

SUMMER SEASON SELECTION



Keith Wilson has high hopes for this month's selection as he searches for organic wines to enhance the social and sporting highlights that make June so memorable



Chianti Classico Giovanni Battista d'Orsi Casaloste 2001, Italy, 13% £12.99 Available from www.pageantwines.com

June is a month full of promise. It signals the arrival of summer, with the longest days and a programme of evocative events that mark the climax of the English season: the Derby and Royal Ascot, Lords, Eastbourne and Wimbledon. Parks are peppered with picnic rugs, the air tinged with the smell of barbecues and the outdoors peel to the clinking of wine glasses and cheery exclamations.

Flaming June deserves wonderful wine to enrich such promise, so I had high hopes for this month's organic quartet of three French whites: a Viognier, Chablis and Gewurztraminer; and that vital elixir of the Italian identity – Chianti.

First to be uncorked was the 2005 Viognier Granges de Mirabel from the renowned organic and biodynamic maison of M. Chapoutier. This wine teases the senses immediately after removing the cork; a luscious floral and fruity scent of pineapple and honey fills the nostrils, conjuring visions of summer meadows. So far so good. On the

palate the body is good and even, and flavours of apple and melon with a hint of oak linger for a long and satisfying finish. In short, Granges de Mirabel has plenty of character, and definitely one to behold on the riverbank picnics at Henley.

Next was the Domaine Philippe Goulet Petit

Chablis. Chablis is a favourite summer tippie, a crisp, dry and easy drinking budget alternative to Sancerre, and this wine is such an example. But the most striking characteristic is the intense fragrance of camembert in the long neck of the bottle. In the glass, this fragrance gives way to more appealing aromas of citrus fruits and melon. The wine has plenty of body but is a touch too sharp with pronounced acid on the back and edge of the palate.

CHIANTI TO ALSACE

Wishing to save the sweeter and fuller flavours of the Gewurztraminer to last, I changed colours and countries by next sampling the 2001 Casaloste Chianti from Giovanni Battista d'Orsi. Drinking Chianti in the land of its birth, while gazing on the rows of undulating vines and olive groves of Tuscany in the late afternoon sun, is one of life's purest pleasures, so I opened this bottle with high hopes. The wonderfully deep red hue and full body was a positive testament to this wine's rounded maturity. Smooth and even across the palate there was a subtle and long finish of oak, which enhanced the experience. In short, the only thing missing was the Tuscan landscape!

Finally, to Alsace, home of Gewurztraminer, the French wine with a German accent. Wine maker Gerard Schueller's 2004 creation has the heady, lush bouquet of Muscat and lychee typical of the Traminer variety, and the rich amber colour also fulfils expectations. But what really surprises about this wine is how pleasingly light and refined it is to the taste, not overly sweet like so many wines of this variety. It will make a perfect chilled accompaniment to a bowl of strawberries on a sultry summer evening watching the tennis at Wimbledon. Your serve. ■



Viognier Granges de Mirabel 2005, France, 12.5% £9.24 Available from www.winesnaturally.co.uk



Domaine Philippe & Jean Goulet Petit Chablis, France, 12% £11.99 Available from www.winesnaturally.co.uk



Vin D'Alsace Gewurztraminer Gerard Schueller, 2004, France, 13.5% £11.99 Available from www.sipwine.co.uk