
- i** Tuscany
- j** Umbria
- k** Abruzzo
- l** Molise
- s** Le Marche

## NORTH-EAST

- e** Trentino-Alto
- f** Veneto
- g** Friuli

## SOUTH

- m** Puglia
- n** Campania
- o** Basilicata
- p** Calabria
- q** Sicily



# GERMANY

- a** Ahr
- b** Mittelrhein
- c** Mosel-Saar-Ruwer
- d** Rheingau
- e** Nahe
- f** Pfalz
- g** Baden
- h** Sachsen
- i** Franken
- j** Rheinhessen
- k** Württemberg



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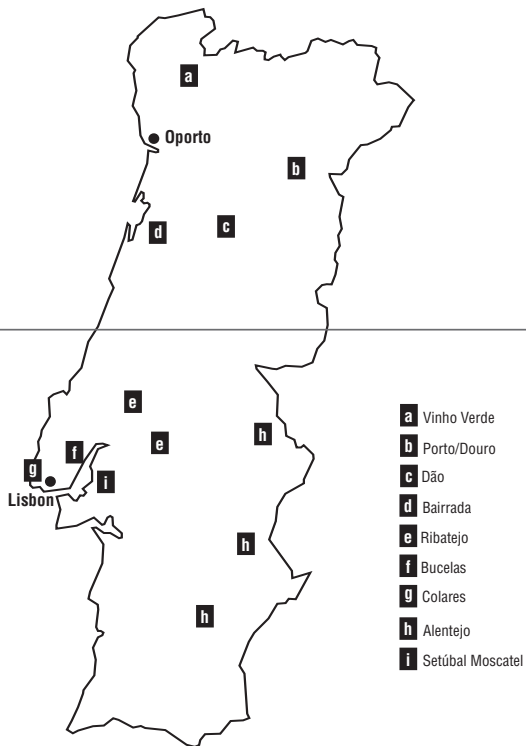
# AUSTRIA



- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>a</b> Wachau     | <b>e</b> Kremstal   |
| <b>b</b> Wien       | <b>f</b> Kamptal    |
| <b>c</b> Burgenland | <b>g</b> Traisental |
| <b>d</b> Styria     | <b>h</b> Donauland  |

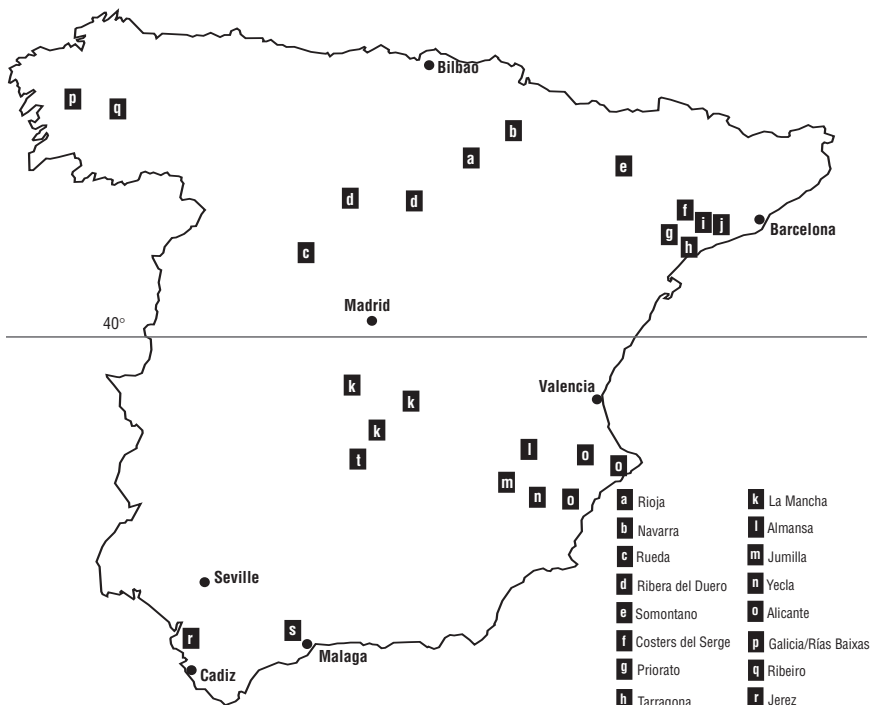
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# PORTUGAL



