

LEA & SANDEMAN

'MOST ORIGINAL WINE MERCHANTS'

LEA & SANDEMAN TWENTY THREE YEARS ON!

The near demise of Oddbins would have been regarded as a truly momentous event back in 1988 when we started L&S. This once powerful chain was a beacon of excellence, even if its feted irreverence was sometimes simply scruffiness. It was cool. It was frankly scary competition.

For the years since the Castel/ Nicolas takeover it had been a guttering flame compared to what it had been in the Scarfe-cartoon glory days, and its final extinction has not made such an enormous impact even if a few shops still carry the Oddbins name.



LEA & SANDEMAN, CHISWICK

In wine terms, Australia and then Chile offered exactly what supermarkets need – industrial volume at prices which really are dirt cheap if you offer to buy twenty-five containers. Even Oddbins could not compete at this level.

For the average French or Italian wine-farmer with five to fifteen hectares of vines, the 'massive buying power' of supermarkets is simply irrelevant. He just wants a price for what he makes which will enable him to make a living, and he needs to keep his life simple by selling his wine every year. The best way to secure this is to supply a wide range of customers, so that no single customer can dictate to him. To make this happen he really is going to farm in a sustainable way to preserve his and his family's future, and going to do all he can to make the best wine he can within the constraints of his appellation and climate, and he really is going to do everything he can to make sure his buyers beat a path to his door every year.

Recently Guy Woodward, editor of Decanter, dared to suggest on Radio 4's Today programme that the chances of buying a decent wine under a fiver are vanishingly remote, and was labelled a 'wine snob' by Asda's spokesperson as a result.

Firstly he is right, and secondly we should all just make a little bit more of an effort not to let the supermarkets grind us down by claiming that any attempt at excellence is either 'snobbery' or 'elitism'. Woodward followed up with an article in the Guardian exasperatedly entitled 'Why Won't the British Treat Wine Seriously?' In this he argues that the tax take on cheap wine is so high that quality is really all but impossible at £5 or less. Have a look at the article inside for more on this.

the massive buying power of the supermarkets only works if there is unlimited supply

What Oddbins originally did best was to provide a real difference to the bland and often industrial-scale wines offered by the supermarkets, but in the end it got caught up in the war of discounting and brands which are such friends of 'grande distribution'. Pioneers of the original Australian invasion, and then the first wave of the Chileans, it could be argued that by making these countries 'hip' Oddbins paved the way for the grinding supermarket machine of brands; building, exploitation and destructive discounting which finally snuffed it out.

People talk about the 'massive buying power' of the supermarket behemoths, but seem not to realise that massive buying power only works if there is unlimited supply.



THIRD YEAR
RUNNING!

WINE AWARDS 2011

For the third year in succession we have been awarded **Regional Wine Merchant of the Year 2011** for London by the judging panel of the International Wine Challenge. At the same time we were again shortlisted for Decanter Magazine's London Wine Merchant of the year 2011, among some very stiff competition.



Another award that came our way, somewhat out of the blue, was Spear's Design for Living 'The Vintner Award' 2011, for 'a wine merchant, auction house, dealer or supplier who consistently sources the best wines for private clients'.



Once again we are immensely grateful to our loyal and growing customer base for your continued support as we endeavor to do what we already do even better.

THE BUNCH – For Wines Less Ordinary

The Bunch is a small group of like-minded independent wine merchants who all share a similar philosophy of sourcing and presenting wines to customers in as exciting and competitive a manner as possible. This does not mean that we are in any way beholden to each other, form part of any buying consortium, or indeed do not compete against each other for business. What it does mean, however, is that we do undertake a responsibility to our customers through a code of practice that we each follow.



Over the past twelve months, in addition to sprucing up The Bunch logo and adding an all-important strap line 'For Wines Less Ordinary', The Bunch has also made the code of practice the focal point of the group. The code covers a guarantee of quality, customer's paid reserves, mail order and all importantly guarantee of supply. Full details can be found at: www.bunchwines.co.uk

Current members of The Bunch are Adnams, Berry Bros. & Rudd, Corney & Barrow, Lea & Sandeman, Tanners and Yapp Brothers.

THE NSPCC CITY FINE WINE CHALLENGE

The NSPCC City Fine Wine Challenge is now firmly established as one of the NSPCC's major annual fundraisers, raising an average of £120,000 each

year and for the fifth consecutive year Lea & Sandeman is the major sponsor.

In addition to providing the champagne for the reception, and all of the wines for the evening, we also run the interactive quiz on the night, with Patrick Sandeman acting as quizmaster.

It is a fast and exciting evening, with twenty-five city companies each hosting tables of ten people jostling for pole position by correctly answering the wide variety of questions, often by buying clues, or even the answers outright,

and with all proceeds going straight to the charity.

It is a great joint team event for Lea & Sandeman and NSPCC volunteer staff alike, pouring over 2000 tasting glasses of wine, running between tables selling clues and answers, and taking orders for more wines to be consumed at the tables both during and after the auction.

With only twenty-five tables available the demand has become intense, as companies have found this to be a great and amusing team building event for their staff and clients alike. November 2012 may look like a long way off should your company consider getting involved, but then so did the Olympics when we first won the bid.



CHISWICK: TWO YEARS ON

Time flies when you are having fun. We have crammed so much into our two first years in Chiswick, put down such firm roots, and become such a fixture on the High Road, that it already feels as if we have been here forever. It is only when some lost soul comes in looking for somewhere to buy a tent or a pair of waterproof trousers that we are reminded that not so long ago this was just a branch of Millets. But, in September 2009, a life of outdoorsy practicality and sensible footwear disappeared and a fabulous site on the corner of Devonshire Road began a new life as the most recent outpost in the growing Lea & Sandeman empire.



Lea & Sandeman was an unfamiliar name to many people but residents of Chiswick have taken well to our exciting, ever-changing, ever-improving, delicious and refreshing range of wines, and today the & of Lea & Sandeman is a familiar sight around Chiswick, on bags and boxes, as well as empty bottles of our increasingly popular Lea & Sandeman Bordeaux in local recycling bins. We certainly seem to have become number one choice when looking for that really special vinous gift. Hardly a birthday, anniversary, retirement or celebration seems to pass

in Chiswick without a couple of eclectic or extravagant bottles in their smart Lea & Sandeman gift bags being part of the occasion.

Business continues to build, and new customers find their way to our doors. It is a challenging market but if we can continue to share our enthusiasm and offer exceptional value and quality, then the world is our highly calcified bivalve mollusc. Thank you for your continued support!

