

Ep 89: Mummy Wine Club, wine adventures and wine tasting themes with Victoria Daskal



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 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!

Hello, to all the wonderful wine lovers of the world. Welcome back to a really nice, soft, chilling in your living room, fluffy socks on, wine shared with friends, kind of episode. I'm joined by the very knowledgeable Victoria Daskal. She's a second stage Master of Wine candidate. Next week, we get a lot more educational, but this week it's really about Victoria's story and the wine regions she's visited. She's the founder and director of Mummy wine club, which offers a monthly wine subscription club and bespoke wine tastings. So she talks about cool themes, you can recreate if you wanted to put on a wine tasting for friends at home, or lesser known grape varieties to try if you're looking for something different throughout. You're gonna hear recommendations on where to travel along with maybe some motivation for those wanting to get into the wine industry and not looking to do it through the Sommelier or wine shop route. This is definitely a put your feet up episode where you can just get a glimpse into the wine world, through the experiences of someone who is just searching for something a little bit more interesting in life. So cue Victoria Daskal.

Janina Doyle 00:01:51 Victoria, welcome to the Eat Sleep Wine Repeat podcast. Are you ready?

Victoria Daskal 00:01:54 Thank you Janina. Yes, I'm very ready. Thank you.

Janina Doyle 00:01:57 I just made that rather serious and I actually never do that. So anyway, let's, uh, go to more fun stuff. So tell me, I do this very often when I have wonderful guests that have done brilliant things in the wine industry. I always wanna know where it started for them. So where does your wine story begin?

Victoria Daskal 00:02:12 Yeah, that's um, it made me think actually, you know, from my, when you asked me that earlier. Let me think. Where does it start? Because you know, at the time of starting it, I was still in Boston in the US and I probably, at that point didn't know it was gonna be the start of my wine story. But I truly, it started when I signed up for wine courses of myself. It was my first year out of university. I'd gone to university in Montreal at McGill. I did a double major in economics and psychology and my first job was in, it was in finance and, you know, sort of the first thing I could get. And it was interesting, actually no, it wasn't interesting. That was the point. It was, it was, it was actually dry and boring and I thought, you know, it kind of paid my, my rent, but it wasn't, you know, anything

fulfilling. So I started taking wine courses in Boston from a, you know, a wonderful teacher who was just really inspirational because he taught wine, not just, you know, the liquid in the glass, but he was always talking about, you know, the history and the culture behind it. And I really got fascinated by it because of how, you know, it wasn't just, you know, a beer or a margarita. I mean, it had a lot of culture behind it and, and just really fascinating stories. So I ended up taking all of the courses that year, that, that were on offer and, um, you know, was not by any means a wine expert, but I was already getting that kind of that bug and yeah, just thinking really like, why am I working in finance when there's this, you know, amazing wine world out there. So that was the very start where I kind of got that first taste and then it, it took off when my best friend in Boston was saying to me, you know, I'm going to France next year. I'm gonna be teaching English in France. You know, they've got loads of wine in France. You should come with me.

Janina Doyle 00:04:01 Apparently they do. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Last time I checked.

Victoria Daskal 00:04:03 Apparently. Yeah, you know. Exactly. And I, I, I, I, I, I believed her. So I applied to this program. It was like a teaching assistant program to teach, um, English at Elysee, and I, yeah and I got it. And I came and I got placed in the South of France, um, for a year. And I was teaching English for only, you know, 12, 15 hours a week. So I had a lot of time and then while there, I started to, um, really learn wine because I, I volunteered at a vineyard.

Janina Doyle 00:04:31 Oh so where were you in the south of France?

Victoria Daskal 00:04:34 Yeah, so I was actually based in Cannes, which is known for the film festival, but it's also, you know, the region where all the Rosé is renowned for, you know, Provence is kind of all on the outer bits of Cannes and it's, you know, the kind of official drink. Um, so I worked at a tiny little winery called Domaine de Grandpré, and it was for a lovely woman who had just acquired it actually. So she had a lot of work to do to kind of, um, you know, just get, get going with the production and to modernize a few little things. And it was small production, but it was really nice, really interesting. She explained a lot of techniques to me that I had no clue about. And I, you know, I was just learning by doing, and that was great. Um, and then I, you know, that year I had time to read about wine, learn about wine. So that definitely was a step further. And then following that year, I decided, okay, for sure, I'm, you know, convinced and I need to take it a step further. So I had applied to do a Masters in wine management, which was, um, yeah through the OIV, so not many people know it, um, in the UK, but there are a few people in the UK who have done it, um, including, you know, Gerard Basset, had graduated from the OIV. Yeah, he had done it. Yeah. Famously.

Janina Doyle 00:05:46 Well of course. He's basically done every single type of wine study you can do. Yeah ok.

