

# vinoetcetera

MAY 2020

MAGAZINE | WINE | TRAVEL | COMMUNITY | FOOD | TRENDS



opimian  
WINE CLUB DE VIN



**WILKOMMEN!**

EDITORIAL

# Life is Beautiful

Zoé Cappe, Editor-in-Chief



Your 2019 vintages are beginning to arrive and are also being featured in Opimian's Cellar Offerings. Jane Masters MW, Opimian's own Master of Wine, gives us an overview of the year in wine.

White wine, red wine, sparkling wine and fortified wine ... we know them and love them, but what about the different glassware that complement them best? Discover which types of glasses bring out the best in each wine. Once you try it yourself, you'll be surprised!

Our much beloved Austrian winemaker, Christof Höppler, answers our questions. To him, Opimian is synonymous with "loyalty and trust", values that are even more important in these uncertain times.

Check out our food section for pairing ideas and recipes to enjoy with the German and Austrian wines in this offering. That's right, Germany is not just the land of beer. Jane has found us some amazing German wines and they are definitely worth a taste!

Don't miss our breakdown of Italian grape varieties by region. Despite the extreme difficulties they have recently faced, Italians have shown us that *La vita è bella*. Words to live by.

We have all experienced substantial change as a result of the pandemic. Isn't it comforting to know that wine, while always exciting, has, at its core, remained unchanged for millennia?

Here's to your good health.

MASTER PIECE

# 2019 Vintage | What Does a Vintage Actually Mean?

Jane Masters MW is Opimian's Master of Wine

The concept of vintage wine has been around for millenia. Indeed, our Club takes its name from Opimian wine, made for Lucius Opimius in the year 121 BC—a highly prized wine that was drunk and written about by Cicero and Pliny the Elder over many years. Vintage ports and vintage Champagnes are only made in the very best years, but most wines are made each year and vintage simply denotes the year the grapes were harvested to produce it.



Vintage is noted because conditions during the vine growing season can have an impact on the quality and quantity of grapes produced. Frost, rainfall or lack thereof, high temperatures, hail and

wind can all affect grapes, particularly at bud-break, flowering and harvest. The majority of wines are made to be consumed within several years. Warm regions with regular dependable sunshine, moderate temperatures and access to water show less variation between years. For these wines, the vintage can be used as a guide to drinking them (drinking window) while they are at their youthful peak.



STEPP SCHEUREBE,  
PFALZ, 2019, LOT 1891

## VINOETCETERA MAGAZINE

Publisher	Opimian Wine Club de vin
Editor-in-Chief	Zoé Cappe
Art Director	Jenny Schumacher
Contributors	Joao Barrote, Kim-Tien Huynh, David Lieber, Jenny Schumacher
Cover Photo	A happy cow mugs for the camera in the Bavarian Alps

**Opimian does its part** In the interest of eco design, this magazine is printed on Domtar Lynx Offset paper, allowing us to make a responsible environmental choice without sacrificing quality or performance, with a minimum of 10% post-consumer recycled content. It is acid-free and FSC® certified. Printed by Imprimerie L'Empreinte





HÖPLER "ERWEIN"  
ST. LAURENT,  
QUALITÄTSSWEIN,  
BURGENLAND, 2017,  
LOT 1890

## THE 2019 VINTAGE

Over the last five months I have tasted hundreds of European wines from the 2019 vintage picked last September and October. According to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), global wine production in 2019 was approximately 263 million hectolitres, which is an average production following the bumper crop in 2018. The quantity of grapes produced can have a bearing on price. 2019 has shown well, despite a year with rain and frost in spring, followed by a hot summer and issues of drought in some areas.

Winemakers' know-how and use of technology to adapt to conditions have produced good results, and many of these wines feature in the current and forthcoming Cellar Offerings.

