



THE
ATHENÆUM
PALL MALL LONDON

WINE COMMITTEE LUNCH

Thursday 8th June 2023 at 12:30pm

**Crossing the Rösti and Polenta Gräben
– a Journey of Swiss Food and Wines**



**Speakers: Simon Hardy DipWSET, Fitting Wines
Dr Victoria Preston, Professor Kathleen Burk and
Alistair Cliff (Members)**

Chairman: Professor James Crabbe

We are delighted to welcome our special guest, Doris Leitner, the wife of the Swiss Ambassador to the UK, Markus Leitner.

Menu and Lunch Wines

Domaines Rouvinez Château Lichten Petite Arvine 2019, ABV 13.5%



Nüsslisalat mit Speck und Eier
Lambs leaves with lardons and chopped boiled egg

Louis Bovard Médinette Dézaley Grand Cru 2016, ABV 13%



Zürcher Geschnetzeltes mit Rösti
Veal, mushrooms and white wine & cream sauce

Gialdi Arzo 2020, ABV 13.5%



Kirschtorte
Cherry and Kirsch cake

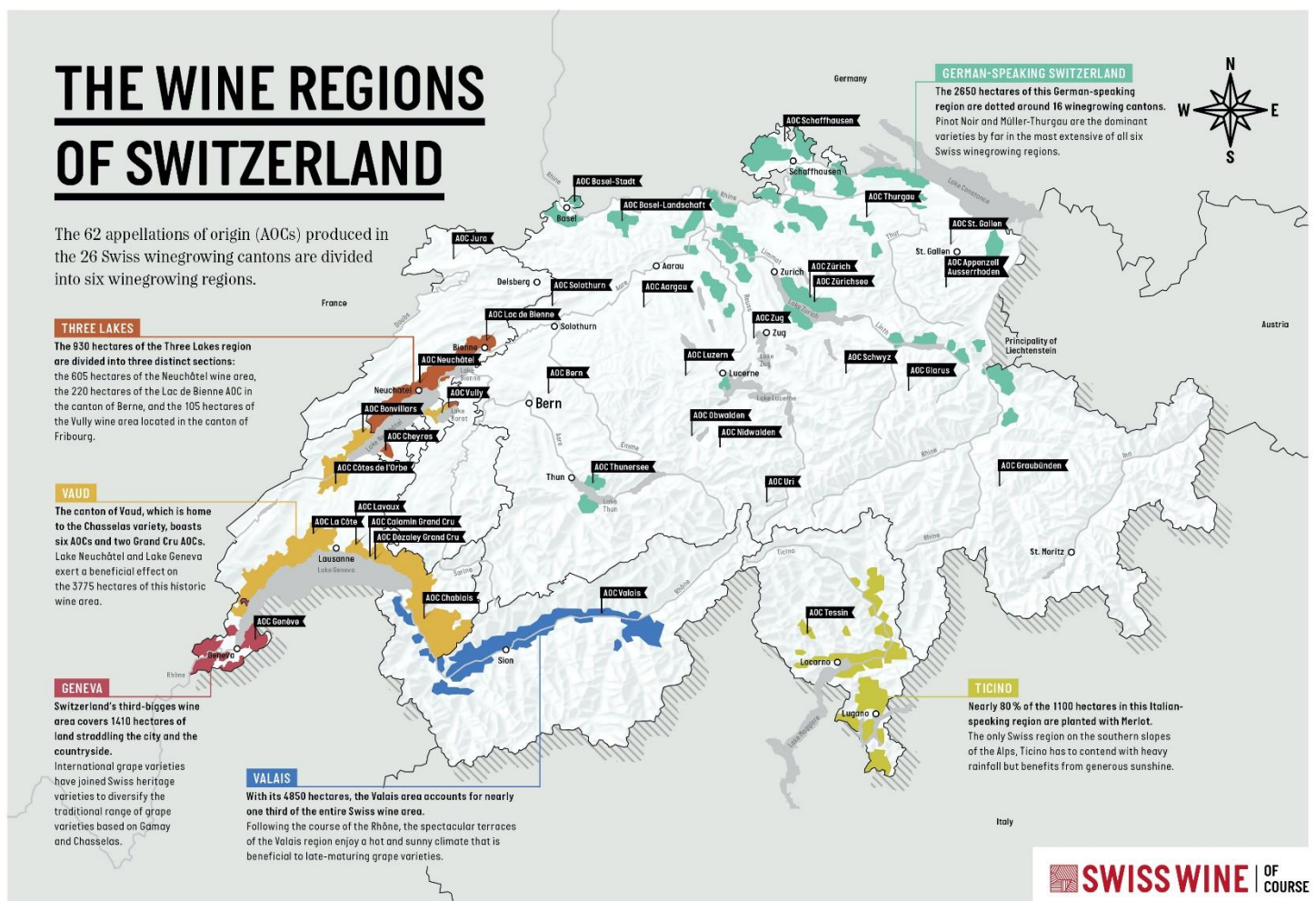
Kirsch eau-de-vie, ABV 40%



Coffee

An Introduction to Swiss Wines

Swiss wines are little known in the UK (less than 2% of Swiss wine is exported) which is why it gives us great pleasure to introduce them to members of the Club today. The 62 appellations of origin (AOCs) produced in the 26 Swiss wine-growing cantons are divided into six wine-growing regions: German-speaking Switzerland in the north and east, Three Lakes, Geneva and Vaud in the west, Valais in the south-west and Ticino south of the Alps. Switzerland represents only 0.2% of total the global vine-growing surface. See Map 1, The Wine Regions of Switzerland.



Today we are drinking wines from the Valais, Vaud and Ticino in this order. With its 4,680 hectares, the Valais area accounts for nearly one-third of the entire Swiss vineyards. Following the course of the Rhône, the spectacular terraces of the Valais region experience a sunny, warm and

dry climate that is beneficial to late-maturing grape varieties. The Vaud region, which is home to the Chasselas variety, boasts six AOCs and two Grand Cru AOCs. The lakes of Neuchâtel and Geneva exert a beneficial effect on the 3,787 hectares of the Vaud. Nearly 80 % of the 1,163 hectares in the Italian-speaking region of Ticino are planted with Merlot. The only Swiss region on the southern slopes of the Alps, Ticino has heavy rainfall, but benefits from generous sunshine, perfect for the maturing of the Merlot grape.

