

Ep 69: Wine Fraud and tips to identify Counterfeited wine bottles with Siobhan Turner MW (Part 1)



Janina Doyle 00:00:07 Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just can not get enough of the good stuff. I'm 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!

Hello to my lovely wine lovers. Welcome back to another episode. Now I have another Master of Wine on the podcast, Siobhan Turner. Now she recently just passed her Master of Wine. So of course, we're going to talk about her journey and her challenges. What's awesome about this episode is she's going to really give you a bit of advice on how to handle blind tasting as that was one of her biggest challenges. So really, the way she goes about it, how she breaks down the grape variety and of course the important theory behind it. So you're gonna learn a little bit more in detail about blind tasting, and then we're going to talk about counterfeits. Now when it comes to wine fraud, it is a very sad fact that there are thousands and thousands of bottles out there that are fakes and Siobhan Turner certainly knows better than the majority, as she has been working within the world of wine fraud and identifying these bottles and fighting the good fight for several years. In fact, she worked on Rudy Kurniawan's wine fraud trial, reviewing the physical evidence. And for any of you who don't know who Rudy Kurniawan is, well, he is most certainly the biggest wine fraudster of the world to our knowledge. Now, if you want to know a little bit more about him and the story that got him quite rightly thrown behind bars, check out the documentary on Netflix called Sour grapes. It will certainly open up your eyes to the darker and more sinister part of our wine industry. Now, apparently, they think 10,000 bottles of Rudy Kurniawan's fakes are still out there, most likely in somebody's cellar after them spending thousands on it, which just is a really sad, devastating thought. So, to keep the mood slightly lighter, let's go over to the chat with Siobhan now.

Siobhan, thank you so much for making some time and coming to talk to me about your wine journey and all of your master of wine experiences. So thank you. Welcome.

Siobhan Turner MW Thank you. My pleasure.

Janina Doyle So I'm going to start with a very, very standard kind of boring, but it could be interesting depending on what you say. The question is, how did you get into wine?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:02:57 I can't remember a time when I wasn't aware of wine, or what made it... I'm not going to say I was able to discern necessarily good from excellent, but certainly good from bad at a young age, it was just something that we had on the table. And when I was probably 14 or 15, I would get a little sip and we'd talk a little bit about it, you know, neither of my parents are particularly wine snobs. It was just there. And it was something my dad had a little bit of interest in and, and it was always

something that I had a bit of interest in and being, um, Canadian. I had to pay for my university. So I funded that and the lifestyle I wanted by waiting tables. And I learned more that way as well.

Janina Doyle 00:03:56 Ok. The same as me.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:03:58 It took me years to earn as much before I, after having gone into being a chartered accountant, during my chartered accountancy training. It wasn't until I was after it, after a year qualified that I was earning as much as I was earned, working about 20 hours a week in a bar in Montreal.

Janina Doyle 00:04:20 Oh my God. Do you know what? You're talking about tips and stuff aren't you? Oh, I miss those days seriously. I mean, I still think there were times. I mean, we're talking like I've stopped being a waitress maybe 10 years ago. And I still think 10 years ago, there were times when I was making more money then, than I am now. And I think definitely, at least I have a career that I'm progressing in now. Oh, thanks everyone for the tips. We appreciate it. Now, during that time we were working in a bar rather than as a waitress.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:04:51 I was working. I was working as a waitress in a...

Janina Doyle 00:04:54 Cocktail bar. That sounds rather cliché. Love that everyone listening, they're singing it right now. So were you exposed to even more wine, even though it was cocktails a lot of the time. Where you're drinking wine?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:05:05 I needed to know it. I needed to know something. Um, so it, it was a restaurant and cocktail bar and yes, I needed to know what was in a Manhattan or a Daiquiri, but I also needed to be able to know if someone wanted a Chablis, that if we didn't have a Chablis, that it was sensible to offer them another Chardonnay rather than a Merlot.