2019 has produced good wines in northern climes. Gerd Stepp in the Pfalz in Germany found himself adapting to drought conditions, whereas in the past his focus was on mitigating disease pressure from cool temperatures and humidity. Similarly, Christof Höppler in Austria experienced lower rainfall and warmer than normal temperatures with perfect, sunny conditions at harvest. The Loire Valley in France has also produced delicious wines. Further south, great-tasting wines were produced throughout Italy, southern France (including Bordeaux) and Spain.

Assessment of vintage is perhaps more relevant to wines for cellaring or investment, as many of these are produced in more marginal climates with greater risk of spring frosts, hail and rainfall at harvest, causing more variation. Conditions during the growing season affect the quality and longevity of the wines produced through impact on natural acidity, sugar and tannin levels. The quality of early-drinking wines gives some insight into the potential of more premium wines, and so far the signs for what's coming are good.

## EN PRIMEUR

Each spring, wine professionals from around the globe attend the **"En Primeur" tastings** to assess the Classed Growth wines produced in September and October the previous year (the event was cancelled this year because of the coronavirus). These are unfinished wines still in barrel that will continue to mature for another year or so before being bottled and released. Individual wines can be assessed at the same time, gaining a general overview of the vintage and different appellations. Bordeaux wine prices are released after the En Primeur tastings and ideally would be based on the intrinsic quality of the wines made, but the laws of supply and demand also play a role. In a bad year, good wines can still be made; indeed the skill of a winemaker reveals itself most at these times. So while generalizations around vintage can be useful, it is important to taste specific wines to evaluate their quality and identify those that offer the best value.



To date, all the 2019 Bordeaux wines I tasted (which admittedly are earlier-drinking wines) and everything I have heard from the estates indicate it is a very good vintage. Quantities are slightly down on the ten-year average, but the fine wine market is sluggish and the coronavirus pandemic is having an impact, so prices may soften. In Burgundy, quality is high—Jérôme Billard's wines are supple and succulent and those tasted at the Hospices de Beaune auction all showed well, although yields are low.

Whether you are looking for wines to enjoy soon or wines for the cellar, 2019 is definitely a vintage to consider.



Q&A

## Christof Höppler

Owner and winemaker, Höppler

After studying economics in college, Christof went into the wine business and took over the Höppler winery from his father in 2008. They export most of their production, including to Stowe, Vermont, where it is the official Trapp Family Lodge wine—yes, *those* Von Trapps!

### 1. WHAT DOES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OPIMIEN MEAN TO YOU?

If I had to use two words: loyalty and trust. Opimian allows us entry into the Canadian market and direct contact with a customer base that is curious, open-minded and loyal. We have been supplying Opimian members for over 20 years. As a family business we value this highly.

### 2. WHICH OF YOUR CURRENT WINES ARE YOU THE MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

I think you will enjoy the rosé that is new this year. In the winery there is a Blaufraensich Kirchberg 18 in the making that I have high hopes for.

### 3. IF YOU WERE NOT A WINEMAKER, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

If I was more organised, it would allow me to pursue my boyhood dream of doing anything fast in cars! Otherwise it would have to be in regenerative agriculture.

### 4. WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

Being connected—to customers, my team, suppliers and nature.

### 5. WHICH WINEMAKING TRADITIONS, IF ANY, ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

We have a non-invasive winemaking style. We believe the key is getting the base material healthy and 'right'. Once in the winery it's about being consistent.

### 6. WHAT IS THE BEST WINE YOU HAVE EVER TASTED?

There are some impressive and inspiring wines that stay in my head for different reasons. The magic of wine is also being in the moment—this cannot be replicated. For me there is no 'best' wine, just a lot of inspiration.

### 7. WHAT ARE YOU DOING WHEN YOU'RE NOT MAKING WINE OR GROWING GRAPES?

My favourite place is on my bike (mountain or road), depending on the season, or if snow allows ski touring in the hills nearby. The fresh air is always inspiring and exercise vital for my well-being.

