

# Ep 189: Exploring Dão: Wine Region Insights & the New Wine Book 'How to Drink Wine' with Author and Presenter Tom Surgey (Part 2)



**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 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!

Hello wine friends and welcome back to part two with Tom Surgey. Now, if you've listened to part one, you will understand why he is in fact a wine presenter. He is incredible at talking about wine. So, I hope you enjoyed our discussion on the Bairrada wine region.

But today we are moving just to the east to the Dão region. But this is a region of much higher altitude and elevations. So, the wines here tend to be more elegant, perfumed and have finesse. They're incredibly gastronomic. And this is a region where Touriga Nacional does beautifully. And a white grape variety called Encruzado.

So, get ready to learn more about the Dão wine region, but also I'll be going back to Tom's new wine book, "How to Drink Wine." There's a section on food pairing. So, I'll be getting Tom to take us through the process of how he would pair some Dão wines with food.

But what I also love about this book, it's not just about wine pairing or understanding wine history, but also markups in a restaurant, how much a bottle of wine will cost you in a wine shop and why, and buying the right wine.

And one of the fascinating things that is brought up that we all should know more about is light strike, a wine fault that massively affects the flavour of wine. So, we discuss what is it, how does it happen, how quickly it happens and how to avoid buying a wine from a wine shop with light strike.

So, if you're curious as to what is in this book, you can pre-order it now and you'll find the link in my show notes. Also, you will find the link to [Wickhams Wine](#), the sponsor of this season, an award-winning online retailer.

So, for those of you in the UK, pop to the site, use my code "EATSLEEP10" for 10% off your first order. And if we are all ready to go, pour yourself a glass of tasty wine and enjoy the episode!

**Janina Doyle 00:02:44** So, tell me about your trip to Dão because this is a region that fascinates me that I think is creating such wines of finesse yet still doesn't seem to be as recognised as it should be.

**Tom Surgey 00:03:01** 100%. Yeah, I've just got back. It was wicked. Absolutely loved it. Saw some friends, some people that I've seen over the years and also got a really good deep dive into Dão as a region.

You've kind of hit the nail on the head. It's an enormously elegant, highly finessed region. It could, if you wanted to make a kind of big statement, like it could be Portugal's most high quality, most interesting kind of internationally interesting region.

I say that kind of breaking my own heart really because I think Alentejo is amazing. I think some of the stuff in the Algarve is amazing. I think stuff in Setúbal is amazing. I think stuff in the Douro is amazing, particularly the whites. Vinho Verde is amazing. Lisboa, there's some cool stuff.

I hate really dogmatic statements, but actually Dão... Bairrada is amazing. But I think Dão is super cool. And really, it has got the potential if you were a marketeer just looking at Dão to be able to say it's the most exciting region in Portugal.

So, we should start with where it is? You would fly, Tom's travel agency. Fly EasyJet or TAP Air, Portugal's Airways, into Porto, up in the north of Portugal. Highly good, we've talked about this before, I'm not gonna bang on about it. Fantastic food scene. Get yourself a Francesinha, which is absolutely fantastic, and sort of the biggest meal you will ever have in the world.

**Janina Doyle 00:04:25** What is it?

**Tom Surgey 00:04:36** Francesinha is, it's a sandwich, it's like a grilled sandwich, but it's got steak, then it has sausage, then it has ham in some bread, often has an egg on top of it, and then they make a sauce out of beer.

It changes in different locations, but usually it's beer in Porto. It's kind of like a sort of a wet sandwich that you chop up, but it's intense. Loads of cheese. Enormous amounts of grilled cheese within it. And usually, served with some chips on the side.

I can't go to Porto without having one, but I've never had two. I think it would be a challenge to do anyway, but honestly, it's the best thing ever. So, you do that and then you will drive sort of Southeast down. It's in the centre. It's inland from the coast where Porto is. It's about a two hour drive.

Let's call it two hour drive Southeast from Porto. You're still in the North of Portugal, but you're getting more towards central Portugal at this point. Portugal, obviously this long, thin, very beautiful country banded on the end of Spain essentially. And so, we're going a third of the way inland towards Spain.

It's no longer influenced climatically really by the coastline. There's not a lot of climatic influence there. The Atlantic coast with all its cold breezes is basically too far away. And the other important thing about the Dão is it's quite high altitude. So, it's sort of 400 metres up, that sort of thing. There are some vineyards higher than that within it.

But it's a plateau that sits within the beautiful Serres Mountains that basically go all the way around it. And the mountains that sort of rise up around it, you've travelled over to get to this plateau in between, slightly lower down, which is Dão. It means that all of those sea breezes that would still be

there to a degree from the Atlantic are kind of blocked a bit. And then crucially, all of the really hot wind that comes in from essentially Africa and also from central Iberia, all of that hotbed in the centre of Spain, all of that stuff kind of gets mitigated. The mountains kind of protect it from that.

