

June 2023 Wine Club

'Kissed by the Ocean': Wines of the Atlantic Coast

Vines have been planted along coastlines and in proximity to historically important seaports for centuries. Why is that? Firstly, wine served (and serves!) as a great source of refreshment for travelling traders, but also to allow for the easier trade and subsequent transport of those wines around the world. In the 14th century, Bordeaux for example, started shipping over a quarter of its exports to the UK market thanks to its location at the mouth of the Gironde which flows straight into the Atlantic. The region's location close to the Atlantic both shaped the characteristics of the world-famous wines that continue to command impressive prices today, and its global success. For part of its history, Bordeaux even placed strict limitations on wines from other French regions which would use the Garonne and Dordogne to travel to the port of Gironde, which served to limit global exposure of regions such as the Jurançon and Cahors, the impact of which is still felt today.

We could look further into the geo-politics of this... but we'll spare you that! Let's move on to the ways in which the Atlantic Ocean impacts the wines that grow on its shores.

Before we continue, it's important to understand what constitutes a coastal region. A coastal region or coastal vineyard is just that: vines that grow near a large body of water. However, coastal vineyards are not necessarily planted on a cliff right at the water's edge (thank goodness!) and don't need to be in sight of a beach. They can simply be near to the coast, as in the case of South Africa's Coastal Region, which is within 100 miles of the ocean.

Put simply, the effect of proximity to the ocean is threefold: Cooler days; Warmer nights; and a lack of extreme weather.

Many regions can be described as coastal, and yet can all have vastly different appearances – many have the classic maritime climate which is characterised by cool to moderate temperatures and a low annual difference between the warmest and coolest months. Some (but not all) coastal vineyards are planted at high elevations, often above the fog line, which is a viticultural boon. These areas have relatively stable temperatures and the vines above the fog line enjoy sun exposure all day, which is highly beneficial to even ripening.

The ability of water to hold and release heat in a stable and predictable way is perhaps the most important factor at play. Because water holds heat better than soil, ocean temperatures show very little variation at night, remaining relatively warm. In comparison, on nearby land masses, temperatures may drop significantly. When ocean-warmed air rises at night, cool air from the land flows in to replace it, causing wind to blow off-shore. This 'hot water bottle' effect helps to make wine growing areas next to bodies of water some of the warmest wine growing regions in the world (for instance, the Mosel Valley). Conversely, during the day, the land warms up faster than the ocean and the situation is reversed, with on-shore breezes winding their way through the vineyards. This exchange of warm and cool air encourages a trend towards a gentle, rather than extreme, swing in diurnal range (the difference between day-time and night-time temperatures) allowing the grapes to ripen evenly which helps to retain balanced levels of acidity.

These ocean breezes that roll in across coastal vineyards are the primary actors in the mitigation of daytime heat in some of the world's warmest wine growing regions, for example South Africa and Portugal, and importantly, they provide well-needed ventilation to the vineyards, preventing the lingering of cold, damp air which could cause vintage-ruining fungus infestations and mildew.

Because a coastal climate is more temperate and doesn't have such big swings between summer and winter temperatures, the growing seasons are longer allowing grapes to develop immensely complex

characteristics, slowly but surely – and, also due to shorter rest periods, smaller yields of grapes. The latter may sound like a negative aspect but small production drives big flavours – all the sugars and flavours available to each vine are being fed to a smaller number of grapes, instead of being diluted across a bigger, more commercial yield.

Finally, I think we would all agree that coastal wine have a certain quality we can all recognise: a purity, a freshness, and even – especially in the case white wines – a definite zip of salinity which makes them not only refreshingly distinctive but a fabulous match for fresh seafood. Coastal white wines are literally ‘kissed by the ocean’, with exposure to salty sea spray which clings to the grape skins ahead of harvesttime. Coastal reds are also blessed with inimitable balance, with cooling breezes and coastal fogs ensuring the avoidance of overly high alcohol levels, and gentle temperature changes allowing the smooth development of tannins, thereby producing wines that aren’t roughly tannic or in need of long cellaring before they can be enjoyed. In fact, I think you’ll find that each of the wines included in this month’s case are ripe and ready to be enjoyed before the summer is out. Happy tasting!