Janina Doyle 00:05:31 Okay. So it got your interest up. Certainly. So now you're a chartered accountant. When did you then go across to being executive director of the Institute of Master of Wine? How did that happen?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:05:43 I'd left my previous job having really, I think, completely burnt out working in investor relations. And I was looking for another similar job and had a company that was very interested in me that I won't name, but a very, very reputable company. Um, and in fact they did offer me the job. Um, but as I was, I was still looking, I wasn't convinced that this was the one for me, largely location. Um, and I was, this was the days when job adverts were still in the Sunday times. And I literally folded up the Sunday times newspaper having decided that I wasn't going to apply for this job I'd been staring at. Turned it over. And there was this tiny and I mean, probably business card sized ad, quite badly worded, that caught my eye. And I thought, oh, well, that sounds like fun. And I had already done the first of the WSET courses and sorry, so what is now level two, I think at the time was introductory. Um, and had signed up for what was an advanced and I think is now level three and was about to start that in a couple of weeks time. And I thought, oh, and I applied for it, or, and the salary was slightly less than half of what I'd been offered by this other company. And I thought about it a little bit more and talked to them up to half because that felt important. And, um, and we went from there. So I started in March, beginning of March, 2004.

Janina Doyle 00:07:41 Wow. Okay. And what were you doing as...what does an executive director of the Institute of Masters of Wine do?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:07:46 I used to say that I did everything from strategic direction to the washing up and that's actually true.

Janina Doyle So you make, a damn good cup of tea, right?

Siobhan Turner MW Uh, I'm not so good at tea, coffee yes. Um, so we had, uh, an education program and I had obviously a team of people working with me who overseeing this, but there, there were sort of membership relations, external relations, the education and the exam, is how I would really divide it up. Plus, you know, what I would term regulatory thing, so legal and financial compliance. Um, and, and it was all of that. It was trying to raise the profile of the Institute, trying to, um, raise the, or, or solidify the financial platform it operated on. Bring a greater level of professionalism to the Institute and really try and I think bring it into the 21st century in terms of what it stood for and how it represented the wine world at large and the professional wine world. And I think, you know, we made a huge, huge leap in my nine years there. By the time I left, it was absolutely time for me to go and for someone else to come on and take it, you know, still further. But I think it, I'm very, very proud of what, what I did there.

Janina Doyle 00:09:22 Now you said part of that was helping with, I assume the organizing and the planning of the exams. So you're there, seeing all of these people doing their Master of Wine exams, right? Exhausted, stressed, probably non brushed hair. Who knows. Did that, is that what inspired you to do your own Master of Wine? Like, how did that happen?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:09:47 It was more meeting the people who had become Masters of Wine, who are collectively a hugely inspiring group of people. And I I'm leaving myself out of this. These are the people I met when I was there. I just found them so committed. So broadly intelligent, um, so aware of what was going on and so interesting. And I thought, you know, I'd love to be able to, you know, be part of this group. And maybe it was slightly arrogant on my part to think I could.

Janina Doyle 00:10:34 Well, you passed.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:10:36 I did in the end.

Janina Doyle 00:10:39 I would take the arrogant straight out. No. So, so with this inspiration, you started your journey. Was it harder than you ever imagined or actually working within the Institute where you fully prepared?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:10:54 I don't know if anyone's fully prepared. Um, I went into it with an advantage that I think some people do not have, which is that I knew it was bloody hard work. Um, and that it wasn't going to be achieved by doing, you know, a half a job on it. There was something I always said to the students when I was speaking to them on their first course day, which is that this isn't, you're not going to find the time to do this. It's not, you know, hidden as a mysterious present under the Christmas tree or shoved in the back of the closet with your summer shoes. It's, it's got to be carved out and it's sometimes got to be carved out of some quite painful parts of your life. And, and that's really important that you recognize that. So I did go in knowing this and I think that is, is really important. Um, and I also went in knowing that, you know, most people don't pass everything first time. So it wasn't, uh, although obviously, you know, I did pass my theory first time.

Janina Doyle Congratulations.