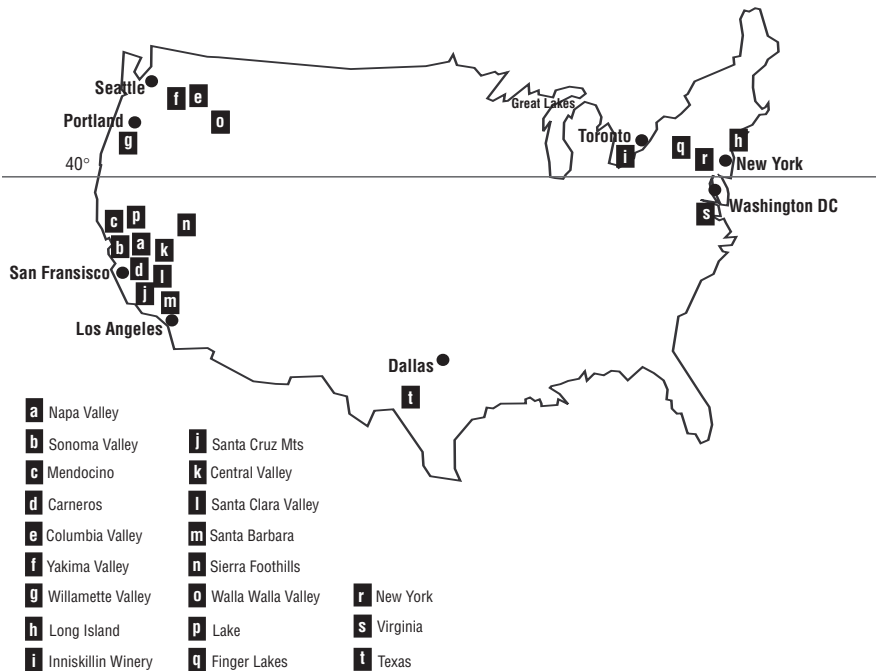
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# SPAIN



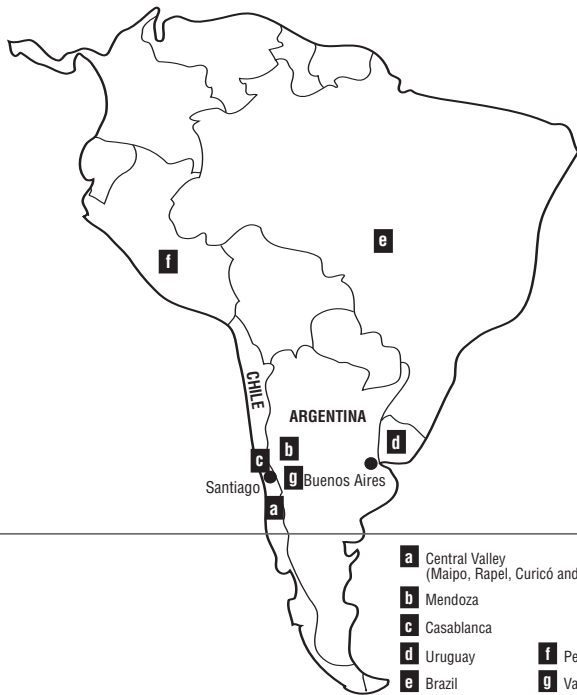
- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>a</b> Rioja             | <b>k</b> La Mancha           |
| <b>b</b> Navarra           | <b>l</b> Almansa             |
| <b>c</b> Rueda             | <b>m</b> Jumilla             |
| <b>d</b> Ribera del Duero  | <b>n</b> Yecla               |
| <b>e</b> Somontano         | <b>o</b> Alicante            |
| <b>f</b> Costers del Segre | <b>p</b> Galicia/Rías Baixas |
| <b>g</b> Priorato          | <b>q</b> Ribeiro             |
| <b>h</b> Tarragona         | <b>r</b> Jerez               |
| <b>i</b> Conca de Barberá  | <b>s</b> Malaga              |
| <b>j</b> Penedés           | <b>t</b> Valdepeñas          |

