

Spurrier's World

Decanter's globetrotting consultant editor gives us a round-up of recent tastings, his views on current issues in the wine world and top bottles to drink or keep

The London Wine Fair

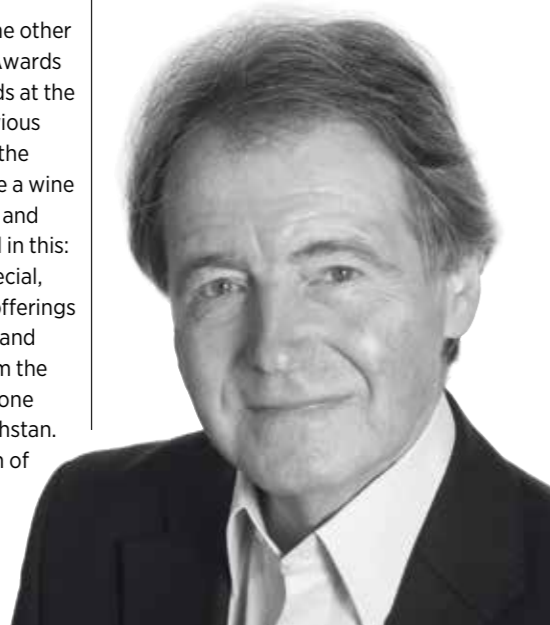
Now in its fourth decade, and having made a return to the more welcoming surroundings of London's Olympia venue after an extended spell in the efficient but characterless ExCel in Docklands, the LWF showed over three days in early May that the UK wine trade is alive and well. While there were some notable absences – Boisset Vins and Liberty Wines – among the importer/wholesalers, most of the big players were there to showcase the major brands they represent. Joint stands from across the wine world were very popular, typified by several producers of sparkling wine on the Welcome to England booth amusingly situated opposite that of Abrau-Durso, the largest purveyor of Russian 'champagne'.

On the single day I could attend – the other two were spent judging the Platinum Awards that had been winnowed from the Golds at the Decanter World Wine Awards the previous week, to arrive at Best of Show – I had the same request for all my visits: show me a wine I have never tasted before. Two recent and very welcome LWF innovations helped in this: Esoterica, 'a collection of items of a special, rare or unusual quality', that included offerings from 58 independent wine merchants; and Wines Unearthed, 'unsigned talent from the world of wine', 78 exhibitors including one table from Mexico and one from Kazakhstan.

At Esoterica, Tim McLaughlin-Green of wine merchant Sommelier's Choice, whose wines have often featured in these pages, showed me wines from two estates at opposite ends of the

Italian spectrum: **Conte Brandolini d'Adda's Pinot Grigio 2014** and **Cabernet Franc 2012**, both modern classics from this aristocratic estate in Friuli-Venezia Giulia; and from the new **Audarya** (meaning 'nobility of the soil') winery in southern Sardinia, whose sister and brother owners are just 22 and 26 years old, a floral **Vermentino 2015** and robust but lifted **Monica** (local red variety). While specialising in France, Kendrick Champagnes & Fine Wines came up with an intriguingly spicy **Coffee Pinotage 2012** from **Van Zijl** in Western Cape.

At Wines Unearthed, **Vina Laguna**, a producer on Croatia's Adriatic coast, impressed with its white and red entry-level 2015s (Lea & Sandeman), a beautifully clear and floral



Malvazija and the crunchy/fruity **Terra Rossa** blend of Teran (Refosco) and Borgonja (Blafränkisch). Romania's **Prince Stirbey Estate**, whose wines are stocked by The Wine Society, showed a fine **Extra Brut 2011** sparkling wine made from Cramposie and a smoky, Muscat-like **Tamãoiosa 2015** dry white, both indigenous varieties. **Heumann Winery**, founded in the late 1990s in Hungary's Villány region by a Swiss-German couple, showed a **Blafränkisch-Merlot Rosé 2015** that would rival most from Provence, a charming Beaujolais-style **Kadarka 2015** and a superb **Cabernet Franc 2012** from Villány's famed limestone soils. Back in Italy, the **Cantine Torracchia del Piantavigna** farms 40ha of hillside vineyards in northern Piedmont's Ghemme and Gattinara districts and its **Ghemme 2010** (90% Nebbiolo, 10% Vespolina) and **Gattinara 2010** (100% Nebbiolo) offer high quality and good value.

Off the beaten track

Back in the main hall, I went off-piste to Mallorca, where **Finca Es Fangar** farms 56ha on undulating mineral-rich soil in this maritime-influenced microclimate. Particularly good were its Torrontés-style **Sa**

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Fita 2015 from Prensall Blanc, Muscat and Chardonnay, and the spicy/garriguey **Fangar Elements 2012** from Manto Negro, Callet, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. New kid on the Mendoza block is American Eric Anesi of **Gauchezco Vineyards**, proud owner of 130ha with an average age of 70 years – the vines for his **Petit Verdot 2013** have just made their centenary, and produce a wine of surprising florality and elegance, available through Connoisseur Estates. Jean-Claude Mas of the ever-expanding and innovative **Domaines Paul Mas** is experimenting with vinification without sulphites and his **Clairette du Languedoc 2015** and **Chardonnay 2015** showed the purity and clarity that results. Last year he created two blends with his old friend Marina Danieli from Friuli's Udine region under the brand **Danieli Mas Cuvées Fusionissimo**: its **Friulano-Viognier** is all lightness and charm and the Refosco-Carignan's earthy spice is totally modern with its feet in the past. Still in Italy, **Antonelli's 2011 Contrario, Umbria Rosso**, a 100% Sagrantino with short fermentation and no oak ageing to avoid the hard tannins, was smooth and ripe, while **Maria Donato Bianchi's Pigato, Riviera Ligure di Ponente 2015**, a more expressive Vermentino cousin, was quite delicious.

