

Ep 35 English wine & Wine Books

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SPEAKERS

Janina Doyle



Janina Doyle 00:07

Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me just cannot get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier, so stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving wonderful world of wine, and wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you.



Janina Doyle 00:30

Hello wine lovers, and welcome back. Today is a Q&A episode. So I am going to be theming the episode on that. A big shout out to the lovely Karl who has been promoting my episodes and talking about the wines and buying things based on what I said. So you are amazing. Karl, if anyone wants to see what he's drinking is @karl_gin_son_wine. Seriously Karl, could you have a longer tag on Instagram? Karl asked about wine books. What are my favourite wine books? What can I recommend? So we will have a look at that. And the other question came from Rachel who runs @lunarmail. Now go check out @lunarmail. They are stunning creations. If any of you have children, and you would like a letter from Santa Claus, apparently she is claiming to be BFF with Papa Noel. So have a look there. They're stunning. Now she asked me about English wine. She wanted to know basically what I think about the future for English wine. So quite excited to tell you my opinion. And of course, some stats, figures and the history of where these wines used to be. Now I've got some really exciting news for me. Finally, I've said this for a while, I have set up a Patreon account. What that basically is, is me offering you guys back some extra content, exclusive content, things that no one else will be able to hear or see, it'll be just for you. It's to build a lovely wine community. But the funding is going to be able to allow me to get better editing tools, equipment, microphones and effectively produce more high quality content for you guys. So if any of you are feeling incredibly generous of which I will be more than grateful, please do head over to patreon.com/eatsleepwinerepeat. If anyone needs the spelling for that it will be in the show notes, you will be my first Patreons and therefore the most special ones ever. So make my day please if you are appreciating this podcast. The support starts from £1.50 a month and then goes up from there depending on how much you want to listen to my voice and how much you want to learn. Also, don't forget I am transcribing these podcasts now so you can get the link in the show notes. Right, enough of that. Let's go to my wine of the week.



Janina Doyle 02:57

So my winery of the week has to be English and I've gone with Hush Heath Estate. Their first vineyards were planted in 2002 and they are currently making around 400,000 bottles, a little bit more than that. The estate is owned by Richard Balfour-Lynn and his wife Leslie, hence why you'll often see the logo Balfour and the sparkling wines are named Balfour. They are known for their delicious sparklings but the still ones that they're making are very, very good and really worth checking out. Now you can find them in Kent, specifically in Staplehurst. And I definitely recommend you going to visit them. They run winery tours like a lot of English wineries these days. They have this amazing patio area outside, of course you can eat inside or upstairs in their kind of balcony setting as well. But on a beautiful sunny day, you're literally right there, in the vineyards. You don't have to book in a tour either. You can grab a map and go on a self guided tour and it's approximately about one hour. You take this little map, you go through the vineyard you'll go through their orchard, they make lovely cider as well, and sparkling ciders. You'll go past a beautiful Tudor Manor as well. It's a gorgeous walk and with the forest, with the vineyards, with the orchards and meadows. It's about a 400 acre estate, so you can enjoy at your own pace and then return for a beautiful bottle of fizz. I absolutely adore their Balfour Skye's Blanc de Blancs. the blonde, that's always been one of my favourites, but that is not what I am going to try today. So what they have done, they've created the winemakers collection, which is a mixture of, there's some sparkling wines, there's also still and they're crafted specifically by the winemakers and they get free reign completely to do as they wish. And I have a very special Pinot Meunier. Pinot Meunier is one of the three grape varieties that's typically used in the traditional method sparkling wines of England, and also of Champagne. You very rarely see Pinot Meunier as a single variety and as a still wine. Now this has been crafted by Owen Elias. This is the first 100% Pinot Meunier in England to be made and if you don't know who Owen Elias is, he is known as one of the top winemakers in England, and certainly has shaped the path for English wine. He's been in the industry for about 30 years now, he spent 20 of those at Chapel down, who again are doing fantastic wines, and one of the largest wineries in England. After that he's been working as a consultant in several other wineries including hush Heath, and in fact, it's his son Fergus, who is actually the head winemaker at Hush Heath now, so there's a great father and son act going on over there at Hush Heath Estate. Now this Pinot Meunier is called The Red Miller. And this is from the 2018 vintage. Now, if anyone doesn't know 2018 was literally the most glorious year for us for sunshine, for weather, and of course, wine production. So let's pour this wine and see how it tastes.