There is evidence that vines have been cultivated in Switzerland since 800 BC, but records of winemaking only since 515 AD at the monastery of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune, located in what is now the canton of Valais. In 1871 Phylloxera first appeared in Prégny, in the canton of Geneva, and spent half a century ravaging the entire country. The disease radically transformed the Swiss vineyards which exceeded 30,000 hectares at that time (against less than 15,000 ha today). The 1970s saw the beginnings of experimentation in Swiss winemaking when André Jacquinet, a researcher at the Agroscope research institute in Changins, crossed Gamay with Reichensteiner Blanc to create Gamaret and Garanoir, a practice that has continued until this day. In 2007 the terraced wine area of Lavaux overlooking Lake Geneva in Vaud became a listed UNESCO World Heritage site, as the exceptional character of this vine-growing landscape was recognised.

Although the surface area planted with vines is small, Switzerland is home to 252 officially recorded grape varieties. Today we are tasting three:

Petite Arvine

Surface area: 253 hectares

Geographical distribution: Valais

Its citrus aromas, combined with its vivacity and characteristic saline notes in the finish, endow it with a profile that is highly appreciated with seafood and fish dishes. While most of the harvest is used to produce

dry and sparkling whites, some winegrowers allow this aromatic variety to over-mature on the vine to create classic botrytised sweet wines.

Chasselas

Surface area: 3,539 hectares (24% of total vine plantings)

Geographical distribution: Vaud, Valais, Geneva, Three Lakes. This grape, also known as Fendant in Valais and Gutedel in the German-speaking regions, used to be quite common in other parts of Europe, and it is still found in southern Germany and several French regions: Haute-Savoie, Alsace and Loire. Most of the harvest is used to produce dry, fresh and delicate whites, which are accompaniment to traditional cheese-based dishes (fondue, raclette, malakoff), or lake fish. However, the best producers, concentrated in the Canton of Vaud, have realised the cellaring potential of this grape and produce more complex and barrel-aged versions of this wine.

