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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Ready for new regions, fewer glass bottles and lower alcohol? **Matt Walls** has seen the future of wine, and it looks and tastes a little different

Photograph by Ian Dingle

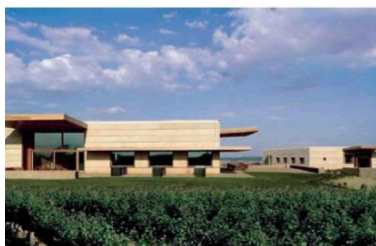
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IN THE 1990S, we drank Aussie chardonnay. In the 2000s, it was pinot grigio. The 2010s have been mostly pink or sparkling. So what's next? We've spoken to some wine industry trendsetters to build a picture of what we might be drinking in the 2020s.

Bubbling up

At the start of the 2010s, we suddenly realised we didn't need a special occasion to drink sparkling wine. Who knows what caused it, but there's no going back. February sees the opening of Prosecco House near Tower



A WHOLE NEW WORLD: [from top to bottom] Spanish giant Campo Viejo is backing cava to succeed; a Vagabond wine bar; luxury conglomerate LVMH has its own vineyards in China's Yunnan province; [right] Gusbourne's Sussex vineyards

Bridge, London's first bar dedicated to the ubiquitous Italian sparkling wine. Will we look back and realise this was peak prosecco?

As more and more chancers jump on the prosecco bandwagon, good quality bottles are getting harder to find; the cheapest supermarket stuff just tastes like sherbet lemons. Meanwhile, cava is waiting patiently on the bench. Prosecco is fermented in large tanks, but cava uses the more delicate champagne method, resulting in a richer flavour. It's more reliably dry and often better value. The time is ripe for rediscovery.

On the other hand, Mark Andrew MW, founder and editor of Noble Rot restaurant and magazine, puts his money on English sparkling, which he predicts "will continue to gain worldwide recognition and the best estates will increasingly come to resemble the major champagne houses in their marketing."

New horizons

Charlie Young, owner of Vinoteca wine bars, agrees England will be one of the more successful wine producing countries of the 2020s, and not just for sparkling – still wines, too. He admits they can be pricey, but predicts that quality will improve and prices will come down "as the public's appetite for home-grown wine increases." He also tips Greek wine, where he's noticed "more consistently high-quality wines across different price points."

The regions that flourish and those that wilt could well be connected to climate change. Jack Green at wine importer Roberson says "I believe climate change will have a massive impact over the next ten years. We've had forest fires wiping out acres of vineyards in California and Spain. We've seen unusually late frosts wiping out 40% of French vineyards... Something has to change."

If temperatures continue to rise, the hottest wine regions could become inhospitable to vines – goodbye Barossa shiraz. Conversely, cool-climate areas will thrive, so expect to see exciting wines from the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, Poland, the Czech Republic, and northern US states like Vermont.

Andrew at Noble Rot backs the emerging Chinese wine industry: "China could be the world's biggest wine producer within ten years and will become the source of juice for a new set of global commercial wine brands."

Wholesome alternatives

Organic, biodynamic and natural wines represent a small but growing proportion of global wine production. Even Aldi now has permanent listings for organic pinot grigio and prosecco. Andrew thinks we might even see



some local governments legislating to make sustainable and organic methods mandatory, but also raises the spectre of genetically modified grapes. "I have a feeling they might play a big role by the end of the 2020s if climate change continues apace," he says.

Opinions on alcohol levels vary. Matt Harris, owner of Planet of the Grapes wine bars, predicts "more winemakers perfecting

CHINA COULD BE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST WINE PRODUCER WITHIN THE NEXT TEN YEARS





the art of lower-alcohol wines. Beaujolais at 10% ABV, moscato and brachetto rather than prosecco, and people falling in love with German riesling all over again." There are dissenting voices however; Stephen Finch, managing director of Vagabond wine hang-outs, predicts that "people will stop fussing over alcohol levels in wine. It's wine, people. It has alcohol in it. If you want low ABV wine, try a Fruit Shoot. It'll be better."

New forms

Lydia Worsey is wine category manager for Mitchells & Butlers, owner of mass-market restaurant and bar brands such as All Bar One and O'Neills, and she too expects to see an increase in organic, biodynamic and natural wines on lists by the 2020s. To this, she would add alcohol-free, low calorie, low sugar and "wine in keg as the serve norm."

Alternatives to glass bottles are gaining ground. Green at Roberson agrees bag-in-box, cans and plastic PET bottles are all due a resurgence, and as the quality of what's put inside them rises, I'm sure some of these will catch on. Shipping heavy glass bottles stoppered with bits of wood halfway across the world really doesn't feel like the future, and it's certainly not the most eco-friendly option. And anyway, your robot butler might find corkscrews a bit fiddly. **f**

photograph (Gusbourne) by Charlie Cliff

THE NEAR FUTURE

Eight wines to drink now for a taste of the (probable) future

BUBBLING UP

Gramona La Cuvée Gran Reserva Brut 2012 (Penedès, Spain)

Biodynamic. One of the greatest cava producers, this is characterful, authentic and delicious. Walks all over supermarket champagnes at this price.
 £23.95, Berry Bros. & Rudd

Gusbourne Brut Reserve 2013 (Sussex, England)

One of England's finest, this has richness and depth not found in its peers.
 £32.95, Lea & Sandeman

NEW HORIZONS

Domaines Vinsmoselle Pinot Blanc 2014 (Moselle, Luxembourg)

Slightly off-dry white with subtle aromas of pear and apple. Great purity, and a refreshing mineral edge.
 £14.50, Vinoteca

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Château Changyu Moser XV Moser Family Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 (Ningxia, China)

A balanced and lively cabernet sauvignon of real elegance. Not overworked, deliciously drinkable, remarkably successful.
 £29.95, Berry Bros. & Rudd

HEALTHIER OPTIONS

Jean-Paul Thévenet Morgon 'Le Clachet' 2016 (Beaujolais, France)

Nourishing red from a legendary natural winemaker. Beautifully made; good for relaxed and carefree drinking.
 £19, Roberson

Domaine du Landreau Jus de Raisin Pétillant NV (Loire, France)

Top chenin blanc grape juice from a serious grower – just not fermented. A real thirst-quenching non-alcoholic fizz that looks and tastes the part.
 £9, Red Squirrel

NEW FORMS

Les Dauphins Côtes-du-Rhône Villages 2016 2.25l bag-in-box (Rhône, France)

Classic Rhône, fruity but firm, in a great vintage – and amazing value.
 £22.99 (£7.66 a bottle equivalent), Waitrose Cellar

Le Grappin Côtes-du-Rhône Syrah Grenache 2016 1.5l Bagnum (Rhône, France)

A magnum in an airtight bag. A crisp, refreshing Rhône blend from a talented winemaking couple from south London.
 £27.50 (£13.75 a bottle equivalent), Weino Bib

GUSBOURNE BRUT RESERVE 2013 IS ONE OF ENGLAND'S FINEST