# NORTH AMERICA



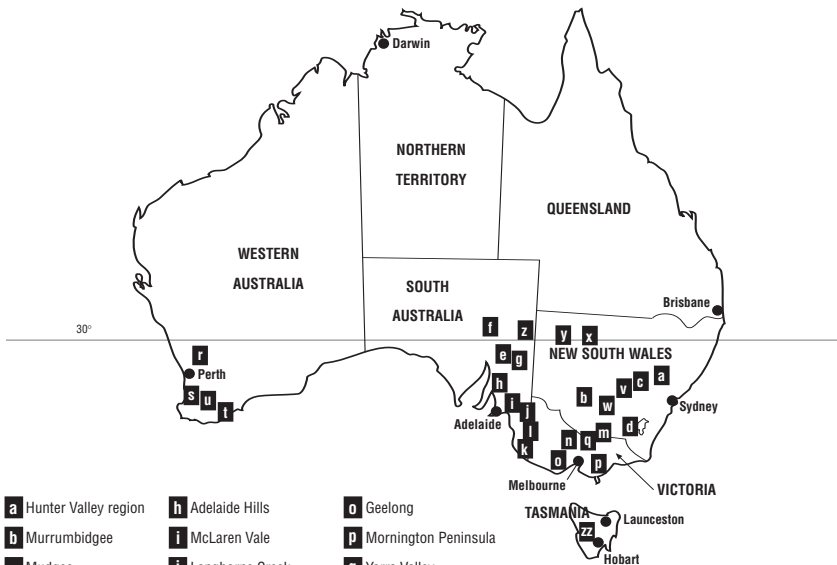


## SOUTH AMERICA



40°

# AUSTRALIA



**a** Hunter Valley region

**h** Adelaide Hills

**o** Geelong

**b** Murrumbidgee

**i** McLaren Vale

**p** Mornington Peninsula

**c** Mudgee

**j** Langhorne Creek

**q** Yarra Valley

**d** Canberra

**k** Coonawarra

**r** Swan Valley

**e** Barossa Valley

**l** Padthaway

**s** Margaret River

**v** Orange

**y** Murray Darling

**f** Clare Valley

**m** Rutherglen/Glenrowan

**t** Great Southern

**w** Cowra

**z** Riverland

**g** Eden Valley

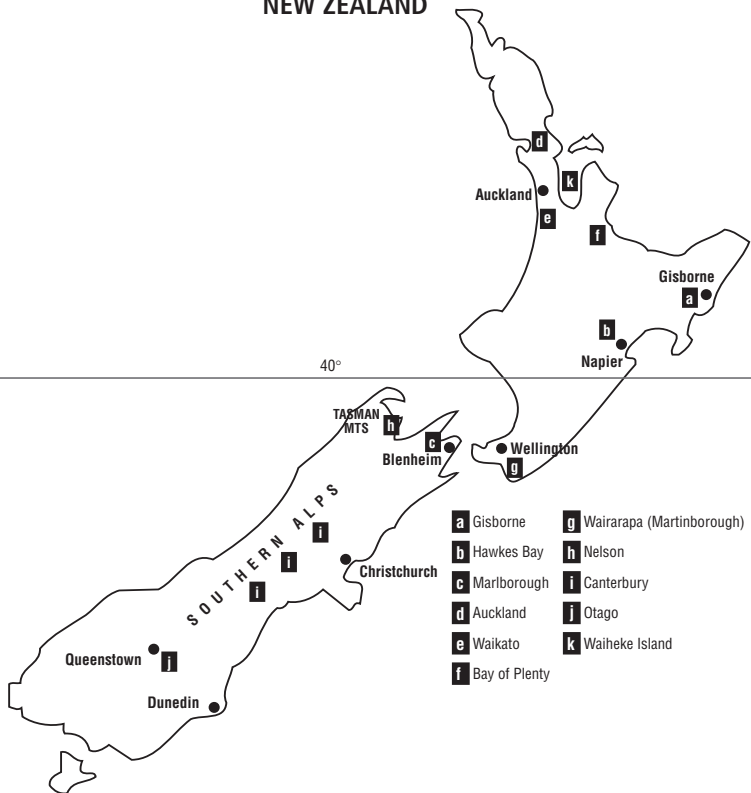
**n** Goulburn Valley

**u** Pemberton

**x** Riverina

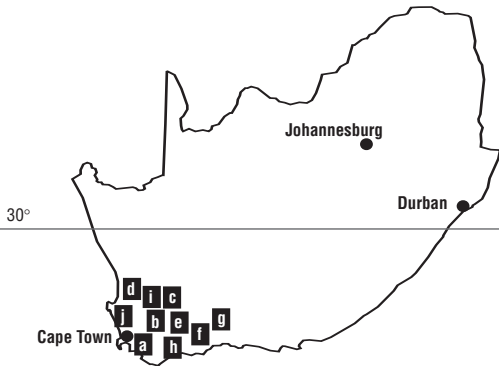
**zz** Tasmania

# NEW ZEALAND



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## SOUTH AFRICA



**a** Constantia

**b** Stellenbosch

**c** Paarl

**d** Olifants River Valley

**e** Worcester

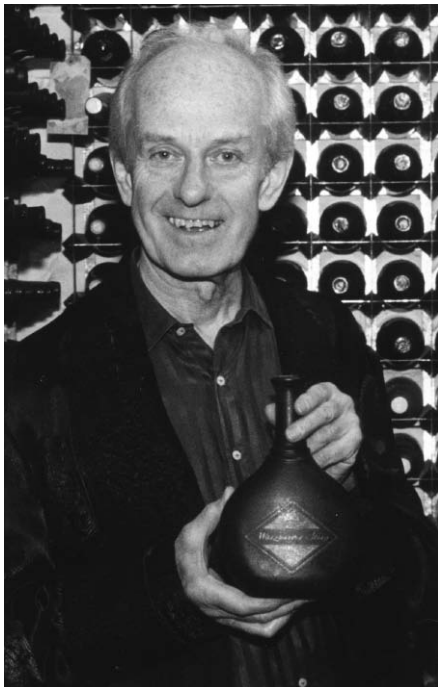
**f** Robertson

**g** Klein Karoo

**h** Overberg

**i** Tulbagh

**j** Groenekloof



**Julian Curry** is well known to TV audiences as Claude Erskine-Brown in the popular series *Rumpole of the Bailey*. He also has wide-ranging stage and screen credits, including leading roles with the RSC, the National and in the West End. His favourites include Angelo, Captain Brazen, Billy Rice, and Herrenstein in Thomas Bernhard's *Elizabeth II*; also the entire cast of Samuel Beckett's *Company*. On TV *Inspector Morse*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Misanthrope*, *King Lear*, *Kavanagh QC*, *The Wyvern Mystery*, *The Hunt* and *The Cappuccino Years*; and on film *The Missionary*, *Fall from Grace*, *Loch Ness*, *Rasputin*, *Seven Days to Live* and John Huston's *Escape to Victory*. This last, a classic 'Golden Turkey', nonetheless involved the very great thrill of working with Pelé. Julian is also an ardent wine buff of many years' standing, and holds a Diploma from the Wine and Spirit Education Trust. He has presented his light-hearted one-man show *Hic! or The Entire History of Wine (abridged)* all over the world.