Victoria Daskal 00:05:51 Exactly. Yeah. I went to his graduation when he finished the OIV so, um, anyway, so it's, it's a great program because basically it's based out of Paris, but we, um, spend 11 months on the road. So we travel to 23 different wine countries. 45 different wine regions. And, you know, it was really intense. I mean, I think that was, that was the deep plunge for me into wine world, because I was with a group of students from all over the world who had their own wine experiences. Some of them were Sommeliers. Some of them were, you know, wine producers or from wine families. And I, I really entered that program. I felt like as the weakest link. Like I had the least experience, but do you know what, it worked out great because I had the most to learn and I had so much, you know, not

just from the program, but from the other students. And you know, now they are still some of my best friends to date because, you know, we spent a year traveling together and learning from each other. And now if I need something, you know, in Spain, or I need to know about something in Italy, I call one of them up and, you know, they, you know, it's just a fantastic network to have afterwards.

Janina Doyle 00:06:58 Oh my god, I want to do this. So this is the OIV wine management course?

Victoria Daskal 00:07:02 Yes. Yes. The international wine management course. It's a great program. Really good.

Janina Doyle 00:07:07 So you said you went to 23 different countries?

Victoria Daskal 00:07:10 Yes. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:07:11 So, okay. Favorite wine memory? There has to be, oh is that too hard?

Victoria Daskal 00:07:16 Oh man. Oh my gosh. No, I mean, it's honestly, that whole year was one big memory of, you know, I, I still sometimes reminisce of that because I think we were moving at such a fast rate and, you know, you don't, you almost like your body's moving faster than your mind where you're kind of, you've already left that previous country, you're in a new country, but you're still you're thinking about what you just learned and who you just met. And I still now, and I probably, my only regret is I wish I had known more when I was a student. So I had, so I was able to ask the right questions maybe, or appreciate what, you know, what we were being told and taught because I was still quite a novice at that stage. So, you know, I probably, you know, walk you through the vineyards, even in Mendoza or, you know, we were in Austria and California. Like, you didn't really understand it as much, um, if you're, if you're completely new to wine. But, but it was still very, very interesting and illuminating experience. And my favorite experience. Oh gosh. I mean, I think South America was really interesting. I had never been there before. Yeah, it was, yeah, it was brilliant. It was brilliant. And it was, we spent a month there. So, you know, we were in Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, um, Brazil. So it was, you know, it was really interesting and I still have great memories of, of them. And I still, you know, come back to those regions now. And I'm, I'm amazed at, you know, when we went to visit Uruguay it was, you know, like really, like, we didn't even realize Uruguay made wine. I mean, this was over, you know, 12 years ago and I was being new to the wine industry. But now I'm, you know, writing and including, and working with Bodegas Garzon for example, someone you know, now for me, seems like a really big player, but back then I didn't, you know, know anything.

Janina Doyle 00:08:59 Yeah. And I love the fact that you've picked South America. Was that potentially as well because of the culture and the people and the energy or, yeah, was that why?

Victoria Daskal 00:09:08 Yeah. Completely. I mean, I think, you know, what it was like, I liked because Europe is obviously an amazing wine country and every, every, every region and, and continent has, you know, their relationship to wine, but some in some regions it's really ingrained has, you know, it goes back, you know, centuries and through the generations, but in some it's still fairly new. But in, in South America, I, yeah, I felt like it was kind of casual and I really liked how it was just part, you know, getting together with your family, having, you know, a glass of Malbec, you know, like every kind of, you know, outdoor sport, and then you still finish with a barbecue and a glass of, you know, Malbec. You know it was just fantastic. Even like, I mean, we were just, you know, young students, like, okay, let's just go get a cheap meal at McDonald's. Oh. And they have Malbec on the menu at McDonald's there. Yeah. They

do. They do. Yeah. And we were shocked, but you know, it's just, it's really part of everyday life. And I thought that was really interesting.

Janina Doyle 00:10:03 Oh my God. Okay. Then quick fire round. Most beautiful wine region that took your breath away?

Victoria Daskal 00:10:11 Oh, that's hard. Um, okay. There are many, and I really, honestly, I cannot just say one but one that comes to mind right this moment.. I was actually like, I really was impressed with the Alps and, you know, going to Switzerland, we visited Switzerland and, you know, just driving through the mountains and, um, seeing kind of, yeah, the vines and there, and also the culture of, you know, having your, your dinner right there, like among vines. And then also going into Northern Italy and seeing how that topography changes. So I don't know. I, I think there's so many. Luckily we, we work in an industry where like, it's hard to pick just one.

Janina Doyle 00:10:47 I think I know. I mean, that was a tough question because ultimately pretty much every wine region is beautiful. That's the point, isn't it.

Victoria Daskal 00:10:52 Yeah, I never seen a horrible one. Very rare.

Janina Doyle 00:10:57 Nor have I, but anyway, I appreciate, I'd love to go to Switzerland. I think those super steep slopes and the fact that it's so mountainous is definitely, yeah, one that people need to tick off. Now, as you know, this is being released at, towards the end of March, women's history month. So I want to ask you, who has been your female wine inspiration?

Victoria Daskal 00:11:18 Uh, that's a good question. I mean, to be honest, I have a few and they all kind of have changed depending on what I've been doing in my wine journey. So for instance, you know, truly when I first got into wine and I was buying my first wine books, then of course, inevitably like Jancis Robinson was my kind of hero because, you know, she was the author of a lot of the books that I was buying and, and, uh, you know, reading her articles. So that was really an inspiration to me and also being a female, you know, wine writer and critic and educator. So I was definitely inspired by her. Um, but then actually, as I got further into my own wine journey, my inspirations can even be a lot of my friends and colleagues that I've met and seeing how they do fantastic work. And, you know, for instance, um, I also teach at the WSET.