Merlot

Surface area: 1,235 hectares

Geographical distribution: Ticino, Valais, Vaud, Geneva, German-speaking Switzerland

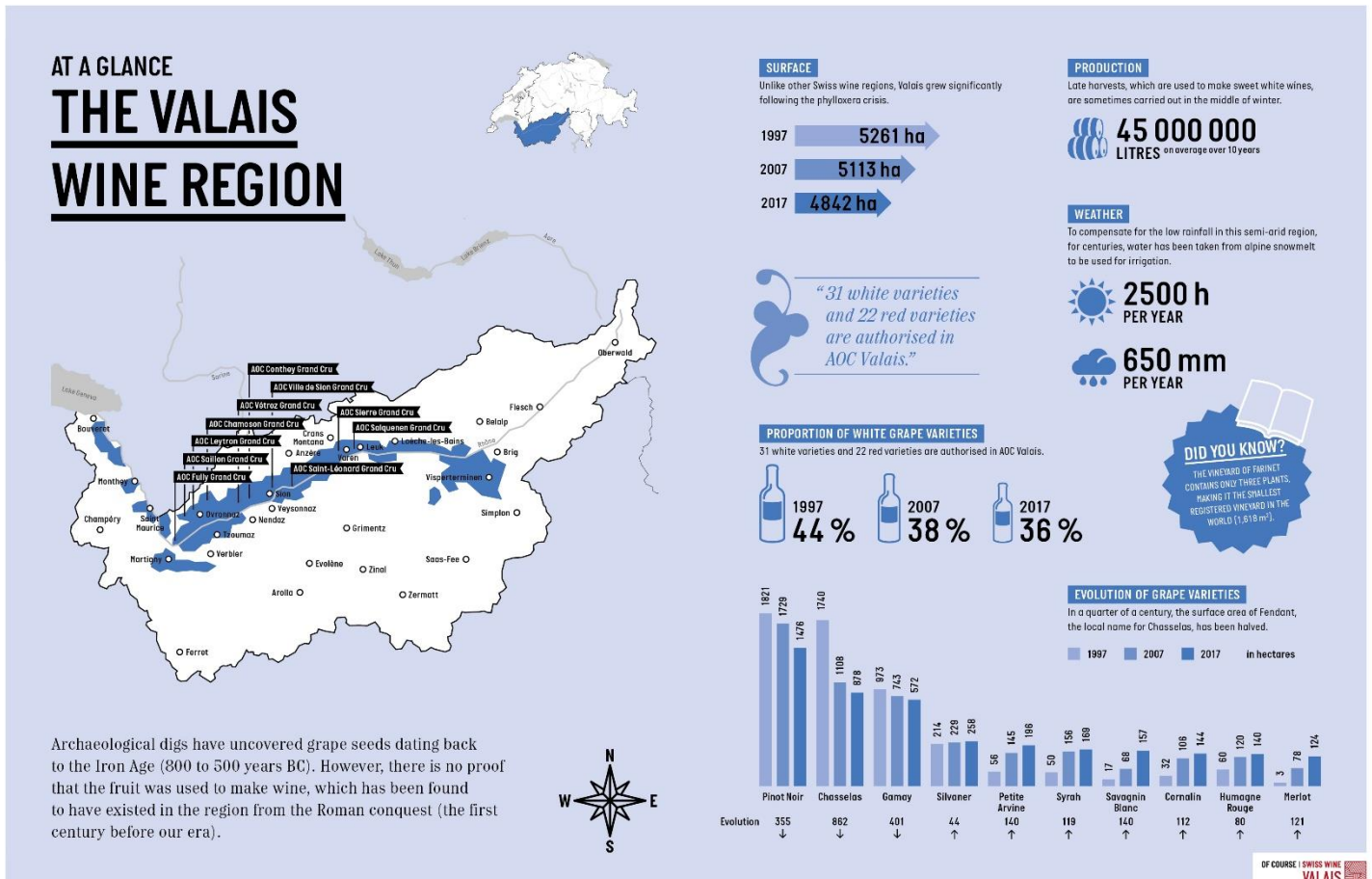
Merlot arrived in Ticino during the post-phylloxera replanting of the vineyards. In 2006, the canton celebrated the centenary of its flagship grape variety which covers nearly 80% of the vine planted area.