For details of tasting at the Chiswick shop, or to join our mailing list, call us 020 8995 7355 or e-mail andrew@leaandsandeman.co.uk. Other LEA & SANDEMAN shops also hold customer events – see your local branch for details.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

The most impressive retailer's tasting this week was that organised by the small independent group Lea & Sandeman. It can't have been easy to have survived and even expanded in a market dominated by supermarkets and their massive retail power and of course they live and die by their selection, in the hands of Charles Lea and Patrick Sandeman.
JANCIS ROBINSON

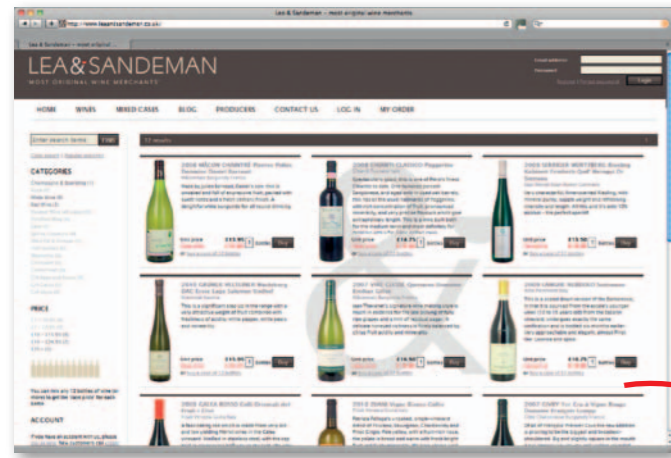
Finally, a plea not to ignore the independent wine merchants. Because their wines are harder to obtain, they always have to fight a little bit harder to make it on to any list, and the pair from Lea & Sandeman in particular are exceptionally good value.
VICTORIA MOORE,
SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Multi-award winning Lea & Sandeman, the London merchant now with four stores as well an easy to use website, has a brilliant

approach to tannin, something which must surely be one of the secrets to its already proven success. Tannins are soft and delicate when they should be, while the feistier wines have tannins aplenty and yet importantly they never seem to be the ugly protagonist. From zippy whites to luscious reds, and especially so from Italy and France, L&S has a seriously seductive, not to mention competitive, range.
THE WINE GANG

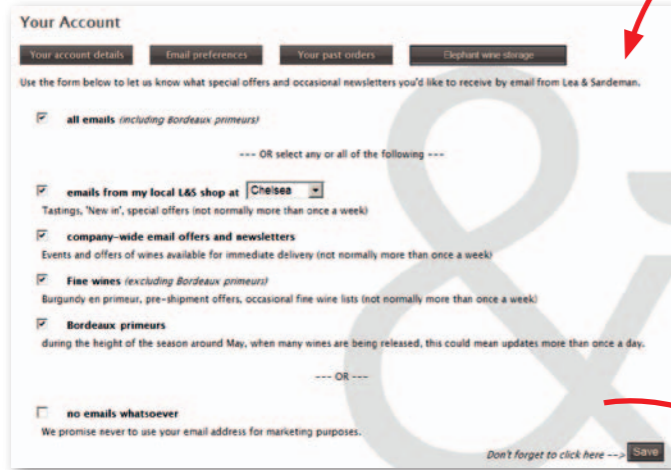
2009 BLACK ESTATE Chardonnay, Waipara, New Zealand £20.95
You could be forgiven for imagining yourself in Burgundy tasting this elegant Kiwi chardonnay; an opulent, complex style with toasty oak, creamy-textured fruit and a nutty, refreshingly dry aftertaste.
ANTHONY ROSE, THE INDEPENDENT





FIRST PORT OF CALL

The development of our website has continued apace over the past year. This is still the best place to find wines we have in stock ready for immediate dispatch, as well as being the showcase for pre-shipment and 'en primeur' offers for Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Rhone, as well as Tuscany, Piedmont, and anything else that grabs our attention in the course of the year. Mix up cases, let our wide-ranging and eclectic list expand your horizons – remember we don't buy wines we don't want to drink ourselves.

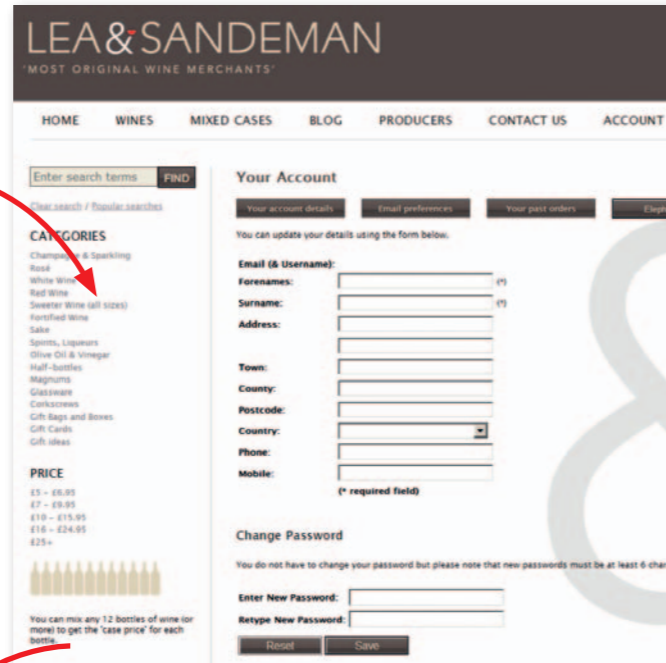


LOGGING ON

Much of the new development is rather hidden behind the scenes, and you do have to **log-in** to see it. If you don't have a password or have forgotten it, you can simply request a 'one-use' link via the website, and then enter a new password. Once you are logged-on you can change your **account details**. (Except for your email address, as this is your user name, so if this needs changing please email us.)

EMAIL PREFERENCES

Under the **Email Preferences** tab you can also change your mailing preferences, so that you only get the offers that interest you, and you do not get more than you want.



PAST ORDER HISTORY

The third tab along on this page will show you all your **past orders**, and you can click on each wine and see any tasting notes we have in our database. You can also see what you paid for wines you have in your cellar, re-order them if they are still available, and you can download a copy invoice as a pdf file.



BROKING AT LEA & SANDEMAN

We are fast expanding our broking operations, after having over 20 years of experience in the world of fine wine.

We are more than happy to quote on cash or broking terms for any fine wines you may wish to sell, at market rates. We are typically, but by no means exclusively, looking for Bordeaux, Burgundy and Italian wines which are in good condition and of excellent provenance.



At the same time if you are looking for wines that do not feature on our website or in store, please contact us and we will endeavor to source them for you at the most competitive rate possible.

For further details please contact Tom Morgan:
 – 020 7244 0522
 – tomm@leaandsandeman.co.uk

JEAN-LOUIS DENOIS Methode Traditionelle Chardonnay-Pinot Noir Brut £13.95

With its warm bread-and-honey nose this smells so much like champagne I had to double-check the label to confirm it's actually made near Limoux. To taste, you might say a touch of rusticity gives away its origin, but I love the generous flavour of red apple, and would buy this by the crate if I were getting married or throwing a party this summer. Amazing value.

VICTORIA MOORE, SATURDAY TELEGRAPH



Lycetts

Protecting a valuable asset...
 is your wine collection properly insured?

Happily wine is still providing a sound portfolio diversification for investors as well as being a source of immense pleasure for enthusiasts. Over the last ten years, as the use of custom-built cellars and temperature controlled storage units has increased rapidly, domestic cellars have been filling fast with good sized wine collections which can be worth a considerable sum.