2015 Château Carcanieux Cru Bourgeois, Médoc, France – 12.5%, £22.99

The vines for this wine are on average 25 years old and grow on the particularly gravelly and sandy soils of the Médoc. A classic left bank blend (Cabernet Sauvignon [45%], Merlot [40%], Cabernet Franc [10%] and Petit Verdot [5%]), the parcels are vinified separately in stainless steel tanks to preserve all the fresh fruit characters of the grapes, and ageing takes place in oak barrels with no more than a fifth of them being new oak. The use of old oak barrels allows for the benefits of oak ageing on the wine to impart tannic structure without lacing the final wines with the potentially overpowering flavours of new oak (vanilla spice and butter).

Lashings of dark cassis and green leaves on the nose, with a savoury note of forest floor (sous-bois) on the palate, which is indicative of this wines’ age. Rather pleasingly, this wine has a lingering fruity core with a touch of woody spice – it is drinking really well right now!

Try with a peppered steak, chargrilled lamb chops or venison.

2022 Knightor Chardonnay, Cornwall, England – 11.5%, £22.99

Perched above the shores of St Austell Bay on the South Cornwall coast, Knightor Winery is situated amongst four acres of vineyards and orchards, a stone’s throw away from the Eden Project. The cool climate, influenced by the sea breezes pushing in from the Atlantic and low yields allow Knightor to produce lighter, fruitier, and lower ABV wines with balance, that are both food-friendly and refreshing as an aperitif. Minimal intervention in the winery means that all the estate’s wines are low in sulphites and the sweetness is derived from the fruit, not from the addition of sugar.



The winemaking team report that the 2022 Chardonnay is one of the highlights of their vintage – the fruit was cool fermented in stainless steel which resulted in a fruit forward and lighter style of Chardonnay, which is reminiscent of a Chablis. Dry and crisp, the nose is lively with notes of citrus, honey and green apple while the palate is racy with crunchy apple acidity.

This would be excellent with charcuterie boards loaded with cured meats and local cheeses such as Cornish Blue and Yarg or a freshly made Caesar Salad with shredded chicken.

2022 Muscadet Tradition Sèvre et Maine, Domaine de la Combe, Loire, France – 12%, £20.99

Domaine de la Combe is based in Saint-Fiâtre, south-east of Nantes, right at the point where the mouth of the Loire River meets the Atlantic. The estate was established in the 1950’s and sits on what is considered one of the best sites

for producing Muscadet Sèvre et Maine. Here the soils are layered with orthogneiss, a cracked, mineral-rich rock and flint, through which the vine roots weave and nourish the vines. Made traditionally at this small estate, the Melon de Bourgogne grapes were hand-picked, lightly pressed to retain their delicacy and purity of flavour, and fermented at cool temperatures to preserve their aromas. The wine was left on its fine lees until the following spring to add complexity and extra richness.

Crisp, flinty notes with a hint of yeasty lees on the nose. The palate has a lean acidity with a slight spritz and flavours of crisp green apple, combined with some savoury yet citrusy notes and a pleasingly yeasty finish.

This is a wine which cries out for shellfish on ice, but would also work well with almost any grilled fish.

2015 Estate Collection Red, Quinta do Pinto, Lisboa, Portugal – 14.5%, £22.99

Quinta do Pinto is in the DOC Alenquer appellation, in the heart of the Lisbon wine region. It is located 60km away from the Portuguese capital and a mere 25km away from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. The 63 hectares of gently drained sloping vineyards are south-facing, and are therefore sheltered by the northern winds by the Montejunto mountain range, while still being enriched by the cool breezes off the Atlantic.