Siobhan Turner MW Thank you. I think knowing myself and knowing my strengths, I probably would have been gutted if I had not managed to do that. Um, the tasting was, was a struggle for me and I needed to really, you know, challenge myself and find different ways of working in doing things. And that was, you know, a valuable lesson, but it was also that I knew this is what I needed to do. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:12:31 So with your struggles, with the blind, tasting it for anybody listening as an example who really thinks, oh God, I really am. I can't understand the difference between this grape variety and that. And I'm, I'm struggling as well with my WSETs for instance. What did you do apart from taste, taste, taste, taste, taste?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:12:50 Someone said to me that there's a limit to the usefulness of blind tasting, and they're absolutely right. You need to be able to do it. It's important, but it's almost like if you're training for a marathon, not everything you do is a race. You need to, unless you think, otherwise I'm not a marathon runner, but my husband is, and he would have a training program and he might race, you know, once every couple of weeks he might go race park run as a 5k, and he would do a few 10 Ks and he'd do a half marathon race. And occasionally he'd do a 20 mile race, but not, those were probably once every three or four weeks. And his rest of his training was very different. So sometimes it would be a long slow run, and sometimes it would be little bursts. And I realized that I needed to take the same approach and a friend of mine who actually used to be the, um, program officer at the Institute, a man called Peter Csizmadia. And he, um, he said to me, you've, they, he was speaking about the students. And he said, the ones who succeed are the ones who look at it as marathon training and not sprint.

Janina Doyle 00:14:14 Oh how funny, exactly what you'd already kind of started setting out in your brain. Right?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:14:19 Yeah. And so I realized I needed to change the way I was approaching it. And I still did my 12 wine blind tastings, but I did actually an awful lot more working on the theory side. So going back over all my tastings, I have notebooks and notebooks and notebooks, but going back over those, and then coming down with a, a list of what might define Chardonnay for me and what the range of alcohol I would expect in Chardonnay is, what the range of acid, um, what making characteristics might I find if I'm looking at Chardonnay, um, what colors would I think of if I'm looking at Chardonnay, uh, what aromatic notes would, I think of, if I'm looking at Chardonnay and then where in the world would I find this and, and what are the ranges that I'm looking at? So if I'm looking at a Chablis and yes, the world is changing, but generally I'm probably looking at alcohol of around 12 and a half to 13%. So if I'm tasting a wine and it's 14 and a half percent, it's not a Chablis. Um, and really almost treating it like a theory exam. With that practical component. And I, I said earlier that for me theory was a strong point. So it took a while, but once I realized this is what I needed to do, I got there.

Janina Doyle 00:15:53 Ok, no, but that's so interesting because basically for anyone listening, yes, keep tasting wines. But ultimately if you spend so long just going, oh, okay. Can I smell strawberries? Oh, you know, has this got high acidity. It's irrelevant. If you don't actually genuinely know the difference between a Cabernet Sauvignon and a Cabernet Franc, for instance. Yeah. Okay. Very good. Everyone get to the books.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:16:17 I think it's got to be based on your own tasting knowledge, but then you've got to sit and analyze it so that you, and different people will have different ways of doing it. But I had these notebooks that have everything written down in them.

Janina Doyle Are you getting them now?

Siobhan Turner MW I am getting them now.

Janina Doyle 00:16:35 I can hear you, off you go. You said there was so many notebooks, how many do you have to carry back?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:16:39 I have three. I have one for, well, I distilled it down to three. So I have my tasting notebooks, which is just, you know, where I would make notes of every wine I tasted. And then I would distill it down into, um, usually two pages. So I'm looking at the first one for me and it's Pinot Noir. And so I've got color, pale to medium, dark strawberry to medium cherry. And then the nose, fresh berries, raspberry, black cherry, floral, perfume, cream, lifted. Pointing to stems: whole berries, Oak spice: pointing to vanilla and clove, and then details of the palette, where it's found, which regions, what criteria are those regions. And then I would write, and I would work on this. So it only went into my book when I thought it was perfect, but I would write what I considered to be a perfect note.

Janina Doyle 00:17:36 Wow, Okay.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:17:37 Explaining why, wine X was Pinot Noir or wines X, Y, and Z were Pinot Noir.

Janina Doyle 00:17:43 Gosh, we all need to come over to your house and sit down and have, are you running any classes on tasting, that might be an idea? I don't know, just, just, just planting that seed.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:17:52 Well it was two Masters of Wine, who really got me thinking this analytically about it. Um, Beverly Blanning and Marina Gayan ran some classes and, and it was a bit of an eye-opener for me. And it really changed the way I approached my tasting and for the better.

Janina Doyle 00:18:10 Very, very interesting. So once you got over that, you able to move forward. Was that your biggest challenge, do you think, the tasting aspect?

Siobhan Turner MW Yes, absolutely. Yes.