There is a general assumption that wine will automatically be fully protected under a standard home contents policy but this is not always the case. In order to properly protect your collection it pays to speak to a specialist broker who understands the nature of insuring wine. If you own a valuable collection you will almost certainly need 'high value' contents insurance, also known as 'high net worth' insurance, which is tailored to suit homeowners with a higher than average value of contents to insure.

Common threats to your collection can include:

- Theft
- Accidental breakage
- Loss of labels in a cellar flood
- Underinsurance – be aware of the current value of your collection

Lycetts have looked after the interests of Lea & Sandeman for many years and specialise in the insurance of wines in domestic and warehouse storage facilities as well as in transit. If you are interested in discussing your insurance requirements please complete and return the form attached to the loose leafed insert in this newsletter and we will contact you as soon as possible to discuss your requirements.

Contact details:

Jonathan Lloyd

Lycetts Insurance Brokers
 1st Floor
 14 Fenchurch Avenue
 London
 EC3M 3BS
 Telephone: 0207 423 0915
 Email: jonathan.lloyd@lycetts.co.uk

THE RIVER CAFÉ

Revisited

The River Café is hardly a new restaurant, but is one that has proven capable of reinventing itself over the past two decades, and remaining one of London's most exciting places to eat.

Founded in 1987 by Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers, initially as a canteen for the employees and clients of the (Lord) Rogers Architectural business next door, it went on to open its doors to the public and was the first Italian restaurant on the London scene to offer Italian food at its most simple and unfussy, based upon sourcing the best possible ingredients for its dishes, and in 1988 was awarded a Michelin star.

A fire in the kitchens in 2008 forced a temporary closure, but allowed for the restaurant to be redesigned, opening up the kitchen and creating a focus on the massive wood fire oven, as well as creating a beautiful private dining space alongside, inside the new cheese room.

In 2010 Rose Gray succumbed to a protracted fight against cancer, and the future of River Café looked momentarily uncertain. However, Ruth Rogers' determination and drive quickly saw that the restaurant continued to thrive, as she built a new team around her, empowering each of them so that they would each have their own input. This year I tasted at Vinality with three of the new team Emily O'Hare (sommelier), Stacey-Lee Edwards (wine buyer and sommelier) and Anglo-Italian chef Joseph Trivelli, and their enthusiasm was infectious.

Not long after, on St. George's day, Katie and I celebrated our 28th wedding anniversary with a glorious lunch at River Café, seated on the terrace outside on a beautifully hot day, and it was difficult to think of anywhere else in the world we could have eaten such wonderful Italian food, surrounded by such happy people and given such perfect service. I have often heard people comment that River Café is 'expensive' and the food 'unsophisticated', and

perhaps Rose and Ruth have been victims of their own success with the sales of their recipe books, making it look all too easy.

Cheap it is not, and nor is it simple; with the dedication to suppliers and sourcing of ingredients undertaken by the River Café team this could never be the case. However, in all the times that we have eaten or entertained at River Café I have barely given the bill a second glance. That, for me, is the measure of a truly great restaurant.



HEDONE

The quest for pleasure

One of this year's most exciting restaurant openings is halfway between the West End and Heathrow Airport on the Chiswick High Road. As our taxi cruises along from Hammersmith to Turnham Green one cannot help but notice the number of indifferent restaurants along this stretch, mostly large chains, as well as numerous one-offs, offering all styles of cuisine. The arrival of Hedone (together with the well-established La Trompette) adds to Chiswick's claim to be a gastronomic destination.



Sited near Turnham Green, Swedish born Mikael Jonsson, chef turned lawyer turned restaurateur, has opened a temple to meticulously sourced ingredients, served in an exciting but unfussy manner, each carrying the signature of his creativity and passion.

The kitchen is open to the restaurant, with modern uncluttered tables around the room, and a particularly comfortable banquette along the exposed brick wall. The rather amusing painted ceiling, depicting all sorts of sea life, is a relic of the Lebanese restaurant that previously occupied this site, and is curiously rather fitting.

We opted for the six course menu, with wines expertly matched by sommelier Benoît Bigot (in fact remarkably tolerant), preceded by what could well become the restaurant's 'signature', an extraordinarily delicious umami flan topped with a seaweed coulis, served small and hot and packing a powerful punch.

A series of small but perfectly executed dishes followed; succulent flame grilled Cornish mackerel with Japanese flavours, the sweetest scallops briefly cooked in

their own juices, a 'tarte fine' of Scottish Girolles with a duck jelly, each one subtle in its execution but perfectly flavoured and balanced. Main courses were equally impressive; breast of grouse with a stunningly intense game sauce, and 45 day aged Black Angus beef cooked rare with bitter rich endives. I could not resist the Rum Baba with individual pots of rum and cream, while Mrs. S declared the vine peach and mint sorbet, accompanied by English blueberry tart, an absolute triumph and the best sorbet she has ever tasted.

Fabulous food made from the very best ingredients, served by very friendly, efficient staff, make this a great experience, and fun to boot. The wines are carefully chosen and well matched by Benoit to the style of Mikael's food, and at quite reasonable mark-ups.

The very fact that Hedone is where it is, and not in the West End adds to its success, otherwise it would be at risk of becoming yet another foodie's temple filled with bloggers, speaking in hushed tones and photographing every dish, while completely missing the point – the pleasure of it all.

THE SWEETNESS OF BEING ROSÉ

All our rosés are dry, and that is a fact, and no matter how many times we tell our customers so in the stores they will insist on insisting, every time that they buy a rosé, that they only want to buy a DRY rosé.

I suppose that it is hardly surprising given the evolution of rosé wines over the past twenty years, to the situation we have today which is a phenomenal demand for rosé all the year round.

Before even Liebfraumilch first appeared on the planet, there was Rosé d'Anjou, a pale orange-hued wine which was consumed in huge quantities by a generation who deserve our respect if only for putting up with it. It was not dry and it could never have been, because if it had no one would have been able to drink it, since the acidity was too high, and it had the overpowering sourness of the half-ripe red grapes from the western Loire which were its base. And then, of course, there was the introduction in the seventies of Portugal's famous Mateus Rosé, a confectioned, slightly sparkling and sweet wine whose bottle adorned the table of almost every bistro across the land. The Italians also got in on the act with Lambrusco, but then we are not sure that this ever qualified as wine?

At the same time, however, we 'in the trade' knew of other rosés, such as the famous Rosé de Marsannay (made by only a handful of producers), a Pinot Noir from just north of Gevrey Chambertin, and of course Tavel, from just west of Châteauneuf du Pape, a powerfully structured wine that is excellent with food and for many years justifiably laid claim to being France's greatest rosé.

Sancerre rosé became highly fashionable in the bistros of Paris and spread across the channel to the restaurants of London,

and deservedly still enjoys a popular following today, as long as made from Pinot Noir and not Gamay.

And then there are the rosés from the Languedoc and Bordeaux, the rest of Europe and of course the New World, but none of the above come close to what our customers of today desire: the palest, the driest and the lowest in alcohol that rosé can be.