This rich and elegant wine is a result of the alliance of two of the most prestigious Portuguese varieties (Touriga Nacional and Aragonêz), with the lesser known Tinta Muida, and two of the most renowned French varieties – Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. On the nose there is intense dark fruit, spices and menthol notes with hints of balsamic, perfectly matched with dark chocolate and toasty smoke. The proximity of the Atlantic Ocean and its cooling influence, lifts the blackberry fruit flavours away from potentially baked and jammy territory, and towards a fresher, more crunchy character. The palate is pleasingly rich and voluptuous with polished tannins and a great lengthy finish.

Serve with grilled red meats and game dishes – perfect for this summer's barbecues.

2022 Cape Coral Mourvèdre, Circumstance, Stellenbosch, South Africa – 13.5%, £17.99

This wine may be familiar to those of you who attended our Rosé tasting sessions earlier in the year, as it was certainly one of the stand-outs if not the overall winner of the event!

The winery, perched high up on the windswept Schapenberg overlooking False Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, was founded by Paul Boutinot in 2004. It continues to be a family owned and run farm which uses organic practices and makes wines with as little intervention as possible. We think you'll agree that the winery produces wines of immense quality and character, and this rosé is no exception.

Because of the estate's proximity to the ocean, the Mourvèdre vines are wind-swept and have to work hard to thrive in the coastal conditions of the region. This means the vines produce low yields of high-quality fruit – and when we say low yields, we mean really low, just 5 tons per hectare. The grapes for this wine are hand-harvested to ensure that only the best quality fruit makes it to the press.

This pale rosé has delicate aromas of pomegranates and raspberry, with a distinctive saline flintiness indicative of its coastal terroir. The palate is elegant with soft red fruit and peachy stone fruit flavours, a silky texture and a refreshing acidity on the finish.

This would be a great match for fresh seafood, tuna sashimi and California rolls, or even just a sunny afternoon spent lounging in the garden!

2022 Albarino Reserve, Bodega Garzon, Maldonado, Uruguay – 12.5%, £27.99

Located between Brazil and Argentina, Uruguay stands as one of the most prominent countries in the Latin American winegrowing world. Its location – on the same latitude as Chile, South Africa and New Zealand – and its temperate climate make it an ideal environment for the production of world-class wines.

Family-owned Bodega Garzon is one of Uruguay's leading new wave producers, located just 11 miles from the Atlantic Ocean, with a patchwork of vineyards covering a wide range of terroirs. Well-draining granitic soils and the cooling Atlantic breezes allow the grapes to ripen steadily. The estate is widely regarded as one of the names to watch

emerging on the world of wine's stage, with their Albarino receiving praise from many of the world's most esteemed wine critics.

The estate takes a low-intervention approach in the vineyards, which is sympathetic to the surrounding natural environment. The harvests are all carried out by hand which guarantees all the fruit that makes it to the press is of the utmost quality. Once in the winery, human intervention is yet again minimised by a lot of the processes being powered by gravity rather than by machine. These softer techniques not only allow the resulting wines to be a true expression of the surrounding land, but also minimise any negative effect upon the local environment.

After a cool fermentation, the Albarino spends 3-6 months on lees in stainless steel, which adds texture and complexity to the wine while retaining its fresh coastal character.

This superb wine is pale yellow in colour with flecks of green. On the nose, there are intense aromas of peach and citrus zest. The freshness and notable minerality on the mid-palate is elegant, supported by a racy streak of acidity which frames the juicy fruit on a crisp and refreshing finish.

Perhaps unsurprisingly at this point, this would pair excellently with all manner of fresh seafood dishes such as Ceviche, but it would also be a happy match to lightly spiced Asian food.



The beautiful image above is taken on the Atlantic shores of the Uruguayan town José Ignacio – it is known for its quiet beaches and magical sunsets, as well as the local wines! The town is known for its feeling of calm and is often a place of refuge away from the hustle and bustle of Uruguay's busier towns and cities. The town has a bohemian spirit, and a local saying tells 'Only the wind runs here'.

So, with that in mind, kick back, relax while you enjoy all the wines in this month's case and let us know what you think – why not share your wine and food pairing with us on Instagram @thevineking and be sure to tag us in your posts!

£135.94

Case Discount: £108.71

Wine Club Price: £99