Janina Doyle What was the best part of doing the master of wines?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:18:22 Um, it was the comradery with my fellow travelers on the journey. Um, it was walking into a room in Rust in Austria and looking around me and thinking these people are going to be with me in very, very intimate ways. I know you put yourself out there and you are very often wrong, especially at the beginning. And you have to be willing to be vulnerable, very vulnerable, um, and getting to know them and making some lifelong friends that way. And, and the, so those are my fellow students, but also the MWs who were so generous with their time and their expertise and their joy when something good happened.

Janina Doyle 00:19:12 Knowing how hard it is to do. Of course, I think that's the point. I think for me, the thing that inspires me, talking with Master of Wines and just talking about your journey, is it is something that is that hard, it's like, you know, whatever doesn't kill you makes you strong. Right? And

it's almost like you literally get knocked down, knocked down. You are literally at rock bottom, as you said, like, you still need to be studying and taking exams in times that perhaps something else is going on in life that really either deserves your attention or perhaps actually is taking away your attention and your focus. And it's not even, it's not even about learning about wine. That seems to be just one aspect. It's learning about yourself as a human being and the internal fire and the internal strength and those friends I truly can understand from talking with so many Master of Wines is that they are probably the only people that really, even your partner, they're incredible, without your partner, you perhaps would never have succeeded. Patient?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:20:16 He was just unbelievable. One day I found him in our cellar and he was, he was cataloging all the wines in our cellar. And he then sent the spreadsheet over to a very, very close friend of mine. Who's a Master of Wine who lives in the state. I call her my sister from another mother. Um, and he sent it to Sherry and he was like, I want to put together tasting packs for Siobhan, what do I do? To actually do that.

Janina Doyle 00:20:53 He's a keeper.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:20:55 Oh, he really is.

Janina Doyle 00:20:56 And he stayed with you through the whole Master of Wine. So he's definitely a keeper anyway.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:21:00 Oh, well, yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:21:01 That goes without saying, oh, do you know? It's it is. It's beautiful. Isn't it? Okay. Let's take you to that incredible beautiful moment when you pass, which I would like to point out is only recently, isn't it? So what day did you find out you passed the Master of Wine?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:21:16 Uh, the 27th of August at 8:03am.

Janina Doyle 00:21:23 And that is, it's like a, the birth of a child. You never forget. Right?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:21:27 Well, I'd said, they'd asked when, um, when they could call and we were actually up in Scotland and we were staying in a hotel in my husband's family village, but we were just there for two nights, but it's on, um, on the edge of a hill and the village itself has a really, really, really limited cell phone service if you happen to be standing in the right place on a sunny day with a benign wind. So I knew that I needed to get up high and there was no cell phone service in the hotel at all, or very, very little so I, I went up, um, I went up the hill that this was on the side off. This hotel was on the side off. And the cloud was down, and later on it was an absolutely glorious day, but the cloud was firmly down. So I climbed up this hill and I'm quite warmly dressed, but I get to the top of the hill and I stand there at, at seven o'clock in the morning and it's chilly and damp. And I'm sort of stomping around getting colder and colder and colder and at eight o'clock or just before eight, I think they're not. And I knew another friend of mine was expecting a call at eight and I thought, oh God, they're going to be on the phone with her now. And I just can't do this. Oh, I'm going to have to go down and see if I can find another place in the village, because I just can't do this. And I, I started to go down and the phone rang and it was Adrian Garforth and I had to scramble back up very quickly. Cause he was, he was very scratchy indeed, but it was good news.

Janina Doyle 00:23:14 And you were by yourself in that moment?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:23:17 I was by myself. It's um, my father-in-law's ashes are actually scattered on the top of the hill, so he was the first person to find out.

Janina Doyle 00:23:27 Okay, beautiful. So you weren't alone and how does it, how did it feel?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:23:32 Um, it was, I'm just, sorry. I'm always tearing up your memory of it. It was, um, it was just this huge relief that my faith in myself hadn't been misplaced. That I had actually managed to do this. I think relief was very, definitely the primary emotion and then sort of a burgeoning joy, but it's very, both are still there. Um, the joy is, is coming out a little bit more. I, I don't think it's ever going to settle down. Every once in a while. I got the, so Riedel are one of the supporters of the Institute and they send all the new MWs, um, a collection of wineglass. And I knew this because several of my friends who'd passed, some had started long before I'd been on the journey, but, um, they they'd got these and they'd taken pictures of themselves with these piles of wine, wine glasses. And there were literally moments when it's like, I have to keep going, cause I have to get those glasses.

