

Historical News Cuttings Book: Vogue, October 1937

Wine, women and sense

WINE, women and song have always belonged together: and indeed they should not be parted. (Only the new partnership is wine, women and sense.) For now, after crashing in on clubs, politics and business, women are beginning to gatecrash the wine cellar, most exclusive of masculine preserves. More and more young marrieds, like Mrs. Kellet, opposite, are to be seen in famous cellars choosing wines to serve at their table: and indeed no woman with any pretensions to elegance can afford to be altogether a wine philistine. To know the great vintages is the affair of an expert: but to be able to choose an honest wine and enjoy it, that is within the province of every Vogue-minded woman.

How much must one know about wine before buying it—or choosing it at a restaurant? Most necessary of all is a knowledge of one's limitations, not only financial. How many glasses of wine can you drink gracefully? How many wines should be served at a simple meal? How much can one leave to the discretion of the wine merchant?

Here comes the crux of the matter: get a good wine merchant, and you can learn everything from him. If he is a really qualified person, he must have spent at least ten years (often a lifetime) in learning about wines. He cannot help being an enthusiast, and it is his job to make more enthusiasts. So he will not look down his nose at poor little you, vaguely knowing the difference between white wine and red, but not at all between Claret and Burgundy, Hock and Moselle!

Tell him what you have to spend, and he will tell you how best to spend it. Excellent light wines, for ordinary drinking, vin Rosé (Continued on page 120)



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like Anjou, or red like Beaujolais, can be had for as little as 3s. a bottle. And the best wine merchants now are quite prepared to sell single bottles of the bigger wines, delivered, if necessary, at the correct temperature for drinking.

The following notes about the various wines and when to drink them have been supplied by Barry Neame of the famous Hind's Head Hotel at Bray, where so many feminine claret converts have been made! And though the wines are given as each belonging to a special course, it is perfectly correct, except at formal dinners, to serve one honest wine following sherry with the main course. The great sin in wine drinking, as in dressing, is pretentiousness: better one simple but well chosen wine than a series of vintages you don't know much about.

NOTES ON WINES

CHAMPAGNE

Champagne, the perfect party drink, may also be drunk all through a meal, or with oysters. It is seldom sent over to England before it is six years old. At the present moment, the 1928 vintage, which has only been here about 18 months, is being drunk; so in this case, it was only about seven years old when it was shipped. There are still some 1919, 1920 and 1921 champagnes on the market as well as 1923 and 1926 vintages, but they are mostly getting old. The famous names are Krug, Clicquot,

Bollinger, Perrier-Jouet, Lanson, Roederer, to mention only a few of the great houses who specialise in a "dry" wine for English consumption.

WHITE WINES

Dry white wines are to be drunk with fish, white meat, and oysters: sweet ones, such as the famous Chateau Yquem, with dessert. With fish or oysters, drink Chablis or a young Moselle, 1933 or 1934 vintage. Full flavoured fish can stand a heavier and sweeter wine; but never must a red wine be tasted until the last vestige of anything fishy has left your palate.

White wines show much greater variation of flavour and sweetness than do the red wines. All red wines are more or less dry, but it is very easy to make a mistake when buying white wines. As a general rule, Moselles and Hocks and Sauternes are sweet—naturally with exceptions in some cases. White Bordeaux, like Barsac and Sauternes are always sweet and better drunk at the end of dinner with dessert or sweets. Some Graves are dryish, but are usually poor, coarse-flavoured things sold under proprietary brands.

White burgundies like Montrachet and Meursault are aristocrats among white wines, with Chablis, which is generally classed as a White Burgundy although it does not come from the Côte-d'Or where the Montrachet and Meur-

sault wines are grown. Chablis is very dry with a fine flinty flavour, not sour at all; and when one gets a real Grand Chablis of a good year, then you have the ideal wine for oysters and fish.

Hocks or rather Rhine Wines (charming to drink at luncheon, or with white meats) vary enormously, but the finer and more costly wines of the Rhinegau and Palatinate districts are often as sweet as the fine Sauternes. As a rule, the cheaper the Rhine wine the drier it is. The word Auslese or Spätlese can always be taken for a sign of sweetness, though of much finer flavour.

Liebfraumilch is the most popular of all German wines and the least genuine: it is, in fact, merely a name and few real connoisseurs will order it.

The really fine German wines always have the name of the vineyard tacked on to the village, such as Berncasteler "Doktor," Foster "Jesuitengarten," or in the case of Johannisberg, when *Schloss* (castle) precedes the name of this wonderful wine, it is wine from the estate still in the hands of the von Metternich family, who have the same pride in their vineyards as the proprietors of Romanée-Conti or Josephospher, which is in the possession of the noble family of von Kesselstatt.

All white wines, including champagne, should be chilled—the sweeter the colder. Yquem may be almost frozen.

RED WINES

Burgundy, warm as sunshine, dark as rubies, is ideal with beef and all the stronger game, such as grouse, wild duck,

hare; it is also excellent with cheese. Never have a fishy savoury if you are drinking burgundy: take a cheese soufflé, cheese omelette, cheese tartlet, cheese straws, plain cheese or an excellent mush of fine, ripe Roquefort and butter with a suspicion of Armagnac as set out by C. W. Berry in that happy and valuable book, *In Search of Wine*. Drink burgundy from a large glass, which should never be more than two-thirds full.

