



**Sommelier** **INDIA**  
THE WINE MAGAZINE

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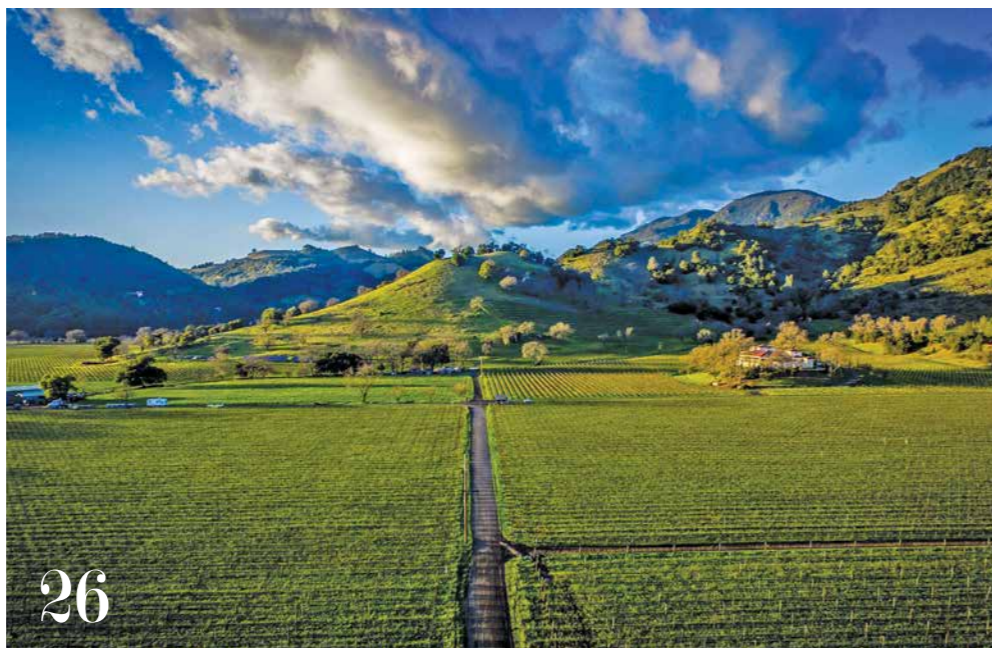
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**Jon Wyand** is a multi-award winning photographer. He has been shooting wine as his speciality for 20

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# Cognac 101

All you wished to know about Cognac, but never asked. **Sovna Puri** fills us in

**Is Cognac a grape brandy?** The answer is, yes, it is. The next logical question is, can grape brandy be made anywhere in the world from any grape? And the answer is, yes, it can. So naturally you ask, can Cognac be made anywhere in the world from any grape? And the answer to that is, NO!

**Why? And what's the difference between Cognac and any other grape brandy?** Well, Cognac must be made from specific grapes, using a specific distillation method, and must come from a specific region in France. Cognac has to be aged in oak barrels for a minimum of two years. However, a grape brandy can be made from any grape, anywhere in the world with no specified distillation method. But the producers are very particular about Cognac's provenance and specifications.

**How many grape varieties are permitted to be used for Cognac?** Although six grape varieties are permitted, most Cognacs are made using Ugni Blanc. Are both red and white grapes used to make Cognac? No, only white grapes can be used.

**What are the steps involved in making Cognac?** The grapes are harvested and fermented, followed by distillation and maturation. Cognac must undergo double pot still distillation by law in a still traditionally known as 'Alambic Charentais', and be aged for a minimum number of years in oak barrels.

**Are any additives permitted in the making of Cognac?** Caramel to adjust colour. Sugar is also permitted, but in



small quantities.

**How do you drink Cognac?** Since you want to enjoy it for what it is, Cognac can be drunk straight up (neat), especially high-end Cognac. But you can also have cognac-based cocktails, which if well made, are delicious.

**Can you name some branded cocktails?** 'Brandy Alexander', 'Brandy Manhattan', 'Between the Sheets' and 'Classic Sidecar' are some well-known brandy-based cocktails you may want to whip up for the winter. Finally, all Cognacs are brandies, but all brandies are not Cognac... and when you sip Cognac next time, remember, you're sipping luxury and refinement.

