

	Welcome: Week 3: Georgia on my Mind! 30 th January 2024	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
White	<p>Cotes de Gascogne I.G.P. “Les Collines de Luzanet” France 2022 The Cotes de Gascogne, which is perhaps better known for being the region which produces Armagnac brandy, also produces some easy drinking, white wines. Friends of ours recently cracked open a bottle of “Cotes de Gascogne Sauvignon Blanc” and it was a great quaffing wine!- their example came from the Wine Alley and it may well have been a bit more of a premium offering - but I was pleasantly surprised when I found an example, from the major Bordeaux French wine company Sichel, on offer at Waitrose at a net £5.22 after case discount (normally £8.25)!</p> <p>French Sauvignon Blanc is generally very different to New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, that we are now all very familiar with – generally French examples are more food friendly (think Sancerre or Pouilly Fume at the top end) but NZ examples are great when you just want a refreshing glass of white wine – but they can overpower delicate food.</p> <p>This wine may be a bit of a compromise between the two – on line reviews suggest it will still give fresh, grassy easy drinking wine but the presence of Colombard in the blend keeps Sauvignon’s assertive acidity in check. We are told to expect a mineral finish with zingy lemon and lime with a bit of elderflower. Other wines from this region may be made with Ugni Blanc grapes in the blend (those are used to make Armagnac, so not surprising).</p> <p>Gascony is Musketeer country – D’Artagnan was born “Charles de Batz de Castelmor d’Artagnan” in 1611 in Lupiac in Gascony SW France – the novel is loosely based on historical figures but their names were altered although his Eminence, Cardinal Armand, Duke of Richelieu keeps his, although Dumas’s Richelieu bears little resemblance to the real Cardinal.</p> <p>We see here the classic way “Old World” and especially French wine is labelled – that is to say the place where it comes from always takes prominence – generally this will be legally demarcated area (often known as an Appellation Controllee, Appellation Origine Protegee or similar) with strict rules on which grape varieties can be planted there if a grower wishes to label their wine under the name of that AOC. The New World by contrast makes a big thing of what the Grape Variety is – however here the French have compromised and also put the variety names in fairly large letters and prominence (For a French Wine) on the front label – they probably realise most of their target market for this wine in the UK will buy it because it is a Sauvignon Blanc rather than a Cotes de Gascogne (unless of course you are a U3A Wine Discoverer in which case you will be familiar with the style and quality of wines you could expect from that region).</p>	Colombard, Sauvignon Blanc	Waitrose normally £8.25 but on offer at £5.22 net of the 5% case discount
White	<p>Sangiovese (“Vinificate in Bianco” – vinified in white) “Fuori Porta” – Bianco Rubicone I.G.P – Emilia Romagna, Northern Italy 2022 This wine immediately caught my eye – and not just because of its funky “La Dolce Vita” label! When we think of Sangiovese, we think of red wine as it is the grape variety behind that most Italian of red wines, Chianti!</p> <p>In this case, we have a similar concept to that of making Rose wines – that is, the grape juice has only very fast contact with the skins before being run off to make the wine, so, little colour is imparted – so, effectively this is a white wine made from red grapes – the grapes are also harvested earlier than they would for making red wines to avoid excessive colouring of the grape</p>	Sangiovese	Waitrose normally £9.16 but on offer and net at £6.95 after the case discount.