### 8. WHAT BOTTLE IS OPEN IN YOUR KITCHEN RIGHT NOW?

Now careful here, you're asking a winemaker! I was tasting in the lab all day and I always bring the wines back home to re-taste with the family. So last night it was our Höppler Zweigelt 18—a tank sample.

### 9. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE WINE?

Wine is versatile. I would never say I have a favourite, but I spent some time in Piedmont, for which I do have a soft spot.

### 10. WHAT UP-AND-COMING WINE REGION WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TRAVELING TO?

Austria of course. It offers the wine lover a new perspective. Most people are unaware we produce the same amount of wine as New Zealand, and because of our history we have some great innovation and high global standards.

### 11. YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK OR MOVIE?

One of the only films I can watch over again is *Love Actually*, a family Christmas favourite. *The Green Book* is a film I just watched that I really enjoyed.

### 12. WHO IS A PERSON YOU ADMIRE?

My wife, of course!

### 13. RED, WHITE OR ROSÉ?

All three—there is a time and a place for each one!

### 14. DESCRIBE YOUR PHILOSOPHY IN ONE WORD OR SENTENCE.

Creating wines in balance and harmony with nature that speak and connect with the consumer in an inspiring way.

HÖPLER RIESLING,  
QUALITÄTSWEIN,  
BURGENLAND, 2019,  
LOT 1888



## Wine Glasses 1.0 | What's Your Style?

Wine glass shapes are not only about creative design—it's primarily about how the form affects the taste. There are about 15 official glass formats, but for high-end wine aficionados, these six are all you need. For the rest of us, all that's really required is one.

### WHITE

Love oak-free whites like Chenin Blanc? This glass will enhance those fruity aromas. It also helps keep the wine chilled and is easy to clean. Avoid using it for reds though, as it could affect their richness and subtlety.



### BURGUNDY

Pinot Noir lovers, pay attention! This style made for sniffing is fabulous for those lighter reds and is also perfect for rosés and oaky Chardonnays. Definitely a no-no for bubbly though—who wants a flat sparkling? Dry whites also won't be as flavourful in this glass.



### BORDEAUX

For those connoisseurs who adore bold reds, here's your choice. That wide opening at the top enhances tannins for a rounder, smoother finish. These glasses certainly make a gorgeous statement, but at that large, fragile size who's going to volunteer to wash them?



### FLUTE

Calling sparkling sophisticates! This style keeps that beautiful effervescence preserved. Super chic, although it tends to close off aromas. So what about the flat, open-style Champagne glass's newfound popularity? Yes, it is better for sniffing, but a white or universal glass works just as well and is much less likely to cause accidental sloshing.



### DESSERT

Lover of port, liqueurs and ice wines? You want this format to help keep those high alcohol portions small. They're just so adorable, who can resist?



### UNIVERSAL

Still unsure? If you need or desire just one type of glass, this is it. The format works for almost any wine—red, white, rosé, sparkling. It's especially suitable for spicy wines and medium whites. Easy to clean too!





DID YOU KNOW?

## **Italian Grapes** | The Sweetness of Life

**Heirs to the long-ago Roman Empire, Italians have never ceased to gift the world beyond with their unrelenting passion, energy and creativity.**

Ever since the Renaissance, Italy has been birthplace to all things that characterize Western civilization at its best—in the sciences as in the arts. In fact, what we refer to as “modern history” is generally considered to have begun in 16th-century Italy.

Today, Italy’s most commonly agreed contribution to global culture has been its unwavering good taste, almost as if Italians invented it. Their love of food, drink and the company of others is perhaps best expressed by the universally recognized words *la dolce vita*.

“The sweet life”. On those special occasions when we cook for friends, family or both; when we take our seats at the table, break bread, and work a corkscrew into a cork, we’re doing what Italians do just about every day.