Janina Doyle 06:02

Now straightaway the interesting thing here, is the colour. It is so light. This wine I know only saw a very short three day fermentation on the skins and a very small amount of

time with some French and American oak with very little filtration. And it's got this really pale rim and it's kind of the colours actually more garnety than ruby. It doesn't look like a really young fresh wine. So let's have a little sip. The nose is really aromatic, very pretty and quite wild. It's like wild strawberries, lots of red fruit, which I guess I suppose I would expect. I'm not sure it's not really something I taste everyday Pinot Meunier. I couldn't really tell you what it tastes like. But this one is lots of like kind of sour cranberries and wild raspberries and wild strawberries. It's got a nice little kind of spiciness, but it's very elegant, very, very soft on the nose, but maybe even a little bit of rose petals and a bit smoky at the same time. Maybe a little hint of pot pourri and incense sticks, actually. Okay, let's try the palate. Okay, this is a very light wine, as in light body, obviously already it was light in colour. It was delicate on the nose, but still medium intensity. And here the body is very fresh. It's very elegant, but it's almost like this playful nature of fruits. There's a lot going on, but it's still quite reserved, very, very juicy. All those red fruits coming through is still very wild, maybe a little bit earthy, maybe a touch of crushed leaves, but it's restrained, it's pretty and quite joyful, lovely wine. Oh my gosh, this is this is £40 bottle. This is not your Monday wine. But it's definitely an amazing example of something, red wine first of all, England's not so well known for red wine. This is a very gorgeous, pretty and unique version of some stunning wines that are coming out of England. Pairing wise: Hmm, I'd want this with some mushrooms. Actually, I'd want this with maybe a mushroom pasta, or some pates or kind of a bit more gamey. It's that slight earthy and wild fruit. I would want this with some more some game gaming meats, or maybe a beef bourguignon. I think that would be delicious.



Janina Doyle 08:23

So let's get to Karl's question about wine books. And just a few of my recommendations, I focused on the kind of educational books, the ones that will really help you, good resources rather than some of the more interesting fun stories or trips to vineyard. So my number one very boring, but kind of important book probably has to be the Oxford Companion to Wine, which is by Jancis Robinson and Julia Harding. I love the fact that it's a bright pink book. So it just makes it a little bit more inviting. Because when you do turn the pages, in fact, I've got it in front of me. Now I'm going to open it up. It literally is like a dictionary, I've just opened up the page on L. If I want to know about lactic acid bacteria, there is a whole section. And what's amazing about that section is it might talk about the malic acid, it might talk about oxygen, it might talk about sulphur dioxide, every word that is highlighted in red, you then turn to that page, and there'll be another massive paragraph on that. And so it's a huge book of cross referencing. There are maps of where all the vineyards are placed in the world. So you can see them as a world map rather than per region. There are diagrams of all the new varieties and how they've been crossed and who are their parents. You can look at what wood influence does to the wine. It is simply a