All of our rosés are dry, and all of our rosés are pink, which might sound immediately obvious, but the intensity of pinkness appears to dictate popularity more than any other factor. The fact that Magliano's juicily, crisp Sangiovese rosé, Illario, is brilliant with almost any grilled food (and it is dry) does not seem to cut much ice these days with the rosé crowd because of its fuller colour, and Tavel still has its place as being one of the best possible food wines, but is deemed to be too dark in colour as well as too high in alcohol.



The Holy Grail of Rosé, for Lea & Sandeman customers at least, is most definitely Provence, be it the achingly pale, dry and crisp MiP* Made In Provence Rosé from Domaine Ste Lucie, or Tempier's wonderfully sophisticated Bandol Rosé. These are technical wines, in so far that they are made with a huge amount of care and attention so as to get just the right amount of colour (very little), the right amount of fruit (and yet

remain dry), and stand up as wines in their own right, rather than being simple by-products of red wine.

Our range of rosés is larger than ever, covering a full spectrum of colours, and a wide range of flavours. Most are brilliant with food, some are simply aperitif wines, and we are always more than happy to talk you through the range. But above all, and before you ask, they are all indeed, dry!

2010 GRECANTE Grechetto Colli Martani Arnaldo-Caprai £13.50

I tasted this beauty the other day with the dashing Monsieur Sandeman from the eponymous and excellent wine merchants Lea & Sandeman and it immediately leapt into this column on account of its incredible, Summery burst of flavour. Gosh, it literally dragged me out of my rainy-Spring-season gloom into an unquenchable and, to date perpetual, upbeat mood. Grechetto is a delicious, lip-smacking variety with lime zest, fresh herb and greengage notes. Caprai is a legend in Umbria, making impenetrable reds from the terrifyingly tannic red grape Sagrantino. He shows his jovial side with this eclectic white and it is a joy. With a Chablis-like weight and masses of class, this is the perfect oddball white to entrance your pals this month - you will adore its pithy acidity and haunting stone fruit flavours.

MATTHEW JUKES, MONEY WEEK APRIL 2010



BODEGA CHACRA – IN TOUCH WITH NATURE

My name is Piero Incisa. I had the privilege of being born into a winemaking family from Tuscany; wine is part of who we are, not just from a winemaking point of view, but most importantly from a cultural point of view. For us wine has never been an object of meditation, but an element of a meal, something that will integrate seamlessly with the local food, effectively conveying an identity that is proper to a specific soil, land, region or even nation.

My grandfather created Sassicaia, from a place that was historically a swamp, abandoned by men and believed to be the worst possible place to make wine. It was at first only a table wine that later received the honor of being awarded its own appellation, a *de facto* "monopole." This showed me that within the right 'terroir' wine can provoke a magical sensation that touches our souls in a particular way and awakens our deepest inner senses.

From my grandfather I learned almost everything I know about nature. He was ahead of his time, using biodynamic and organic practices when they were not in fashion; his understanding for nature was deep and his spirit pure. His passion was contagious and at an early age I caught the wine bug.

Chacra came to me in an unusual way. I tried what I thought was a Burgundy in New York, and it turned out the joke was on me. My friend and now consulting winemaker Hans Vinding Diers had made it in Patagonia for a local winery. The wine expressed real Burgundian characteristics but had a specific print that made it

somewhat unusual. After pestering Hans for months he finally invited me down under and I started to look for vineyards of Pinot. To my surprise I found out that this valley had very old vines that were all 'massale', ungrafted, viable due to the desert-like conditions of strong winds, cold nights and low humidity that deter phylloxera, which is present but does not prevail. A 'massale' vineyard is nowadays hard to come by, in the era of clones 'massale' is something of the past. Clones in my opinion have eradicated the biodiversity in the vineyard that made wines so unique and individual, creating effectively a communist system in which all plants share the same genetic print and to me that is not quite as interesting. A 'massale' selection will convey a certain purity, individuality and freshness that are quite unique and uplifting, and when coupled with organic and biodynamic farming can convey wines that are happy and that awaken your senses.

The vineyard that spoke to me was planted in 1932 and was a mere 2.5 hectares, becoming the source of our wine **Chacra 'Treinta y dos'**. It was almost abandoned. Its founder, an Italian called Napolitano, had sold it to another Italian gentleman called Mr. Pirri from whom I eventually bought it. Our approach from the start was organic and biodynamic farming in an effort to nurse it back to life and to restore its true identity and equilibrium. Subsequently, I purchased neighbouring vineyards which had been planted in 1955, and those gave birth to **Chacra 'Cincuenta y cinco'**. The Barda vineyards came to me last, and its vines are some twenty years old.

In its style we are close to the old world, for whatever that means (I always thought that the whole



PIERO INCISA

world was created at the same time). However, it is in my opinion a quintessential expression of our Patagonian 'terroir'. Its mineral qualities are drawn from soil that was once the river bed of Rio Negro, and which shrunk over a period of 5 million years. Biodynamic and Organic farming is for us a natural part of our thought process and actions, though some people ridicule us and tell us that it is not quantifiable, to which I respond that neither is love, but yet somehow we all know when it is there, even though we cannot touch it nor see it.

Biodynamic is not synonymous of quality, therefore I do not believe that biodynamic wine is necessarily a guarantee of quality or taste, though I do think that site, micro-climate and soil composition, and for the lack of a better word 'terroir' are the most important elements which will determine the quality of a wine. However man is very much one of the elements of the 'terroir', and his actions will have a direct correlation with the final outcome. To me a vineyard is very much like a human body, in that it can get diseases if its immune system is low, and when it takes drugs it gets sick, and



2010 TIBERIUS Blanc Vignerons du Sommiérois £6.50

Made by the Vignerons du Sommiérois co-op near Nîmes, in the baking eastern Languedoc, this is an unusually successful blend of grenache blanc, ugni blanc and viognier. Dry, fruity and with a floral lift from the viognier, this is just about the perfect affordable summer white. August 2011.

ANDREW NEATHER, THE EVENING STANDARD

extreme temperatures become hard to weather, but if it is in good shape it will weather them, after all it's all about molecules, so why should a vineyard behave any differently to a human body? As chemical drugs are bad for us, not to mention antibiotics or any other drug, so are fertilizers herbicides and any other product that is mass produced in a factory. Finally we are biodynamic and

organic also because we like to drink a lot of our wines, and we don't want to get cancer or other illnesses.

The 2010 vintage was very much to my liking; a long, even summer coupled with cold nights enhanced our fastidious work in the vineyards over the past seven years, yielding wines reminiscent of the wines of the 1940s to 1970s that were lighter in

alcohol but still long on the palate, and great even with foods such as fish or grilled vegetables, not overly extracted nor concentrated. Barda's 12.5% alcohol proves that old vines farmed organically and biodynamically can achieve elegant concentration that also exudes freshness, finesse and power without losing the typicity of the grape.

