

# Ep 40 Premium Bag in Box wines with Founder Oliver Lea of Bl...

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Oliver Lea, Janina Doyle

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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.



J

Janina Doyle 00:31

Happy New Year to you all. How has the start been to 2021? It's got to be better than last right? Well, we certainly started the year with a bang with a bottle of sparkling wine from the Trentino region in Italy. The Trento DOC region was actually, in fact, the first region in Italy to dedicate themselves to the Metodo Clasico or as you may know it as: the traditional method, aka the way you make Champagne. And inside this region is the Ferrari winery, producing such good sparkling wine that their top wine Giulio Ferrari Reserva del Fondatore is said by many to be the Italian Dom Perignon. So, we cracked open this very special wine, the 2008 vintage and it went down very...well quickly. It's a wine made from 100% Chardonnay and aged on the lease for 10 years, so a little while. It's a very serious sparkling wine. In this region there is the highest concentration of Chardonnay vines in Italy. And this is really due to Giulio Ferrari's efforts, so the guy who started this winery back in 1902. And he had this simple belief just to make the best sparkling wine that would be as good as champagne. It's quite an iconic winery so do go and check them out if you haven't heard of them before. The Ferrari Brut is about £18 bottle. So not bad at all. Although if you want to try this special one, it will set you back around £90 and ou can find it currently at <https://www.vinvm.co.uk/> Just think tropical fruits, honey, baking spices. It's still super fresh but if you want the full tasting notes go to my Instagram.

J

Janina Doyle 02:12

Now what did you crack open anything special? Let me know and what are your resolutions for this year? After all the negativity and certainly my own personal resistance to a few things that I couldn't quite control last year, my New Year's resolution is to be more like water. Actually or should I say wine. Flow like wine? I think is a nice little ring to it, don't you think? But seriously, I am an Aries. I was born in April. I am all FIRE. So this

year for me, I will be just letting go. Well, that's the plan. Now what about dry January. Any of you trying it? Good luck to you, I definitely will not be doing such a thing. In fact, I have seen a new hashtag trending in the wine world and that's #tryjanuary. So this is all about getting out of your comfort zone and trying different wines, regions, things you wouldn't normally go for. So I thought I would combine #tryjanuary with a halfway house of #dryjanuary to bring you a company that is certainly shaking up the wine industry in terms of packaging with their luxury bag in box wines. They're called the BIB wine co and if you thought that bag and box wine was only for generic everyday knockback liquid, it certainly time to rethink. So these bag in box wines, they hold three bottles and they last for up to six weeks so I felt it prudent to share this with you seeing as this month, tends to "add discipline" shall we say, to the amount that people drink. Plus, extra added bonus they are super eco-friendly so you can drink guilt free and start ticking off some of those new year's resolutions if you are planning on going a little more green this year.



Janina Doyle 03:58

Now, there is certainly many alternatives to packaging these days. There's the plastic quarter bottles, cans of course, even the plastic Single Serve wine glass with that pull off lid but nothing seems anywhere close to replacing the iconic 75cl glass bottle. But, back in box with its convenience factor and environmental factor. Well, it can now add quality factor to its point of sale. Now I don't know if you know, but about 40% of new world wines these days are shipped and not in bottles but in bulk. So the liquid is put inside of a 24,000 litre plastic bladder placed neatly inside a metal shipping container and this is also called a flexi tank. This shipping method is being adopted more and more often due to its eco friendliness and now has such expertise on doing this, and with the creation of much smaller plastic bladders, the quality of wine arriving into the destination is really good. It's not suffering the effects of travel in the way it used to in the past. It's now also available for those micro organic wineries. They can ship their wine in small amounts and have a winemaker in the destination country just stabilise the wine with minimal intervention and the respect that that original vigneron would have chosen. So it's actually really interesting how the technology has advanced. And hence why now bag in box wines can be premium.



Janina Doyle 05:24

It's also thought that Scandinavia has had some responsibility and moving things forward, I was actually shocked to find out about 60% of their wine is sold in bag in box. And that's actually due to the fact that the country doesn't allow price promotions on wine. So for that reason, the money saved on a three or four bottle box compared to a 75cl glass bottle, gives them that discount that they are basically looking for. So for such a massive

percentage of wine being sold in box, it's encouraged those premium producers to look into doing it as well, so they still get a piece of the pie in those markets. So, if you're interested in hearing about this startup, BIB wine co, the thoughts behind it, the obstacles and how this type of packaging is just miles ahead in terms of being sustainable. Let's now go over to the chat with one of the founders Ollie Lea now.



Janina Doyle 06:17

Ollie, thank you so much for joining me today on this cold, grey but Christmassy afternoon.



Oliver Lea 06:23

Thank you Janina. Yeah, it's um, it's definitely grey and fairly miserable and a little bit wet here. But it's Christmassy. Yeah, typical. Exactly.



Janina Doyle 06:32

And I've got a glass of wine in my hand and before clicking the record button, I did check that you, is it now in your hand?



Oliver Lea 06:37

It is, yes, I can do cheers if thats the direction we are going in?



Janina Doyle 06:40

Okay, can we make a clink somehow? Wait, wait, hang on. There we go. That was not a clink at all. I need to bring....



Oliver Lea 06:45

I've got nothing to click on.



Janina Doyle 06:46

Wait, wait. Oh, god, I'm hitting a pen. That's the most appalling sound... oh it almost sounded like you had noise. Whatever! Cheers to you!



Oliver Lea 06:55

Yeah. Cheers. Thank you very much.



Janina Doyle 06:57

Take a sip. For everybody who doesn't know about the BIB Wine Co. Ollie, you're going to tell us all about this. So you started this company with three other siblings. But where did it come from? You decided I want to put wine in a box. I mean, these already existed. But these are premium wines. So how did the whole concept start?