Janina Doyle 00:12:11 Ah, I didn't know that.

Victoria Daskal 00:12:12 And, you know, yeah. So I, you know, I love teaching. I've always, I've always been, you know, ever since I started learning about wine, I've always wanted to keep talking and telling other people about wine. And so...

Janina Doyle 00:12:20 Oh I know about that.

Victoria Daskal 00:12:23 Yeah. You know how that is, right. Cause you just wanna teach everybody about wine. Um, but you know, and so then like wonderful educators, like, you know, Christine Marsiglio, I'm really inspired by her. I've taken some of her courses, um, you know, on the kind of MW level where she helps prep students and I can see how great, you know, how, what a great teacher she is. And so that has inspired me, um, equally, you know, just in wine writing, I'm, I'm inspired by writers like Margaret Rand and like the way she, so, you know, charming and her storytelling is really lyrical or like Anne Krebiehl who's incredible at, you know, really getting to the point of really interesting topics.

Janina Doyle 00:12:57 My last guest. My last guest.

Victoria Daskal 00:12:59 Oh really? Yeah. Well, probably not your last again. I'm sure you'll have her back. She's so interesting. And yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:13:05 Oh god. The amount that she, the detail she goes into.

Victoria Daskal 00:13:07 Yeah. Cause she's amazing. She's so intelligent. And also, yeah, just, I, I, I really, you know, love her writing as well. And then, you know, and then more recently, you know, with Mummy Wine Club, I, I got inspired with, um, Sarah Abbott who, you know, is another Master of Wine who...

Janina Doyle 00:13:23 Yes, all the old vines as well. All that research she's doing.

Victoria Daskal 00:13:26 Yes. I, I, I got, I was so, you know, impressed and also just with the way that she's championing, um, other lesser known wine regions, but you know, very high quality, really, again, rich in history and culture like Georgia, Turkey, Japan, and, you know, really shining a light on them. And so, you know, that actually has in turn, inspired me in the way I teach, you know, choose my wine selections each month. So, you know, there's, there's, there's no, I mean, I've just named a few, but there's so many amazing women in wine.

Janina Doyle 00:13:54 No, they are good choices. Well, then now I'm gonna bring you back to Jancis Robinson, because I know that when you came to the UK, you were interning for her. So I think that must be a pretty good experience.

Victoria Daskal 00:14:06 It was, yes. So, well, basically that actually started during the OIV. So when I was on the OIV course, I, one of the ways I wanted to try to learn and, you know, we all kept loads of records and books, sorry, like notebooks and journals of everywhere we visited, you know, but you, you know, you get so many of them. And sometimes I felt, I really want to ensure that I learn as much as I can from this region. So I wanted to write articles about some of the places I was visiting. And I was writing a few for, um, a few places in Boston called like Bostonist.com, which actually doesn't exist anymore. It used to, it's like, londonist.com, but now it's, anyway. So I was writing for them. I was writing for intowine.com. Just a few wine blogs in the US. Um, and then Wine State in Australia, just, you know, kind of reporting on my, from the, from the trips and my school director at the time. Um, Michele Burki, he actually really amazingly, I didn't know he was gonna do this, but he wrote to Jancis and said, we have a student on the course who's really interested in wine writing. You know, and she's already been in touch with the OIV cause she often, um, does a presentation when they come to the UK. They, they had, at that point, um, regularly met with Jancis. She would kind of introduce them to, you know, the UK market. And so do, you know, do a presentation for them. But so at that point, um, this was 2007, I think, um, he had written and said, you know, do you have any kind of advice or tips on where she may be able to write? And she actually very, you know, generously said she can write for me. Um, you know, I, it wasn't a paid gig or anything, but it, was still a fantastic, um, chance to, to write for someone who is already so well known. And she, you know, she had that website already, um, jancisrobinson.com. So she basically published a few of my articles just from the road. So I remember the very first one I wrote to her was, um, from Hungary and it was, I was reporting about, yeah. I was talking about how Tokaji is not just a sweet wine anymore. How at that time I know we all know this now, but at that time it was kind of a little bit newer that Furmint was being fermented dry. And it was,

you know, really, you know, it was just becoming a little bit more of a wider known wine from Hungary, which was a dry Tokaji, you know, now you see it on the menu all the time and on wine list, but at that point it was new. And so anyways, so I wrote an article on that and, you know, from there it kind of took off and I wrote from China and from the US, um, from various...

Janina Doyle 00:16:35 Oh, from China?