PIERO INCISA



2009 CHACRA '32' PINOT NOIR Bodega Chacra £58.50

But my mind was blown this week by Argentina's potential for fine wine when I tasted Chacra Pinot Noir '32' 2009. The wine comes from Patagonia and felt more like a two-week trip to the Land of Glory than a sip of vino. With complex aromas and flavours proffering layer after layer – from cherry, almond, raspberry, perfume, juniper, anise and an overwhelming sense of purity – this wine convinced me in a single sip that Argentina is able to make serious, fine and age-worthy wines. With a respectable 13.5 per cent alcohol and enough structure to carry the flavours, this is a big fat wow wine. And believe it or not, it matches impeccably with fresh raspberries – as I discovered during some impromptu food pairing experiments.

And, since you asked, it's organic. It's available from leaandsandeman.co.uk for... hold onto your wallet, this may pinch a bit... £58.50. Worth every penny.

OLLY SMITH, THE MAIL ON SUNDAY

NATURAL WINE – A new phenomenon or just another marketing exercise?

This year has seen a curious upsurge in the marketing of 'natural' wines. A recent showing of these wines at a wine fair held in Borough market seemed to attract a healthy crowd but at the same time raised more than a few hackles amongst journalists, winemakers and wine merchants (like us), because the inference is that until now we have all been missing the point.

So what is natural wine? The movement's own definition is that they are wines made with as little intervention in the vineyard and winemaking process as possible. That means no use of pesticides, artificial fertilisers and little or no use of sulphites.



2010 VERMENTINO Domaine Les Yeuses Languedoc-Roussillon £6.75

Proper wine, made from the Italian grape. Think fresh green herbs and dust illuminated by late evening sun in the air around a country lane, add a ruffling texture and you're there.

Amazing value.

VICTORIA MOORE,
SATURDAY TELEGRAPH

On balance this is all to be highly commended and at Lea & Sandeman we have been sourcing wines this way for many years. In fact it permeates through virtually every tasting note and press comment on our website.

The only exception is we do not champion sulphur-free wine because, backed up by many respectable journalists, we all agree that they are hugely unpredictable, mostly unstable, and lack complexity, which is why they never appear to feature in any list of top 100 wines.

More worryingly there are an alarmingly high number of duds, and while the concept of natural (sulphur free) wine is a defensible concept, not every practitioner distinguishes between what is 'natural' and what is plainly oxidised or faulty. What are billed as natural wines then should be approached with some caution, distinguishing perhaps between those that are non-sulphured wines and those that are naturally well made, original, and real wines, be they organic or biodynamic. Even then they are not always guaranteed to be great quality, which is why we have such an important role to play in selecting them for our market.

A new phenomenon in some quarters, but in fact if you are a customer of Lea & Sandeman you have been buying, drinking and enjoying these wines from us for some years.

TOM LORIMER

In his UK Budget speech in March, George Osborne simply said that there would be no further increases to alcohol duty beyond the measures already in place, which the media immediately interpreted as 'no increase in alcohol tax' but a few tweets later and a quick glance at the HM Treasury budget statement showed that wine had actually gone up by 15p a bottle. Even a 4p annual increase used to get mentioned in every Budget overview, but now a 15p rise doesn't even get a look in. It is, of course, all the previous Labour Government's doing when they announced in the March 2010 Budget 'an increase in the rates by 2 per cent above inflation each year to 2014-15', but we now have a situation when none of the major parties will criticize the policy towards alcohol duty.

The UK now has the highest duty on wine in Europe; with only three other countries (Ireland, Finland and Sweden) having duty of over 50p a bottle. In France, it's 3p.

In the last three years, duty has gone up a staggering 36%, and duty will continue to increase by 2% above inflation each year until 2015.

UK duty, and VAT on the duty, is over £26 on a case of still wine, and it will be £30 in two years at the current rate of inflation. VAT, which also went up in January of course, is charged on duty and

the wine, so that's a double whammy. Duty on sparkling wine or champagne is

don't even think of buying a bottle of wine for less than a fiver

even higher at over £33 a case and this rate also applies, even more iniquitously, to the increasingly successful sparkling wines from England.

A TAXING ISSUE



The average price of a bottle of wine in the UK is still only £4.55, of which more than half (£2.57) goes straight into the taxman's pocket, leaving less than £2 to cover the packaging, bottle, marketing, transport, retailer's margin, and of course the grapes. So that leaves you with about

In the last three years, duty has gone up a staggering 36%, and duty will continue to increase

50p worth of wine at best, and probably a rather nasty taste in your mouth too.

Spend another couple of pounds, and pretty much all of that is going entirely towards what is in the bottle, and all the more so if it is not a brand, as you will not be paying for any marketing either.

The problem is that the supermarkets and chains continue to offer '3 for £10' promotions, or '50% off deals' on £10 bottles of wine, which not only dumb down consumer education, but more often than not hide the fact that you are being offered a bulk, sub £1 bottle of wine in the first place.

So, the moral of this little story is don't even think of buying a bottle of wine for less than a fiver, beware of supermarkets making offers that look too good to be true (they inevitably are), and support your independent wine merchant who goes that extra mile to offer you the best quality and value. As for the taxes, iniquitous as they are, only our Chancellor can make any difference and that is increasingly unlikely. Drink less, pay a little bit more, and drink better.

PATRICK SANDEMAN

HOW MUCH 'OOMPH' IS THERE IN MY BOTTLE OF WINE?

It seems that a popular topic of dinner party conversation these days is the growing level of alcohol in wine, and what with avoiding sulphites, spurning oak and shunning Chardonnay; it is a wonder that some people can bring themselves to drink any wine at all.

It is a fact that the average alcohol levels in wine have risen by a degree or more over the past ten years, not enough to see down-and-outs in darkened alleyways forgoing the pleasures of super-strength cider in favour of a crisp glass of Pinot Grigio, but enough to raise a ripple of concern amongst the wine drinking classes. 'But why?' We hear you ask. 'Do they want me to have a hangover?'

The answer is complicated, and, like the dryness of rosé, down to the vagaries of fashion in taste. Go back thirty years and we were just on the last gasp (in fashionable circles) of 'suss-reserve' sweetened German whites, Liebfraumilch and friends. Suddenly fashion demanded these be dropped like a hot brick, and everyone wanted dry – the drier the better. Cue the sharp rise of battery-acid Muscadet. We (merchants in general – Charles Lea was labouring chez Majestic at the time) could sell anything as long as there was no detectable sweetness. Then you might remember when Australian wines first hit the shelves in the eighties? (Those readers too young to remember – just use some imagination, and bask in your appalling youth while it lasts). What a revelation all that primary fruit, generous richness and luxurious texture must have been. The not very dry, oaky (oak-chips, giving those vibrant day-glo yellow colours to whites, and toasty sweetness to the reds) wines of Australia ruled the roost and were quickly followed by South America with buckets of ripe Chilean fruit for not a great deal of money coming onto the market, both heavily promoted by 'la grande distribution'

(as the French call supermarkets) as they did that thing the supermarkets love: unlimited supply and standardisation. There is little vintage variation in these countries, certainly in the parts where the bulk market wines are grown, and they were always hot enough to ripen their grapes, and often to very high potential alcohol levels.