Oliver Lea 07:17

Yeah, there is a little debate about who came up with the actual idea amongst us. One of the reasons is that we talked for a very long time about the idea of actually finding good wines in a box. It wasn't an idea of ours, we just were hunting for good box wines. And, you know, obviously, they didn't exist. And we had been having that thought for maybe 10, 15 years. And we'd go to the wine merchants, you know, supermarkets wherever, and we could never find anything. And this is principally me and my brother, Tom. But it was the discussion that all of us siblings had had a few times. And one Christmas, I was living in Paris, and I hosted at Christmas with all of the family, which was lovely. And I did serve a box wine that was absolutely delicious, that I'd found in France. And I didn't really think anything more of it. But my brother Tom said, Oh, that's great news. Finally, good box wine. Yeah, it exists. So his initial thought actually was, well, let's see if we can find it in the UK, you know, I'm gonna stock up at home, that'll be my house wine. And this is what I've been looking for for ages. So we were very quick to find that that didn't exist in the UK. And actually, good box wine in France is pretty hard to come by still. And they have a lot of box wine. But the good stuff is not hugely common. So I think it was the next day, we were already talking about doing it ourselves. And that's where the arguments have come in. Well, you know, who had the actual idea, you know, my memory is that the next day we were talking about doing it. I'm not going to claim that it was me. But if it was, I mean, I think it really was a fairly group effort. And there's a certain amount of FOMO in our family, that fear of missing out I think led to all of us being on board, we had never thought about having a business together really. But once one person started talking about it, and then another, you know, we were talking about it together and there was just never going to be any possibility of three of the four of us starting a business. So it ended up being all of us. And it was really lucky that that was the case because we each bring something slightly different to it. And we've never looked back and within a few months we had started speaking to wine experts, and they all said the same thing, which was that we should meet this guy called Justin.



Janina Doyle 09:29

Ah, that's how you met Justin Howard Sneyd, who is a Master of Wine.



Oliver Lea 09:33

That's right. And yeah, he's now a wine consultant. So Justin's history and background is as a buyer principally, so he ended up, he worked with Safeway and Sainsbury's and lots of different companies and then ended up being the head of wine at Waitrose. And after that, for many years was head of wine at Direct Wines: the company that is Laithwaites. So he's got as a buying history. He's one of the youngest or quickest people to become a Master of Wine. Yeah, he's got an astonishing brain and he's, you know, a bit of a revered expert really in the field. One of the things that stands out with Justin is the fact that he's just an all around nice guy. It's really hard to dislike him, despite his success.



Janina Doyle 10:14

So you tried. You tried?



Oliver Lea 10:16

Yeah. And he's, he's gone on. He got...after Laithwaite, he went on to become a wine consultant and start making his own wines. And that's the point that we came speak to him. And we just haven't really looked back from that point on.



Janina Doyle 10:28

Yeah, well, fab. So he does, as you mentioned, he has one of his own wineries, Domaine of the Bee. And you have that in your wine range. Now was that one of your first wines that you started with?



Oliver Lea 10:40

So the Bee pink, which is his Rosé was in the opening range, it wasn't one of the first wines to be put in that range. He was nervous about suggesting it, we were nervous about asking for it. He's got the, you know, that's a business that he's running would essentially be stealing customers from him, and it was quite awkward. And there's a certain amount of, you know, trying to run a company for the first time and thinking about keeping certain transactions at arm's distance, and all of these other things. So it was all a bit awkward, as you know, just very British and not wanting to talk about money and stuff like that. But in

the end, when we came to discuss having a Rosé, he said; "Look, if you wanted to, I can take myself out of the decision, but I'd be happy to offer up some of my Rosé". And we're incredibly glad of it because it's a fantastic wine. It's tremendous value. It's made in the Roussillon, and, but in the Provence style, that is the fashion these days, for this sort of very light, dry and fresh Rosés. And it was really what we were after and what we needed, but because it's not from Provence...



Janina Doyle 11:45

So much better value.



Oliver Lea 11:47

So much better value, but it's just as good, and I think, you know, better than most actually. Better than most really quite expensive Provence Rosés, that have become quite a lot about the marketing. Still, you know, they have nice wine, you know, the Whispering Angels of these worlds, it's nice, nice wine, but the final five pounds on your bottle is going into a sort of Grey Goose style marketing package or something like that. So umm..



Janina Doyle 12:10

Nice way to say it. Yeah.



Oliver Lea 12:12

Yeah. So we were tremendously pleased. And we were surprised when we started scratching at the surface that he would allow us to have his white wine. So that joined the following year, joined the range.



Janina Doyle 12:23

Yeah, and that's a Grenache, Grenache Gris, Grenache Blanc?



Oliver Lea 12:26

It's Grenache Blanc and Grenache Gris and a little bit of Roussanne. And what's really nice about that is they're lovely South of France, Roussillon native grapes, but the Grenache Gris is the bit that changes it slightly from what you would normally expect from a wine of that style. So the Grenache Blanc and Roussanne are more normally and more widely used. Often there's a little Grenache Gris but it's quite underutilised, I think and what that

adds really is freshness and a bit of zing. And so this wine, it's got all of the big, fat, round characteristics and huge fruit and it's very expressive. Lots of tropical, lots of stone fruit. It's had time in smallish oak barrels, a certain percentage of it so that adds all the weight and the clove and spices. But then that Grenache Gris evens everything out, by giving this almost Sauvignon-esque zing to it and a little bit of citric nature. So it's it's a cracking wine and it allows it to be drunk in the summer of a summer evening, as well as being great in winter. It was my favoured white wine for Christmas this year.