As old as its culture may be, as countries go Italy is young. Not until 1870 was the loose agglomeration of states huddled on “the boot” united under a single government, leaving a diverse viticulture that remains quite localized, even within such a relatively small geographic area. Add to that the climatic differences between northern and southern Italy, plus the magnificent island of Sicily and you easily have the most exciting wine menu in the world.

Here’s a general primer reflecting the distribution of wine production on everyone’s favourite peninsula.

## SANGIOVESE | TUSCANY

A dark-red fruit native to central Italy, Sangiovese grapes—historically associated with Tuscany—mix well with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Richly coloured, Sangiovese also takes on the flavours of the barrel, although less aromatic than its cousins. It pairs well with lamb and red meats.



SOGATIA CHIANTI  
RISERVA, DOCG, 2017,  
LOT 1864



## FRAPPATO | SICILY

Known by a variety of local names, Frappato di Vittoria (or simply Frappato) is a signature red grape grown in sunny Sicily. Frappato wines consist of a minimum 30% Frappato grapes, closely related to their Sangiovese cousins. Aromatic but light, it's best served slightly chilled.

'84 PROSECCO BRUT, DOC  
TREVISO, LOT 1882

## GLERA | VENETO

Glera, also known as Prosecco, is a white grape descended from central Europe. Wines are usually sparkling and identified with low-lying Venice, although the vines are tended on the slopes of higher altitudes south of the Dolomites. An excellent accompaniment to a lazy brunch.



## NEBBIOLO | PIEDMONT

The red Nebbiolo grape is central to all red wines from the Piedmont region. Its product is smooth and deeply coloured. Grown at the foot of the Alps, Nebbiolo vines rest in their native cool and dewy climate, but burst forth during the hot summers. Nebbiolo wines enjoy a reputation for aging gracefully.

## PRIMITIVO | PUGLIA

Red Primitivo grapes, also referred to as Zinfandel, are very dark-skinned, ripening early in the vineyards of south-eastern Italy. Their wines are bold and potent, but seldom aged long, earning them a reputation as a "hard wine." They pair well with meaty pasta or savory bacalao.



SOLEMNIS, PRIMITIVO, IGP  
SALENTO, 2017, LOT 1851





## FOOD

# Germany and Vietnam, Unite!

We might think that Germany and Vietnam have nothing in common, be it geography, climate or culture. But, when it comes to food and wine pairings, it's hard to find a better match than these two countries.

## RIESLING

Affectionately called "Kaiser" (Emperor), this grape variety with mineral notes reigns in Germany. It has a certain freshness with hints of green fruits, like apple. This wine's richness and natural residual sugar goes well with grilled pork and rice vermicelli.

## GEWÜRZTRAMINER

Originating from Alsace but sporting a German name, Gewürztraminer is a rich wine with intense notes of exotic fruits, such as lychee and passion fruit. Gewürztraminer works well with most Vietnamese dishes, the wine's sweetness pairing nicely with spicy dishes.

## GRÜNER VELTLINER

This grape variety from Germany's neighbour Austria, with light and crisp wines, has apple and fennel notes with a hint of citrus, giving the wine a freshness that pairs perfectly with chicken coleslaw.



Vietnamese cuisine varies from region to region, and from family to family. What is similar in its cuisine is the flavour and freshness of the ingredients and dishes. Here are a few things you should know.

- Fish sauce is highly concentrated and is often used in marinades. However, when used as a dipping sauce, it should be diluted.
- A Vietnamese herbal blend is often composed of perilla, mint, Thai basil or Vietnamese cilantro. You can also make a simple blend of just mint and Thai basil.