Janina Doyle 00:24:45 Oh my gosh. That was your trophy.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:24:49 I knew that sounds incredibly superficial, but sometimes you have to seize on, what's motivating you at that moment.

Janina Doyle 00:24:56 I fully understand. Oh, that's brilliant. Have they arrived?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:24:59 They've arrived and I've not found space for them all yet. So there are, um, 18 glasses in boxes sitting on top of a, a sort of cabinet with nowhere to go just yet. But I can see them when I'm sitting at my dining table and probably once a day, I sort of look at them and go to my husband, look at my glasses, and point to them. I'm a Master of Wine, you know?

Janina Doyle 00:25:23 And he's like, I know I was there with you. And so you should. Now, what did you celebrate with, what drink? What did you crack open?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:25:31 Well, I packed a bottle of champagne just in case, but I texted my husband on my way back down this Hill. I should say it took me an hour to walk up the hill, so it's not a small hill. Um, so it took me a bit less time to walk down

Janina Doyle 00:25:47 Much quicker. You're really running and sliding like with joy.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:25:51 And when I got back down, there was a bottle of Bollinger RD, 2004.

Janina Doyle 00:25:56 That's all right. That's all right. Isn't it?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:25:58 Yeah, that was pretty good. And the, um, the hotel was just brilliant. They, they let us serve it and, um, there it's, it's a wonderful place. It really is the Darroch Learg in Ballater if anyone's interested.

Janina Doyle 00:26:13 Very good. So when you pass your Master of Wine, they'll look after you. There you go.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:26:17 Exactly. And they've got a lovely wine list.

Janina Doyle 00:26:20 Oh, beautiful. So now let's go on to another subject, which you did after you finished working at the Institute of Master of Wines. You started working with Maureen Downey, who is all about wine fraud and authentication. Are you still working with her today?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:26:37 Yes, I am. She's one of my major clients.

Janina Doyle 00:26:40 Fantastic. So I love this subject because I don't even know where to start. And I think for many people in less, they have a cellar and they've been collecting for many years. The average wine consumer probably found out about counterfeits by watching the documentary on Netflix called Sour grapes, which was all about Rudy Kurniawan and his shocking, but pretty excellent counterfeits. So, it's disgusting to our industry, but the way he was able to do it is, um, is remarkable.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:27:17 I'd say actually his counterfeits per se are not, if you're looking at the let's call it artistry of the, for example, um, they weren't that good. What was good was his con artistry

Janina Doyle 00:27:34 With people and the way he was. Okay. Okay. Interesting. So as a, I suppose, can I call you a specialist now in authentication? As a specialist then in being able to identify counterfeits, you're saying that his bottles were not actually that good. So, so why, what are you looking for? What is it that, how do you find a wine...?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:27:57 You are looking for a number of things. Um, obviously you're wanting something that's, if you are being a counterfeiter, you want something that is going to resemble the original as closely as possible. And there are some people, particularly some we think are operating out of Northern Italy at the moment who are making bottles that are very, very good counterfeits. Indeed, they're still obvious, but they're harder to spot. What people are doing, there are two principle ways of counterfeiting wine. The first is to start from the bottom up and to, you know, get a bottle, a label, you know, create, you're probably not going to blow your own bottle, but you're going to, um, start with a bottle, uh, create a label, um, and really put something together that is almost from scratch. And the other way, and this one is, is somewhat harder, is to start with a legitimate bottle and reuse the constituent parts. So, which is one of the reasons that we, you know, we were always keen for people to destroy or somehow deface labels. Um, just smashed the bottles. If you look on E-bay at the moment, for example, I am pretty much a hundred percent certain that you'll be able to find, uh, many of the constituent parts of a wine bottle that would retail, if it were sold for, you know, hundreds, if not thousands of pounds.