Intriguingly, some 20% of Merlot production in Ticino is vinified as a white wine: Merlot Bianco. Over the last two decades Merlot has become established in the cantons of Vaud (where it has achieved Premier Grand Cru status), Geneva and Valais where it is producing excellent results. Often made as a single-varietal wine, it is also blended with other Bordeaux varieties or with native reds.

The material on Swiss wines has been sourced from OFAG 'L'année viticole 2022', Swiss Wine Promotion's '*Switzerland Wine Regions and Wines*'.

Domaines Rouvinez Château Lichten Petite Arvine 2019

Location: Coteau de Loèche in the Valais, East of Sion. See Map 2, The Valais Wine Region.



Size: 26 hectares, 10 of which are planted with vines.

Grape varietal: Arvine, native variety

Estate: Rouvinez

Abv: 13.5% vol.

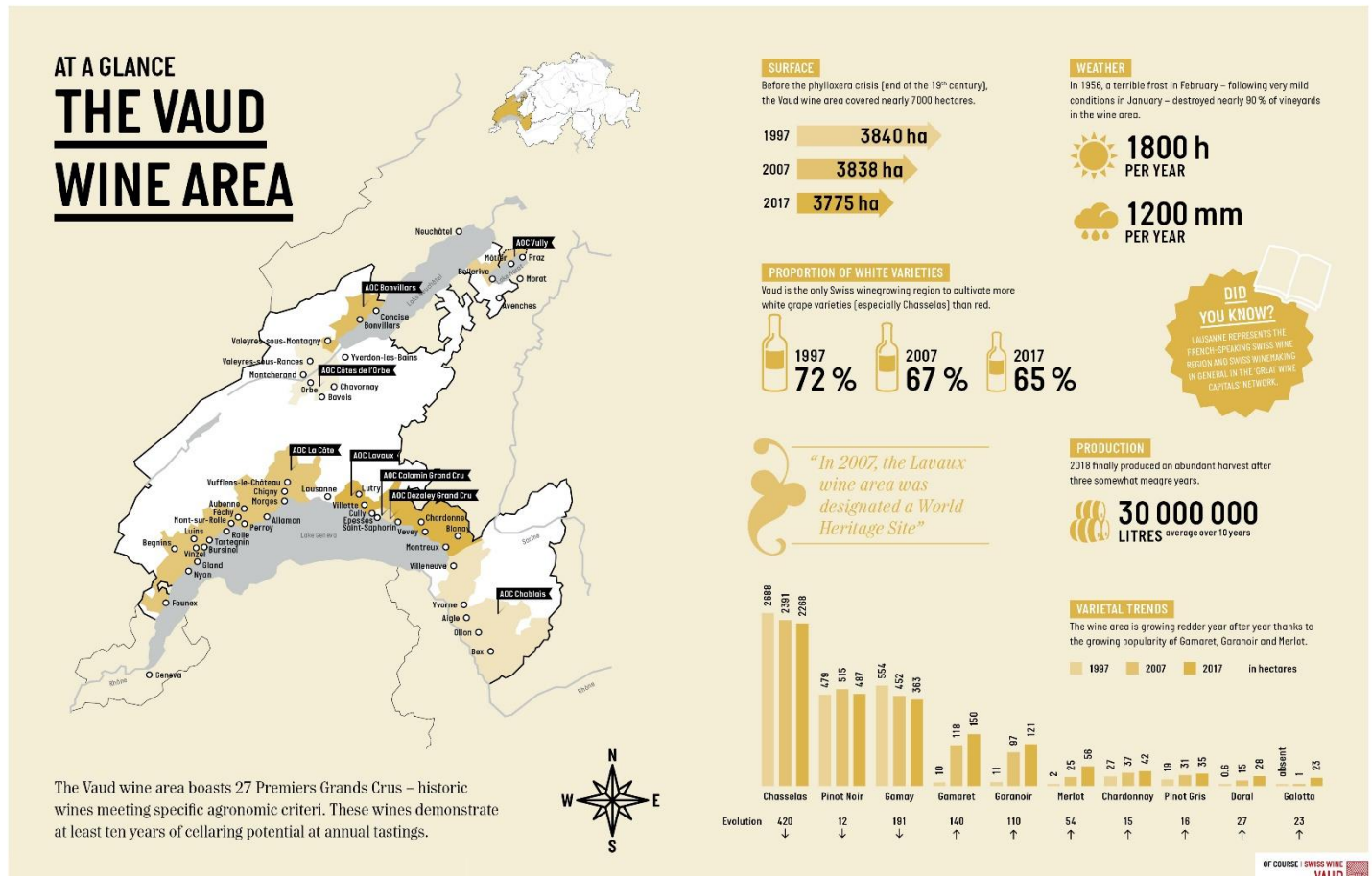
Profile: This domain of light and sandy soil is situated on steep terraces in the middle of small pine and oak woods.