real wine Bible if you want to get super geeky in this world of wine. I have the fourth edition, which I believe is the latest one. So go and get that one. Talking of additions, the next book, it seems I'm a bit of a fan of Jancis Robinson is *The World Atlas of Wine* and I have the eighth edition, which is the latest. By the way for anyone, the seventh edition is not that different, to be honest. So if you haven't got either, and you find the seventh for much cheaper, go for it. It's not that big a deal. This is written not just by Johnson Robinson but also by Hugh Johnson. And what I love about this one is it goes by region by region. There are incredibly detailed maps. If you want to look at Burgundy it will go into detail about all the soil types, it will break it down village by village. If you want to look at Germany, we all know those labels are so confusing. They break it down every single term you'll find on the label. There's an explanation. If you've ever wondered why some Bordeaux wine is way more expensive than others. There's even a detailed chart looking at the harvest costs the average yields they produce, the number of vines per hectare they have, all the calculations based on a standard Medoc vineyard compared to a Grand Cru site, so you can really understand the economies of scale to why wine costs so much. What I miss about the seventh edition, they had specific labels of top top producers that they recommended. If you're like me, and you're more of an image kind of learner, it's nice to see recommended labels to see if you've tried them or to put them in your memory bank for if you ever come across them in a wine shop. Sadly, they've taken them out on the eighth edition, but a lot of the wine producers are written in as recommended. But what they do have in the eighth edition is they've given my beloved South America more presence. Uruguay and Brazil gets its own page now in the eighth edition. Even the Sauvignon Blanc zones of Marlborough, get a massive focus. So you can understand that Marlborough is not just one brand, it doesn't just have one flavour. There's so much more to that region that many people think. But one complaint, England still only has one page. So we have to wait for the ninth edition for that. But I shall fill the gap in a minute when we get to the English part of the podcast. Now I mentioned being a real visual learner. If that's you, then the *Wine Folly* by Madeline Puckette and Justin Hammack is a really good one for that, loads of great maps. In fact, if you google *Wine Folly*, you'll find some of the most fantastic maps online, you can purchase them, you can download them and use them. They're brilliant little reference guides. It's great for great knowledge and the way they create them in pie charts with colours, lots of food pairing, what glassware to use, a real focus on regions. That's a really lovely book. Quite a nice book to give as a gift as well. Now going slightly away from reference books. I really like *The History of Wine in 100 bottles* by Oz Clark. I think that's a book that hasn't actually got as much attention as it perhaps deserves. With this book, you can really learn the backstory of wine, learn about the wine revolution. It starts from 6000 BC, you're going to learn about the Egyptian times, times in Greece, Phoenician times, Roman times, Pompei, Tokaji, the birth of Claret, the monasteries, how they helped the world, how corkscrews came about, the special wines of Constantia in South Africa, The history of Dom Perignon. And through that

there's a whole list of wines that really, you get the opportunity to go out and try knowing that little piece of history. Wines like Barca Velha from Portugal, Buena Vista winery in California, Vega Secilia of Spain, even one of the wines that I look after, The Tara wines from the Atacama Desert in Chile. You'll learn about The Judgement of Paris, which was a major turning point for the California wine industry, or even Parker points and how that specifically changed the way winemakers were making their wines much bigger, much bolder, just to get the points. So there's so much in this book, I think it's quite nice to have wines that you can aspire to, some wines that you can go out and buy. And just to really understand how wine styles or wine grapes have changed over history. Now that leads me to my last wine book recommendation, which I just bought this week. And it's another Oz Clarke book. It's called English wine. I might also point out it refers to Welsh wine as well, he just didn't feel it had a catchy enough title. The poor Welsh, always being put in second place when some of them wines are equally as delicious. Oz Clark really does like his history. And what I find fascinating about this book is talking about how our climate has really changed. We have history going back 2000 years. Although to be fair, I don't think any of us really wanted to try any of the wines 2000 years ago, but he really goes into a bit of detail about the history. One of the things I found fascinating, would you believe, there was a little ice age, I did not know this before, between the 1400s and the 1850s. And during this time, it was so cold that the River Thames in London used to freeze over for around two months of the year. So much so they would have these frost fairs and these markets would be held on the ice. So you can imagine, this probably was not the best time to be making English wine. He touches on all the major wine styles and the major wine grapes that are growing in England and in Wales. But for anybody wanting to get to know the wineries better, about two thirds of the book is breaking down the wineries per region. And who you should go and visit. There's information about these wineries, their telephone numbers, what tours they do, if you can stay there, if there's a hotel, if there's restaurants nearby, so it's a really good guide if you are ever planning on going to the English vineyards, which you absolutely should. So great segway for me. Let's now go on to answering that question about the future of English wine.



