

February 2026

Newsletter

Welcome to the February newsletter! January is a strange month, cold, windy, wet (at least if you're in the UK) dark, and, for many, a time to hunker down after Christmas and reflect on how much money has left the bank account.

In the wine world however, it's also an exciting time. The onset of Spring brings a plethora of supplier portfolio tastings, plans for year, upgrades to websites and social media entities, and the chance to explore new trends in the world of Vino. We have been busy – with dining events in the earlier part of month, along a theme of 'The Mediterranean'. This included food and wine from places like Croatia, Turkey and Lebanon. We love doing these evenings!

We have also been to some trade tastings – and it's been great to meet so many amazing winemakers from around the globe, and to seek out English producers making excellent Wine. Ian is predicting that 2025 could be the best year yet for those making wine in England, and he's certainly not alone in that view. So, grab these Wines once they start to hit the market.

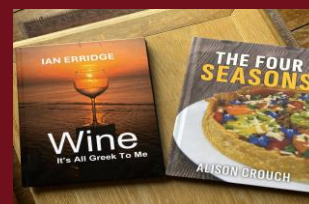
We also went to Manchester last month and visited the Holmfirth Winery in Yorkshire. The scenery around there is spectacular, as are the facilities at the vineyard, with a superb circular restaurant and store, selling Solaris – a white grape offering citrus fresh notes, Rondo – a luscious red fruit variety producing light reds and Rosé, Regent – another light red developed in Geilweilerhof, Germany – and Syvel Blanc, a reliable, hardy, white grape producing wines of great acidity and pairing versatility. This and other wineries in Northern England produce some stellar wines – go and support them in 2026.

"Wine is sunlight, held together by water"
Galileo Galilei.



About Us

Hello! We are Alison and Ian. Alison has 35 years' experience working in food. From teaching cookery, nutrition and food hygiene, running restaurants, broadcasting, writing both recipes and food articles, to carrying out cookery demos at food shows. She has worked with Gordon Ramsay, Rosemary Shrager, Brian Turner, Aldo Zilli and Cyrus Todiwala - and has written several cookery books, her latest being *The Four Seasons*, which was released in 2024.



Ian has over 25 years' experience in the Wine industry and is also keenly into his food. He is author of a book on Greek wine, called, *Wine; It's All Greek To Me* - having lived in Greece for over 4 years. He also studied on the coast of Southern Spain for 2 years - has worked extensively across the UK - and is now a Wine Consultant, Specialist Tasting Host, Sommelier, Wine Writer and Author.

Foodie Focus

Asparagus and Pancetta Risotto

Each month Alison writes a tasty recipe for you to cook. Ian pairs the dish with great wine, both alcoholic – and non-alcoholic, in case you're still carrying on from dry January. The British Asparagus season traditionally runs for 8 weeks, from St George's Day in late April to the Summer Solstice in June - a great time of the year. It's also known as the food of love, perfect for Valentines Day.

This recipe serves 2; You'll need

500ml vegetable stock
350g of asparagus
75g of pancetta
Vegetable oil, for frying
1 onion, diced
1 large garlic clove, crushed.
150g of carnaroli risotto rice, or arborio rice
100ml of white wine
25g of butter
30g of parmesan
1 lemon, zested and juiced
Sea salt and pepper

Let's Cook!

1. Put the stock in a pan and simmer with the asparagus until softened, then lift it out
2. Slice into 1 cm pieces – put to one side.
3. Fry the pancetta for 2 minutes in the oil, stirring.
4. Add the onion and garlic.
5. Fry for 3 minutes, until softened.
6. Add the rice and stir well. Add the wine. Let the rice absorb the wine.
7. Add ladles of warm stock one by one, each time letting the rice absorb the stock before adding the next.
8. Stir regularly to release the starch from the rice, which is what gives you a creamy risotto.
9. Once the stock is absorbed stir in the asparagus pieces. Save a few to garnish.
10. Stir in the butter and Parmesan. Add the lemon juice and zest. Season to taste.
11. Serve with the saved asparagus on top to garnish.

*For a vegetarian version leave out the pancetta and add peas, courgettes or mushrooms. (Or all!)



Ian's Wine Pairing



**Foncalieu
Picpoul Rosé
Southern
France
13%ABV**

For this dish Ian chose this sublime Rosé. Its Rose Petal aromas and lovely acidity, cut through the dominant Asparagus flavours, while offering enough structure to hold up to the savoury pancetta.

Available to purchase in our store

www.wineanddine.org.uk/product-page/foncalieu-picpoul-rose

Non Alcoholic; We love the Italian Sparkling Spumante Rosé from Oddbird Wine. Made from Glera and Pinot Noir, its lovely red fruit flavours are a real joy with this dish.