	<p>skins. I notice that a Rose (or Rosato, as this is Italy) version is also made, with, presumably, the juice remaining in contact until a little more colour is obtained – Waitrose also sell the red version.</p> <p>The region it comes from, the Emilia Romagna, straddles the top of the leg of Italy just above Florence, level with Genoa and is home to most of the exotic names of Italian cars and motorbikes with rich gastronomy and the vineyards that produce the grapes for this wine are in its coastal area of Rimini, on Italy's North East coast. We should get citrus and and yellow apple on the nose with fragrant, minerality and balanced acidity with yellow fruit and herb notes with good length on the finish – suggested for roast chicken, buttery pasta and any tempura or deep fried fish. This was on a good offer at Waitrose – normally £9.16 but down to £6.95 net after their 5% case discount.</p> <p>Here is something to impress the waiter with – Sangiovese derives from the Latin meaning “Blood of Jupiter”! Fuori Porta (“out of town”) is the Italian expression for heading out for a day trip which of course would not be complete in Italy without a bottle of vino!</p>		
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White	<p>Qvevris “amber wine” by Tbilvino – Kakheti region, Georgia (Black Sea/Caucasus) 2020 I was almost beside myself, positively giddy with excitement to find this wine on the top shelf of Waitrose's white wine section (– I know, I should get out more).</p> <p>Only a few weeks ago, I had read an interesting article by Richard Allisette in the Guernsey Press about the unique wines of Georgia (not the US State!) and here were some bottles of the stuff! I have no idea what this wine will taste like, beyond the hints of pear, peach and almond mentioned on the label – although, in general, we should get a dry wine with apple, honey, nuts and savoury flavours with some orange zest and herbs – potentially they can be oxidised but this is not a fault - but I just had to bring it along as it is the history of winemaking in a bottle!</p> <p>This wine uses a winemaking method that has been used for 8,000 years and Georgia is officially the birthplace of wine as an ancient clay amphora style fermentation vessel, known as a Qvevri (pronounced “Kway-Vree”), that was dug up in Georgia, has been dated back 8,000 years and has residues of ancient pips and wine compounds dating to 6,000 BC and UNESCO regards it as an <i>Intangible Cultural Heritage</i> so Georgia can lay an evidence based claim to being the birthplace of wine!</p> <p>Only a handful of modern-day Georgian winemakers continue to embrace this ancient method of making wine in Qvevri, including the one we are trying today – hence the name. The Qvevri looks like one of those giant clay amphorae you see used as garden features – historically they were buried in the ground and the wine would become amber in colour because it was fermented on the grape skins – the grapes being harvested, slightly crushed and then put in the Qvevri with their skins, stems and pips – the Qvevri then sealed with a clay lid and the whole thing buried in the ground, sometimes in a building containing a number of these buried clay Qvevri in a stone floor with the lids looking like manhole covers. The use of these Qvevri tended to give very consistent temperatures as the wine would not get too hot or cold and the clay would not necessarily taint the flavour of the wine although different clays do give variations on flavours in the same way Oak barrels will affect wine if the barrel is New oak, French Oak, American Oak or if it has been “toasted”.</p> <p>We have previously tried a so called “Orange wine” but the Georgians use the term amber for theirs as this is its true colour. Kisi is a local grape variety and the grapes will typically ferment for around 6 months . Apparently Qvevri made wines should</p>	Kisi	Waitrose £13.93 net after 5% case discount (5 bottles) and two bottles at full price £14.66
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	<p>not be drunk too chilled and can be drunk more like red wines as they are more structured on the palate and will be served with spicy lamb, steak etc. Kakheti is the largest wine region in the Eastern part of the country.</p> <p>So, whether you like it or not, this is a true voyage of Wine Discovery and you will be tasting wine as it would have been drunk by our very distant ancestors! It is not a cheap wine and therefore this is an opportunity to give something very different, a go, without having to part with the best part of £15 for a wine you have no idea what to expect from it! – the very ethos of our “U3A Wine Discovery”</p>		
Red	<p>Sannio D.O.P. Aglianico – La Guardiense Co Operative – Sannio Beneventano, Campania, Southern Italy 2020 The grape variety here is Aglianico, although at first glance, incredibly minimalist labelling gives very little information away about the wine! It is always great to find something a bit different on the Supermarket shelves at a reasonable price and Italy, like Portugal has a bit of a USP in the world of wine in the form of a huge number of indigenous grape varieties unique to its various regions so there is always something a bit different to discover.</p> <p>Aglianico, is regarded as Southern Italy’s best red grape variety and in fact is referred to as the “Barolo of the South” – (or maybe more accurately that should be the “Nebbiolo of the South” as that is the grape variety that is used for Barolo wine)! This is because it can produce highly refined and complex wines like those of Barolo. In fact, along with Nebbiolo and Sangiovese it is considered to be one of the top three Italian grape varieties! It is also a very fashionable variety and rest assured, we are therefore “on trend”.