## How you store your wine may determine how well it drinks

**A**t warm India temperatures, a wine will mature more quickly and not always in the best way. The ideal storage temperature is 10° to 15°C. Once it tops 25°C for a prolonged period, your wine may taste cooked or burnt. Consistency is as important as temperature. Fluctuating temperatures may affect your wine and can also make the cork contract and expand, and eventually start to leak. High humidity is better than somewhere very dry. You should also try to keep your wine away from sunlight and strong electric lighting. This is one of the reasons why most wine bottles are dark green or brown. Strong UV rays will cause your wine to age prematurely or oxidise and turn brown.

*Ref: Irish Times*

## WHICH WINE

### The Source Pinot Noir released in 2023

**A** notoriously difficult grape to grow, Pinot Noir usually fares best in cooler temperatures, but it has adapted well to the climate in Nashik. The terroir of the vineyard, type of fermentation and even the type of yeast affects the typical flavour of the grape.

A light to medium-bodied red wine, with a deep ruby colour, the Source Pinot Noir from Sula is made from carefully selected grapes grown in the cool climate vineyards of Nashik. The wine is aged in French oak barrels for five months, giving it a soft velvety texture and a long lingering finish. It's a great choice for white wine fans who are moving towards drinking red wine. Wines from Pinot Noir are soft and delicate compared to Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon which are much more robust.

Pinot Noir is grown around the world in a wide range of quality from an inexpensive wine to the most expensive wine on the market running into five digits. The Source Pinot Noir costs Rs 1,250 in Maharashtra.



## VISITING

# Bordeaux delegation in Bangalore



(L-R) Renaud Limbosch - Ch Tifayne, Hemagini Rskshit from the French Consulate, Brinda Bourhis, Laurent Mujot, Abhay Kewadkar, Smita Agarwal, Ann-Xaviere Vernay - Ch Guiraud, Deepak Menezes, Sangamitra Banik - Ch Lafaurie-Peyraguey

**T**he Consul General of France in Bangalore, Thierry Berthelot, in partnership with Abhay Kewadkar, co-founder of Tetrad Beverages, recently held a wine dinner at the ITC Windsor Hotel, for a delegation from Bordeaux World Heritage Editions and its finest winemakers from 1er Grand Cru Classé vineyards.

The winemakers included David Ornon of Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey Sauternes and Faugeres St Emilion (presented by Sanghamitra Banik of

Wine Sutra); Anne Xaviere Vernay of Château Guiraud, Sauternes; Emmanuel Boidron of Château Corbin Michotte, St Emilion and Cantelauze, Pomerol; François Huguenot of Château Sociando Mallet, Haut-Médoc; and Renaud Limbosch of Château Tifayne, Franc Côtes de Bordeaux.

Bangalore's wine lovers had been waiting for this event, especially after the success of the one last year. The Bangalore Wine Club became a partner and opened up the event to many wine

lovers.

The evening began with a speech by the Consul General who welcomed the gathering saying how love for wine is widespread in France. Wine, he said, was a way for the French to share their hearth and home and enjoy convivial conversation.

Deepak Menezes, general manager of the ITC Windsor spoke about the Indian meal specially prepared to accompany the wines that were flown in for the event, while the winemakers spoke passionately about their wines as we tasted them. I learned a lot from my table-mate Francois Huguenot about the nuances of aging Bordeaux wines. It isn't as straightforward as you think.

The event was anchored by Abhay Kewadkar, who worked for months with his French counterparts from Bordeaux - Brinda Bourhis, MD of Winevox along with Laurent Mujot, author of the book, "Pairing Bordeaux wines with Indian Cuisine". At the end of the evening all guests received a complimentary copy of his book.

-Shoba Narayan

## Young Sommeliers Olympiad 2023



From left to right: Kirti Rathore (1st Runner Up), Manav Kattey (Winner) & Vedashree Gangapurkar (2nd Runner Up)

**T**he level of skills and knowledge of the competitors has only increased in the last few years and this year was no different. The six finalists were put through a rigorous testing procedure which included testing their skills, knowledge, personality and aptitude for the job. The competition had nine rounds through which the winners were selected. The tasks they were tested for ranged from opening and decanting still and sparkling wines, pouring the same level of sparkling wine into six glasses to blind tasting and decoding still and sparkling wines. The competition included beer, spirits, non-alcoholic beverages, food pairing and a *viva voce* interview with the jury. The finalists will receive study and cash scholarships plus travel opportunities with industry leaders including Sommelier Gagan Sharma.