## FISH SAUCE

### Ingredients

- 1/3 c. (75 ml) fish sauce
- 1 c. (250 ml) hot water
- 4 tbsp (60 ml) sugar
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) fresh lime juice
- 1 small Thai chili pepper (optional)
- 1 garlic clove, minced

### Directions

1. Dissolve sugar in hot water.
2. Add all other ingredients.
3. Store in a cool place.



## GRILLED PORK AND RICE VERMICELLI

### Ingredients

- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 3 tbsp (45 ml) finely chopped shallots
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) oyster sauce
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) dark soy sauce (not to be confused with regular soy sauce)
- 1/2 tsp (2.5 ml) salt
- 1 tsp (5 ml) sugar
- 2 lbs (1 kg) pork back, cut into 5 mm slices
- 1 package of rice vermicelli

### Garnish

- Herb blend of mint, lettuce, red Vietnamese perilla
- Bean sprouts
- Lebanese cucumber, julienned
- Pickled carrots and radishes (optional)

### Directions

1. In bowl, mix garlic, shallots, oyster sauce, soy sauce, salt and sugar.
2. Add pork and marinate minimum 30 minutes, ideally overnight.
3. Cook pork 30-40 minutes at 350°F in oven-proof dish or grill as brochettes on BBQ.
4. Prepare rice noodles as per package instructions.
5. In bowl, add noodles and top with meat. Garnish with herb blend, lettuce bean sprouts and cucumbers. Drizzle with meat sauce or fish sauce. Serves 4.



HÖPLER GRÜNER VELTLINER,  
QUALITÄTSWEIN, BURGENLAND,  
2019, LOT 1887

## COLESLAW AND CHICKEN SALAD

### Ingredients

- 1 small container store-bought traditional coleslaw with vinegar
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 c. Vietnamese coriander (Rau ram) or spearmint
- 1 chicken thigh or small chicken breast, cooked and shredded
- Salt and pepper
- Prawn crackers

### Directions

1. Drain coleslaw containers in colander for about 10 minutes, making sure to remove as much dressing as possible.
2. In bowl, combine coleslaw, red onion, coriander (or spearmint) and chicken.
3. Adjust seasoning.
4. Serve with prawn crackers and fish sauce. Serves 4.

STEPP RIESLING VOM SAUMAGEN,  
KALLSTÄDTER SAUMAGEN, PFALZ, 2018,  
LOT 1897



# Germany | More Than Das Bier!

**Can you recall the first time you tasted German wine? Nein? That's okay, we won't hold that black or blue choice against you.**

Almost everyone's first taste of German wine dates back to when they didn't know better, usually in college. Cheap and sweet as soda pop, Blue Nun and Black Tower may actually have seemed sophisticated at the time, at least until the next morning.

A certain lover of Germany's much-revived wine industry once listed three disasters of the last century that still tarnish the reputation of German wines: World War I, World War II, and Liebfraumilch. The problem, he argued, is that when German wines are discussed, the subject often starts and stalls at the anachronous sweet-vs-dry debate; whereas those who've actually studied the length and breadth of modern German wine production will assure you otherwise. Even a novice would acknowledge they can't all be bad. Who among us hasn't enjoyed a glass of chilled, dry Riesling?

### THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Only about a quarter of German wines even register on the "sweet" scale. That's still quite a lot, but it means they're easy to avoid. The problem seems to be that even though German wines are produced in quality and variety, their unearned reputation often sentences them to hard time on wine store

shelves and menus alike. Stores and restaurants tend not to stock up on inventory that moves so slowly, meaning you might have to do your own research to identify the best.

That's the next thing you need to know. Except for a tiny area around Dresden in the northeast, all wine-growing in Germany is concentrated in the southwest, otherwise known as Rhineland. (There are usually considered to be 13 wine regions in Germany, 11 of them in Rhineland.) This means the finest wine producers in Germany are distributed among several microclimates along the Mosel and **Rhine** rivers, to the extent that their products are often best identified by their terroirs of origin. Think of them as "micro-regions."

Which brings us to the most important point. Especially since 1991, an entirely new generation of German growers has created a vast variety of quality reds and whites more than worthy of worldwide attention and respect. Just remember that many of the names for German grapes have common equivalents in the more-familiar vocabulary of wine lovers. That means a "Spätburgunder" from Rhineland will more than likely stand its own against a Pinot Noir from Burgundy. Zum Wohl!