As to the temperature, all red wines, claret and burgundy alike, should be drunk at "the warmth of a charming woman's hand." They should never be artificially warmed, but kept in a warmish room for several hours before drinking.

Burgundies mature more rapidly than clarets, and are more generally popular, partly, I think, because they are sweeter, as a rule, than claret.

In buying Burgundy, you must rely on your wine merchant, since very few growers bottle their own wines, and it is possible to be misled by high-sounding labels. Burgundies of 1926, 1928 and 1929 are excellent: or if an older wine is wanted, remember the years 1923, 1919 or 1915—you will be lucky if you can get a fine 1911 or an earlier vintage.

CLARET

Claret is to be drunk with the entrée or joint, never with fish or a fishy savoury. Lamb and mutton, sweetbreads, foie gras, chicken and partridges are all perfect with claret. So is cheese and the cheese savouries as with burgundy. Good clarets

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last for sixty or even seventy years, maturing like the slow growing oak.

Claret is the safest red wine to buy, as all the great clarets of France are grown in vineyards adjoining the chateau, and that wine *only* is taken to the chateau and made and tended through all the processes until it is ready to run into separate hogsheads, ready for bottling in due course.

Most of these chateaux bottle the wine themselves, using their own branded corks, labels, capsules, etc., and the French Government is very careful to protect the purity and fame of its great chateaux bottled wines.

At present the 1923 clarets are perfect, but they will not last long; next year they may be losing some of their charm, whereas the 1920 clarets are still improving and the 1924 are not anywhere near their prime. 1926 clarets will take very much longer to mature, even longer than the 1928, whereas the 1929 vintage will come to maturity and pass into old age possibly before the 1924, 1926 and 1928 are at their best.

Again, the longer a wine takes to come to maturity, like the oak and other hard wood trees, the longer it lasts.

At the present moment I have some 1870 claret which I am told was not pleasant to drink for many years, and yet now, nearly seventy years old, it is a magnificent, full, rich, velvety wine.

The 1864, 1865 and 1869 clarets are

still very lovely, especially the 1864, and then there are youngsters like the '74, '75, '77 clarets all being enjoyed by the small band of claret lovers who share their treasures joyfully when they find a brother epicure.

These old wines were all made from the old French vine which was wiped out by the terrible pest, Phylloxera (lice brought in from America in 1879 on the stock roots from the great, strong, coarse American vine). The result was that the whole of the vines of France had to be uprooted and new vines planted that had been grafted on American stock—the poison and the antidote coming from the same source.

Since this period, 1879-1887, when no good wine was made, there have been fair wines in 1893, 1895, 1896, but in 1899 and 1900 again were produced some magnificent wines, which are as fresh and lovely to-day as one's palate could wish. Then in 1904 and 1906 there were two good years and then nothing great till 1920.

The 1921 clarets suffered from the great heat of that year. The white grapes of Sauternes Barsac and Graves gloried in it, and the Chateau d'Yquem of 1921 is peerless.

One claret of 1921, the Cheval Blanc, grown about 30 kilometres north-east of Bordeaux and up in the hills of St. Emilion, escaped the terrific heat, and produced a wine that is fetching £2 or £3

per bottle, and it is still far from its maturity.

But avoid the 1918, 1922, 1925, 1927, 1930, 1931 and 1932 clarets: Some merchants have been "landed" with them, in both senses of the word, or have bought them cheap and hope to work them off on an unsuspecting and unfortunately indiscriminating public.

Read, mark and learn these notes: but do not forget that in a year's time, the great changes that take place in wine may have put some of the wines, perfect now, into a memory of the past, while some of the younger wines may have become a real experience.

In the meantime, never mind if you've not thought much about wine before: begin now, and do not forget that the most famous wine merchants in the world regularly serve customers who come for one bottle with the same

courtesy as they serve a millionaire ordering a cellarful at the time. I have been in their cellars often, so I speak from what I know, and what is more they will decant a grand bottle of old claret for you and send it round just in time for lunch or dinner!

BARRY NEAME

Now if you are in doubt about any wine problem, the Wine and Food Society of 6 Little Russell Street, W.C.1, exist to answer such queries. They have also prepared a chart of current vintages, marking the best wines to invest in just now, and Vogue will be glad to send one with compliments to any reader who will take the trouble to write and ask for it, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. Please send your request to Vogue, 1 New Bond Street, London, W.1.

VOGUE PATTERN DEMONSTRATIONS

• A Vogue Pattern Service representative will be in attendance in the fabric departments at Wm. Hill, Ltd., Hove; Huntbach & Co., Hanley; Draffen & Jarvie, Ltd., Dundee, during the week beginning October 11; at McEwen & Co., Perth; Handley's, Ltd., Southsea; Selfridge & Co., London, during the week beginning October 18; and at Bainbridge & Co., Newcastle; Marshalls, Birmingham; Anderson & McAuley, Belfast, during the week beginning October 25. This representative will be pleased to discuss any of your dressmaking problems with you, and to help you select appropriate Vogue Patterns and suitable materials in which to make them up.

THE NEXT ISSUE OF VOGUE

is the Winter Fashions Number, out on Wednesday, October 27.
One shilling. Vogue is published every other Wednesday.