



Editors' picks

Each month our editorial team tastes a lot of wine, but not all of it makes it onto the page. So here's our in-house pick of other great wines we've tried



PRISONER-MADE ISLAND WINE MARKS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

JAMES BUTTON

A sunny June morning was perfect for a private boat trip with some 50 other journalists and friends of the Frescobaldi family (frescobaldi.com) to the island of Gorgona, 30km off the Tuscan coast from the cruise ship-lined harbour of Livorno. After an hour cutting through the sparkling blue of the Tyrrhenian sea, we arrived at the unique open prison that is Gorgona. Transfer requests from other prisons are apparently high, and you can see why. Some prisoners were repainting a retaining wall in a striking baby blue atop the steep cliffs, as the waves lapped at a tiny stretch of stony beach where an elderly lady (the last non-inmate resident left on the island) rested under a striped parasol. After a tour of the immaculate vineyards and rustic shed-like winemaking facility, we tasted the 10th vintage of the white (2021: about €80/75cl in Italy) with lunch. A blend of Vermentino and Ansonica, served (by inmates) from magnum, it is salty, creamy, floral and lemony, with a mineral tang and pure fruit expression. When asked if any women were incarcerated on Gorgona and involved with the winemaking, our host, 30th generation president Lamberto Frescobaldi, said it was male only. The reason? Only 6% of prisoners in Italy are female.



SINGULAR SPANISH SPARKLERS

JULIE SHEPPARD

Raventós i Blanc traces its viticultural roots back to 1497, with 1872 a notable date, being the year Josep Raventós Fatjó produced Spain's first traditional-method sparkling wine. Today the estate (raventos.com) is run by the affable Pepe Raventós, who took the bold decision to leave the Cava DO in 2012, focusing on producing sparkling wines without DO restrictions from his 50ha of biodynamic vines in Conca del Riu Anoia in Alt Penedès. Hosting a tasting in London, he quipped: 'If you like fruity, this is not your tasting. Sorry. This is mineral sparkling wine.' The jewel in the estate's crown is Clos del Serral, a 1.92ha plot co-planted with Xarel·lo and Bastard Negre vines on fossil-rich soils, producing the exceptional single-site **Mas del Serral**. We tasted the first three vintages released: **2007**, **2009** and **2010**. Aged for 100 months prior to disgorgement, all three exhibit toasty richness, a mineral core and marked salinity. The 2009 (awarded 99pts by Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW in his Expert's Choice selection for *Decanter* last year) showed admirable freshness and complexity. But the 2007, with its evolved savoury notes allied to layers of crystalline citrus, nuts, pear and honey, stole my heart. *Mas del Serral 2009 and 2010 are available in magnum from Liberty Wines.*