**J** Janina Doyle 13:29

Ah, okay, good to know, I've had some of the Domain of the Bee wines before. As far as I know, he has a very small amount of hectares and they're all very low yielding vineyards. They've so concentrated, they're fantastic. So it's amazing to have that in your portfolio.

**O** Oliver Lea 13:43

Yes, no, we were really lucky. And there's potential that we might be able to convince Justin to go a step further, but we will see - nothing confirmed. So, we're, it's something where we're trying.

**J** Janina Doyle 13:55

Okay, interesting. And of course, it fits in with your ethos, I suppose because you've got quite a few wines now in the portfolio from lots of different countries and everything is small production, kind of family owned, what's the ethos? What is the concept of the wines that you choose to get in these Bag in Boxes?

**O** Oliver Lea 14:11

So that's a really interesting question. So it was a piece of advice that Justin gave us when we started with so you've got to have something to narrow down your, your buying options because there's 1000s and 1000s, or hundreds of 1000s of wines out there. So we just look for the sorts of wines we would look for. And I guess like a lot of other people when we go into a wine merchant, when we travel around looking for wines, we want wines that are made with passion, that are characterful. We want wines that come with a story I suppose. That story often comes side by side with the character in the glass. And actually from the start, one of the real advantages of bag in box wine is an environmental benefit. The carbon footprint is 10 times lower than bottled wine and actually it was always a bit of a driving force with us that we wanted sustainably made wine, that ethos could run through. And also, I believe that wine makers that make their wines with

sustainable methodology, whether it's organic, whether it's biodynamic, or whether it's a non certified but very sustainable outlook, those are the winemakers that are taking greater care often with their wines. So again, it goes hand in hand, if you were to narrow your range down to sustainably made wines and look at organic and biodynamic, then you're you're narrowing it down on the whole in a positive manner.



Janina Doyle 15:29

For sure. Well, talking of organics and biodynamics, the wine that you have sent me, which I'm thoroughly enjoying and also gave a little bit, only a little bit to my partner and he gave it the big big thumbs up. He said fruity, aromatic, spicy and yummy. They I think, were the four adjectives, which I highly go with. So it's the Château Couronneau, The Cuvée Clair de Lune. And this is an organic and biodynamic winery, and I assume, probably quite small as well, to fit in with your ethos. And it is absolutely delicious. So for anybody who's interested in this one price wise £39.90. And, I wrote down the equivalent per 75cl for everybody is £13.30. And I have to say, for the price point, the concentration, the freshness, the intensity is fantastic. It must have seen some oak because I'm getting this kind of slight, marzipanny, almond spiciness. Yes?



Oliver Lea 16:23

It has. They give it a minimum, I think it's between 15 and 18 months, depending on the vintage. Depending on the concentration, but to get it to the level that they want it to be at before releasing it. So it's had a decent amount of time and oak and you know, the small oak barrels. But they they introduce quite a lot of oxygen throughout the process. They're just really skilled and lovely people as well. It's a couple called Christophe and Bénédicte. They're absolutely lovely. And they bought the estate in the 90s and have made it their own. And it is hard to make organic wine in Bordeaux, at all.



Janina Doyle 16:58

Yeah, because it rains a bit ha ha.



Oliver Lea 17:00

It rains a bit and the moisture sort of hangs around. So I think they're terribly skillful to be able to do this not only organic, organically, but with the additional restraints of biodynamic agriculture. They do have one advantage, which is that they're right out as far east as you can go and still call yourself Bordeaux. So they're, they're out by a little town called Sainte-Foy-la-Grande, which is a very famous market and is lovely and beautiful.

But essentially all around that area is Bergerac wine. And they're just in this little sort of peninsula of Bordeaux. So they're quite lucky to have the Bordeaux Appellation where they are. And they're also quite lucky to have a bit of the slightly drier Bergerac climate and being out where they are, you know, it's typically made with 100% Merlot. The next winemaking areas in towards Bordeaux, the central Bordeaux are Saint-Émilion and Pomerol. So, for me, this is the same sort of style. And as you said, tremendous value. I can drink it without food, even though it's got huge tannins.



Janina Doyle 18:01

But they are velvety at same time, the are beautiful.



Oliver Lea 18:04

They are, I think it's really, really impressive what they've done with this wine. And this is the second wine we had from them, we had the 2016. And we thought actually 2016 is such a good year for Bordeaux that we had just got a cracking vintage from a good winemaker. And keep our fingers crossed that they can get near it. But actually, I think this 2018 is just as good. If not a little bit of an all round better wine, it's slightly more approachable, whilst not losing anything that the other one had. We've got the 2019 stuck in some interesting COVID and Brexit related haulage traffic, but it's started its journey. So really looking forward to that. It's tasting amazing, a little younger in the fruit. But with all of the same sort of density and layering and spicing. And the tannins are a little younger, but still, you know still lovely and provide all that structure. So they're just brilliant. They seem not to be able to miss when it comes to their wines.



Janina Doyle 18:58

Good. Do you have any of the 2018 left?



Oliver Lea 19:01

There is not. There is not any left to purchase but I can guarantee when the 2019 comes in you won't be disappointed, in the same way that we've not been disappointed. It's a lovely wine and I think it'll keep developing for a little while longer as well.



Janina Doyle 19:16

Oh, it's stunning. Honestly, I think the intensity of fruit for me it's really almost opposite stewed plums, but at the same time, it's still quite fresh and then loads of these sweet

baking spices and like maybe some dark chocolate shards. It is actually ironically, I think you said you were going to send me something that was quite Christmassy and I suppose it is because it's big and bold and juicy and spicy. And that velvety tannins that soft, plush mouthfeel but that's what Merlot, if Merlot is done correctly. That's what Merlot can do. Right? This is actually a pretty good example of a really spot on Merlot.



