

Kate Hawkings on... CLIMATE CHANGE

olive's wine expert explains the effects of global warming on the industry



Last year went down as a disastrous one for the world's wine industry. Global production was the lowest for 50 years, down 8% on 2016. Europe was particularly hard hit with a 14% drop in yields, which will only add to the misery of Brexit-related price increases that have already started to bite.

The dreadful harvests have been put down to climatic events – droughts, floods, frosts, hailstorms, extreme summer temperatures and catastrophic fires all contributed. Weather has always varied from year to year, of course, but there has been a progressive shift in climate patterns over recent decades that has had a profound affect on wine-making across the world. Increased levels of CO2 have led to warmer winters and hotter summers, meaning more rapid ripening times – harvests are often a month earlier than they were only a few years ago. In the longer term, a rise in sea levels as polar icecaps and snow packs melt will cause flooding and increased salinity in coastal soils but also change the ocean currents which drive weather patterns.

In traditional wine regions, such as Bordeaux, makers are trying to mitigate the effects of the unpredictable weather. Some are experimenting with later-ripening varieties, others are planting at higher altitudes and/or latitudes to take advantage of their cooler temperatures, which is why places such as England, Tasmania and the hills of central China are now able to produce really fine wines.

The Siam Winery in Thailand, which makes Monsoon Valley wines, has been running an extensive research programme for years alongside universities in Europe to develop vines that are resistant to excessive heat and humidity, the results of which will be of use to viticulturists the world over in the future.

Consumption is rocketing in newly wealthy countries such as China and India, whose own wine industries are not yet producing enough bottles to satisfy the demand. These expanding markets mean prices of the world's limited production of wine are bound to increase for us all. And if the current rate of global warming continues, two-thirds of today's wine regions may no longer have climates suitable for the grapes they now grow, forcing drinkers to look towards new regions and innovative makers for affordable drinking in the future. @KateHawkings

Bottles to try this month...



Chateau Changyu, Moser XV, White Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 (£13.95, Berry Bros & Rudd) Cabernet sauvignon is a red-skinned grape usually made into red wine but here renowned Austrian wine-maker Lenz Moser takes the juice off the skins immediately after pressing to make this very pretty white wine in China's remote Ningxia province. Its grapefruit and lychee notes with a little soft spice would sit well with the orzo risotto with cavolo nero, peas and chilli on page 60.



Yaatra, Syrah 2016 (£12.95, Borough Wines) Indian wine is often ripe to the point of flabbiness and treated to brutal oak to help keep it in shape. This bottle is made by roving Englishman Liam Steevenson, who picks the grapes early to retain freshness and verve, and ages it gently in old French oak barrels. Taut and peppery, it stands up well to spice – try it with Burmese pork and potato curry (p22).



Monsoon Valley Late Harvest Chenin Blanc (£11.58, Great Wines Direct) Thailand's hot climate means grapes ripen quickly and their sweetness intensifies further if they're left on the vines until they almost shrivel to raisins – what's known as "late harvest". Luscious with toffee apple and apricot notes, this would be lovely with the rhubarb and custard cheesecake on page 109.



Jansz Premium Cuvée NV (£16.99, Waitrose) This very classy sparkling wine from cool-climate Tasmania is rich and creamy with a yeasty complexity that stands up well against other fizz at twice the price. Lovely as an aperitif or a decadent match with the roast chicken with bay salt on page 18.