
Summers Last Hurrah

POSTED ON 15/08/2015

It is still summer, isn't it? In the South of France mid-August is traditionally a time for thunderstorms and torrential downpours, bringing in their wake the first wistful chill of autumnal air. Here, it's not just the changeable weather that's baffling on a surreal Saturday when Rooney & Co. are performing before the first ball of the fifth Ashes Test is bowled. But if my glass is half full today, I want it topped up with appetisingly dry whites to prolong the al fresco moments before the nights draw in.

In the expectation of an Indian summer, my first optimistic port of call is Portugal's breezy Atlantic coast where the lower alcohol of brisk, light-bodied, dry whites of vinho verde can perk up your spirits like few other wines with their invigorating, sherbet-lemon-crisp bite. Light in body, breezily fresh and crunchy, the 2014 Quinta de Azevedo Vinho Verde, £6.95, Wine Society, £9.99, buy 2 = £6.66, Majestic, is quintessential VV, bone dry, with a briny sea-spray of mouthwatering, citrus-crispness.

Equally bracing, the 2014 Quinta das Arcas Tapada de Villar Vinho Verde, £8, Marks & Spencer, blends the Loureiro, Arinto and Trajadura grapes, into a tongue-curling dry white with refreshing quince and apple fruitiness; the 2014 Adega de Ponte de Lima, Vinho Verde, £7.58 - £7.99, Cambridge Wine, Wine Rack, shows floral aromatics and tantalising green apple bite; and 2014 Casal de Ventozela Vinho Verde, £9.99, buy 2 = £7.49, Majestic, brings bone dry appley freshness and citrusy verve to the party.

Grown close to the Mediterranean, Italy's vermentino is a grape variety which by retaining mouthwatering freshness body chimes perfectly with seafood pasta, bream, monkfish and sea bass. From Liguria, the 2014 Lunae Vermentino Colli di Luni, Etichetta Grigia, £14.40 - £15.49, Bottle Apostle, Ellis Wharton, is spicy in aroma with a hint of ginger biscuit and lemon peel, the refreshing prickle exploding on the tongue with a with a lively, lemony dry tang. From Agricola Punica in Sardinia, the 2014 Samas, Isola dei Nuraghi, £13.50 - £15, The Good Wine Shop, Handford, Secret Cellar, Corks Out, Toscanaccio, Exel, is fragrant vermentino with a touch of chardonnay whose smoky, peppery fruit bursts into life with bitter lemony verve.

If vermentino is a tad exotic for you, chardonnay is at its most refreshing in its cool climate heartland of chablis, as you'll find in the 2014 Chablis Grande Cuvée, £9.99, Tesco, whose subtly smoky and green apple scent is streaked with a moreishly appetising dryness. An excellent New World counterpart, Tom Carson's 2013 Red Claw Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay, £18, buy 2, save 25%, Marks & Spencer, is a finely-crafted Victoria chardonnay in which grapefruit zesty aromas mingle with a, creamy-textured fruit quality whose elegant freshness wouldn't disgrace chablis premier cru.