Oliver Lea 19:49

It's interesting, isn't it the bad street cred that Merlot gained, I guess mainly through the film Sideways, but also it's probably more than that through a lot of fairly average, just what you would describe on a Marks and Spencers bottle as a smooth and velvety, fruity Merlot. But it's very, very drinkable and quaffable. But it lacks when made in that larger scale and the cheaper end, it's of lacks, lacks character, but actually, it's a great variety that can go on and do really great things.



Janina Doyle 20:20

Absolutely. I always say to people, you know, when we used to: "Oh Merlot - It's a knock back wine". I mean, come on Pertus, in Pomerol. So we're talking obviously, not quite the neighbour here, but the point that Merlot is so dominant in that blend and Masseto. I tasted a Masseto from Tuscany once and that was an incredibly special experience, and I only tasted it once. But I remember, I remember the emotions more than the flavour. Definitely it's a wine to seek out if you're ever lucky enough to, to get your hands on it for sure. Now, what are you drinking because you are drinking something slightly different from the range.



Oliver Lea 20:54

When I was getting set up for this chat, I had to choose where I would be. I'm at home and have three children. So I needed to hide in the most secure place I could find, and this time of day, is my bedroom. So I just thought that I needed something that was a little bit more relaxed, and less full on and more bedroom worthy than the Château Couronneau. So I've gone with the next one down on the ladder in terms of alcohol and strength and bigness and tannins and something which is bit more of an all rounder, which is the Château Ponzac 'Maintenant ou jamais'.



Janina Doyle 21:30

That's a good accent. That's good.



Oliver Lea 21:32

Well, I try. It's a, it's a Malbec. And it comes from Cahors and you know, actually having drunk this it doesn't lack intensity or interest or anything like that. Well I know that because we bought it but it's bloody good. And it's, I think a really interesting sort of halfway house between the classic cahors style which is austere and heavily tannic, and needs about 30 years and a cellar before anyone can ever bring themselves to drink it. And not particularly marketable, nor is it good without food. And there's lots of things wrong with it. But it has lots of depth and interest, and it's a bit of a wine geek wine, and then Argentinian Malbecs, which are all about fruits and fun and approachability and giving straight away. And this wine comes from this Château called Château Ponzac, a lovely couple called Matthieu and Virginie. But they also work with this chap called Pascal. He is a bit of a, he's leading a revolution in the Cahors. And what he brings is actually a little bit of influence from Argentina, you know, he says you shouldn't need and you can't really afford to be trying to sell wines that need a lot of cellar ageing. We should be trying to make wines that are actually joyful to begin with, and nice to drink straight away. So bringing a little bit of that fruit further forward, but not going all the way into the Argentinian style and softening out some of the edges and making the tannins easy to deal with. So this is lovely and fruity and it has lovely, softened tannins. It's got structure, it's a little less alcoholic than an Argentinian Malbec. So we're talking sort of 13% instead of some of the huge Argentinian numbers, but it combines that complexity and depth and interest in that sort of, the thing that makes you keep on going back to your glass because there's something that you can't pin down or you get a new flavour or a new smell each time and it's got that, which I think brings from this a French style of dealing with the grape variety.



Janina Doyle 23:27

Okay. So it's a halfway house.



Oliver Lea 23:28

Yes, it's got the fruit. Yeah. And it's, it's a halfway house and they call it Maintenant ou jamais. Which, which is 'now or never' so, you know, they're playing on that idea that actually this is a wine that's ready to go. And I think they've done a tremendous job with it. And probably crucially for winemakers in Cahors, and they're now mainly getting on with this. But it's, they call it a Malbec. And they put that on their label.



Janina Doyle 23:50

Yeah, you haven't chosen to use Côt or even Auxerrois, the other option that they would more likely use in Cahors. Is this more global, just recognition of Malbec is more well known.

**O** Oliver Lea 24:01

I think, even in other parts of France, malbec's more well known than Côt, but certainly if you, if you've got any hope of selling your wine outside of France, then calling it some, you know, local version of I mean, obviously, they probably felt a bit hard done by because they were growing the grapes, but you know, sometime before, but they just had to jump on board, you know, Malbecs incredibly marketable. And it is for us too. And you know, to be quite honest, this, you know, we sell more of this wine because it has Malbec on the label than we would if it didn't.

**J** Janina Doyle 24:33

Fab. We've talked about the two wines that were both drinking. Can we just talk about bag in box for a second and the fact that, you know, this preserves the wines for, you're saying six weeks. I unfortunately won't be able to test that out because it will probably last a few days, ummm...

**O** Oliver Lea 24:48

Well, that's, that's the nice thing for us. It very rarely does get tested. I mean, I should say we say up to six weeks because at the end of the day, it's wine and if you think of wine in a bottle once you've opened it, some wines will go a good few days, some will only go one before we can really notice it. And there are some rules, but they're probably no hard and fast rules. If you chuck them in the fridge, you tend to get more time out of them and things like that. So it's the same with boxes, you know, they weren't all go all the way up to the very last day of that six weeks, but they'll get bloody near. And you know, I think it depends also how you treat them. If, where you're storing them, how warm it is. If it's white, and you have the advantage of being able to put in the fridge, and they are all fridge friendly sizes. So yeah, they'll do four to six weeks pretty easily. That's down to the, you know, the deal with bag in box is it's a collapsible bag inside a box. There's no secrets in the name. And it's a tap that allows the wine to come out without letting in much, if any air. So basically the two things, that, the bag which has a high oxygen barrier, and the tap that doesn't let in much air means that the wine stays protected from air and the oxygen in the air, which is really the end of the day, the sort of enemy of wine. And it, but, you know, keeps it away for longer and that just allows it to stay fresh for longer. So that's the deal, like you know, with how it lasts for longer, and that gives it the convenience factor.