Inevitably, the French, the Italians, and anyone else who saw their market share disappearing, responded and gave their wines a little nudge in the direction of New World 'oomph'. New World 'oomph' comes by picking grapes at 'phenolic ripeness', at the moment when the tannins in the grape are at their optimum ripeness, rather than relying on simple sugar ripeness. As the popularity of New World wines increased, grapes were starting to be picked later than was previously traditional, giving rise to musts with more sugar, and more sugar ultimately meaning more alcohol.

Today you are lucky enough to be buying wine in a very competitive market, possibly the most competitive in the world. For every one wine that makes it onto our shelves, a large number of wines will have been rejected. Generally, wine buyers and journalists are confronted by having to taste their way through rafts of wines in order to find the stand out wines that they want to buy or write about. What sort of wine do you think stands out in a line-up of a hundred different wines? Naturally, the sort with big fruit, big flavours and... big alcohol.

Oddly, however, the alcohol level is ultimately of less importance, and what is more important is the wine's drinkability; the balance of texture, fruit and uplifting flavours that makes you want to raise your glass again the moment you have put it down. That's what makes your wine taste so good that you want to come back and buy another bottle. That is what excites journalists into making it

their wine of the week, that is what wins awards, and that is what we enjoy selling.

But, it would seem today that if you want the lovely, lush texture of modern winemaking, you have to accept a degree or two more alcohol in your glass. You can't have your cake and eat it...or can you?

If you are still crying over your 14.5% Côtes du Rhône, don't get the impression that you do so alone or that no-one is listening. The wine world is listening – it's just it doesn't yet quite know what to do about it – it's not as simple as just turning off the alcohol tap. Even if it were permissible for winemakers to dilute their must with water before fermentation, the dilution of sugars goes hand in hand with a dilution of flavours. Or, there is the de-alcoholising option, but removing alcohol also strips out much of the character (have you ever come across a really tasty de-alcoholised wine?) It is suggested that different cultured yeast strains be used – not very natural, but it might work, but more likely, we may find that producers have to try different grape varieties in different regions, something which global warming may force upon us anyway.

There are still plenty of wines of more modest alcohol levels about – you just have to look for them, or get a decent wine merchant to look for them for you. A good Chablis will rarely come in at more than 12.5%, Champagne (and who needs an excuse to drink more Champagne?) will typically be only be 12%, German wines are considered strong at 11%, and a lot of red Burgundy sits happily at 12.5%. Look on our web-site – we have a long list of wines at 12.5% and under. Obviously, most of these will be a little lighter in body, a little fresher in flavour, and with a little less 'oomph', but what they might lack in 'oomph' is often made up for in drinkability.

ANDREW HOOPER



Lea & Sandeman Bordeaux £9.50 Bottle £19.95 Magnum

Basic Bordeaux doesn't get in this guide very often, but there's basic Bordeaux – and there's Lea & Sandeman's basic Bordeaux. These guys have gone to a very good producer in the classy area of Fronsac and blended up a wine that is so ripe it's almost rich. This has the leafiness and furry tannic grip of proper Bordeaux, yet it has the ripe red plums, blackcurrants, the dryness of summer country earth, and the promise of scent if you open the bottle an hour or two early, which would make me think it's a very attractive Fronsac at about half its normal price.

OZ CLARKE'S 250 BEST WINES



2007 CABURNIO Tenuta Monteti IGT Toscana £12.50

An idiosyncratic blend (cabernet sauvignon, alicante bouschet and merlot) from the Tuscan Maremma, the rapidly upcoming southern coastal area. It's beautifully balanced: it brims with bright cherry fruit, there's nice weight and a fair dollop of oak, but there's decent acidity too.

ANDREW NEATHER, THE EVENING STANDARD

IN PERFECT HARMONY

It's time to out myself and talk about my other life, but nothing too shocking, I can assure you. It is simply that as well as being a wine merchant for nearly twenty years I have also been a drummer in a band called 29 Fingers. Our first album 'Lottery Lost Paradise Found' (for those who don't have it) apparently went platinum in Ulan Bator, but you won't find it on Amazon. Post

Good music like good wine, and I might add good wine merchants, also has the potential to age.

the pressures of fame we keep a much lower profile these days by dressing up and playing other peoples' songs for audiences up and down the UK with a few forays abroad to entertain our incredible armed forces. Needless to say we have had a tremendous amount of fun and experiences.

As a result of wearing this other hat, I have come to understand that there are many parallels between music and wine. For example if you play long into the night and drink a lot of wine, it really does make you feel and look like Ronnie Wood the next morning. Another similarity is that in both fields there is more variety than ever, but this isn't necessarily a guarantee of quality. If God hated you he could design it so that your radio only played Jedward songs and that the only wine in your fridge would be Black Tower (although if you turned the twins upside down they'd make very good decanter cleaners, so he's a canny Deity after all). Conversely if He, like 29 Fingers, felt your place in heaven was assured, then The White Album by The Beatles and a bottle of 2008 Pouilly Fuissé La Roche from Daniel Barraud (genius behind both creations), would show His benevolence.

Good music like good wine, and I might add good wine merchants, also has the potential to age. You

only have to look at any Greatest Songs compilation to see that the top twenty are mostly songs from the sixties and seventies. Bowie, Hendrix, The Stones, Beatles, and their like will be played for many years to come. We even had The Wombles at Glastonbury this year, and they rocked!

It may surprise some of you that even in the vineyard music has its place and purpose. A number of our Italian producers use transistor radios in their vineyards to scare off

the wild boar from the vines, and the fabulously elegant Caterina Dei, whose wines we have loved and sold for many years now, is a very talented musician and does an excellent rendition of 'Caruso' with a glass of Vino Nobile in hand.

As I see it then there is great parity between music and wine, so as you contemplate this thought over the coming months (the Newsletter is only annual after all) here are but a few music and wine combinations that might work.

Take That (especially for our female readership) with a bottle of 2010 Le Petit Diable Provence Rosé. Both bring out the little devil in

every woman, of all age groups, and plenty of refreshing length to remind them of Robbie's talents.

Queen - Live Wembley DVD 1986. Turn up the volume, open a bottle of Larmandier Bernier Blanc de Blancs (Freddie was really a Moët man, but Larmandier truly rocks), and toast the most legendary rock performance of our time. I must have watched it at least twenty times and it's a top favourite amongst my children too. Timeless brilliance.

Adele 21 – a prolifically brilliant songwriter, who writes seamless hit after hit. Hugely original, away from a lot of identikit bands, this is a great album to play on a lazy, wet Sunday afternoon, reading the papers, and drinking a bottle of Nicolas Rossignol's 2006 Volnay.

A good bottle of wine and classical music from any of the great composers, the permutations are endless and waiting to be discovered.

And finally, when I put the idea of writing about music and wine to Patrick (my editor!) he replied: 'Music and wine, why not? I dance flamenco like a God after drinking a bottle of Inocente Fino!'