***Details of Hic! are available at [www.hicwine.com](http://www.hicwine.com) or from [hic@onetel.net.uk](mailto:hic@onetel.net.uk)***

**A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE MAIN STYLES OF WINE. WHERE SOME OF THE BEST COME FROM, WHAT FOOD THEY GO WITH, AND HOW MUCH THEY COST. USEFUL IN A RESTAURANT, OR WHEN OUT SHOPPING.**

COUNTRY	WINE NAME	TO DRINK WITH	APPROX PRICE
<b>Crisp, light, unoaked dry whites and rosés. Fresh wines to drink chilled, as young as possible.</b>			<b>A/B</b>
FRANCE	Muscadet. Bergerac. Bourgogne Aligoté. Anjou-Touraine. Gros Plant. Colombar. VdP des Côtes de Gascogne and other VdP. Gaillac. Rosés from Anjou, Lirac, Tavel and the south, esp. Bandol and Bellet.	As an aperitif Antipasti Shellfish and other seafood, simply cooked	
ITALY	Frascati. Dry Orvieto. Verdicchio. Light Pinot Grigio. Collio. Bianco di Custoza. Alto Adige. Trebbiano. Est! Est!! Est!!!	Oily fish, such as sardines or mackerel Fish and chips	
SPAIN	Galicia. Manzanilla or Fino Sherry. Rosados, esp. from Navarra.	Light pasta dishes Chinese or Thai food	
GERMANY	Kabinett. Light 'Classic' or 'Selection'.	Flans	
PORTUGAL	Vinho Verde.	Soufflés Salads	
<b>Medium-bodied whites. Some flowery/spicy, others dry 'green' and zesty. Most unoaked. 2 years old max. Drink cool.</b>			<b>B/C</b>
FRANCE	Alsace (various). Sancerre. Pouilly-Fumé. Entre-Deux-Mers. AC Bordeaux. Macon. Côtes de Duras. Pinot Blanc/Gris. Dry Loire Chenin Blanc, eg Vouvray. Much VdP Chardonnay.	Fish, grilled or with a creamy sauce Pasta with seafood sauce Risotto alla marinara	
SPAIN	Navarra. Ribeiro. Rueda.	Bouillabaisse	
ITALY	Fuller Pinot Grigio. Arneis. Lugana. Vernaccia di San Gimignano.	Onion tart	
NEW ZEALAND	Sauvignon Blanc. Chardonnay. Riesling. Semillon. Pinot Gris/Grigio.	Quiche	
SOUTH AFRICA	Sauvignon Blanc. Steen (= Chenin Blanc).	White meat, hot or cold	
AUSTRIA	Grüner Veltliner. Riesling.	Stuffed courgettes or aubergines Sweetbreads	

Key:

VdP = Vin de Pays (often good value)

N/V = Non-vintage (champagne and other fizz)

VDN = Vin Doux Natural (fortified)

A = Inexpensive

E = Expensive

COUNTRY	WINE NAME	TO DRINK WITH	APPROX PRICE
<b>Rich, full-bodied whites. Some ripe, oaky and fruit-driven. Others less powerful but with subtler nuances. Drink most at 2 to 4 years old. Some, eg Burgundy and Hunter Valley Semillon, can be older. Don't overchill.</b>			<b>C/D/E</b>
FRANCE	Burgundy. Graves/Pessac-Léognan. Hermitage. Condrieu. Ch. Grillet. Some VdP Chardonnay.	Asparagus with hollandaise sauce	
ITALY	Chardonnay from the south, eg Puglia.	Strongly flavoured or richly sauced fish	
SPAIN	White Rioja. Various Chardonnays, eg from Somontano or Navarra.	Lobster, turbot, crayfish, scallops	
CALIFORNIA	Chardonnay. Viognier. Marsanne.	Duck à l'orange	
AUSTRALIA	Semillon. Chardonnay. Viognier. Verdelho. Marsanne.	Roast or barbecued chicken	
SOUTH AFRICA	Chardonnay. Barrel-fermented Steen.	Cheese	
<b>Sweet whites. NB These luscious wines needn't be confined to puddings! The best will keep for decades. Drink cool.</b>			<b>C/D/E</b>
FRANCE	Sauternes. Loupiac. Montbazillac. Botrytised Loire Chenin Blanc. Jurançon. Alsace <i>Vendange Tardive/Sélection de Grains Nobles</i> . Jura <i>Vin de Paille</i> . VdN (fortified), eg Muscat de Baumes de Venise.	Foie gras Rich/savoury pâté	
ITALY	Vin Santo. Recioto. <i>Muffato</i> wines.	Roast duck or goose	
GERMANY	Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese, Eiswein.	Bread and butter pudding	
AUSTRIA	Beerenauslese, Ausbruch, Strohwein. Trockenbeerenauslese, Eiswein.	Many nutty/fruity puddings such as apple strudel, rhubarb crumble or pecan pie	
CANADA	Ice Wine.	Crème brûlée	
MADEIRA	Bual or (sweeter) Malmsey.	Mince pies	
HUNGARY	Tokay with 5 puttonyos, Aszú, or (sweetest) Essencia.	Cheese, especially roquefort	
AUSTRALIA/ NEW ZEALAND/USA	Botrytised Semillon and Riesling. NB Oz Liqueur Muscats.	Sweet biscuits, such as cantuccini or langues de chat	
SOUTH AFRICA	Constantia. Semillon Noble Late Harvest.	Fruit Nuts	