Janina Doyle 15:49

So to answer Rachel's question about the future of English wine, to make it very simple, the future is bright. I genuinely think that the English wine industry is only going to get bigger, bolder, better and more exciting. And in fact, it's always better to put your money where your mouth is. So I am investigating currently, where I want to put my well earned British pound, so perhaps you may want to do the same. So let's look at some figures. Currently we have about 3500 Ha planted. If anyone who doesn't know how much a hectare is, I'm terrible with sizes. It's basically around the same size as an international rugby union field. So that gives you a bit of perspective. Those numbers are going to shoot

up because in 2017, we planted 1 million new vines, 2018 1.6 million and then 2019 3.2 million, so it's going to be very exciting. In the next 10 to 20 years how many hectares of vines we really have planted. In fact, in Oz Clarke's, English Wine book he says there's a great climate expert who is saying that we have well over 30,000 ha of prime vineyard land that is available in England, and hardly any of it has been planted yet. So there is some exciting times ahead. Pretty much 70% of the vines are all planted down in the south, you have about, just under 2% in Wales planted, which is often why sadly, people don't even realise that there are incredible wines there. And there was about 4% of vines going up to the Midlands, and up in the north. In fact, really interestingly, the future of English wine, well, that may well be up in the north and Scotland, They're predicting that by 2080, it's going to be too hot to plant vines down in the south of England. And we're going to be planting vines up in the north. And apparently grape varieties like Malbec will be doing very, very well in England. So let's see, I'm still hoping to be alive fingers crossed in 60 years. So I look forward to seeing what red wines I'm going to be drinking and from where. Now we are the nation of sparkling wines. We have proven in competitions and blind tastings over and over again, that we can compete on the same level as Champagne. So to be specific, as of last year, 2019, 67% of all production was sparkling wine and of that 98% was traditional method sparkling wine. So when we say traditional method, it is the second fermentation in bottle with some lees ageing, like they do in Champagne. So that leaves us with 2% which is either the charmat method, which is making the bubbles, the second fermentation in a tank, nice, quick, fresh, no lees ageing, none of those biscuity notes and for that Fitz is a really good winery that you should go and check out. They do a white and they do a pink version. In terms of labelling terms, a lot of people I've mentioned this before, didn't realise you can only label it English sparkling wine if it has been made with the traditional method. And if not, it will just be labelled sparkling wine. So if you're not sure whether you're going to get those bready flavours or not, have a look to see if it says English sparkling wine. Another really good producer for the tank method style would be Flint who do a Rose and they're making it with some really interesting varieties. Solaris, Reichensteiner, Cabernet cortis and Rondo. So you may want to get stuck in with that. Included with that 2% is also even carbonation. Chapel Down, as I've already mentioned before being one of the biggest producers, have made a very successful sparkling using the Bacchus grape variety, which is, I guess, England's answer to New Zealand's Sauvignon Blanc to give you a slight idea of style if you've never had Bacchus before, and they literally carbonate it add in the bubbles, it's loads of fun, nothing complex, but it's been very, very popular. Now of course I just mentioned that if it's made with the traditional method, you should see English sparkling wine on the label. Well, wine GB who are our National Association for English and Welsh wines have just announced the Great British classic method. Now what this basically is they've launched a new industry hallmark, this is for the PDO wines only. So PDO is the highest quality that we have in the industry: Protected Designation of Origin. You find this