From France I tasted two wines under the new Touraine Chenonceaux AC – **La Voûte's** stunning **2014 Sauvignon Blanc** had fine depth of fruit and a lifted, mineral finish, and a red **L'Esprit des Dames 2014**, a 50/50 Breton (Cabernet Franc) and Cot (Malbec), showed great vineyard character. Finally it was to Hampshire's **Exton Park** to taste Corinne Seely's early-released **Pinot Meunier Rosé 2014**, very pale, very dry and very precise: a new departure for English sparkling rosés.

Steven Spurrier is Decanter's consultant editor and a renowned taster

From the cellar Château Dauzac

A fine Margaux estate with splendid parkland, a brand new winery and visitor centre that calls to mind the best of Napa Valley, Château Dauzac's 42ha vineyard is in a single block – rare in the Médoc and especially so in Margaux – planted 63% to Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% to Merlot. During the en primeur 2015 tastings (see *June 2016 issue*), general manager Laurent Fortin and technical director Philippe Roux took me through the Dauzac vintages ending in '5'. Prior to the 2005 we had the **2014, 2013** and **2012**, all very good for the appellation, while the **2010** was exceptional, showing a



fragrance and depth of fruit over great structure (93/100pts, drink 2018-2030), superior to the more robust **2009**. The rich, velvety red **2005** showed natural richness and depth (92, 2016-2025), the **2006** being more fragrant and precise (92, 2016-2026). The **1995**, high in Merlot, showed earthy maturity, not a success, while the **1985** (the vintage to which I have likened 2015) was fresher, with coffee bean aromas and lovely middle fruit (92, 2016-2020). The **1975** was still young in colour but drying out on the palate; and the **1955** was a fine, still lively expression of Margaux.

For the cellar Finca La Emperatriz

'The Empress' Estate' is an historic 101ha (80ha planted) near the Oja river that belonged to Eugenia de Montijo, wife of Napoleon III, from the 1870s. Bought by the Hernaiz family in 1996, the wide range of wines, from old bush vines, is only now coming to the UK (North South Wines), and it is very good. At 570m, Rioja Alta's cool climate is of great benefit to the floral and citrus **Viura 2015** (£10.95, 2016-2019), while the oak-aged **Viura, Cepas Viejas 2013** from 67-year-old vines shows rich complexity (£20.95, 2016-2020). The reds begin with a warm, balanced **Tempranillo**



Crianza 2012 (5% Garnacha and Viura; £13.95, 2016-2019) and an impressively young and spicy **Reserva 2010** (£17.95, 2016-2024), then go into overdrive with the **Garnacha, Cepas Viejas 2013** from a single plot of very low-yielding vines planted in 1946, again showing the cool climate with great freshness and lifted fruit, which at just 13.8% abv is a great bonus (£25.95, 2016-2025). Finally, the **Terruño 2011** from 100% Tempranillo vines planted in 1997, trained to 2m for maximum light exposure, is dense and vigorous with complexity and sophistication to come (£21.95, 2016-2026).

Steven recommends... (for full details of UK stockists, see p101)



Raventos i Blanc, Textures de Pedra, Blanc de Negres, Conca del Riu Anoia, Penedès, Spain 2011 93 £28.10 Berry Bros & Rudd, Hedonism Very pale rosé-coloured cuvée based on three local red grapes – Xarel-lo Vermell, Sumoll and Bastard Negre – from the producer's highest vineyards. Sensational fruit structure, bone dry. **Drink 2016-2021 Alc 12%**



CVNE, Contino Blanco, Rioja, Spain 2014 91 £25.45 BI Wines & Spirits, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Field & Fawcett, Planet of the Grapes, Hedonism, The Halifax Wine Co, Waitrose, Waitrose Cellar 85% Viura, 10% Garnacha Blanca, 5% Malvasia; no malolactic, just seven months in new 350- and 500-litre French oak. White and yellow fruits, long, lifted and fresh. **Drink 2016-2019 Alc 13%**



Marimar Estate, Albariño, Russian River, California, USA 2013 90 £27.99 Campbells of Leyburn, Eagle's Wines Marimar Torres' fourth vintage of Albariño from the Don Miguel Vineyard is the best so far: lime and florality on the nose, white summer fruits on the palate with a touch of saltiness on the finish. **Drink 2016-2018 Alc 13%**



Quinta dos Avidagos, Vinhas Velhas, Douro, Portugal 2012 92 £20 Bluebird Wine Cellar, H2Vin, Hangingditch From seven indigenous varieties co-planted more than 75 years ago on schistous soil at high elevation: shows terrific youth and vigour of autumnal briary fruits, great length and balance despite its relatively high alcohol. **Drink 2017-2025 Alc 15.5%**



Château d'Esclans, Déesse Rouge, Côtes de Provence, France 2014 90 £33.60 (2011) Hedonism While Sacha Lichine's red may not reach the heights of his renowned rosés, this Syrah-Mourvèdre blend is both spicy and smooth, with a class and depth of fruit that approaches some of the better Bandols. **Drink 2016-2020 Alc 13.5%**



Churchill's, Crusted Port, Bottled in 2005, Douro, Portugal NV 92 £21.45 Christopher Piper, From Vineyards Direct A field blend of all the classic Port varieties. Bottled unfiltered after about three years in wood, it throws a 'crust' in bottle so needs decanting. Violets on the nose, fine depth of warm, earthy single-quinta fruit. Very good indeed. **Drink 2016-2020 Alc 19.5%**