

# Havant U3A Wine Appreciation Group

## 12<sup>th</sup> Lockdown Newsletter

### Newsletter October 2020

#### Welcome

Hello Wine Appreciation members, while we are still restricted in our daily lives, we hope this newsletter goes some way to lightening the mood by concentrating on a happy rather than gloomy topic, and can help to provide some learning along the way.

While we hope that these newsletters are providing interest and education whilst our normal monthly meetings are suspended, please remember that you can determine the look, feel and content. U3A is a collaborative exercise aiming to provide value to all members with contributions from many. We would very much like these newsletters to also operate in this way, so we ask for any of the following:

Members to volunteer to provide the content of the next study topic

Members to provide input about their:

Wine experiences – like the best wine I ever had or the wine I've saved for a special occasion

Wine likes and dislikes – what is your favourite wine or a style of wine and why

Please reply to this letter to offer your services and or to provide your input. Please email any or all of Geoff, Nick or Steve.

If we cannot get this participation for these newsletters, then they will cease.

## Members News

After another successful tasting in October, the third such virtual meeting, we will be having another virtual meeting based around tasting in November. Discussion about the tasting subject for the next meeting at the end of the October meeting decided on any wine from Chile.

This will be on:

**Tuesday November 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm.**

**Please will you RSVP, ideally by email to Geoff.**

The meeting will be held using the Zoom video meeting tool. The meeting invitation, with the meeting link, will be sent out near to the date.

For the meeting we will be having a group tasting and discussion. For the tasting please bring a single bottle of *any wine from Chile* you would like to sample:

Please bring a bottle of Chilean wine, it can be white, rose, red or sparkling

Please let Geoff know by email several days before the tasting which wine you have selected ie name, year, grape, strength so we can compile a list before the tasting and group similar wines

Please be prepared to tell us about the wine that you are tasting – where it's from, grapes used, etc. and any other detail about the geography, terroir, winery or wine making process you are able to find.

If you have not taken part in these meetings before I would encourage you to try one; although it's a bit of computer/tablet/smartphone tech it's really not too difficult!

If anyone would like to have a one-to-one trial Zoom meeting any time before the event, please email either Nick or Steve to ask for this.

## Wine news

Following up on Nick's wine news last newsletter, warning of the potentially disastrous effects of climate change on French wine production comes the other side of the coin. An article by Harry Wallop in the Times about the continuing success of English wine due to climate change together with a selection of the top 20 English wines by Jane MacQuitty.

To summarise, "go back 30 years and English wine was considered a bit of a joke, but the quality now is fantastic". Planted area has quadrupled over the last 20 years to 3,500 hectares, a larger area than that for pears, with over 10 million bottles of sparkling wine produced last year. The French Champagne houses Tattinger and Pommery have bought land and started on sparkling wine investment while LMVH, owner of Krug and Moet and Chandon is seriously looking to start up in England.

The fascinating aspect of the Jane MacQuitty selection is that the prices start at £8.50 for a white from Three Choirs, implying that climate change has ensured the sort of stable production volumes to enable much lower pricing for quality than before.

The links to the two articles are:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/champagne-mais-non-the-new-french-fizz-is-from-kent-5qz7z07vc?shareToken=0557afaf6955308ee096ed1ca087b8db>

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-top-20-english-red-white-and-sparkling-wines-7rg3v5dfm?shareToken=b067554f75e11f1838ac847ba5fd4d4d>

## Wine and Health

I thought it worth considering the various views of the health giving benefits of wine across the ages, but first a slight diversion into the historical proof of the earliest existence of wine.

“It can now be shown that China is where the first grape wine was made some five hundred years earlier than Georgia where wine making has been accepted from 9 thousand year ago.

Jiahu is a Neolithic archaeological dig site in Northern China near the middle of the Yellow River Valley. Very early examples of Chinese pictogram writing and bone flutes, “the earliest playable musical instruments in the world,” have been found there, along with pottery shards or fragments of storage vessels. The dried remains of the liquid contents of these storage vessels have been analysed by the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and the results of the examinations showed that the residue contained a mixture of honey mead, hawthorn fruit wine, rice wine, and indigenous Chinese grape wine and was dated as being five hundred years older than that found in Georgia. “This beverage currently predates the earliest evidence of grape wine from the Middle East by more than 500 years,” thus making the Jiahu wine the earliest fermented alcoholic beverage in the world

It should also be remembered that this wine beverage was made over four thousand years before Chinese tea was first used by the Chinese Emperor Shen Nong in 2737 BCE.