Janina Doyle 00:29:53 Ah, see that and that, and you know exactly why it's there, right? So if there's a premium bottle of wine and they're saying, this is the empty bottle from this very expensive wine, there's only one reason why somebody would buy well, no no no, maybe somebody wants to put candles in it actually. I've just, some people do like collecting and putting candles in it. But I would say 99% of people. Yes. There's a specific reason why they're buying that. That's very frustrating. Okay. And then if they buy literally the bottle of wine, that's empty, presumably though, then they just need to put some juice into it and put a cork in it and they can literally resell it, which is very scary.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:30:36 And a capsule. Yeah. Yeah. It is.

Janina Doyle 00:30:38 The bottle itself is perfect. That the bottle, it's not a counterfeit, it's the real bottle.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:30:42 And that's why you need to look at all the elements of a bottle.

Janina Doyle 00:30:45 Okay. So you actually so, you would be then very much focusing on the top, presumably the...

Siobhan Turner MW 00:30:51 In that case. I mean, if I'm looking at a bottle, I look at the whole thing. Okay. Um, so does it, is it the right label? Is it the right bottle? Is it the right period?

Janina Doyle 00:31:04 Yeah. Cause vintages as well. Like sometimes there's been like Mouton Rothschild, and it'd be a specific vintage, but they didn't actually make that vintage and somebody hasn't actually done the research when doing their counterfeit. Right.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:31:16 Yeah, exactly. Or, you know, they'd call something Rothschild and it's before the Rothschilds bought that.

Janina Doyle 00:31:23 Okay.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:31:24 So, so I mean, we, we've got a bottle of wine in front of us, for example. And if I know we've both taken our corks out, um, but if you look at the, the capsule, um, it's a fairly generic brown capsule, except when you look at the top of it and you can see that Pelican on top. And it's knowing that, uh, the Pelican is because, uh, now my German is, um, sketchy, but the Von Mandl family is I, that is their family crest. And I believe Mandl might mean Pelican in German, but don't quote me on that.

Janina Doyle 00:32:08 So the bottle of wine that we have, which obviously we will be tasting in a little bit, they, they put that on the cork and probably a counterfeiter would miss that detail and just use a plain cork as an example. Okay. So you're basically looking obviously for any potential missed details, something quite small.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:32:27 Missed details or, um, things that are incorrect. So is the ink the wrong color? Is it the wrong type of printing? Are there elements of what I call the anti-fraud that are missing. So is there invisible ink that I'm expecting, but not seeing?

Janina Doyle 00:32:51 Ah, okay. Because I, it is that where things are going, because I know that, especially with the top Bordeaux houses and some of the top wines, there's now I guess, like little things you can scan. So it's like traceability and tracking and they are trying to put certain things on the portal. So that actually you can really follow where the wine's going, right? Is that helping presumably having these, these trails? Are we winning, are we winning the war against counterfeits?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:33:22 I think there is certainly some progress being made. Um, it's always a race. The trick here is that Maureen says you don't need to be the fastest zebra in the herd. You just need not to be the slowest one. And that's a good analogy. Um, you want people to be trying to counterfeit someone else there. If your wine is, is one of the really top prestige wines in the world, they're definitely going to be trying to counterfeit you, but you want to make it harder for them. And there'll be things that everyone knows about, things that some people know about, things that just a few people know and things that actually only, you know, um, and it's being able to prove that this is fake and being able to trace that back. But I think, yeah, I mean, the producers are doing as much as they can in as many ways as they can, they are looking for help from other sources. So they want distributors, for example, to start tracking where they are selling their wines. Um, they, they want, um,

to keep much more control over where things are going. So if you look for example, at a wine that I don't think I have ever seen counterfeited, um, which doesn't mean it can't happen and it's not been, but I've never seen it. Um, but Harlan Estate, but they use, they are very, very, very strict on their distribution. They also use a large number of layers of anti-fraud. Um, but it's the distribution really. And if they see something that appears on the open market, then they will try and find out where that's come from. And I suspect that the person whose allocation that was, uh, no longer gets that allocation.

Janina Doyle 00:35:45 Ah, so they, I mean, yeah, they are really right from the beginning keeping on top of it. Okay. So hopefully that might inspire other wineries to do the same, because that does sound like they're, if you're saying you're not even aware of that ever being counterfeited and they're taking such controlled measures, it seems to be working. Yeah. Yeah. What would you, what advice would you give for somebody who is starting their cellar collection and they're purchasing wine and maybe they're going to auctions or wherever they're getting their wines from, what should they do to ensure, and I don't know if the word insure is correct, because can you? But you know, what would they, what could, would you advise them to try their best to make sure that their bottle they're getting and putting away in the cellar is genuine?