Victoria Daskal 00:16:36 Yeah and I remember from, so we visited, we visited China on the course and, um, we were there and we visited some, um, producers and also just actually in Shanghai and Beijing, we visited more the commercial side actually. We were learning about how the market works and how wine education works there and everything. And interestingly, I wrote this article and she said, you know what, I'm gonna wait to publish this until you've left China. So just to make sure there's no problem. Cause she was, you know, really, she was very savvy in that way. Like just in case there's any problems, you know? Cause I wasn't like, oh my gosh, you know, it was, you know, it was a very constructive kind of piece about, you know, my impressions of, you know, little wine industry in China. And it was again coming from someone who was still quite new, but just my observations. And so I did that and um, okay. So how I got to England was basically at the end of my course, you are required to do a, an internship and you then have to also write up a report on a particular topic, which I ended up writing on wine communication. But, um, again, I wrote to her and said, you know, it's been great to write for your blog and, or sorry for your website. You know, I would actually love to go and live in the UK for some period of time because I'm really interested in the wine scene there. Um, listen, truthfully, my boyfriend at the time was living in the UK and who's now my husband.

Janina Doyle 00:17:56 Oh ok. That worked out.

Victoria Daskal 00:17:57 We wanted to live in London together. So I wrote to her and I said, you know, do you know anybody who might be hiring? And she was, you know, in a few days she wrote back, I said, actually, I'll be glad to do a paid internship with you. Um, it was for, you know, for kind of five months I came and, um, worked for her full-time basically on her website, um, on various wine projects cause she, besides her website, she actually did a lot of other projects like with British Airways and Nintendo and other, you know, wine, um,

Janina Doyle 00:18:28 Nintendo?

Victoria Daskal 00:18:29 Yeah. There was a project with, um, Nintendo DS. Which, yeah, it's not very well known, but it's um, it was something related to wine and food pairing. So basically having to choose a hundred wines and match them to, I think it was a thousand recipes from Elle magazine. Elle like a French Elle. So yeah, yeah. It was a project I had to work on anyway. So it was great. It was a really, really interesting experience. Um, she was very good about helping me with pointers on wine writing, you know, how to get interesting, um, kind of angles and stories and not to be totally, um, you know, maybe swayed by one side and really look at it from different points of view and you know, very, very good comments and you know, um, I definitely cherished the kind of, that period of learning from her. It was, it was really great. So I, I did that for about five months and actually did not know whether I would stay or go back to America or to, you know, maybe to France cause I also really liked it there. But yeah, no, I ended up, you know, getting a job with Laithwaites afterwards and then with, you know, other wine companies and, and here we are nearly, you know, over a decade later I'm still in London and I love

it and I'm really glad because it really kind of all pinned on getting that internship with Jancis, cause if I hadn't, I would've probably settled somewhere else. So.

Janina Doyle 00:19:50 Well thank you Jancis.

Victoria Daskal 00:19:51 Yes. Thank you. And all worked out and you got to live with the boyfriend that's now the husband. Now funny, the segue into that, because you obviously continued, you did lots of freelance writing, but then once you had your baby, you had an idea to set up the Mummy Wine Club. Have I got that right in terms of timing?

Victoria Daskal 00:20:11 Yep. It was, I mean I had worked, you know, in a lot of other different fields, um, like in sales and marketing and events and as I said, I've always been, you know, I've always loved teaching, so I've, I've always done a bit of that on the side. Um, and I had already been working at this point at The World of Fine Wine magazine, um, for nearly six years and I was managing editor, um, most recently. And then I had gone on maternity leave with my second daughter and didn't want to completely, you know, be shut out from the wine world. I really wanted to stay connected and do things that I loved and, and talk about, you know, things that I love. So I started a little group called Mummy Wine Club, um, just in my neighborhood because I had already known other moms who were also, you know, home from work on maternity leave with, you know, babies that, you know, still, still wanted to do something interesting and learn something. Cause you know, when, when you have a really young baby, there's lots of, there's just no shortage of baby classes. There's like, you know, baby massage and baby sensory class and baby yoga. And there's really...

Janina Doyle 00:21:17 But what about mommy classes?

Victoria Daskal 00:21:18 There is nothing, nothing, there was nothing. I mean now there's a little bit more, but there's really nothing. And so, and the thing is the reality is actually that when you have a young baby, they're usually asleep anyway, you know, they sleep so much at a time. So actually my friends and I said, you know what? They knew I work in wine and you know, we kind of started talking about having maybe a little wine club where I could teach them about wine. Um, you know, kind of a, a short course, like a one hour course at lunchtime. And I so basically started in my living room with, you know, four to five, sometimes six moms would be able to come, their babies would be asleep in the buggies still, kind of we'd park it in the kitchen and you know, and I would teach them really yeah, a class each week. And I was, you know, for instance, we did a month of South America. We did a month of, you know, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, um, just, you know, each, each week kind of meeting up, I would show them like the four most important wines from that country and tell them about the grapes and where they come from. And it was really fun and it was not very serious. It was just, you know, a chance to kind of learn and talk and do something a little bit different. And yeah, most of the time the babies were just sleeping or if they, you know, maybe they're, you know, just like rolling around and playing, but it wasn't something that, you know, couldn't be done. Um, it just hadn't been done yet. And yeah, so that was the start of Mummy wine club. I mean I called it Mummy Wine Club on WhatsApp, which is why I then just kept it as the business name, it's now like a trademark incorporated company. But, um, but yeah, I didn't overthink the name obviously at the time. I just called it that and then stuck with. Um, so yeah, that was how it started on maternity leave with my daughter and yeah. And it was, you know, it kind of grew really organically, you know, just through word of mouth.