Later grape wine played a very important role in Chinese medicine as part of the Chinese materia medica, and was also used as a menstruum or mixing medium for other medicines. Red wine was also used in sacrificial ceremonies because its colour was associated with blood.

Since the age of the Egyptian Pharaohs five thousand years ago, wine has been used as a medicine. The ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman empires all appreciated and utilized wine as a medicine. Into the Middle Ages, monks ran hospitals in their monasteries and made medicines from wine. These were the basis of many of the liqueurs enjoyed today.”

“The modern era of wine and health is illustrated in Australia in the eighteenth century. In 1787 the First Fleet sailed from England for Australia, using wine as a medicine and a source of vitamins to help convicts survive the long sea voyage. This tradition of Australian doctors’ medical use of wine was the springboard for today’s research into the relationship between wine and health.”

Now a few quotes relevant to our lifestyle today:

“Alcohol can stimulate the appetite so it is better to drink it with food. When alcohol is mixed with food, it can slow the stomach's emptying time and potentially decrease the amount of food consumed at the meal”

As the key to all dieting is first to reduce quantity we know what to do!!

“Resveratrol is a polyphenol that can be found most especially in red wines. It is a powerful antioxidant that can be found in grape skin and red grape juice. Antioxidants help the body fight off free radicals that can damage our cells and organs. Studies show that resveratrol promotes health and longevity by increasing the activity of a protein called sirtuins. Sirtuins are responsible for protecting the body against diseases of ageing. Several studies have suggested that alcohol consumption, particularly wines, have shown health benefits that lead to longer life spans. Nonetheless, these studies emphasize that positive benefits only come with moderate consumption.”

Now we can see that consuming wine itself will enable us to consume wine for longer!

Daily consumption of wine can boost the immune system according to researchers. Ethanol, the chemical component of alcoholic beverages and wine as well helps boost the potency of vaccinations. Drinking wine in moderation can help develop immunity that can fight against 200 viruses. Wine contains high levels of antioxidants in the form of flavonoids which can combat strongly against viruses. As proof, red wine can help cure the symptoms of flu and cold. The polyphenol resveratrol can prevent viruses from multiplying once they have entered the body’s system.

At least then we might get some protection against flu if not the dreaded Covid 19!

For all who are interested in much more detail the first of the above quotes were taken from the book:

The History of Wine as a Medicine: From its Beginnings in China to the Present Day  
By Philip Norrie, published 2019 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing ISBN (10):  
5275-2153-2 ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-2153-7

## Study Topic – Wines of Georgia

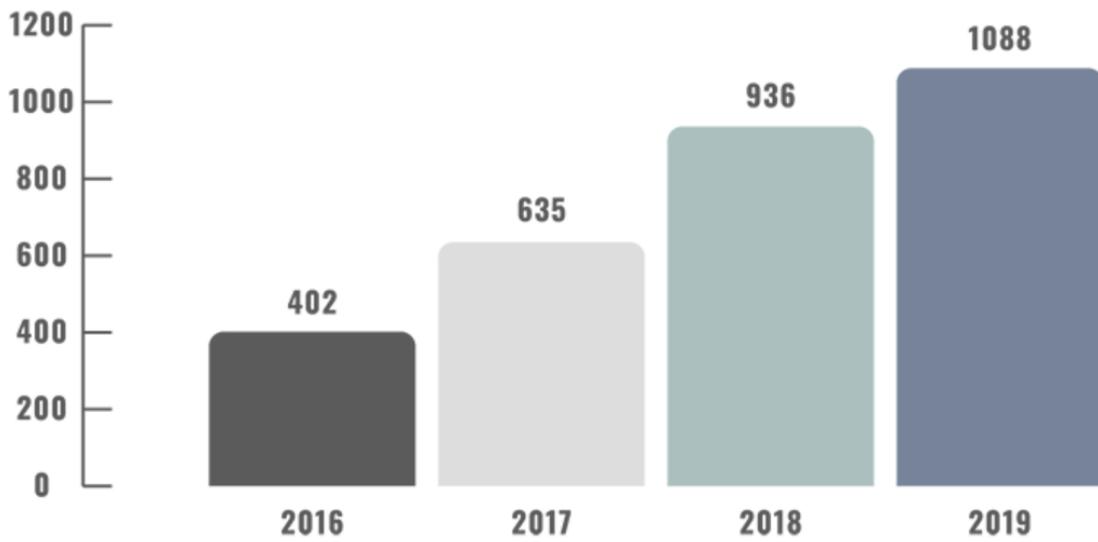
Why Georgia? Because it was mentioned above as the second oldest starting point for wine and it has been mentioned by several commentators over the last two years, as an up and coming region, even though exports to the Western world are still USA dominated.