<https://oddbird.com/products/spumante-rose>

Wines of the month

Fabulous Vino to try in 2026

It's part of our obligation to you, dear readers, to discover new wines, pass on recommendations for vino we already know and to visit as many wineries as we can along the way. It's a tough job, but somebody must do it.

First up is this beauty. The Tannat grape has always been dear to Ian's heart. He discovered a bottle from Alpha Estate Winery in Greece, while he lived and worked there, and fell in love. Very topical with the 14th February in mind.

The variety is historically grown in South West France in the Madiran AOC, but it's now one of the most prominent grapes in Uruguay, where it is considered a national treasure - and it can be found throughout South America - and, as mentioned, Greece do brilliant versions too. We picked up this awesome **Finca Traversa Tannat** from the 3rd Gen Familia Traversa Winery, who are based near Montevideo. The dominant plum and cherries with hints of spice are incredible - and its amazing value at sub £15.00.



You might be surprised to learn about the great quality wine that India is producing. Ian was delighted to find this wine at a pre Christmas wine tasting event he was co hosting at The Shed Wine Bar in Market Harborough - he'd tried the wine in Munich, of all places, the year before, and was so impressed.



The **Sula Vineyards Chenin Blanc** has wonderful pear aromas and bursts with fresh tropical fruit flavours and good acidity and subtle minerality. The winery itself is situated in Nashik, India's largest grape-growing region. It was established in 1997 by Rajeev Samant & Kerry Damsky, who set about developing clones of Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc. The first release in 2000 was a wonderful success and the rest is history. Sula now produce Shiraz and Zinfandel and are rapidly gaining a well deserved reputation for developing quality wines. It's been great to see the attention they have been getting at recent tasting events in London. At around £11 it's great value and a lovely wine to pair with food. We hope to stock this in 2026, watch this space.

Wines of the Month

Fabulous Vino to try in 2026

Fancy a wine that's under £10, but has the quality of a much more expensive, high end, Chassagne Montrachet from France? No, we are not kidding, it's that good!

The **Waitrose Loved & Found Gelber Muskateller** is an Austrian Muscat made with grapes mainly from the beautiful Weinviertel region. The wine is equally as pretty, with aromatic notes of flower blossom and exotic fruit. It's a truly excellent example, that finishes with elegant zesty freshness, crisp acidity and lovely bursting fruits. Pair this with some fresh John Dory and it's a belter!

Otherwise known as Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains the grape has Greek origins. There it's the most important grape on the island of Samos, producing a Vin Doux Naturel, aromatic dry white wine and a Liastos or straw wine. In Italy, the grape is the most widely planted member of the Muscat family and is most commonly known as Moscato Bianco. It is the oldest known variety grown in Piedmont. Picture; Vivino. This is an unbelievably good wine, and we've only just picked ourselves off the floor with the shock of discovering how brilliant this is.

Check out our own wine store, for beautiful Vino that we love! www.wineanddine.org.uk/category/all-products



Partner Profile

Oinos Wine Accessories

We are delighted to be working with Oinos Wines.

If you have ever had a corkscrew fail on you, at the vital moment – and you haven't got a spare, it's a disaster. This has happened to us, so to have quality accessories around you, is a joy.

The 'A' collection of Corkscrews, Aerators and Chiller Sticks is pure class. The business was founded by Rhea and James, who's friendship has been built over a love of wine. We will be using Oinos products at all our events.

We will be stocking the range very soon, but in the meantime visit <https://oinos.wine/> and use discount code WINEANDDINE10 to get yours.



Events Watch

Upcoming Wine And Dine Tasty Food and Vino offerings

We have a few exciting events to tell you about, tickets are available to purchase online.

On May 30th at 7pm we are running a Greek Wine Tasting called 'A Tour Of Greece Through It's Wine'

You have the opportunity to come and learn about the wines of Greece, gain some wine tips ready for your Greek holiday, or enjoy memories of the wine you drank whilst there.

A wine tasting and talk, exploring seven Greek Wines, selected by Ian, who will also discuss his book "Wine: It's All Greek To Me" . It will be accompanied by delicious Greek bites to accompany each wine - made by Alison - award winning Chef, and Food Author, Alison

For more details and to book, visit our events page at <https://www.wineanddine.org.uk/events>

(Please let us know if you have any allergies)



On July 4th at 7pm we are a running 'Fire And Wine' Tasting - a wonderful night of Wine especially selected by Ian, paired with scrumptious food prepared over fire, by Award Winning Chef, and Author, Alison.

And there are Llamas too! Yes, Llamas! Because the event is being held at Glamping with Llamas in Norfolk. They aren't paying guests.

We ask that you bring your friends, your appetite, and your love for awesome wine and food - and of course, the Llamas! Don't miss out—let's light up the night together!

For more details and to book, visit our events page at <https://www.wineanddine.org.uk/events>

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Thank you to our partners and suppliers



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