</p> <p>The region this wine comes from is the Sannio Beneventano (Campania) which is a key region for producing Aglianico based wines. The production of wines in this region is dominated by four “co operatives” of which “La Guardiense”, established in 1960, is one with 1,000 growers/members.</p> <p>It seems likely there will some oak ageing so some vanilla together with juicy red cherry, blackberry, spice and cocoa and freshness. A wine for rich meat pasta dishes. I do rather like the minimalist bottle labelling, although, from a supermarket perspective, I could imagine it could leave an average shopper scratching their head if they pick up a bottle!</p> <p>If we do get a bit of a baby Barolo here, then at £8.70 a bottle, this will be a stellar find! In any event, a bit of an alternative to some of the more familiar “varietal” Southern Italian red wines such as Negroamaro, Nero d’Avola etc.</p>	Aglianico	Co Op St Martins - £8.75 shelf price but we get a 10% staff discount on this, so £7.88 net to the Group (6 bottles) and one at £8.75
Red	<p>Stemmari Terre Siciliane I.G.T. “Passiata” 2021 You may from time to time come across bottles of Italian red wine with words such as Appassimento, Ripasso, Passiata on the label. This is especially common in the Valpolicella region where you will find Valpolicella Ripasso where the wine has been “passed over” the residue of Grape skins etc from making the top Italian wine, Amarone, to enable it to gain additional intense flavour - and indeed Amarone itself, which is made from pressing dried, raisined grapes which gives intense flavours but of course, inevitably makes for an expensive wine as much less juice is extracted from considerable quantities of grapes.</p> <p>These practices to intensify flavours in the wine seem relatively unique to Italy, as I can’t think of any French table wine made from dried grapes. Here, we have a wine from Sicily which is a blend of Nero d’Avola grapes and Syrah - utilising a similar technique of using dried grapes, but in this case only for a portion of the grapes used to make it.</p>	Syrah, Nero d’Avola	Waitrose £10.45 net of case discount of 5%

	<p>This wine is a blend of Nero d'Avola grapes (very much associated with Southern Italy – Puglia, Sicily etc)- those grapes are harvested mid September and dried for 60 days – then destemmed, gently pressed and matured in stainless steel tanks.</p> <p>The Syrah grapes are harvested at the end of September and fermented in Stainless steel with half of that Syrah being aged in oak barrels for up to 8 months.</p> <p>So, both grape varieties are effectively vinified separately- the two wines are then blended together and that blend spends another 6 months in stainless steel before bottling. The objective of course is to give plenty of complexity and intensity to the wine and we should get blackberry, cherry, raspberry with tobacco notes and vanilla from the use of oak. It should be a velvety wine with beautiful long finish and fruitiness and elegant tannins.</p> <p>However, as only a portion of the wine has been in oak and only a portion comes from those dried grapes, it should be still an approachable wine to go with a meal and yet with enough going on to pair with Cheeses and a cold platter of salami, cured meats etc. Amarone is a very different prospect, in Italy often being treated almost like a Port and drunk over a relaxing conversation at the end of a meal to contemplate its complex flavours.</p> <p>Interestingly we have an “international” grape variety here in the form of Syrah – whilst these do appear in Italian wines – Merlot features - Italy has so many indigenous varieties it is almost a surprise to see an international one!</p> <p>This would go great with any steak or any meaty sauce pasta.</p>		
Red	<p>Nebbiolo D'Alba D.O.C. Cantina del Nebbiolo, Alba, Piedmont, Italy 2021 It is quite usual, in Italy, to find that the better wines will be named using a combination of grape variety and the town they come from – so we have for example, Nebbiolo d'Alba – a wine made from Nebbiolo grapes exclusively from the area around the town of Alba – you may also see Barbera d'Asti – wine made from Barbera grapes from around the town of Asti and so on.</p> <p>Nebbiolo, is one of Italy's most noble grape varieties as it is behind the expensive and famous wines of Barolo – which is a very near neighbour to Alba – in fact, this wine is considered to be the closest thing to a little brother of Barolo. However, although it is a near neighbour and made from the same grape, it is a softer and lighter in structure and strength to Barolo – which may be no bad thing – the problem with Barolo is that it needs many years in the bottle to be approachable – most supermarkets sell it with a few years under its belt but you probably could tuck it away for another decade. There is also the matter of price – this wine isn't bargain basement but it is around half the price or less of a typical supermarket Barolo and many critics think it is a worthy substitute.</p> <p>(Barolo, being a top end Italian wine, is allowed to go by simply the name of the place it comes from on its label).</p> <p>This wine should be at its best at around 3 to 6 years and this already has 3 years under its belt. It does have some poke however at 14% so this is not for the faint hearted! Probably a wine to buy two bottles of if you are feeling flush – one to use to slow pot roast a lovely rib of beef to give you a “Beef Barolo” and the other bottle to drink with it – a considerably more cost effective option than two bottles of Barolo!</p>	Nebbiolo	Waitrose £12.19 net after 5% case discount

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