

Wine of the Times

Wine tasting: always a pleasure, never a chore? Join the club, says Jackie Dunning.



VINEA
www.vineyardwines.co.uk

Vinea

New kid on the block (or rather, new club on the dock!) Vinea has filled a niche in the market with their fantastic bar, shop and deli combo at Liverpool's Albert Dock. As well as offering more intense five-week courses, 'walk-in wine tasting' is also available, which in my opinion is a stroke of genius. Just £12 for six tasting varieties, it really does make for an accessible treat.

With its relaxed, coffeehouse-like atmosphere and a Sommelier that treats you like an old friend, Vinea has to be my favourite new wine haunt. Better still, your bill won't leave you jumping into the Mersey, as there's only a 30ish% mark-up on all wines, as opposed to the usual 70ish% used by most restaurants.

With some really special bottles coming in at as little as £5.99 per bottle, you'll feel less guilty about taking away some of the delicious cheese and meats on offer too.

Top Bottles...A beautifully Christmas-cake-tasting Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz blend in the form of Abadia san Campio, Albarino 2006, Rias Baixas, Spain. £5.99

Morgan Twelve Clones Pinot Noir, Monterey, California, 2006. £23

Vinea, Unit B7, Britannia Pavilion, Albert Dock. Tel: 0151 707 8962. www.vineyardwines.co.uk

Microzine

As some of you may know already, lifestyle store Microzine on Liverpool's Bold Street, is my home from home. And of course, wherever I am, there's wine! This time, Microzine has turned its exclusive product collaborating skills to vino, to present Microzine white and red offerings in association with The Purple Wine Company: one wonderfully fresh and fruity Pinot Grigio and one intense French & American oak-aged Malbec. I wonder what my friends will be getting for Christmas?

Watch out for wine events at Microzine in 2008.

Microzine Pinot Grigio, 2006. £8.95
Microzine Tapiz Malbec, 2004. £9.95

Microzine, 65-67 Bold Street, Liverpool. Tel: 0151 709 7282.
www.microzine.co.uk



I'm a little bit tipsy as I sit here jotting down my wine adventures. That, dear readers, is a perk of the job. Wine tasting to me is like toy testing to Tom Hanks in that eighties classic 'BIG'. And the last few months certainly have left me feeling like a kid in a Pinot-Meunier-filled candy shop; sniffing and swirling myself around some of the best wine events that the region has to offer.

Wine clubs, it seems, are popping up everywhere. And why not, I say? A little wine knowledge goes a long way and, if you're anything like me, one tasting will leave you thirsty for more (if you'll pardon the pun).

With Christmas (or Valentines Day) fast approaching, wine tastings and courses are the ideal gift, and you know what, the recipient may even learn something... hiccup.

Here are some of my favourite wine clubs and courses...

Room Wine Club

Each month, Room Restaurants invite a different representative from a notable producer or vineyard to talk through their selection. Wines are paired with a four-course meal and, at £30, it's well worth it for a great night out. Bubbles and beers also crop up for this monthly treat, so why not sign up to the wine club and find out what's on the agenda.

Top Bottles...Pommery's Four Seasons of Champagne.

Room Wine Club (Monthly at Liverpool, Leeds and Manchester). www.roomrestaurants.com