Siobhan Turner MW 00:36:30 I think the best thing I would say is to find a reputable wine merchant and buy from them and build up with their advice. Um, if someone is starting a wine collection, it is likely that, you know, if they're starting from scratch, they're going to want wines to drink within the next 12 months, the next five years, the next 10 years, the next 20 years. And you need to think about that in terms of what you're buying, but you also need to think that your tastes may change and people's tastes, usually do change. So, we see a lot of our American clients in particular, we'll start off buying a lot of Napa Cabernet. And what we will do is then sort of gradually introduce them to Bordeaux. And then once we've got them on Bordeaux, then we might start talking to them about Burgundy. But if I were buying for them, I would need to be buying those Bordeaux now for them to drink in 10, 15 years time. Um, and it's, it's understanding that what you want now may not be what you want and what you like in, in 10 years time. Um, but so that's, I suppose that's not answering the authentication question. It's finding someone who is trusted, um, and really working with them because that doesn't mean they can't make a mistake, but it does mean that they will own up to her mistakes and put them right. Yeah. And that they are taking actions to minimize making those mistakes.

Janina Doyle 00:38:24 Yeah. That makes sense. And presumably as well, you can take your wines to go and get checked by the likes of yourself for instance.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:38:30 But that's, that's after the fact, it's much cheaper not to buy them in the first place, rather than to have to pay me to come and look at your wines and give you the bad news. Um, but yes, if, if you have a concern, um, by all means it is a wise idea to, um, do that. And, and I have, uh, a client who buys not infrequently at auction, but he's very aware of the risk he's taking in doing that. And he will call me in if he gets something that he's a little bit concerned about. Um, and he's got a good nose. He's never called me in for something that's been real yet.

Janina Doyle 00:39:14 Oh God, poor guy though. That means that he's counterfeit after counterfeit.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:39:18 No, I think he's, I think the other things he buys are good. He just doesn't call me in for them.

Janina Doyle 00:39:24 Yeah. He's too busy drinking them. Okay. There we go. Now we know, go to somebody reputable.

Siobhan Turner MW 00:39:30 Yeah. But if you do suspect then yes. You know, get someone who can, who's a trained authenticator. And the one thing I would say is that it's just as easy, in fact, it's easier to fake a certificate of authenticity than it is to fake a bottle. So those should be regarded with extreme suspicion.

Janina Doyle 00:39:50 Okay. Always be suspicious. Done.

Janina Doyle 00:39:58 Now, if you want to know the wineries that are the most counterfeited in the world, apparently it is a fight between DRC. So that's Domaine Romanée-Conti from Burgundy and Petrus, which is from Pomerol and the right bank of Bordeaux. Now I always used to think it was the super-premium wine. These cult wines like Lafite Rothschild and Penfolds Grange that were the only kind of wines being counterfeited. But you know, it turns out that's not the case, even in the UK in a very small corner shop in Hastings earlier this year, apparently, they were done for having some counterfeit bottles of, wait for it, Blossom Hill White Zinfandel. This is one of the most well-known wines in the world and costs about five pounds on a shop shelf. Thankfully, this is not common practice, but it is thought that 20% of all the wine on the global market is fake.

But don't let that put you off in terms of buying wine, cellaring it and aging it because there's just nothing better than holding back a beautiful bottle of wine that means something to you and then cracking it open on that special occasion. Just pick a trustworthy retailer or cellar. And on the beauty of an aged and special bottle, I should end with a quote by Mireille Guiliano. And she is a French author who says:

“The memory of some bottles can stay with you for life. While the wine doesn't have to be old and rare, a great old bottle can be like a time capsule capturing in its flavors and aromas the time and place of its creation.”

Now talking of time and place, next week will be part two with Siobhan Turner. And you may have picked up a hint of an accent. Well, she is Canadian. And so, we are going to be talking about British Columbia and specifically Cabernet Franc. So, make sure you tune in next week. Thank you as ever for listening to this episode. Leave me a review if you can, especially, if you're listening on apple podcasts, there is a comment section. Like the podcast, do share it with all your wine loving friends. You're all amazing. So go out and be great. And until next week, cheers to you.