STEPP PINOT NOIR,  
PFALZ, 2018, LOT 1895



TASTING NOTES

## Happy Hour

We reflect on previous vintages from suppliers featured in the current Cellar Offering. Each issue highlights a few bottles enjoyed with friends and family.

OUR  
SUGGESTIONS



**TERESA MACDONALD,**  
AREA REPRESENTATIVE, OAKVILLE,  
BURLINGTON AND NIAGARA

It's a cool March evening, not really winter and not yet spring. I still want a warm meal and a sturdy wine, but just a little lighter than when it was still so cold out. Tonight's meal is Wiener schnitzel with sauerkraut and roast potatoes and the wine is, of course, a Grüner Veltliner. In this case a 2014 Höppler Grüner Veltliner the colour of gold, smelling of vanilla, spice, honey and lemon. The acidity matches that of our sauerkraut and the freshness cuts the fried crumbs surrounding the veal. I have a few bottles left, so I best drink them soon.



HÖPLER GRÜNER VELTLINER,  
QUALITÄTSWEIN, BURGENLAND,  
C267, LOT 1312  
2018 VINTAGE NOW AVAILABLE,  
C276, LOT 1887



**LIA DABORN,**  
AREA REPRESENTATIVE,  
NEW BRUNSWICK

A group of us get together regularly for blind wine tastings. I took along a bottle of Truffle Hunter Barbera d'Alba to our most recent gathering which, coincidentally, also ended up featuring Italian wines. My bottle was the best of the bunch! Very well balanced, with full flavours of dark fruit, cherry, currant and plum and some savoury notes. The ripe, soft tannins led one person to call it a "smooth operator". Definitely ready to drink now, it will hold for a few more years. This is one wine I will absolutely be ordering from this Cellar Offering.



TRUFFLE HUNTER LEDA  
BARBERA D'ALBA, DOC,  
2016, BOSIO WINERY, C258,  
LOT 9728  
2018 VINTAGE NOW  
AVAILABLE, C276, LOT 1878



PRIMITIVO,  
IGP SALENTO,  
LE VIGNE DI  
SAMMARCO, 2014,  
C240, LOT 8584  
2019 VINTAGE  
NOW AVAILABLE,  
C276, LOT 1849

**MICHAEL LUZTMANN,**  
OPIMIAN CO-MANAGING DIRECTOR



One of the benefits of working from home these days is that I have access to my extensive wine cellar. After a day of online meetings and creating plans for the future of Opimian with my Co-Managing Director, Greg Rinehart, I love to choose a wine from the cellar and relax. This evening, I chose the Primitivo from Sammarco to pair with a baked pasta in a rich tomato sauce. The lush fruitiness of this wine paired wonderfully with the dish. I found both cranberry and mulberry on the nose and on the palate. The medium body and integrated tannins of the Primitivo (a.k.a. Zinfandel) held up perfectly to the acidity of the tomatoes. Jane strikes again with this excellent value and top-quality wine from our friends at Sammarco. The grapes are grown in the Salento, the 'heel' of the Italian 'boot'. I hope to visit it one day soon.

DON'T MISS MICHAEL'S VIDEO  
REVIEW OF THIS WINE ON OUR  
BLOG AT [OPIMIAN.CA](http://OPIMIAN.CA)

## CONNECT WITH THE FASCINATING WORLD OF WINE

Opimian is Canada's largest private and non-profit wine club. With privileged access to the best winemakers in the world, Opimian offers its members unique wines not found anywhere else in Canada. We guarantee the quality of our wines, as they are all tasted and approved by Jane Masters MW, Opimian's Master of Wine.

This magazine is a companion to Cellar Offering C276.



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WINE CLUB DE VIN

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