COUNTRY	WINE NAME	TO DRINK WITH	APPROX PRICE
<b>Sparkling wines. Much of the best is champagne. Other regions also offer superb fizz, often at better value. Vintage will keep 5-10 years. Most non-vintage (N/V) is better drunk young. The cheaper, the cooler.</b>			<b>C/D/E</b>
FRANCE	Champagne. Crémant d'Alsace/de la Loire/de Bourgogne. Clairette de Die. Blanquette de Limoux.	A celebration! As an aperitif	
SPAIN	Cava.	Scrambled eggs and smoked salmon	
ITALY	Prosecco. Asti Spumante.	Gravadlax. Oysters. Caviar. Lobster. Scallops	
GERMANY	Deutscher Sekt.	Kedgeree	
AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND/ USA/SOUTH AFRICA/ ENGLAND	Many excellent sources, often Blanc de Blancs or Blanc de Noirs. Look for the words Brut (dry), Classic or Traditional method. Oz red sparkling Shiraz.	Various soufflés Strawberries and cream Summer pudding Cake, eg Mille-feuille	
<b>Soft, fresh, fruity reds. Wines to drink at a year or two old, maybe lightly chilled.</b>			<b>A/B</b>
FRANCE	Beaujolais. Gamay de Touraine. Sancerre. Anjou. Alsace Pinot Noir. Cheaper Loire Chinon, Bourgueil and Saumur-Champigny. Menetou-salon. Many VdP.	Simple fare, summery dishes Antipasti Scrambled eggs	
ITALY	Dolcetto. Bardolino. Valpolicella. Barbera. Reds from Trentino-Alto Adige.	Robust fish, such as grilled tuna or salmon steaks Seafood stew	
SPAIN	New style, eg from Navarra.	Paella	
E. EUROPE	Various, notably Kékfrankos from Hungary.	Cold meat and salad Pasta	
NEW WORLD	S.A. Cinsault. Oz Tarrango. CA Ruby Cabernet. Argentine Bonarda/Barbera.	Chicken, plainly cooked Mushrooms Beef carpaccio	



COUNTRY	WINE NAME	TO DRINK WITH	APPROX PRICE
<b>Medium-bodied reds. Intense but balanced, mildly oaked, excellent 'food wines' including several European classics capable of long ageing.</b>			<b>A–E</b>
FRANCE	Bordeaux. Burgundy. More expensive Loire reds. Many domaine or château-bottled VdP. Crû Beaujolais, eg Fleurie or Moulin-à-Vent. Corbières. Minervois. Côtes du Rhône.	Duck paté Stuffed peppers Ratatouille	
ITALY	Chianti. Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. Barbera d'Asti and many others, eg from Friuli, Umbria and Le Marche.	Liver and bacon Wild mushrooms Spaghetti Bolognese	
SPAIN	Rioja. Somontano. Navarra. Valdepeñas.	Lasagne Pizza	
PORTUGAL	New style from Ribatejo and Alentejo.	Steak tartare	
NEW ZEALAND	Cabernet, Merlot and especially Pinot Noir.	Sausages	
AUSTRALIA	Cool climate Pinot Noir NB Tasmania.	Moussaka	
SOUTH AFRICA	Light Pinotage.	Rabbit with mustard sauce	
CHILE	Pinot Noir (esp from Casablanca) and others.	Roast lamb, chicken or guinea fowl	
USA	Pinot Noir and light Zinfandel, Cab or Merlot, esp. from Washington, Oregon and Long Island.	Stew Gammon	
E. EUROPE	All sorts, esp. from Hungary, Bulgaria and Greece. Many good bargains.	Many cheeses, if not too pongy	
<b>Full-bodied reds. Spicy, alcoholic, mouth-filling, ageworthy wines, usually matured in oak, including some spectacular New World blockbusters.</b>			<b>C/D/E</b>
FRANCE	Hermitage, Cornas and Châteauneuf-du-Pape from Rhône. Madiran. Top Languedoc-Roussillon. Classy VdP such as Mas de Daumas Gassac or Domaine de Trévallon.	Spicy sausages Cassoulet	
ITALY	Barolo. Barbaresco. Brunello di Montalcino. Vino Nobile di Montepulciano. Amarone della Valpolicella. <i>Supertuscans</i> . Primitivo wines.	Barbequed meat Roast or casseroled beef	
SPAIN	<i>Vinos de alta expresión</i> . Ribera del Duero. Toro. Priorato. Jumilla.	Steak	
AUSTRALIA	Shiraz, esp. Barossa. Cabernet. Shiraz/Cab blends. Old vine Grenache and Mourvèdre.	Beef Wellington Well-hung game	
CALIFORNIA	Cabernet. Zinfandel. Syrah. Merlot.	Wild boar	
ARGENTINA	Malbec.	Venison	
CHILE	Expensive Cabernets.	Rich stew	
SOUTH AFRICA	Serious Pinotages.	Confit de canard Hard and villainous cheeses	