Janina Doyle 00:22:59 Like your child.

Victoria Daskal 00:23:00 Yes, exactly. Like the best wines. Um, yeah, I know. So it, it just is a very word of mouth way. Like that has been the way it has and it continues just mainly through word of mouth and Instagram, of course.

Janina Doyle 00:23:11 And where are you now? Because on the website, it's not just the club is it? People can get involved online and have wine boxes.

Victoria Daskal 00:23:20 Absolutely. So, I mean, basically it started with those wine events and, you know, as the year progressed, the kids got a little bit, the babies got a little older and once they got closer to, you know, one years old, you really can't bring them along to things cause they, they, they move, their mobile, they need more attention. So we actually switched gears and started doing them, um, as weekend and evening events. So kind of left the babies with dads and then it was really all about the moms. And at this point I, you know, I actually started really enjoying this as a side job, um, to wine writing and you know, working at The World of Fine Wine. And I, I, I was, it was actually taking up, you know, a considerable amount of my free time, but it was also fun, you know, it was also just something I truly just love to do. So having these like wine dinners and wine events and um, it got to the point where even wine producers, um, and chefs were like, you know what, we're interested in, you know, participating in this because we don't often have, you know, a table of 10 moms or, you know, women who are, you know, because it is still is a thing where, you know, it's often the man that has to choose the wine at dinner or is considered the, you know, sort of wine expert in a couple. And you know, we, you know, you and I is like women in wine would never, never think that that would be the way, you know, if you go to a restaurant, you'll be the one choosing your wine obviously. But you know, it's amazing how actually in a lot of normal, you know, regular couples, it's still the man that gets the menu and whatever. So, um, it was interesting that, you know, some producers and chefs were keen to work with female consumers directly. And, and so we had some really fantastic tastings like Alsace and Indian food and, you know, it was really kind of ticking off, but then literally, um, you know, March 2020 happened and all that happened and everything had to grind to a halt as with everybody else. So I couldn't do Mummy Wine Club anymore as I had planned on it. But actually, um, I had already, in my mind been thinking a little bit about a subscription club because I had people who wanted to come along, but they were far away and they just let you know, and people who always messaged me, asking me for wine tips and, um, and as it happens, of course, you know, my, my husband loves coffee. So we have like a coffee subscription and like my, a friend of mine locally has a flower subscription. So she, you know, she delivers bouquets of flowers every week. And um, yeah...

Janina Doyle 00:25:44 Oh gosh, this is the area for subscriptions.

Victoria Daskal 00:25:47 Yeah, well, so, I was already, you know, aware of that, you know, people liking the sort of regular delivery. So I had thought about it. And um, and then when covid hit, I thought, well, time to put this into action actually, because, you know, that's the only thing I can do now, is send wine out. I cannot, you know, I can't meet with people, but, um, but actually it worked really well because it kind of forced me to focus on something specific, which was the subscription box. And that now is very much the core of the business, which is a monthly subscription club. So they can choose either between every month or every other month. And I, they get a selection of four bottles. Um, and you know, I, I really do think of it as like a curated selection because I think a lot about the theme behind the selection. It's not just, you know, the four bottles I happen to really like this month or whatever, it's, it's, it's usually built around ideas like, um, wine and literature, wine and history, wine and culture, um,

you know, specific, really specific things that people may have not even realized can tie wine together. So it's not just like, I, yes, I have had wines that were all from Spain for instance, but then I've also had wines, um, that were all old vines. Actually that was influenced by, you know, Sarah Abbot's old, old wine conference, you know, and then there, we had wines from all over the world that, you know, South Africa and Chile, South of France, um, and Spain, and they were all kind old vines that people had never even thought to think of as, um, as a, as a type of wine, you know, as, as consumer. Yeah. So that's how it's kind of developed since covid, but then now, because thankfully we can, you know, do stuff again. I've also now gone back to the origins and I've reintroduced live events again. So during all during covid I was doing the monthly box plus um, virtual wine tasting. So every month subscribers would be able to come and have a free wine tasting with me. And eventually actually I was, I was inviting some of the winemakers to come along with the calls. And that really, it was great because, you know, for many people, again, we kind of take it for granted, probably, you know, in our jobs getting to meet winemakers, but most wine consumers, they don't get the chance to really talk to the person who made their wine and hear from them. And so it was nice to, you know, sit in your living room on a dreary, you know, February 1, and actually, you know, talk to someone from New Zealand or, you know, or South Africa and like, and hear about, you know, what's it like for them and how they're making wine and their, their journey. So that was a great, you know, way to make a, you know, a challenging thing work for you because connecting with people around the world was, was a real perk actually through, through, through the virtual tastings.

Janina Doyle 00:28:25 So is it still aimed at the female consumer, these boxes or tastings? Are men allowed?