Petite Arvine is an autochthonous grape of the Valais producing fragrant, floral dry white with a distinctive full-bodied character and good balance. The fruit is planted on two of the Rouvinez's vineyards, located on opposite sides of the wine-growing areas and with different soil characteristics. In Domaine de les Seilles, the terrace walls built from gneiss reflect the heat of the sun on steep slopes. The dry, warm, windless climate, and the rocky soil are especially suitable for Petite Arvine. Today we are tasting Domaine de Château Lichten, where the grapes grow on light, sandy soil situated on steep terraces in the middle of small pine and oak woods.

Tasting notes: The wine is a pale, yellow colour with light green reflections. It displays aromas of lime, grapefruit and rhubarb with marked acidity, giving it a lively and fresh taste and slightly salty flavour on the finish with a long persistence of the flavours in the mouth.

Louis Bovard Médinette Dézaley Grand Cru 2016

Location: Cully, 10km east of Lausanne. See Map 3, The Vaud Wine Area.



Size: 13 hectares

Viticulture: Terraced vineyards along the Lake of Geneva with an average slope of 50%. Entirely manual wine-growing operations. Vine density about 9000 /hectare. Grape yield 1kg/vine.

Grape: Chasselas, native variety

Terroir: On the surface, clay-limestone sediment and gravel. The steep slope and the immediate proximity of the lake induce a unique microclimate with solar radiation.

Vinification: Maturing on lees with stirring and 10 months in oak barrels.

Abv: 13% vol.