In a classic instance of the tail wagging the dog, Georgia is known by many people for kvevri wines, which are fermented (and sometimes aged) in clay vessels—its namesake kvevri—that are often buried underground. It is this method which was discovered to have originated some 9000 years ago. Representing only 1 percent of all Georgian wines, kvevri wines themselves come in different styles. There are dry red wines made from Saperavi and other red grapes, such as Otskhanuri Sapere and Tavkveri, but it's the amber wines, produced from white grapes fermented in kvevri with skins and sometimes stems, that have become Georgia's calling card.

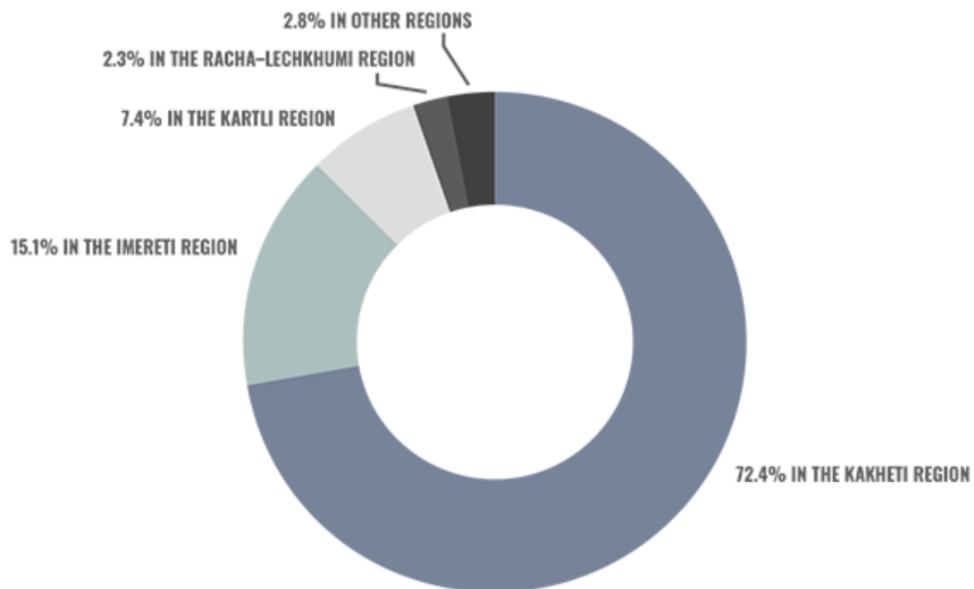
Next a few diagrams summarising the state of play:



### NUMBER OF REGISTERED WINERIES



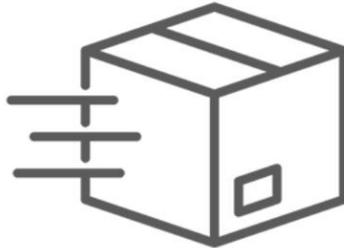
### 55,000 HECTARES OF VINES



## GLOBAL EXPORTS IN 2019



93.4 MILLION BOTTLES EXPORTED TO 53 COUNTRIES



341 EXPORTING COMPANIES



TOTAL VALUE OF EXPORTED GEORGIAN WINE:  
\$238 MILLION (EST.) IN 2019

Georgia lost 96 percent of its export market following its war with Russia in 2008. Ever since, the country has followed a full-court press to diversify its target markets. Now, with the Russian ban on Georgian wine lifted, Russia remains by far Georgia's top customer (in volume though not value). Ukraine, Poland, Kazakhstan, and China are also dominant markets. Today, [Georgia exports to 53 countries](#), and as of June 2019, its National Wine Agency reports that sales to France, Israel, the Netherlands, and Canada have increased by double digits. The U.S., one of Georgia's strategic markets, saw imports for the first six months of 2019 increase by 88 percent over those for the same period in 2018. (A country of only 3.7 million people, Georgia exported a total of 86.2 million bottles in 2018, a 30-year record high.)

For now, Georgian wines come in a variety of styles that are made mostly in stainless steel—designed to provide an easy entry into Georgian wine for those who normally might opt for Pinot Grigio or a Cabernet Sauvignon but are open to wines from more far-flung places. In this category, producers [Marani \(Telavi Wine Cellar\)](#), [Shumi](#), [Tbilvino](#), [Vaziani](#) and [Vinoterra](#) offer well-made wines from the Rkatsiteli, Mtsvane, Kisi, and Saperavi grape varieties.