all over Europe with cheeses, with olive oils. PDO is the highest with the strictest criterias. Underneath that you have PGI: Protected Geographical Indication. So now with any of the wineries that are in a PDO status, they can apply to use the classic method on their labels. 30 producers so far have been accepted. And so in the coming year, you're going to see releases with the classic method. This is the traditional method wines. What they wanted to do was create a name that separated them apart from say Champagne and saying traditional method. I know that Ridgeview is in that list. They are an incredible sparkling wine producer. They only do sparkling and in fact, they were one of the founding wineries of sparkling wine, certainly just after Nyetimber. The other winery who I know who's definitely going to be using the classic method is another one of my favourites which is Hattingley Valley. And you should definitely, if you haven't tried either of their fizzes, go grab yourself a bottle immediately. Now just on other wine news in England, there's a new sustainability scheme, they really wanted to make sure that they were up there with the other wine regions of the world. And it's called SWGB: Sustainable Wines of Great Britain. Already, they have 30 founding members and apparently in terms of all of their hecatres it accounts for over 40% of that under vine. So it's really good to see that the wine industry in England is really getting behind these incentives. They have to use a carbon calculator to be part of the membership of SWGB. And that calculator will work out the greenhouse gas emissions, the carbon footprint, if they're to maintain and improve soil health and reduce the vineyards energies and they have to promote biodiversity in the vineyard and reduce and optimise the pesticide input. So it's good to see this initiative taking shape and obviously something that will grow in England. So look out for the little green label on the bottles with little butterflies and green grapes on it.



Janina Doyle 22:26

So in terms of wineries, we approximately have about 165 wineries going now with about 770 vineyards. So that's a lot of work for us to do to have to get around to visit them all. And in terms of grape varieties. The number one grape variety is Pinot Noir. Plantings are at 33% but that does also include a grape variety called Pinot noir Précoce. Now that is basically a much earlier ripening Pinot Noir. It doesn't quite have the same aromatics and concentration but still does pretty well. So with those kind of two Pinots together that's 33%. Just behind it at 32% is Chardonnay and then 13% is Pinot Meunier. So that makes sense. We're a sparkling wine producing country, and the three main grape varieties planted in the UK are the typical three varieties used. Now after that you have Bacchus just at 5% but Bacchus is totally becoming the great variety for our still white wines. Imagine elderflower, lime, this nice zestiness, lovely high acidity, sometimes tropical notes, you can get that green note. Remember I mentioned that it kind of has that ability to be the answer to Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand. It does have that intensity, but for me, I always feel like Bacchus grape is a blend of Sauvignon Blanc with

Riesling, and then with Albariño. Imagine the three of them having a love child. That's kind of what Bacchus is, but it's a beautiful aromatic grape variety. Followed behind that at just 2% which I was quite surprised about is Seyval Blanc. Seyval Blanc just grows really, really well in England. It's actually not very aromatic. There's not that much excitement about it, but they can produce some pretty good versions and it seems to do better here than anywhere else. Then you have Pinot Gris at 2%, Rondo 2% and then the rest, that's 11% if anyone can do their mathematics is all the other great varieties. But we have some very cool grape varieties growing in England. Cabernet Franc is starting to grow, Gewürztraminer, you'll find Chasselas, Gamay, the great variety of Beaujolais, even Albariño. Talking about Albariño you can get an orange Albariño from Wales. So I've talked about Ancre Hill Estates before who are in Wales. They were my winery of the week on episode 25 when I was discussing organics, biodynamics and sustainable wines, obviously that gives you an idea as to their philosophies. Totally. So I was tasting the Pet Nat: Pétillant Naturel from them on that episode, but they also make an orange Albariño. So we've got some really funky wines going on. So okay, I'm going to talk about the unusual varieties for you to check out or unusual wines that you might not expect.