So you can have a wine, you know, I'll have two boxes, sometimes three on the go. At the moment, my wife's pregnant, so it's just me drinking and I didn't really ever worry about getting through the wine. I don't drink huge amounts of wine. But I can have a glass at night or a couple of glasses at night sometimes and chop and change and I'm never thinking about, should I open a bottle? You know, will I finish it? Am I actually, you know, ok no one's going out at the moment because of COVID and all of that but I'm not thinking well I'm not here tomorrow and then I'm away the next day. So I shouldn't open the bottle tonight because I might not finish it, it might, you know....I never have that decision.



Janina Doyle 26:44

It takes out the stress.



Oliver Lea 26:46

It does, I think it in a way makes it more accessible because I think for a long time I would drink during the week, I'd be more likely to have a beer or a gin and tonic even though I prefer a glass of wine, you're not going to do it because of the opening a bottle factor. And in a way that's a bit sad. So actually now with a decent box wine you can have a glass whenever you like it. So it just takes that out, but you've got it on tap whenever you want it, good for large groups, good for a person by themselves and you know fits around the drinker I suppose, rather than the other way around and then it is better value. We found on average between 20 to 30% better value and that's just because we can ship it. It ships much more tidily by the box. We also ship it as bulk wine essentially but in small 1000 litres of bag in box kind of containers and you get better shipping, logistics. You know savings on the way and actually boxes are cheaper than bottles and things like that, so the end result is better wine for your money and then all of those points you're saving logistically, you're also putting in to the environment fewer polluting emissions and cutting on greenhouse gases, principally CO2, so the environmental side is really massive. You know it's almost half a kilo of carbon dioxide equivalent saved with every bottle or three times that with every box so, so it's huge potential carbon saving we did some sort of back of fag packet maths and I can't remember the numbers. It was the equivalent of taking hundreds of 1000s of cars off the road and this, you know huge potential impact. You know, we drink well over a billion bottles of wine in this country a year.



Janina Doyle 28:24

Yes, we do.

- O** Oliver Lea 28:25  
The maths is pretty, it's pretty simple to get the saving. So yeah, we're, you know, obviously convinced and that was why when we came across it in that Christmas, you know, we were already massive fans, so it didn't take us long to, to come to the point of a business plan, I guess.
- J** Janina Doyle 28:41  
So this is guilt free drinking and stress free drinking. It covers all angels.
- O** Oliver Lea 28:45  
Yes, exactly. God Janina, you should do our marketing for us. You've summed it up far better than we ever have.
- J** Janina Doyle 28:50  
I'm available. I'm available all year. So, when you were setting this up and talking about logistics and meeting winemakers and I don't know, organising packaging, there must have been a few disasters. Were there are a few things that went wrong, or a few shocks along the way?
- O** Oliver Lea 29:03  
Oh Shit! Disasters? We didn't have a point where we had wine in bags, and the first part of the bagging process is to bag them. The second part is put those bags. this is just the way we're doing it at that point. There are some fancy lines where the, you know, it all happens at once and with conveyor belts and stuff but that's not how we were rolling. And so we found ourselves with quite a lot of wine in bags and then realised that the bag provider, there's some debate whether the bag provider provided us with the wrong bags or we bought the wrong bags from them
- J** Janina Doyle 29:36  
Still, still unconfirmed.
- O** Oliver Lea 29:38  
Yes, it's it still is. A bone of contention. But we found that they didn't fit in the boxes, so...



Janina Doyle 29:45

And you had already bagged everything.



Oliver Lea 29:46

Well, we had bagged, not everything. We had bagged half of a wine, so that was a problem. But then we couldn't find any other bags, we couldn't change the bottom and it was, it seemed like a disaster that we'd never be able to overcome. We found a way through somehow. So yeah...



Janina Doyle 30:02

Well you didn't lose it.



Oliver Lea 30:03

No, we didn't. But we just, there were things like that that seemed to happen all the time, because you're basically inventing everything from scratch. Yeah, those sorts of things just, they come along, and they make you feel like your whole world is about to, well, it has been turned upside down. But you know, that's a really nice thing about being in a business with siblings, with people that you know incredibly well, trust very well. And, you know, we're all there for each other. And we make a pretty good team. So we can find ways through this. And then having people like Justin, who's got this weird sage wisdom about him. And their ability to sort of cut through all the bullshit and say, Have you thought about this and be like, Oh, my God, we spent the whole of, whole of yesterday discussing this with each other. We never once thought of that now seemingly incredibly simple solution. So yeah, it makes you make pretty good team. So we've, we've got through everything so far.



Janina Doyle 30:59

So have you been to all the vineyards and visited the wineries of the wines that you're doing?



Oliver Lea 31:04

No, God, no. So I, I would love you know, I think when we set the company up, my initial thought was, this is great. So we're going into a business where I'm going to spend at least half of my time in sort of softtop classic cars touring around the South France driving from

you know, Château to Château and then maybe heading down to Tuscany. And, and it's, if you tried to do that, you just wouldn't taste enough wine. That's the problem, you know, we've tasted 1000s of wines, and you need a sort of more efficient way of tasting them, then travelling from one site to another. So the other side of it is, we've been to quite a few of them, we know them all very well. And, you know, some of them are contacts of Justin's from the past. Lots of them aren't. But you know, Justin spent a lot of time in France, and we've got some base there. You know, we do visit them, but it's never me, it's always Justin. So, you know, that I think the sad truth is, I would rather, if we like the people, and we like the wine, and maybe Justin has visited, or maybe we've met them somewhere else, but you know, the paying for a plane ticket for me to go and visit and get some photos and say, I've been there and then come back, I mean, all of that money basically goes on the price of the wine. So I think...