TOM LORIMER



2009 ACÚSTIC BLANC Bodegas Acústic £14.75

(60% garnatxa blanca, 25% macabeu, 10% garnatxa and 5% pansal)

Light yellow-gold. Pungent, mineral-driven nose hints at fresh pear, tangerine and white peach, with toasty lees, chamomile and iodine qualities adding complexity. Juicy and tight, with bracing acidity and a strong iodine character to its deep orchard fruit flavors. This could pass for a very serious white Burgundy. Finishes firm and spicy, with the mineral element repeating. A remarkable value.

**JOSH RAYNOLDS, STEPHEN TANZER'S
INTERNATIONAL WINE CELLAR**

A VISIT TO THE SIPSMITH DISTILLERY IN HAMMERSMITH

Having arranged a trip for a number of our customers I arranged to meet half the group at Ravenscourt Park Station, and walk them through the sleepy back streets of Hammersmith to what appears to be nothing more than an unassuming garage but, in fact, turns out to be home of the iconic Sipsmith Distillery.

Expecting to see the rest of the party waiting for us outside the distillery, I was just a little miffed to find that they were apparently late. However, they were not late at all and in fact had already been beckoned inside by Sipsmith's dashing owner Sam Galsworthy (now happily married to Charles Lea's niece, no less) and I was even more miffed to find that they were already well over half-way through their first gin and tonic of the evening! The rest of us quickly brought ourselves up to speed by sinking a G&T each, and Sam embarked upon a fascinating and enthralling talk covering the history of gin, the story behind the birth of the Sipsmith Distillery, the importance of the copper still, the provenance of the botanicals, the importance of the heart of the spirit, and so much more, including the importance of serving Sipsmith gin with the correct tonic water (his chosen being Fevertree).

Having adequately prepared our palates with Sipsmith's hedonistic and fresh Gin we went on to taste the luxurious



and warm Sipsmith Barley Vodka. We were even given a sneaky peak at the new release of Sipsmith Sloe Gin (last year's version was incredibly popular) and the first release of their fabulous and lively Damson Vodka, both of which are now in the stores. Feeling suitably fortified we stumbled out into the warm June evening, ready to take the message of Sipsmith into the wider world.

ANDREW HOOPER

SIPSMITH
independent spirits

Launched in Hammersmith in 2009, Sipsmith is the first copper distillery in London for almost 200 years and is bringing the art and craft of distillation back to the capital.

Distilled in small batches, Sipsmith produce multi gold medal winning spirits of uncompromising quality and flavour. Our spirits are a perfect marriage of traditional recipes and a truly handcrafted process.

London's first copper distillery for almost 200 years.



2009 HEBA Morellino di Scansano Fattoria di Magliano £12.95

"It's really, really good glugging wine," Patrick Sandeman of Lea and Sandeman puts it, while we taste his excellent Morellino di Scansano "Heba" 2009 from Fattoria di Magliano in the shop in Kensington Church Street. There's the deep, black cherry nose with just a hint of violets, the open generous fruit, sweetness trouncing the hint of sourness you always get with sangiovese – helped here with 15% syrah. Heba is mainly fermented in cement tanks – coming back into fashion all over the wine world – and not matured in oak. It weighs in at 13 degrees, which is relatively light for morellino these days, but seems about right.

**HARRY EYRES, THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
JULY 2011**

2008 PINOT NOIR Mature Vines, Rippon Vineyard Central Otago £29.75

A grown-up, sophisticated, antipodean riposte to red burgundy that, unlike most three-year-old Kiwi Pinots, is nowhere near ready. At closer to £30 than £20 for a single bottle, it is not cheap, but it is possibly the most complex Kiwi Pinot I have ever tasted – and certainly the driest and purest. This is a very different style from the flattering fruit bombs with which New Zealand Pinot made its international reputation. But it is not austere and curmudgeonly. I felt that it was almost flirtatious – again in a rather burgundian way – on the finish. 14% alcohol, mind.

JANCIS ROBINSON WWW.JANCISROBINSON.COM



THE SMOKING BISHOP

Mulled Port

Last year's mulled wine recipe went down a storm it would seem, and judging by some of the emails we received was especially popular when the country was gripped by snow and ice.

There is nothing more welcoming than coming in from the bitter cold to the warm smell of mulling spices and wine and, since I mentioned that my own mulled wine recipe is much inspired by 'The Bishop', we thought that this year we should up the stakes and give you the recipe for 'The Smoking Bishop'.

Not so long ago almost every pub in Ireland would have had a 'kettle' and serve hot port, and well before that Charles Dickens mentions the 'Smoking Bishop' in a Christmas Carol, when the reformed Scrooge says to Bob Cratchit '...we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon over a bowl of Smoking Bishop, Bob!'

Steaming hot, so that it is 'smoking', and richly purple, as in a Bishop's robe, this is surely the best of all the winter warmers!

Two bottles of a rich ruby port (an inexpensive LBV will do)

A good slug of brandy

A ½ bottle of robust red wine

Three oranges & three lemons

120g dark brown sugar (Demerara)

Cinnamon sticks, cloves, ¼ tsp each ground ginger, allspice, mace, cinnamon.

Place the oranges and lemons on a baking tray in a low oven for about ninety minutes.

Score and stud the fruit with cloves, and place in a large bowl with the ground ginger, cinnamon, allspice and mace. Add the sugar, the wine (but not the port at this stage) and half a pint of water and allow to infuse in a warm place for up to 24 hours.

Once infused cut the fruit in half and squeeze the juice and pulp back into the bowl together with the skins. Now add the cinnamon stick and bring to a high heat for five minutes. Turn down the heat and add the two bottles of port and heat gently, allowing to mull for about twenty minutes (do not allow to boil).

Once the Bishop is 'smoking' and you can resist no longer, sieve into a jug and serve.

At this stage you might add a sprinkling of nutmeg and more sugar if you want it sweeter.

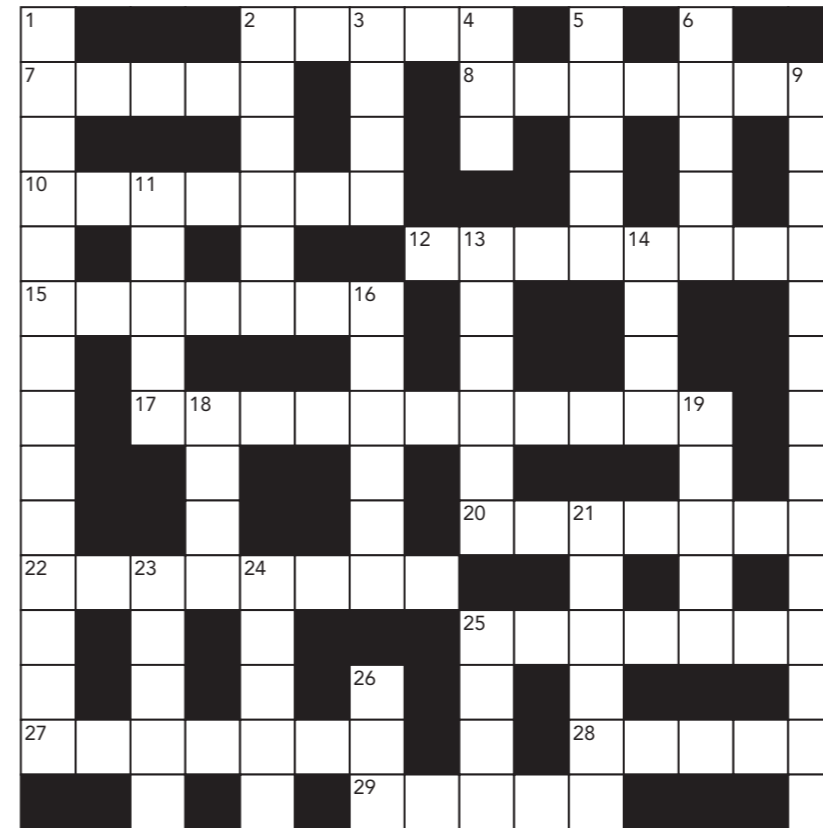
This can be made a few days in advance and 'matured' in the empty bottles before reheating and serving.