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# WHAT'S WHAT ON LABELS

## OLD WORLD WINE (Grape variety often unspecified)

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



PRODUIT DE FRANCE



NAME OF WINERY

HAUTES-GRANGES

VINTAGE

2000

MONTRAVEL SEC

APELLATION  
MONTRAVEL SEC  
CONTROLEE

APPELLATION, INDICATING  
REGION AND STYLE (DRY)

ADDRESS OF  
PRODUCERS,  
INDICATING THAT THE  
(NOT FAMOUS) AC IS  
IN THE DORDOGNE

MIS EN BOUTEILLE A LA PROPRIETE

BOTTLING INFORMATION  
(BOTTLED AT THE WINERY)

PAR LES PRODUCTEURS DE MONTRAVEL ET SIGOULES

DORDOGNE - FRANCE

A F 24100

ALCOHOLIC  
STRENGTH

12% vol.

75 cl

CONTENTS OF BOTTLE IN  
CENTILITRES (NORMAL)

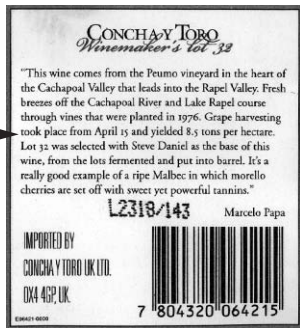
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SHIPPING INFORMATION

## NEW WORLD WINE



BACK LABEL  
GIVING (OPTIONAL)  
INTERESTING  
BACKGROUND  
INFORMATION



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## THE FRENCH APPELLATION CONTRÔLÉE SYSTEM

*Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* means 'controlled name of origin'. It is often shortened to *Appellation Contrôlée*, or *AC*, and is France's system of quality categorisation and control. Most other countries, especially in Europe, have similar systems. It evolved as a guarantee of authenticity for the protection of consumers and producers alike. Originally it was applied to the techniques of roquefort cheese making, with the stipulation that only ewe's milk might be used. Since the 1930s it has been most famous in connection with wine.

*Appellation Contrôlée* is the name of both the system and its highest level. Wines awarded *AC* status print the words on their label, separated by the region of origin, as for example *Appellation Bordeaux Contrôlée*. They must adhere to a rigorous set of conditions. The laws codify winemaking practices, and lay down a hierarchy of vineyard sites. Each area of France is subject to control of subregion, village/commune, alcoholic strength, volume of production per hectare of vineyard, and vine varieties, with stipulations regarding maximum and minimum proportions. (It's amusing to note

that whereas red Hermitage from the northern Rhône must be made from Syrah and nothing but Syrah, Châteauneuf-du-Pape from the southern Rhône has no less than 13 permitted grape varieties.) It doesn't stop there. Where viticulture is concerned, vine density, pruning, and system of training, extent of irrigation, minimum vine age and grape ripeness at harvest time, are all carefully monitored.

After *AC*, the next level down is *VDQS*, short for *Vin Délimité de Qualité Supérieure*. This is an interim level, accounting for a mere 1% of the country's wine. But it is subject to *AC* rules, and is often a stepping-stone towards *AC* status. Below that in the pecking order comes *Vin de Pays*. This enormous and carefully regulated category includes a growing number of wines which offer excellent value for money. They are relatively free from restrictions, but must nonetheless come from a demarcated region, be made from specified grape varieties, produced in limited quantity, be unblended and have a certain minimum level of alcohol.

The lowest level is *Vin de Table*, basic plonk. It can be made anywhere, from any grapes, in any quantity. It is lightweight and thin, without pretension to quality, can at a pinch provide welcome lubrication for a dry

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throat, and is often used for blending or distillation.

It's a cumbersome, complex system, and by no means a guarantee of quality. Some would call it, echoing Hamlet, a system 'more honoured in the breach than the observance.' There are independent spirits who wilfully disregard the rules, planting whatever they damn well please, and to spectacular effect. When they started to make wine at Mas de Daumas Gassac in the Pays de l'Hérault, they decided to use an unusual combination of grapes not found in AC regulations. On its release the wine was a huge success, and was hailed by one critic as 'The Château Lafite of the Languedoc'. Yet Mas de Daumas Gassac is technically a lowly 'Vin de Pays de l'Hérault'. They should worry!

The AC laws came into force in France in the 1930s to protect winemakers and drinkers from fraud, adulteration, and other piratical goings-on. In spite of the anomalies they have been highly successful, and imitated in one form or another by most wine-producing countries.