Each of these wineries also produces semi-sweet red wines from the Khvanchkara and Kindzmarauli appellations, in western and eastern Georgia, respectively. Intended to be drunk when young and vibrant (even with a bit of a chill), these wines are characterized by a fruity, sweet attack that's immediately freshened by nearly imperceptible tannin and bright acidity. With flavours of dark forest fruits and spice, they finish clean, not sticky, and can be a surprising match with intensely flavoured, spicy cuisine. Although most of the Georgian wines shipped to the U.S. are dry, these sweet and semi-sweet wines constitute 70 percent of the country's wine production. Of this number, 30 percent are produced from state-designated appellations, or PDOs (Protected Denomination of Origin).

Georgia has about 55,000 hectares of grapes, with 75% planted in white grapes and 25% in red. By far the largest portion of the nation's vineyards are planted in the

Kakheti region of eastern Georgia, the country’s primary winemaking area. Although Kakheti boasts roughly 80 grape varieties, the two most prominent are Rkatsiteli (white) and Saperavi (red).

### **Rkatsiteli**

Though it is now grown throughout Georgia as well as abroad, the Rkatsiteli white grape variety is believed to have first emerged in eastern Georgia in the first century. Rkatsiteli makes noticeably acidic but balanced white wines with a full flavor profile and good body. Restrained and refreshing, with crisp green-apple flavors and hints of quince and white peach, Rkatsiteli wines are more complex when produced using the traditional Georgian qvevri method. Rkatsiteli grapes result in high-quality table wines, regional wines, and appellation-controlled wines. Rkatsiteli grapes are frequently mixed with the Mtsvane Kakhuri variety

### **Saperavi**

Deep in fruit character, yet brisk with acidity, this gutsy grape presents a unique alternative to everyday reds. The leading red variety in Georgia, Saperavi is indigenous to the country. Its name means “the place of color.” It is one of the few teinturier grape varieties in the world—a grape with red flesh as well as red skin. Saperavi wine reflects a deep, inky, and often fully opaque color. It has aromas and flavors of dark berries, licorice, grilled meat, tobacco, chocolate, and spices.

Georgia has adopted the European Union’s regulatory structure defining wines linked to a specific place. To date, Georgia has registered 24 Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) wine appellations. The majority of these lie in the eastern part of the country; see the chart below for associated regions and wine styles.

<b>PDO</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Main Wine Styles</b>
<b>Eastern Georgia</b>		
Akhasheni	Kakheti	Semisweet red
Akhmeta	Kakheti	Dry white, semidry white, semisweet white, dry amber
Akhoebi	Kakheti	Dry red
Gurjaani	Kakheti	Dry white
Kakheti	Kakheti	Dry white, amber
Kardenakhi	Kakheti	Fortified white (sweet amber)
Kindzmarauli	Kakheti	Semisweet red
Kotekhi	Kakheti	Dry red, dry white
Kvareli	Kakheti	Dry red
Manavi	Kakheti	Dry white
Mukuzani	Kakheti	Dry red
Napareuli	Kakheti	Dry white, dry red
Saperavi Khashmi	Kakheti	Dry red
Teliani	Kakheti	Dry red
Tibaani	Kakheti	Dry white, amber

<b>PDO</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Main Wine Styles</b>
Tsarapi	Kakheti	Dry amber
Tsinandali	Kakheti	Dry white
Vazisubani	Kakheti	Dry white
<b>Central Georgia</b>		
Atenuri (or Ateni)	Kartli	Sparkling white
Bolnisi	Kartli	Dry white, dry red, dry amber
<b>Western Georgia</b>		
Khvanchkara	Racha	Semisweet red
Salkhino Ojaleshi	Samegrelo	Dry red
Sviri	Imereti	Dry white
Tvishi	Lechkhumi	Dry to semisweet white

For more detail on all aspects of wine in Georgia, especially grape varieties and PDO wine styles look [here](#) .

Uk specialist sources for Georgian wines include:

Georgian Wine Guild <https://www.georgianwineguild.co.uk/>

Georgian Wine Online <https://www.gvinouk.com/>

Taste of Georgia <https://www.tasteofgeorgia.co.uk/>

Georgian Wine Society <https://georgianwinesociety.co.uk/>

Georgian Wine <HTTPS://WWW.GEORGIANWINE.UK/>

This last supplier has a list of UK stockists under the Georgian Wine Producers tab. They also have downloadable PDFs for every PDO wine giving a detail map, climate, grape varieties and soil.

Healthy quaffing,

Steve Cook.