CHAMPAGNE BARNAUT Grande Réserve Brut Champagne £24.95

Lea & Sandeman have always had some good growers' Champagnes. This one, from the Grand Cru of Bouzy, is their cheapest (although not their cheapest Champagne) and it's a great deal better than some of the famous names. It's pure and fresh, but rich, with lovely Pinot Noir peach and redcurrant fruit and a creamy brioche taste and texture.

THE WINE GANG



ACROSS

- 2. House for dining without the racket in the outskirts of Barolo (5)
- 7. Initially, after drinking, imbibers expel urine and leave (5)
- 8. First stages of French unicycle race not a short distance (7)
- 10. see 28
- 12. A thousand pounds for half a cruise! The wine should be good (5,3)
- 15. Last drop of Condrieu consumed by everyone, everywhere (7)
- 17. A first! Monty's less positive, getting sick at a party. Too much sherry? (11)
- 20. Clarets in Athens found to contain Greek wine! (7)
- 22. Lark about and open Magnum that can be seen from a long way away (8)
- 25. Get wine from taps? I am opposed to that! (7)
- 27. Caught bowler with Perrier at Bordeaux estate (7)
- 28. and 10. Pager for 1 and 9 (5,7)
- 29. Nicks battered skate (5)

DOWN

- 1. Popular New Zealander, a nun loving to get around using dodgy cabs (9,5)
- 2. Rub up the wrong way with a lack of conversation at 27's office (7)
- 3. Ships in wine vats very regularly (4)
- 4. Old newspaper seen frequently (3)
- 5. Finish up in the drink (5)
- 6. A third of VAT used to make you feel better (5)
- 9. Usually French, sounds German, often drunk with Chinese (14)
- 11. German agreement following famous carnival of wine (5)
- 13. Religious man abandons pushchair for fancy car (6)
- 14. Buxom wench drank last of wine and grappa with fatal consequences (4)
- 16. The French travel around 27 (6)
- 18. Mad to put drug into drink (4)
- 19. In parts of the Roussillon I only find things to make me cry (5)
- 21. Stuff this! No good staying inside (6)
- 23. To carry Country wine, pale is used (5)
- 24. If 14, was, presumably, prepared to meet a vigneron with no wine (5)
- 25. Find closure in Ireland (4)
- 26. Have reservations about a smaller barrel (3)

The first dozen correct entries submitted to our offices will each win a MAGNUM of Lea & Sandeman Bordeaux (Please send entries to Lea & Sandeman 170 Fulham Road, London SW10 9PR)



ANTHONY ROSE 'WISHED THE ENTIRE POPULATION
HAD A LEA & SANDEMAN ON THEIR DOORSTEP'...

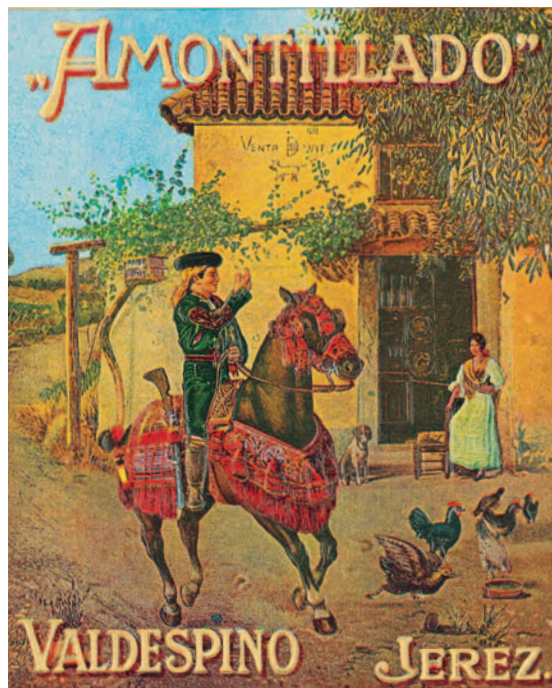
...NOW IT CAN, VIA WWW.LEAANDSANDEMAN.CO.UK

THE SHERRY REVOLUTION

Having been brought up in a sherry family, Sandeman on the one side, Valdespino on the other, it was entirely normal that the fridge was always filled with bottles and half bottles of Fino and Manzanilla, and that we drank chilled sherry from large 'copas' from an early age. In fact the first time that I recall getting roaringly drunk was on sherry and, while I would never recommend drinking to excess, it was perhaps the happiest form of drunk I have experienced, in spite of the subsequent hangover in the prickly heat of the Andalucía sun.

At least once in every decade the much underrated wines of Jerez de la Frontera and Sanlucar de Barrameda face a renewed revival, but sadly mostly short-lived. However, it does seem that sherry is at last having some success, in London at least, with a number of openings of sherry bars which are proving to be hugely popular.

These are a far cry from the 'tapas' bars of the seventies, when rather indifferent sherries were served at the incorrect temperature, in totally inappropriate glasses, with entirely indifferent oily, greasy and tired dishes which were passed off to an unsuspecting public as 'tapas'.



CAPTION COMPETITION

What is the 'caballero' saying to the 'señorita'?

Please email your caption to sales@leaandsandeman.co.uk and the best half dozen will each receive a bottle of Contrabandista Amontillado

The new breed of independent sherry bars, such as Bar Pepito in North London, and Barrafina on Frith Street to name but two, are modelled far more on the bars of Puerto de Santa Maria and Jerez de la Frontera, rather than being simply themed offshoots of a brewery chain, and concentrate on a fabulous range of sherries that most of us have never experienced before in this country, let alone in Spain itself. Accompanied by simple, but high quality 'tapas' dishes, such as 'jamon iberico' and 'manchego' cheese, these embrace the true spirit of the way Jerzanos drink sherry, always accompanied by small dishes of food.

This year, in addition to various limited edition bottlings from Gonzalez Byass (look out for the stunning 'Palmas' Fino releases), we have added two more sherries to the Valdespino range: 'Contrabandista', a fabulous medium dry amontillado, and 'Viejo CP' a stunning Palo Cortado, the rarest and most sophisticated form of sherry. Salud!

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