Victoria Daskal 00:28:30 Okay. So yes, yes and yes. So it is, um, I do of course speak, you know, to the female consumer because, you know, it was kind of, it came out of a period of, you know, being, um, on maternity leave and, you know, spending a lot of time with my female friends and talking to them and about their thoughts on wine. And, and, and I, you know, I am a woman, so, you know, I'm just kind of doing what I know and, and what I love, but actually it's absolutely available to anybody. You don't have to be a woman. You don't have to be a mom. You don't have to be, you know, you don't have to be anybody. You just have to be a person who likes good wine and who is interested in, you know, really good quality wine. That's, that's got a story behind it. That's, you know, usually made, I tend to choose wines, not, um, there's no rule, but I tend to prefer wines that are made by family producers that have, you know, kind of a multigenerational story of wine making behind, behind them. Um, of course there's gonna be little exceptions as I discover maybe someone brand new on the scene, but that's just someone I really like. And then also, again, it's not a rule, but I do tend to go for kind of more organic or maybe more naturally made wines. Although, you know, again, I've gone, you know, more commercial at sometimes depending on where I'm trying to, you know, what theme I'm going for.

Janina Doyle 00:29:47 Yeah, and the story.

Victoria Daskal 00:29:48 Yeah. It's, there's no, there's no hard rule, but there is definitely a few kind of, um, influences along the way as I choose the wines.

Janina Doyle 00:29:55 For sure. So what are you some of your favorites then that you've put in the box in the last year, like, is there a few producers or grapes even?

Victoria Daskal 00:30:03 Yeah. Well, so, so the way I, you know, remember my wine selections has, has been by the themes, so some of my favorites have been for instance, um, the volcanic wines I've done, um, which, you know, again, people...

Janina Doyle 00:30:17 Ohhhh, where did you go?

Victoria Daskal 00:30:17 Yeah, I, so I went to kind of, some of the usual suspects, like I had, I'd gone to Italy. Um, and particularly I was looking at Sicily, but in the end I found wines that were even just around Sicily and like little islands, like one called Salina, which is, um, yeah, really lovely. And I found a beautiful, um, producer who is actually even more known for making, uh, growing capers on the island. And he's like a really renowned caper grower, but also happens to, because you know how in like a lot of agricultural regions people, you know, they do everything. Yeah. So he's known for his capers, like all around Italy, but, um, but his grapes are also fantastic and he grows grapes from different islands around there and happens to make this amazing kind of very saline. Um, you know, just really crisp and minerally, almost like smokey white that I really, really loved. And, and so, and people really liked it too. And then we also went to Tenerife, um, and had wines from, you know, from that region. And, you know, there, you know, I had been to Tenerife, you know, when I was actually pregnant with my first daughter, so I couldn't drink, but I really, you know, I loved the kind of wine, the food culture that, you know, I was seeing. And, and anyway that the mountain and the volcano Teide was just really impressive and slightly kind of everywhere you went, you could see it where we were. And so it really struck me, reminded me of that, like that being a volcanic region. Um, so I included that in the box of course, as well. Um, and just, no, I guess what's what strikes me as an option that people don't realize is that, you know, when you're learning about wine, it's not just about necessarily like following one grape or one country, you could group them in other ways, like maybe, yeah, like looking at old vines from around the world or volcanic soils or, you know, another one that was a, a big favorite was actually Alpine wines because, you know, I, you know, it was a region that really, you know, impressed, impressed me when I was there as a student, just because of the beauty and the nature and the fresh air and kind of just also how preserved, it felt, you know, it wasn't really influenced by international grapes. They had a lot of their own grapes. And, and so I, you know, I had a box of just very unique, um, varieties, like, you know, Teroldego from Northern Italy, um, Altesse from the Savoie and Jura regions and just having grapes that were very unique to their particular sites.

Janina Doyle 00:32:47 Yeah, no, I think actually Alpine wines, and there's always that freshness as well, because they're a little bit higher altitude. They're not heavy in alcohol as well. So I think that's, and it's not, uh, an area that many people either think of or go to. I mean, we hardly get any Swiss wine as an example do we? I think the percentage of it that actually comes to the UK is, is tiny and probably for the rest of the world is, is tiny. And also with then again, I always, I love the fact that you've done the volcanic soils because of course we, we know all these hotspots for volcanic soils, but the average consumer doesn't because they tend to be quite small production, but even with Ten, Tenerife, was it white wine that you did? Did, did I make that up?

Victoria Daskal 00:33:25 So I actually, no. Well, so you didn't, I, I did do a white wine. Um, you know, what's funny, I just remembered I've done Tenerife twice, cause I did once new wave Spain. So I did Tenerife. I did, um, a Listan Blanco and then I did Tenerife again because it did well, but this time I went for a red wine and it was a Listán Negro and um, and so I've done it.

Janina Doyle 00:33:46 Okay. It's all about the Listan grape varieties isn't it.

Victoria Daskal 00:33:48 So I've done, I've done it twice and you know, people love it. And I think people really reacted A: because the origin is unusual. It's not really something you're gonna get at the supermarket easily and, or if at all, and then also just the idea of thinking about it, be based on the soils and, and the kind of, you know, the terroir that they come from. Some people found it a little bit kind of smoky and maybe even a little tad reductive, but it was funny. It was a little bit of a divisive wine. That one, it was just like, um, either really love it. And some, and, and other people we'll find it a little bit funky.