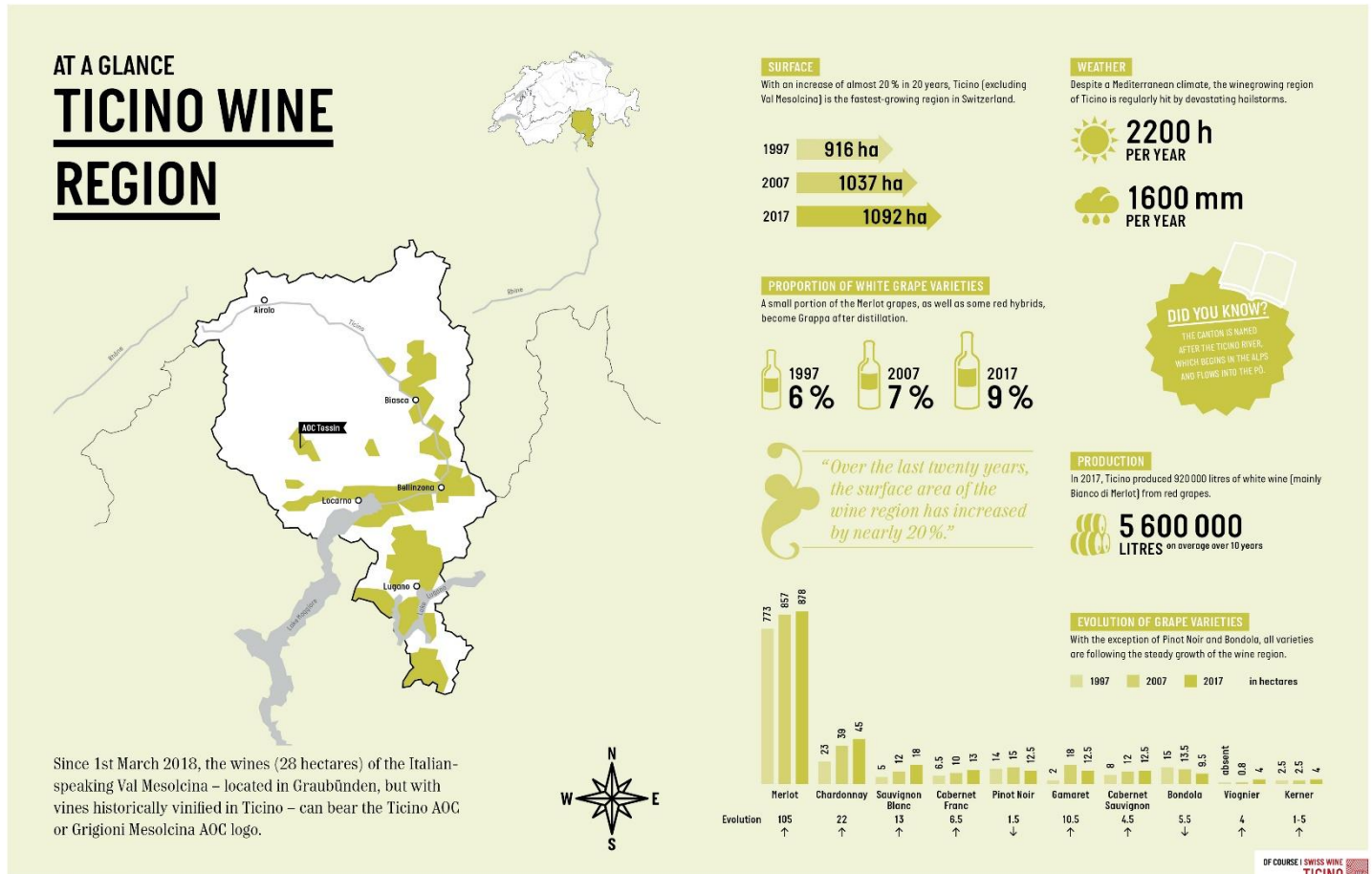
Profile: Louis-Philippe Bovard, whose name is in its 10th generation, took the helm of his family's estate in 1983. The estate is one of just a dozen 'Icons of Swiss Wine' (Gault & Millau guide). Bovard is a pioneer in Swiss winemaking, responsible for the introduction of new grape varieties such as Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and Syrah and the maturing of Chasselas in barrels. He created the 'Conservatoire Mondial du Chasselas', to research older vines, and built a collection of mature Dézaley vintages. He is one of the founding members of the Barony of Dézaley, Arte Vitis (innovative winegrowers from the canton of Vaud) and the "Mémoire des Vins Suisses". The name 'Médinette' refers to the city of Medinet-Habou, located near Thebes in Upper Egypt, where a temple is dedicated to divinities of the vine and wine and the label reflects this.

Tasting Notes: On the nose, the wine exhibits complex aromas of toasted bread, honey, flint, dried fruit and roasted almonds. On the palate, the wine is dense, rich and well-structured, with mineral accents and a pronounced length.

Ageing: 20-40 years. Old vintages: decant 30 minutes before serving.

Gialdi Arzo 2020

Location: Tre Valli region in the central-northern Canton of Ticino. See Map 4, Ticino Wine Region. Grapes are sourced from 200 vine-growers.



Grape Varietal: Merlot

Vinification: Traditional method with a maceration period of 14 days at 28 - 32 °C in stainless-steel tanks. The wine is matured for 15 months in barriques of new French oak (65%), while the rest is placed in one year-old barriques (35%).

ABV: 13.5%

Profile: Gialdi Vini was founded by Guglielmo Gialdi in 1953 initially as a wine merchant and only began production in 1984. Grapes are sourced from 200 vine-growers in the 'Tre Valli' region in the centre-north of Ticino. The wines are grown on well-draining sand over gneiss primary rock. The area is close to the Alps and the warm days and cooler nights allow the grapes to ripen slowly and preserve their organoleptic freshness. The current Director, Feliciano Gialdi works with his oenologist, Alfred de Martin to perfect the winemaking process.

