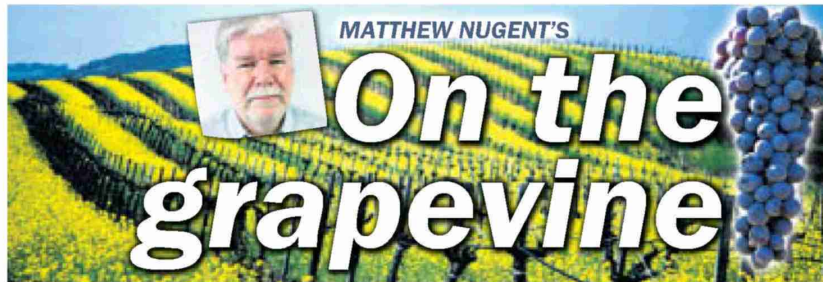


Client: Tagus Creek
 Source: The Sun (Eire) (Main)
 Date: 12 January 2013
 Page: 29
 Reach: 86064
 Size: 497cm2
 Value: 6212.5



YOU SWEET THING

HEALTH experts make much of our sugar intake and the dire effects it has on our health.

A recent report suggested that some popular cereals contain 35 per cent sugar.

Yet while our appetite for all things sweet has increased, it hasn't taken off for dessert wines. That's a pity because they can be a real treat.

One Irish Sun reader, **Sean Cantwell** from Glanmire, Co Cork, had his first taste of a dessert wine at Christmas and has asked for some more information about the production process.

There are a variety of methods for making sweet wines, Sean. These range from the cheap and cheerful where the fermentation is stopped with some sugar remaining, to some of the more labour-intensive processes in winemaking.

Some of the sweetest and richest dessert wines are made from grapes affected by a fungus called 'noble rot'.

It attacks the fruit leaving the grapes shrivelled on the vine – but tasting deliciously sweet. The world's greatest sweet wines including Sauternes from France and Trockenbeerenauslese from Germany are made with these grapes.

Another process delivers late harvest wines – made from grapes left on the vine long after they are ripe, which allows the sweetness to intensify.

These can be a great introduction to dessert wines because they are not too expensive. A real favourite is the

Brown Brothers Special Late Harvested Orange Muscat & Flora (around €13 for a half bottle and widely available) A blend of two grapes, Orange Muscat and Flora, it has flavours of citrus and stone fruit and a fresh crisp finish. When young it displays vibrant, crisp characters. With bottle age it develops complexity and richness.

● **Pauline Quinn** from Ballyconnell, Co Cavan, asks: Some winemakers describe themselves as biodynamic. What does this actually mean?

In a nutshell Pauline, biodynamic



namics is a form of organic farming that goes well beyond the standard principles by using special homeopathic-like preparations and tying-in the timing of vineyard work with phases of the planets.

For many wine lovers this seems a little extreme. But having visited several winemakers who follow the principles of biodynamics I can say they do deeply believe in what they do.

Making wines using this process can be labour intensive and push up costs – but the rewards for wine lovers can be huge. One of the world's best biodynamic wines is, without doubt, **Coyam 2011** (€20.99 from O'Briens Wines – but sometimes on promotion).

This Chilean blockbuster is made with five red grape varieties. It is a rich and powerful wine with soft tannins, packed with fruit flavours and possessing great length.

● And finally today some pleasing news to help you lose some of that January gloom – a new study suggests the risk of depression is significantly lower in women who drink moderate amounts of wine.

Some 13,000 adults in Spain were studied over a ten-year period, with the outcome based on a doctor's diagnosis or on the habitual use of antidepressant drugs for four or more years.

Reported depression was much higher among women than men, but for those women drinking around one glass a day, the risk of diagnosis of depression was significantly lower, when compared to non-drinkers.

The study was carried out between 1999-2012 on 13,619 university graduates with a mean age of 38 years, and of which 42 per cent were men. All were initially free of depression.

Among the women, those consuming between half a drink and one to one-and-a-half drinks a day, there was evidence of a lower risk of depression during a follow-up period extending up to ten years.

According to the authors there were no differences seen according to the type of beverage consumed; with the majority of subjects reporting they consumed red wine.

RED WINE . . . Just the job to fight the blues



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PERFECT WITH SUNDAY ROAST

Campo Viejo Reserva 2006, Spain (€14.49 widely available)

A favourite winter warmer – and a reserve Rioja at a great price.

Dominated by Tempranillo with smaller amounts of Graciano and Mazuelo, it has a complex nose of jammy red fruit, cherries, raspberries and blackberries.

Its time in barrels provides liquorice, pepper and vanilla. Lovely ripe fruit flavours.

Drink it with: Roasts, grilled spring lamb chops.



BARGAIN BOTTLE OF THE WEEK

Eaglehawk Merlot 2011, Australia (€9.99 widely available)

Great to see this grape making something of a comeback.

A soft, easy-drinking Merlot with characteristic ripe plum and berry aromas. Enticing palate of dark cherries and spice with medium body and smooth finish.

It is gloriously smooth, unfussy and very more-ish. Great value entry level Merlot.

Drink it with: Pizza, tomato pasta sauces, meatballs.



SOMETHING A LITTLE SPECIAL

Ramos Tons de Duorum 2009, Portugal (€9.99)

O'Briens Wines)

From the Douro Valley comes this blend of three of the Tourigas – Nacional, Franca and Tinta Roriz.

It is dominated by strawberries and blackberries on the nose, blending beautifully with spicy secondary notes from barrel aging.

Well-balanced acidity, soft tannins and a persistent finish result in an elegant wine.

Drink it with: Pasta and hard cheeses.



● EMAIL ME YOUR QUESTIONS AT WINE@THE-SUN.IE