



The Valpolicella wine region in Italy.
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Swig

‘Forgotten’ wines shine

Wines from smaller regions, which are under-represented in Singapore, will be big this year



Anjali Raguraman

White wines from regions typically known for their reds, sparkling wines from non-traditional regions and quality wines from smaller regions will be big this year, accord-

ing to sommeliers The Sunday Times spoke to.

Mr Mauro Serrajotto, 36, general manager and sommelier of Basilico, an Italian restaurant at The Regent Singapore in Cuscaden Road, says that European wine countries, be they France, Italy or Spain, are “all going through the same thing”, where the main wine-producing regions are facing high demand. Hence these wines are becoming more expensive.

“But it’s the time for the smaller or forgotten regions to rise,” he says.

Hot regions include Valpolicella, a wine district in north-eastern Italy’s Veneto wine region, as well as France’s Loire valley, whose wines are under-represented in Singapore.

A spokesman for the Les Amis restaurant group’s wine team says that such wines are “often overshadowed by the better known regions or are not the main highlight of that particular region”.

While the usual suspects like Bordeaux from France or Barolo from Italy dominate the market here, some sommeliers such as Britt Ng, 29, from Gordon Ramsay’s Bread

Street Kitchen restaurant at Marina Bay Sands, feels that it is time to give newer, unexpected wine producing countries a chance.

The restaurant stocks wines from Lebanon, Uruguay and Slovenia.

The winner of the title of 2016 Asia Best Sommelier in French Wines, an award given out by international food and wine marketing and communication agency Sopexa, adds: “Singaporeans are quite receptive to new wines, they just need to be convinced.”

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Wine trends

WINES FROM VALPOLICELLA



Wines from Valpolicella, known for a particular style of Amarone wines made from dried grapes, could make a comeback this year, according

to Master of Wine Tan Ying Hsien (above), the first Singaporean to have the prestigious title, awarded by London-based The Institute of Masters of Wine.

The 55-year-old describes it as an “oft-forgotten classic region”, located in the province of Verona in Italy. It has been overlooked due to an excess of thin, mass-produced wines that came from the region in the 1970s and 1980s.

Basilico restaurant’s Mauro Serrajotto mirrors his sentiments, saying: “They’re having an internal revolution with new winemakers producing wine of stunning quality. “Some problems that Amarone had in the past was that it was too powerful and too rich, but the new wave of wines from there is more elegant. They’re still powerful, but have a bit more acidity and are more drinkable.”

He recommends the Valpolicella Superiore, Garbole 2009.

Mr Tan says Valpolicella wines can be approached by both serious wine drinkers, as well as more casual drinkers “looking for vivacious, juicy floral red fruit with some backbone to go with their meals”. Most of the leading producers, including Quintarelli and Dal Forno, are represented in Singapore.

He recommends the 2012 Tedeschi “La Fabriseria” Valpolicella Classico Superiore.

WHITE WINES FROM RED WINE REGIONS AND LOIRE VALLEY WINES

Bordeaux is most famously known for its red wines, but the Les Amis Group’s wine team is confident that the often overshadowed Bordeaux white wines will come to the fore this year.

“Bordeaux’s dry white wines are more of an afterthought compared to the reds or the dessert wines, but some winemakers do make excellent Bordeaux whites,” the team says.

The group runs restaurants such as the two-Michelin-starred French restaurant Les Amis, with its award-winning wine list; and French bistro Bistro du Vin, both in Shaw Centre.

The team feels that Bordeaux whites (such as S de Suduiraut by Chateau Suduiraut 2007 or Chateau Fombrage Blanc 2010) pair well with a variety of dishes as they are usually made from a blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc grapes. “They have a blend of the crisp and citrus flavour of Sauvignon Blanc and the rounded stone fruit and honeyed flavours of Semillon.”

The team also says that the Loire Valley in central France is “one of the wine world’s best-kept secrets”.

The region produces wines in almost every style – from Chenin Blanc to Gamay – thanks to its various terroirs along the Loire river.

For a white Loire wine, the team recommends Alain Cailbourdin Blanc Fume de Pouilly “Triptyque” 2012 or Didier Dagueneau Blanc Fume de Pouilly “Silex” 2010. Good reds from the region include Clos Rougeard Saumur Champigny “Clos” 2010 or Stephane Bernaudeau Anjou Rouge “La Chantelee” 2011.

SPARKLING WINES FROM NON-TRADITIONAL REGIONS



While champagne or prosecco may be the bubbly of choice, sparkling wines from the United Kingdom to Tasmania are what sommeliers are

keen on this year.

Bread Street Kitchen, for instance, stocks Chapel Down’s 2011 Blanc De Blanc, from Kent, England. The sparkling wine is made with the Champagne method, where the bubbles occur naturally within the bottle. Its sommelier Britt Ng (above) says that British-made fizz is on the rise, with the ascent of producers such as Nyetimber from West Sussex.

Raffles Singapore wine director Stephanie Rigourd is excited about interesting sparkling wines from Tasmania and South Africa.

“I will be selecting sparkling wines from these regions as they are new to the market and it will be interesting to see how they will be received,” the 29-year-old says.

Meanwhile, Mr Tan Ying Hsien is looking to Northern Italy for its take on sparkling wines, in particular, Trento, where winemakers are making high-quality sparkling wines using the traditional Champagne method. Wine is fermented once in the barrel and then a second time in the bottle, after the addition of ingredients such as yeast and sugar.

“For champagne enthusiasts, the sparkling wines of the Trentodoc provide an affordable high-quality alternative,” he says.

WINES FROM REGIONS AFFECTED BY BAD WEATHER



Among other things, last year will be remembered for being the hottest year on record and certain wine-producing regions could not escape the effects of climate change.

As a result, certain vintages will be affected.

Ms Stephanie Rigourd (above) from Raffles Singapore is still in the midst of selecting her master wine list, but it is largely dependent on how certain appellations have performed after this year’s chaotic weather.

She is considering Burgundy wines of vintages 2014, 2015 and 2016, from Pommard, Volnay and some of the areas around Vosne Romanee and Savigny-Les-Beaune, some of which have not yet been released.

“These have been tough vintages for these appellations as the volume produced was small. But despite the smaller volume, I’ve heard that what has been made is excellent,” she says.

She expects that the lower production volume, coupled with high demand, will push up prices. “So it will be interesting to have access to the first ones released.”

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