Tasting Notes: The wine is deep ruby-red in colour, with complex aromas of ripe red-berries and hints of liquorice and menthol. The flavours are intense and quite earthy with damsons, plums, blackcurrants, blackberries and black cherry. The tannins are present but soft and harmonious with a persistent and balanced finish.

Ageing: Arzo 2020 already reveals its expressive potential and will continue to develop in character.

Dr Victoria Preston 2023

Berghof Kirsch

Kirsch is produced in the Black Forest of Germany, Alsace, and is a speciality of the north east of Switzerland, particularly the Swiss Canton of Zug, which sits between Lucern and Zurich.

The Zug cherry orchards of Lake Zug (“Chriesi” in the local dialect) mainly surround Lake Zug, where various varieties of cherry have been cultivated for centuries.

Around nine kilogrammes of cherries are required to make the fermented cherry juice that after double distillation makes a single bottle of Kirsch. A pure clear Kirsch such as this is then aged in stainless steel tanks to maintain its pure, clean fruit flavours, before bottling for sale. Other styles of Kirsch are produced. Oak matured Kirsch produces a softer, slightly coloured spirit, and other styles follow the characteristics of individual cherry varieties used in their production.

The Berghof Kirsch is made by Lateltin, a Zurich Wine merchant of the 19th Century that was taken over by a spirits company in 1918 and went on to develop Berghof fruit sprits as a prominent Swiss brand.

Abv: 40% vol.

Alistair J Cliff Esq 2023

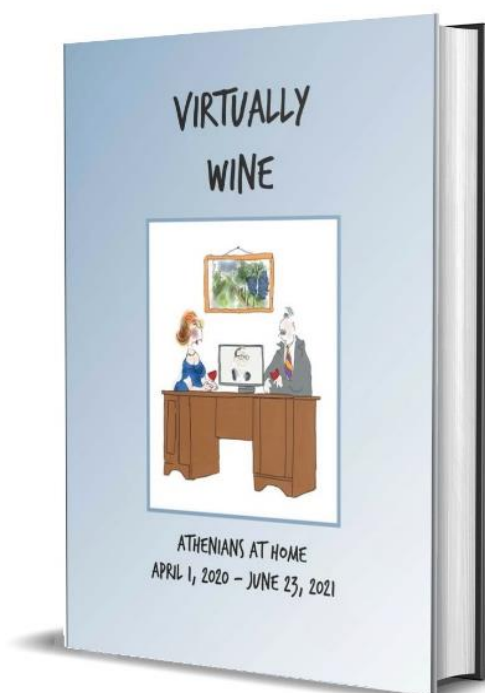
Virtually Wine

You may be interested to know that we have some copies of *Virtually Wine* still available. Copies are available to purchase for £30 each and can be obtained from the porters lodge.

In 370 pages, *Virtually Wine* documents Athenians at Home from April, 2020 to June, 2021. *Virtually Wine* tells the story of how Athenians confronted and finally confounded the pandemic by tasting wine and sharing anecdotes with each other whilst connected in Zoom meetings. In informal surroundings at home, these weekly meetings created a lively and convivial atmosphere for the enjoyment of a shared passion. It includes introductory essays by Mr. Richard Higham, Mr Jasper Morris MW and Professor M James C Crabbe. In 'Dessert Island Wines', over twenty members of the Club are castaway on fictitious desert islands with unlimited quantities of their favourite six wines.

Eight celebrated wine producers and three independent wine merchants discuss and present their wines, often with tastings. Specialist articles include Professor Tim Unwin's 'Terroir: in the ground and in the mind', 'Wine and Diplomacy' by Professor Kathleen Burk and 'Great Athenians and their Wines' by Dr Victoria Preston.

Chapters are interspersed with witty drawings by Professor Dan Cohn-Sherbok and the hardback A4 book concludes with helpful indices compiled by Dr Jonathan Punt on 'Wines and their Countries of Origin', 'Independent Wine Suppliers' and 'Vignerons'.



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