With the audiobook packed to capacity, fortified wines are discussed here in the booklet.

## **SHERRY AND SOUTHERN SPAIN**

Sherry slugs it out with German Riesling for the title of most undervalued masterpiece of the wine world. The centuries-old classic fortified wine takes its name from Jerez, in the hot south of Spain, where Palomino grapes grow in chalky-white *albariza* soil. The Spaniards love it, and drink all styles bone dry. Elsewhere it tends to be sweetened for export and kept too long, and its popularity is sadly waning. What a waste!

It comes in various styles. *Manzanilla* is delicate and frisky, with a whiff of the sea, and about 15.5% alcohol. *Fino* is similar but slightly fuller, almost as light and tangy. Both should be drunk young and chilled, and not kept long, once opened. They're excellent aperitifs, ideal with Andalusian seafood and tapas. *Amontillado* is nutty, fuller and mahogany-coloured. *Oloroso* is even darker and richer, redolent of dried fruit and nuts, with 18-20% alcohol. Sweet Olorosos can be found in Spain, and also abroad, where they tend to be called Cream Sherry. Pedro Ximénez (known as PX) is used to make very sweet sherry for blending, and occasional dark treacly dessert versions.

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Plenty of commercial styles are exported. To identify genuine quality bottles, look for *Fino* and *Manzanilla* with 15.5% alcohol at most, and newly shipped. Buy from a shop with a quick turnover. *Amontillado* and *Oloroso* should be labelled 'dry'. And the words *Muy Viejo* ('very old') are a good sign. These are some of the best value wines currently available.

The nearby regions of Montilla-Moriles and Condado de Huelva make less pungent sherry-like wines; some sweet, some dry; some fortified and others just remarkably strong.

Málaga is another fading star. Such dark, raisiny, toffeeish, fortified wine is not in vogue. But Scholtz Hermanos produces some delicious bottles.

## **PORT AND MADEIRA**

### **Port**

It seems ironic that while table wines are becoming fuller and more alcoholic, fortified wines, the fullest and most alcoholic of all, aren't really in fashion.

Vineyards don't get much less hospitable than Portugal's Douro valley, cradle of port. It's uninhabited, steep, wild and almost entirely lacking in earth. Vines plunge their roots yards deep into schist, in search of water and nutrients. Areas are graded according to quality, and their

produce priced accordingly. The best are some 80 miles upriver from Oporto.

A vast number of indigenous varieties may be used. Touriga Nacional is the most prized. Port's darkness and concentration depends on maximum extraction of colour and tannin, and traditional foot treading of grapes can still sometimes be seen in this remote, desolate region, accompanied by Bacchanalian rituals of music and dance.

Fermentation begins normally, but is interrupted halfway through by the addition of grape spirit. The unfermented juice retains its sweetness, and the brandy stuns the yeast and raises the alcohol level up to 22%.

There are many styles of Port. Most are aged in bulk, and bottled when ready to drink. Ruby, tawny, white port, colheita, late bottled vintage and the misleadingly named vintage character, are all examples of this kind. Tawny may be cheap and cheerful, or lusciously mature. The latter is aged for 10, 20, 30 or even 40 years in wood. It will be a lustrous, pale brick colour, and taste deliciously of nuts and raisins. It is a favourite style among the Port shoppers themselves.

Other styles are bottle-aged, 'throw a crust' as the saying goes, and must be decanted. Vintage Port is the most famous, but accounts for only 1% of total output.

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A vintage is declared only in the best years, about one in every three, and made only from the finest, most concentrated and tannic wine. It is bottled after two years in cask, but will then keep for decades. Single Quinta Ports are similar in style, but come from a non-declared year. They're cheaper, lighter, and can be drunk sooner. 'Crusted' indicates a blend of years.

The wines are matured in port lodges in Oporto and Vila Nova de Gaia. These were set up in the late 17th century by British merchants looking for a substitute for heavily taxed French wine. The shippers who run them have remained largely non-Portuguese.

## **Madeira**

The longest-lived and most resilient of wines is Madeira. A 317-year-old bottle recently found in London was said to be 'fresh, lively and palatable'. It comes from a Portuguese volcanic island in the Atlantic ocean. It is the only wine that can be opened, left half drunk, and will still taste good months later. It is not only fortified, but also baked. Centuries ago it was carried across the equator as ballast in sailing ships. Instead of the wine being spoiled, as you would expect, it was miraculously mellowed. Nowadays it is matured in hot stores called *estufas* for several months, at up to 120°F. Vintage

Madeira is then aged in wood for at least 20 years.

Four grape varieties may be used for the finest bottles. Sercial, Verdelho, Bual and Malmsey, make different styles, with increasing levels of sweetness. The sweeter styles are fortified early like port, the drier ones later, like sherry. These are luxury items.