## COLUMN



SHOBANARAYAN

Asks if the much-vaunted view that wine is not the best drink to pair with spicy Indian food is true

# Why does India prefer beer to wine?

**H**as beer overtaken wine as young India's drink of choice? To continue the question, what can the wine industry do about it? But first, some figures. Bangalore has about 85 brewpubs. It doesn't have a single wine bar. Go into The Bier Library on a Friday evening and you'll have to wait in line for a seat. Why is this so?

"Beer is accessible, less pretentious, lower priced, available in a single serve, made by Indian brew masters for Indian palates and suits Indian food," says Devesh Agarwal, past president of the Bangalore Wine Club and founder of The Wine Connoisseurs group. Now, his wine friends fear that they may lose him to beer.

The other difference between beer and wine has to do with expertise and ingredients, says Agarwal. Beer is made by local brew masters and uses foreign ingredients (hops, malt, etc). Wine, on the other hand, uses local ingredients – the grapes are grown in India – but relies on foreign winemakers for expertise. Local brew masters tweak the drink to suit the Indian palate. Foreign winemakers force the Indian palate to change for the wine. Is this a sustainable situation in a country with as robust a culture of food as India?

A long time ago, an American wine writer, in response to a reader's question on "which wine goes with Indian food", answered "Beer." When I first read this, I felt enraged because I thought the American wine writer brought with him biases about Indian cuisine and our country's relatively new appreciation for wine. After all, beer came with the British while wine is only a few decades old in India. But now, maybe it is time to accept the truth that wine perhaps is not the best libation to go with our spicy Indian food.

**B**ut this doesn't mean that wine is a lost cause in India. For the wine culture to grow here, we need to look at non-European cultures that have created a love for wine. Take the US for instance. It had total prohibition, it is considered a "new world," but within a short period of time, it has created an ecosystem for wine. One reason is because early winemakers didn't treat wine with the preciousness and reverence that it is accorded in India. Sure, wine appreciation needs to happen, but for that a wine palate needs to be fostered. The way America did it was by simply nudging more young people to drink more wine. They created wine spritzers, wine coolers, Sangrias, put wine

in tetrapaks, and bottled cheap wine in gallon jugs – all of which got more young people to pour themselves a glass.

In India, only now are we putting wine in tetrapaks, but it is an important first step. What does a youngster want when he drinks? He wants a tasty glass of alcohol that he can afford. Wine in India starts at Rs 900 a bottle. You can get a can of beer for Rs 150.

In Europe, particularly in France, Italy or Spain, wine is considered part of the family meal. We all know that. Pouring a thimbleful of wine into a child's glass just so he can say "Cheers," is normal in families. India, on the other hand, has a cultural aversion to alcohol. A significant portion of our population is teetotal. Even though this is slowly changing, beer seems to be reaping the benefits faster than wine.

There are a few small steps taken to popularise wine. The last time I visited Grover

Vineyards, I tasted wine infused with paan-like flavours. I expected to hate it, but found it familiar and delicious. It would likely go very well with a South Indian banana leaf dinner. Grover is also playing around with other Indian flavours. It is likely that other large wineries are doing the same.

**T**he great thing is that wine doesn't need to crack the entire Indian market in order for it to gain ground. Most urban Indians these days are well-travelled and love non-Indian cuisines. We may go home to our *ghar-ka-khana* but are quite happy eating bread and cheese or pasta – foods which naturally work with wine.

The focus, I feel, should be on making wine popular with young people. In order to do that, wine bars are a great way to go. Put on some good music, create some cool vibes and pour wine at a price point that a first-time employee can afford. ♦

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## Unlock the World of Wine & Spirits with Sovna Puri Certified WSET Educator / Capstone Trainer

Do you aspire to refine your wine and spirits experiences, gain relevant F&B certifications, or elevate your hospitality business with trained wine and spirits staff?

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