Janina Doyle 00:34:22 Do you think that that is how you keep people engaged in terms of coming up with new ideas, just come up with new themes and try and find... yeah.

Victoria Daskal 00:34:30 So basically I, I think so, cause I've not just gone for the really typical examples of how you can group wine, but now I'm also really interested in like wine and literature, for instance, and you know, looking at like wine books, not just, not literally wine books, but books that have wine in them and then choosing wines from there. And, and that way you can really tap into other hobbies and interests. So someone who might be, you know, a great lover of, of reading could read and enjoy some of the wines that are in that book. So I did that with Ernest Hemingway's, A moveable feast where, you know, it's, it's a memoir of his time in the 90s, 20, 1920s Paris. And he drinks a lot of wine during that time with his writer friends. Um, and, and it happens to actually he lists a lot of the wines he drinks like in a pretty specific way. Yeah, I mean, he really was a wine lover, like he, he lists vintages and villages and um, you know, spec... Yeah. He was very specific. So it was easy for me to go out and like together a box based on what, what I read in that book.

Janina Doyle 00:35:34 Well what did you pair?

Victoria Daskal 00:35:35 So well, it was all French pretty much because that was, you know, that was what, you know, what you could get in 19, 1920s Paris, but it, but there was loads of options. I mean, he talked a lot about drinking great Muscadet with oysters and shellfish and, you know, crabe mexicaine. Like he really specified, you know, even the pairings that he was having there. Yeah. And then he talked about wines from Corsica and he talked about wines from a lot from the Rhône and Burgundy. So we had a wine from Mâcon because he actually in the book does a road trip with F.Scott Fitzgerald, like from Lyon to Dijon and from Paris. So it's really fascinating. It's a great book to read if you're a wine lover. Um, and particularly if you're a lover of French wine regions, so we had, um, yeah, a Muscadet, a Mâcon and then we had a Corsican wine, which is absolutely brilliant. Um, and then for the red, we had a Cahors, which, um, you know, of course is Malbec, but people don't think about that as, um, necessarily as a Malbec. It's very different.

Janina Doyle 00:36:33 Which well, it, of course, because it's just so famous for Argentina, but it's nice to go back to its original roots. Yeah. And of course, very different for anyone listening. It's not quite, it's a lot more rustic and you'll, you'll have more tannins than what you expect from the Malbec you normally get from Argentina. How did that go down, actually, a Cahors Malbec?

Victoria Daskal 00:36:51 Really good. I mean, it was Chateau de Chambert, which is they, they're very, very good producer and, you know, just, I, I, although it is more kind of structured and a little bit more savory than anything you'd get in Mendoza, it still is, um, like the tannins are really lovely and, and kind of integrated really well. So I don't think anybody found it, you know, too hard to, to enjoy. And in fact, it's, it's become a favorite. Like people come back to it and I was like, I want that for my Christmas

meal now. And, and actually that's a something I do offer, if you, if it's something that's been in my box, I tend to also offer it in like an online wine shop, um, setting. So people can then go back and buy it again if they really liked it. So it's, it's nice that they don't, it's not just like a flash and then they never see that wine again. They can, they can buy it again if they want it.

Janina Doyle 00:37:36 They can go back. Oh we like that. So. Okay. I wanna ask you two questions that I've been inspired by what you just said. First of all, I want to know your favorite food and wine pairing. What comes to mind? And I'm sure you have loads?

Victoria Daskal 00:37:46 Oh my gosh. Okay. So favorite food and wine pairing. Um, can I just tell you one that I had kind of recently, that really surprised me? So I'm not saying I do this every night, please. I do not do this often, but I had, um, a duck confit recently with English sparkling wine. And it's so weird, but it really worked so well. And it really stood out to me because it's something where, you know, you're cooking and you have your sort of cooking wine and you just, you know, as you're getting ready for dinner. And then I was thinking I would have a Pinot Noir with the duck because that was like such a, exactly.

Janina Doyle 00:38:21 Which would be more classic, of course.

Victoria Daskal 00:38:21 But then, but then I just still had, you know, half, half a bottle of this English sparkling wine that was really delicious. And so we just decided to stick with it and it went so beautifully. It was just because the duck is quite fatty, like it's, you know, and also the potatoes and everything and the English sparkling wine is so fresh and crisp and high acid and mouthwatering. It just worked really well. And you know, both my husband and I just thought, wow, that actually was delicious. And, you know, we saved a Pinot Noir for something else, but never would've imagined English sparkling wine and duck confit being a thing. But now it is a thing, I'll never stray from that.

Janina Doyle 00:38:55 Beautiful. Did you stick with a typical, just a Brut sparkling that was a blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes? Or was it a Blanc de Blanc, or Blanc de Noirs?

Victoria Daskal 00:39:03 Yeah, no, it was, it was a blend. Yeah. It was a Busi Jacobsohn. It was really nice. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:39:08 Ah, I literally just tasted they're white at the latest SITT tasting and oh, really, really vibrant. Um, that's my memory from tasting that.