Janina Doyle 32:19

Thank you for not leaving the house and letting us buy more affordable wine, we appreciate it.



Oliver Lea 32:24

Well, I'm glad, I'm glad.



Janina Doyle 32:27

Thank you for your sacrifice.



Oliver Lea 32:30

I mean, I hope to be able to do a bit more of it. But it's it's not a rule that we have to go to each of them. And, and actually, you know, one of the ways that you narrow things down and taste a lot of wines is by going to fairs. So we, for example, especially with French wine, and there's a very high concentration of wines from the south of France that are organic, that we could spend five weeks travelling around to tick off, you know, a handful of those wineries and taste their wines. And yet they're all at Millésime Bio, which is an organic wine fair, that happens in Montpellier. So it would really be a huge waste of time driving, you know, to taste those wines, because you're not going to get them all. In fact, you know, Justin might taste, I've been with Justin and Fleur who is our buyer as well. And you know, those guys are machines, they can taste 200 wines in a day, get really accurate notes, get it all into their iPhones or notepads or whatever. And you're at the fair like that for three days. And that's an awful lot of wine.



Janina Doyle 33:26

It's actually pretty hard work. Yeah.



Oliver Lea 33:28

It's really hard work. I was amazed you know, the skill that you develop. I think the thing that amazed me first was the fact that Justin seemed to be able to hit a spittoon from well over a metre away.



Janina Doyle 33:39

Great party trick!



Oliver Lea 33:40

Yeah it is because when I tried to do it from you know, half a foot away, I still get it all down my beard so, yeah it's that and he carries around a breathalyser. Yeah it's because he you know, he'll sometimes he'll need to drive, but he's always like 0.0. He doesn't swallow any of it, it's amazing. So it's a real skill. But what's incredible is then coming back to his notes, six months later, if we've bought one of those wines, one of those many wines tasted, whilst my head was starting to spin and I won't be able to remember which one it was, his notes will be the first place that we go to refer to when we're thinking about what we, how we write the wine up. Now we will have tasted it three four or five times after that but he's got his original notes and they're always bloody bang on and he's saying oh a little bit of cinnamon bark or a little bit of bergamot or juniper something and you are like oh god, I am only just starting to get that now. I've tasted it half a dozen times and you've told me and how did you get it all straightaway but you know, that's why he's a Master of Wine.



Janina Doyle 34:39

Yeah, have you learned a lot from him as maybe for wine tastings or just about wine regions?



Oliver Lea 34:45

From Justin and I have to say Fleur as well. So Fleur came on board recently, Justin's our Head of Wine, Fleur's our day to day buyer, as it were, and they both buy together really, you know, they do a lot of work together and we're hugely lucky to have found Fleur who

has been working with Justin for a number of years. She's a Master of Wine student and a scholarship winner, Freixenet scholarship, and Millésimes scholarship winner. So she's an expert in wine probably quite soon to become a Master of Wine, who knows. So we're quite heavily loaded on experts. I think the first thing I learned from Justin, and probably what stays with me the most, is this general confidence he has, and therefore, he's completely happy, not just admit, but just to let you know, when he doesn't know something. You know, that this is such a wide subject, that there's no way that you know, even a Master of Wine knows everything about, you know, not just all of the wines, but all of the appellation rules, which are so complicated all over the world. And there's, there's too much to keep in your head at any one time. So that confidence, just to be able to say, I don't know that actually, I'll get back to you is something that I learned from him pretty quickly. Because it's just a great big, fascinating world with a huge number of grape varieties, producers, regions, rules and it's complicated and big and no one can know it...



Janina Doyle 36:02

Absolutely. So what about the wines in the range then. You've got a Gruner Veltliner, which I absolutely adore. You've got a Furmint in fact. I mean, do you have any favourites in the wine range? Are you allowed to have favourites? Or are they like children?



Oliver Lea 36:16

No, it's pretty hard. No, I think at any one time I have a favourite. Right now I'd say the Malbec but there's probably because I'm drinking it.



Janina Doyle 36:24

Okay, well, I'm excited that you have an English Bacchus in the range. Yes, Three Choirs was one of the first vineyards I went to see, many many years ago in Gloucestershire. And it's just great that they're going from strength to strength. They're an English winery, I always think that kind of stays in the background.



Oliver Lea 36:41

I agree, you know, they've got lovely labels, but it's not glitzy and over marketed, but actually the Bacchus. You know, we did tremendously well with it last year. It's a lovely wine. The art shows a blend that we did collaboratively with them. So it's their wines. But we have collaborated over the final blend which is really cool to watch. You know, Justin, we've done it two years running with Justin and Martin the director of wine at Three Choirs, the winemaker. Seeing them going back and forth with a little bit of this, and a

little bit less. And it's principally the same wine from the same grape just picked at a different time from a different part of the vineyard. And you see this sort of wine changing and morphing in front of you and going in one direction then back and small percentages here and there, suddenly making a massive difference until it everything ties together and it's a little bit of alchemy and you know some of its science, some of its winemaker knowledge, and there is almost like a sprinkling of you know, weird fairy dust or something but it just comes together. It's really cool. Intuition I suppose.

J

Janina Doyle 37:47

Well I suppose you said like how interesting it is to take say, Bacchus, which is the grape variety and pick it at different times. But I was interested when I've done some work in vineyards just the difference maybe three days will make you know the acidity will be less the richness of the fruit and the sugar content will be higher and it's shocking how different is, and I've never done it enough, but just for the few times I've tried the flavours in the grapes, you can notice it so yeah, I think that's that's probably quite cool experience.

O

Oliver Lea 38:11

I think it's yeah, that, choosing the picking date and getting that right is so crucial because you're balancing the concentration and the sugar content and the acid and if you go too late you lose one and get more of the other and you know too early, it's in the other direction. So getting that bang on.