Janina Doyle 25:16

Let's look at Pet Nat. Pétillant Naturel, if you want to know more about how it's made and what it is go back to that episode 25 but it's not just Ancre hills that makes a really good Pétillant Naturel. Quite a few of our urban London wineries are doing Pet Nats so amazing. You can be in central London and you can pop to one of the wineries just down the road. So vagabond who started actually in 2010 with all wine shops and all these Enomatics that you can take little tiny samples out of, have now actually started an urban winery in Battersea and they make a "Pet Not". That's what they've called it. And it's made from Pinot Noir and Pinot Noir Précoce. Then you have Renegade. These guys have been around since 2016. They're in Bethnal Green, they have concrete eggs with smiley faces on it. And what's really cool about their wines in general, they always use the eyes of a different person who lives in the UK, you do not need to be British, you can be anybody you apply if you are able to say that you are part of the fabric of the UK, you have the opportunity to be on one of their labels. And they do a Bacchus Pet Nat. Then you also have wineries like Westwell, who do it with Ortega grape variety, or Davenport, who do it with Auxerrois, Pinot Meunier and Faber. Has anyone heard of Faber. My good friend Google tells me it is a crossing between Pinot Blanc and Müller-Thurgau, there you go. Now you do know. And for anyone who's really into the natural wine scene, of course, which Pet Nat falls into, you have Tillingham, who with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier are making a, what they call a Col Fondo, which is what they often call it in Prosecco. So the same ancestral method. They're also using Kvevri's, which are these big clay pots to age the wine in. They're treading with their feet and leaving some

Chardonnay in contact with the skins. So of course you're then getting those orange wines. I already mentioned Ancre Hills for their orange Albariño. If orange wines are your thing, you could also go to Westwell who do a skin contact Ortega. And for those that don't like it so intense. I tasted an absolutely beautiful orange Bacchus, that was by Litmus and it was just that slight suggestion of skin contact. And actually I remember it tasting like a mango solero lolly. Now does anybody outside of the UK. Have you ever tasted a solero lolly? They were awesome. Just FYI. No, hopefully that's giving you an idea actually, of how exciting English wine really is. And so many of these are still varieties. Not sparkling. Cabernet Noir! A great variety is being grown and then bottled by Blackbook winery. This is another urban winery. In fact, they've been around since 2017. My favourite Chardonnay that I have tasted from the UK is their 2018 Painter of Light. I brought this out in a blind tasting with about 12 other sommeliers and everyone was thinking it was a Premier cru Chablis and they were predicting that it was about £30 a bottle. And this is a little under £20 a bottle I believe. So if there's any left, because I know they've gone on to their 2019, if you can find any of the 18 - grab it. I adored it. This is by winemaker, Sergio Verillo. He has been working in Flowers in California, in Ara Rangi in New Zealand in Martinborough. He's worked at de Montille in Burgundy. He has got some incredible experience and we're so lucky to have him in the UK. And actually seeing as I've mentioned, all of the urban wineries, apart from one, they need a shout out to: London Cru was the original urban winery of London that started in 2013. Their Baker Street Bacchus, it's a really pungent, tropical, powerful style. At £15 a bottle that is my favourite Bacchus around that price point. It is absolutely delicious and zingy. So go and get that, definitely try that one. There is sweet wine, there is fortified wine being made in England and Wales now, so I could be here for hours. I will in fact be carrying this on on a exclusive episode for my new Patreons so if you really do want to dive into the world of English wine, I have far more to say and that will be over there on Patreon.com. I will be doing an episode on English sparkling wine for sure because we haven't mentioned some of my favourite winemakers: Jacob leadley from Black Chalk, oh my god, his sparkling wine is incredible and also Dermot Sugrue who makes the Sugrue Pierre, his own wines and also makes the wines for Wistons. So another episode is coming guys, but for now, I shall leave you to just try some of the few that I have mentioned.



Janina Doyle 30:15

I shall leave you with a quote from Roger Scruton, who was an English philosopher and a writer. And he said; "Wine is not just an object of pleasure, but an object of knowledge. And the pleasure depends on the knowledge." Well, I've certainly found that the more I know about wine, the more I love it, so I hope the same is true for you. So thank you so much for listening. Don't forget to leave your comments, like, subscribe, share, get this podcast out to the world and I will see you again on another episode of Eat Sleep Wine

Repeat. Cheers to you.