Much Madeira is also made from an inferior grape, the Tinta Negra Mole. It is OK for enriching sauces in the kitchen, but not nectarous, not a patch on the real thing. My oldest bottle was an 1827 Bual. It came at the end of a glorious evening's drinking (as opposed to tasting). I was so moved, I wrote a little tasting note. I have to admit that it is not entirely legible, but seems to refer to rich amber colour, prunes and all sorts of spices, massive alcohol and amazing freshness on the palate.

## Wine Vocabulary

English	French	Italian	Spanish	Portuguese	German
Wine	Vin	Vino	Vino	Vinho	Wein
The wine list	La carte des vins	La lista dei vini	La lista de vinos	Lista de vinhos	Die Weinkarte
Red	Rouge	Rosso	Tinto	Tinto	Rot
White	Blanc	Bianco	Blanco	Branco	Weiss
Pink (or rosé)	Rosé	Rosato	Rosado	Rosado	Roséwein
Bone dry	Brut	–	Brut natur (fizz)	–	–
Dry	Sec	Secco	Seco/brut (fizz)	Séco	Trocken
Medium dry	Demi-sec	Abboccato	Semi-seco	Meio seco	Halbtrocken
Medium sweet	Doux	Amabile	Abocado	–	Mild
Sweet	Moelleux	Dolce	Dulce	Doce	Lieblich
Extra sweet	Liquoreux	–	Muy dulce	–	Süss
Sparkling	Crémant/mousseux	Spumante/frizzante	Espumoso	Espumante	Sekt
Vintage/harvest	Récolte/vendange	Vendemmia	Vendimia/cosecha	Colheita	Weinlese
Estate bottled	Mise en bouteilles au château/domaine/à la propriété	Imbottigliato all'origine	Embotellado de origen/ en la propiedad	Engarrafado na origem	Gutsabfüllung/Erzeugerabfüllung
Wine Estate	Château/Domaine	Tenuta	Pago	Quinta	Weingut
Cellar/winery	Cave	Cantina	Bodega	Adega/amarzém	Weinkellerei
Wine grower/maker	Vigneron/viticulteur/propriétaire	Vignaiolo, viticoltore	Proprietario/enólogo	Produtor de vinhos	Winzer
Wine growers' co-op	Cave coopérative	Cantina sociale or cantina cooperativa	Cooperativa vinicola	Cooperativa de vinhos	Winzergenossenschaft/winzerverein
Vineyard	Vignoble	Vigna, vigneto	Viña, viñedo	Vinha	Weinberg
Fermented/matured in oak (barrels)	Vinifié/élevé en (fûts de) chêne	Fermentato/invecchiato in (bariles de) quercia	Fermentado/elaborado en (toneles de) roble	Fermentada em Madeira	–



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## Acknowledgments

For Mary, who has only a passing interest in wine (she has told me so more than once) but is constantly amazed and delighted by how good the stuff tastes.

I was both thrilled and daunted to be asked to write and record this audiobook. The field of wine knowledge is vast, and only a fraction of it was to be found inside my head. There's no way I could have managed without much help from the experts. Luckily there is no shortage of excellent wine columns, slim volumes or weighty tomes. I'm much indebted to works by Tim Atkin, Gérard Basset, Michael Broadbent, Oz Clarke, Hubrecht Duijker, Rosemary George, James Halliday, Anthony Hanson, Hugh Johnson, Jane MacQuitty, Kathryn McWhirter, Charles Metcalfe, Robert Parker, David Peppercorn, John Platter, Jancis Robinson, Joanna Simon and Harvey Steiman.

Also, many thanks to Nicolas Soames for commissioning me, and for his great support, encouragement and patience. To Chris Foss for oenological editing; to Hugh Griffith for textual editing; to Sarah Butcher for her infinite pains in splicing together the recording; to Sheila Green for co-ordinating this booklet; and to Gus, who helped clear my head with a brisk pre-breakfast walk each morning.

**Recommended reading, limited to six of the best. Each of the following covers a different area, and is excellent in its own way.**

- World Atlas of Wine by Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson, pub. Mitchell Beazley.
- The Story of Wine by Hugh Johnson, pub. Mitchell Beazley.
- The Larousse Encyclopedia of Wine, pub. Hamlyn.
- Winetasting by Michael Broadbent, pub. Mitchell Beazley/Christie's Wine Pub's.
- The Wine Bible by Karen MacNeil, pub. Workman Publishing.
- Hugh Johnson's Pocket Wine Book, pub. Mitchell Beazley.

The website [www.jancisrobinson.com](http://www.jancisrobinson.com) is also recommended, as an excellent source of wide-ranging information about recent developments in the world of wine.

**Advanced courses in wine study are available at:**

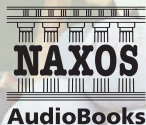
- Institut œnologique de Bordeaux, France.
- Institut agronomique de Montpellier, France.
- University of Adelaide, South Australia.
- UC Davis, Northern California.
- Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa.
- The wine institute at Geisenheim, Germany.
- Lincoln University, Canterbury, New Zealand.
- Plumpton College, Sussex, England.

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It then moves on to thumbnail sketches of the grape varieties most commonly used, their natural habitats and related styles of wine. And it concludes with a lengthy section devoted to all the major wine regions, in the Old World and the New.

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