J

Janina Doyle 38:27

Yeah, Pinot Gris, Pinot Grigio is probably a perfect example. I always say to people, if you drink Pinot Grigio from maybe Italy, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia compared to a Pinot Gris in Alsace, you'll see the massive difference between high acidity and not that much flavour, compared to so less acidity and concentration, honey, peach, apricot, it's, that's always my perfect example to showcase picking dates, right?

O

Oliver Lea 38:53

Yes, and then you get, you get wines from both regions where actually because they have vineyards with lower yield, vines with lower yields because they put a little bit more care and effort along the way and because they actually choose slightly different picking dates, they go halfway and they get you know, the more skillful ones will, in the Alsace will get plenty of acid if they've gone better altitude or you know, what, what have you and so,

and the same in the northeast of Italy, that actually the better winemakers can get more fruit, more flavour, more concentration and then do other things to get more body or texture to round it off. And yet they maintain that freshness and it's really difficult. The one thing with Bacchus which is really I think interesting for me is that 2018 was when we had the big hot summer was sort of discussed in a lot of wine journals and trade magazines as being this bumper year. And it was, in terms of volumes, it was high yielding. But having a really hot summer isn't that great for Bacchus because Bacchus' speciality is being able to deal with relatively cool climate and all of us sudden the winemakers are faced with a really tricky decision because they couldn't leave it quite as long as they otherwise would. They needed to pick a little earlier. But then they were starting to have slightly washed out wine. So they were, you know, it was much harder finding a picking date and really the 2018 Bacchi(?) If that's even a thing, that were good. Yeah, were the ones that had more concentration and the winemakers had put more effort into when to pick and what to do with it thereafter. So yeah, it's really, I think, actually, you know, this ever warming climate in the UK, the wine that's come to the fore as our speciality in Bacchus might, you know, might end up suffering a little bit, because Bacchus from Germany is, you know, they can't make wine, varietal wine from Bacchus, which is where it came from, because it's too flabby. So yeah, and Germany is not an awful lot warmer than here.



Janina Doyle 40:49

Well, I think I've said this before. I've even said this on this podcast, they predict in like another 50 years, we're going to be growing Malbec, and not even just down in the south of England apparently Malbec up towards Scotland or something I don't know. So yeah. Interesting. Interesting thought. If that's what we're growing, what's everyone else gonna be growing around the world?



Oliver Lea 41:06

Well, they probably would have moved on to pineapples or something.



Janina Doyle 41:09

Yeah, pineapple wine. Interesting. I hope not! So to sum up, but just my question to you is, what do you think is the future for bag in box? Have you seen a massive movement towards people changing from bottled wine to box wine? Are people still reluctant to try? What's your feelings?



Oliver Lea 41:27

Gosh that's a huge question. I mean, I think we've taken, we've taken a big punt on the fact that the future is, in one way or another alternative packaging. I think, at the very least. I went to a forum called the Sustainability of Wine forum, two years ago. It was the inaugural event. And it's really good, interesting. I think it was one day, lots of credible speakers, lots of stuff about water tables and how to save water throughout and how to make wine with different equipment to cut on carbon footprint and a whole day of, you know, interesting subjects like organic fertilisers and stuff. And then the final bit was packaging. Sort of shoehorned in at the end. And I was also shoehorned into that panel as a, as a last minute substitute speaker. And it was really interesting. There's a guy, it was all Chatham House Rules, so I can't assign any quotes to anyone. But there was a guy who said, You know, I think we all know that the only way that wine can make a significant step towards sustainability is to stop using glass bottles. Everyone in the room nodded and it was accepted, you could see that it was accepted in the room. And then the subject moved on, you know, it's, there's, the big wineries have to put wine into bottles, it's in the small winemakers definitely do because it's not on them to market alternative packaging. It's on startups like us, I guess. But I think in the end, the message is, I can feel it growing weight, I can feel people getting behind it, the sustainability factor and the value and convenience, but mainly that environmental factor is such an easy way to save. And yet obviously you can't do it if you can't find wines that you like. So the first step is for people in our position to put nice wines in boxes to gain the trust by having a lot of collating and curating a cool selection and range of wines, interesting wines. And that should continue to grow it out. And this year, I think we've really started to see a bit of a green revolution coming out of the back of COVID. And it's definitely gaining weight. So I think it will and we didn't really meet resistance interestingly. I mean, wine lovers, people that are into wine, they're already won over because you know, they understand it. Yeah, they've heard of it so many times. And actually, they're just excited to find good wines in boxes.



Janina Doyle 43:42

And this is I can vouch for that. I would like to categorically say this is a very good, and I also want to say, which obviously makes sense, that as I've had it in the glass, and I've been swirling around, it's been getting better and better. I know it seems a bit weird taking a bag in box wine and then what, pouring it into a Decanter. No harm in that. Absolutely no harm in that for what you're gonna drink. You know, if you know you drink half of bottles worth. There is three bottles in this lovely yummy bag.



Oliver Lea 44:08

Yeah, no, we definitely do. It's just like any other wines. If something needs a bit of air, then

give it a bit of air. And if you're not sure, we would always say to our customers, if you're not sure ask us but actually the best thing to do is if you're not sure to splash it around a bit and see if it gets better, you know, like sometimes you just have to take a punt and see how it goes.

**J** Janina Doyle 44:23

Well yeah, I personally think that with a young wine you can't go wrong. It's with the older wines that may be if it's that old and that fragile, yeah, okay, maybe you could damage it, but either a young wine, nothing's gonna happen, or it might open up so there's no harm - go for it.