Victoria Daskal 00:39:21 And also great depth. Like it really felt like it was, you know, not just this linear kind of very, you know, it also had this like depth as well in the palette. Like it had a little bit of breath and I don't know, had nice weight to it too. So I don't know. It went really well with, with food. So.

Janina Doyle 00:39:37 Beautiful. Love that. Okay. Now my last question, because you are a beautiful writer yourself, do you have any wine books that you would recommend somebody?

Victoria Daskal 00:39:46 Yeah, well, I have a lot of wine books actually. I'm kind of, um, really bad at just like constantly acquiring new books. I haven't read them all, but like I...

Janina Doyle 00:39:54 It's never the worst, it's not the worst habit.

Victoria Daskal 00:39:56 I know. I do. I love wine books. Um, I think this is one that I have on my desk right now, which is, I really like it just the way it's done. It's called Vignette by Jane Lopez and it's called Stories of life and wine in 100 bottles. And I actually picked it up just cause when I flipped through it, I really like the way she grouped each chapter, which is kind of in a way that I, again, like the way I like to look at wine, is not just by region necessarily or by grape, but she talks about, um, you know, different, I don't know, different kind of things and, and in her travels and, and she even actually mentioned some spirits and other drinks in this book, but it's, it's a good one because it's not just factual. It's also her sort of story and her experience with the wine. And it's just a very personal, personal way of presenting wine. And I like the illustrations are really nice as well. She has really great maps and even the way she, you know, Barolo is actually a wine that I, is one of my favorites actually. And she has a, um, section where she classifies in her way, modern versus traditional Barolo and Barbaresco and she has a beautiful...

Janina Doyle 00:41:06 Oh, and that's so good.

Victoria Daskal 00:41:08 It's really. Yeah, it's very handy.

Janina Doyle 00:41:09 To really understand it, understand the category. It's the same thing as like looking at more traditional Rioja versus modern Rioja and the usage of oak, you know, American versus French and a lot of new Oak versus no, no new Oak and, and people really understanding just that one wine, but in it's too, with its two faces, shall we say.

Victoria Daskal 00:41:27 Absolutely. Yeah. And yeah, you're right. You get that in a different, in a lot of the kind of big, um, traditional regions, get the kind of traditionalist and the modernist and then she's, you know, done a great way of, um, yeah, exactly that. Talking about the oak usage, but also the skin maceration length and how long they do that for. And you know, so it's really nice if you wanna exactly know what to expect from different producers.

Janina Doyle 00:41:52 Now, just in case anyone was wondering what is a modern style of Rioja versus traditional? Well, traditionally the wine would go through an extended amount of aging, and this would be in American Oak barrels. That also tend to be lighter as they would see less maceration and they can have a lovely elegance. Whereas modern styles are very fruit driven with loads of concentration and they're aged in French Oak for less time. And they're very often a hundred percent Tempranillo rather than a blend of the grapes growing in Rioja. Now, if we are looking at traditional versus modern Barolos, modern is all about aging in small French barrels, imparting more oak and spice flavors. Whereas traditional is all about aging in large old wooden vats, known as Bottis, where they impart no oak flavors. Modern Barolos can be drunk younger as they have shorter macerations, meaning less intense tannins and their fermentations are shorter and warmer. In fact, a great story to look up would be that of modern Barolo producer Elio Altare who famously took a chainsaw to his father's old vats. And that resulted in him being cut out of the will. Anyway, I imagine Sommelier, Jane Lopez who's written this book Vignette, goes into much more detail. So if you are after a new wine book, that could be the next one on your list. Now Jane Lopez herself has an incredible story. She's passed her Master Sommelier exams in 2018. And for those of you that watched the movie Somm, you'll know that this is one of the hardest exams in the world to pass. And within a few weeks of being freshly crowned, she was dragged into a cheating scandal based on a few Sommeliers, which meant that every Sommelier was to have their title taken away and have to do the tasting exam again. Absolutely brutal. Now, if you read Jane's account of her emotions and what this all meant, you'll understand why after passing, she

never took the second exam again and has realized after all that previous hard work that she doesn't need the letters MS after her name. Quite valiant and certainly an inspiring woman. So today's episode will conclude with a quote or, or more of a snippet from the preface of her book Vignette. And she writes:

“My adult life has been marked by moments of extreme joy, severe pain, wonder, accomplishment, failure, fear, solitude, community, and grit. Most times a bottle of wine has been somehow involved. Its emotions, feeding mine and my experiences providing a context for it.”

Now I picked that one out as I, I think it's quite poignant. If we all look back to memorable moments, good or bad, try I infant door tragic. There's normally a glass of something poured to accompany us through that time. And as all wine carries its own story. May we also hold our own stories with that wine. Thank you to all of you for listening to another episode. Join me next week with Victoria as we are going to be talking about wines of Moldova. Yes. They make wine in Moldova and have an extensive history. So you're going to want to familiarize yourself with that. As I always say, sorry, Groundhog day again, please share the podcast with your wine loving friends, like the podcast and me review if you're listening on apple podcasts. Go to my show notes if you wanna get in touch with me and until next week, cheers to you.