**O** Oliver Lea 44:38

Well, it's interesting is that some misconception that I think lots of people have that old serious wines need decanting. To a certain extent you do decant them to leave the sediment in the bottle, but you would normally decant it into sort of a high sided and very gently high sided Decanter so it doesn't get much oxygen because they really don't need it. You don't want to give them a lot of time because they're fragile by that stage, starting to deteriorate rather than improve. Yeah, I agree on young wines, you splash it around, and they'll almost always improve.

**J** Janina Doyle 45:07

Absolutely. Well, anybody who is interested, you can go to <https://www.bibwine.co.uk/>. And you can see the whole range. You guys also do little tasting packs as well where people get like these tiny little pouches and try like six different wines, which is very cool.

**O** Oliver Lea 45:23

We've really enjoyed doing the pouches. In what happened is, because we had planned to open this bar. And then for obvious reasons couldn't, we had a lot of wine lined up. And we wanted, you know, we had been looking forward to standing behind the bar chatting about wines. And we also thought that it was a good idea that people were able to taste our wines. So with everyone stuck at home, we thought, Well, why don't we provide some entertainment and also an opportunity to taste our wines, and give us you know, the opportunity to chat about them. And we bought some little pouches and filled them up and sent them out. And it went really well. Feedback was great. So we've developed it further. And I think we'll be doing it regardless of lockdowns or anything like that, because it's very popular. And the idea of tasting wines at home I think is, has grown and is

successful. It's just easy, accessible and fun. So, and then also they're pouches rather than little bottles. So again, you know, you're not having to cart around loads of glass, which is heavier, but also requires smelting down in a glass furnace, which is incredibly bad for the environment. So you know, still ticking that same box.



Janina Doyle 46:28

Can anybody outside of the UK get these? Or is it still at the moment exclusive just to us?



Oliver Lea 46:34

It is exclusive. Yeah. I'm sorry. Yeah, it's, um, yeah, just because we haven't got that set up, you now we are nowhere near it. We're learning with the pouches as well. Our first pouches were great, and people loved them. But the longevity of the wine was a bit of an issue. Any time you've got a small volume of wine, it's going to struggle to maintain its freshness for a long time. So we've now developed a second batch of pouches. And these have got an amazing, what's called OTR, oxygen transmission rate, super low. It's just like glass almost. And so these will do a couple of weeks. But still, it makes the logistics, a couple of weeks, at least. Yeah, the logistics are more challenging because of that.



Janina Doyle 47:17

Well it's interesting that anyway, it's evolving. It's changing. So you went from something that didn't last for more than a few days to now something that lasts a few weeks. So everyone in Europe, my friends in America, wait, wait for it.



Oliver Lea 47:28

Yes, yeah, We have had a little bit of interest, you'd be better off filling them in, if you wanted to distribute them in America, you would be better off filling them there. But anyway, yeah, technical challenges.



Janina Doyle 47:38

Exactly. Ollie, thank you so much for just discussing this really cool project. The boxes are amazing. The wine tastes delicious. And I think you and the siblings, whoever decided it, ha ha, it was a great decision. So good luck with this bar, maybe?

**O** Oliver Lea 47:53  
Yeah. Still on the cards. We will see, not immediately, for obvious reasons. But we will see. But thank you for having me and putting up with my going on and on about box wines. And it's been really fun. So yeah, thank you very much.

**J** Janina Doyle 48:05  
Thank you. And we'll speak against it.

**O** Oliver Lea 48:07  
Brilliant. Cheers Janina.

**J** Janina Doyle 48:12  
So after that chat, I started looking up a little bit more information about weight of glass bottles, and I was sadly not surprised to see that glass actually accounts for 60% of the weight when you're talking about a case of 12 bottles. And then of course, keep in mind afterwards, you need to melt down that glass. So that extra energy needed there as well. Really interesting. If you look at a pallet of Boxed Wine, it weighs 30% less than a standard pallet of wine that's in glass bottles. But on top of that, it can hold 80% more wine. So I'll leave you guys to do the maths. Now, I hope that chat convinced you all of the reasons why you should get yourself a BIB wine co bag in box. Well obviously if you're in the UK. If you are listening further afield I know of BiBoViNo, sells in France, Switzerland, the West Indies, Thailand, even the Caribbean, sadly not to America. I know a lot of my listeners are in America. And US actually in fact is a very big market for bag in box apparently so, any of you in America, tell me, Are there any companies over there achieving greatness? I would love to know. So whilst this year is still uncertain, and we need to stay strong and positive. I thought that for this episode. This quote I found on the website of Julianna glass was quite apt, and it says:

**J** Janina Doyle 49:35  
"Good things take time. Stay patient and positive. Everything is coming together once it's fermented."

**J** Janina Doyle 49:43  
Well, I'm pretty sure that's not the original quote. But I think I like this one better. Now,

may I take this opportunity just to wish you all a Happy New Year. No matter what, we can still write our own story. So I hope you'll choose happiness this year. Stay strong mentally, find those little reasons to be grateful and create powerful and meaningful connections and thank you, thank you all for your support in 2020. Six months of doing these podcasts solo and it's been super hard work, but so much fun and your comments are always so appreciated and I can only ask you kindly to subscribe and share this podcast if you're enjoying it and you haven't done it already. So feel free to get in touch by email that's [janina@eatsleepwinerepeat.co.uk](mailto:janina@eatsleepwinerepeat.co.uk) or Instagram [@eatsleep\\_winerepeat](https://www.instagram.com/eatsleep_winerepeat) You have all my details in the show notes plus the link to the transcript. Also don't forget you can come join the team at [Patreon.com/EatSleepWineRepeat](https://Patreon.com/EatSleepWineRepeat) to listen to exclusive episodes just for Patreon members. So, see you there? And until next time, cheers to you!