And because it's high up, you get quite a cool, very high diurnal area. Diurnals, I'm sure lots of listeners know all about it, but the diurnal range is the difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures.

So, Dão gets a good amount of sunshine. It gets a really good amount of water. It pretty much everywhere is unirrigated that we went to see, which is awesome, which isn't the case for all parts of Portugal at all. There are areas with real water problems. Dão is not one of them, which is good.

But because they're high up, the days are warm and sunny. And then at night times, the temperature just plummets and gets really, really cold. And the joy of that, any wine region in the world really wants high diurnals. Most places want that.

And the reason for that is you get really juicy, delicious, flavorful fruit that's ripe in the daytime and sunny and all of the lovely character you get from that. But then at night, that coldness retains acidity. It slows down ripening. The grapes just sort of slightly sort of chill out. It reduces the amount of ripeness that you get. You get more complexity. You get both lovely cool climate fruit and warm climate fruit characteristics going on. And you can arguably leave fruit longer on the vine as well because of that, as long as it's not too wet, and achieve a really complex kind of multi-layered style of wine. And so, that's what, in a nutshell, the Dão is about.

As you go through those mountains, you see a lot of schist, you see a lot of granite. And the granite is amazing. Big soils that are built over millennia of really thin little bits of kind of little rock. Granite is everywhere. And so, that's your soil type. Very free draining everywhere in Portugal has been making wine for thousands of years, like ages, right? Much like all sorts of places like Romans rocked up and started planting vineyards and all the rest of it.

And actually, while we were there, we went to Quinta de Taboadella, and Taboadella has got a Roman Lagar, which is like a big swimming pool of wine sort of thing. It's amazing that you can go and see it, as well as the remains of a Roman villa in the middle of the vineyard.

So, they're clearly been winemaking there for a long time. And the Romans did talk about the wines of the Dão. So, it was good, unlike in England where they planted vines here and then sort of no one really talked about it.

What assumes it was better in the Dão. The soil types are kind of quite important. They're really free draining. The aspect is amazing. I mentioned this in Bairrada, it's kind of the same in the Dão. You find quite a lot of different aspects going on.

So, you have vineyards with some elements facing south, some elements facing a little bit more east, and they've been able to plant myriad of different grape varieties there to kind of best be suited to those different topographies and aspects.

So, it's a really cool region. That's what I was going to say, historically, while it's had winemaking for a really long time in the Dão, there was a for a long time until the mid 80s, everything was made for

co-ops in the Dão. It was really heavily restricted, really heavily controlled. There were a lot of hybrids and kind of quite average varietals being planted there.

It was a bulk wine producing region for a long, long time. And if you speak to probably our parents' generation, Janina, and older people around the Dão, if they are aware of the Dão, they'll think it's low quality, big, bulk kind of stuff.

It's a little bit like a small region that experiences the same thing as German Riesling. 20 - 30 years of shouting about the cheapest, sort of sweetest, sort of most average wines possible. And it would take another 100 years to sort of remind people that actually it's not just that.

**Janina Doyle 00:10:07** Fix that.

**Tom Surgey 00:10:08** And they, yeah, exactly. And like German Riesling, they are some of the most exciting wines in the world, and it just has to cut through the noise. And Dão now, they've replanted lots of vineyards with good local interesting traditional varietals again.

There are still lots of very old vineyards there with old vines, Vinhas Velhas, that are there. It's an amazing, genuinely beautiful place. Everywhere you look, in any direction, there's a mountain range a little way off. It's extraordinary. And it's based on the River Dão. Hence the name, Dão. So, there are also beautiful waterways, segmenting it up. It's so stunning. I can talk about grape varieties and things, but yeah, you tell me. It's amazing.

**Janina Doyle 00:10:45** Talk about grape varieties. For me, actually, it's the white grape variety that I get very excited about, Encruzado. Should I be pronouncing it differently?

**Tom Surgey 00:10:58** No, that was perfect pronunciation. I think that was bang on. Encruzado is, point one quite easy to say for a Portuguese indigenous varietal, which is brilliant.

**Janina Doyle 00:11:08** Right?

**Tom Surgey 00:11:11** It means that it is much more likely that it's internationally going to become something people drink. It's like to Albariño and Alvarinho. The reason we drink lots of Albariño is, A, it tastes really nice and B, people can actually say it, which is ridiculous but it's true

I've been there very excited for Encruzado. I've been into Encruzado for probably a decade and I have bought Encruzado for my own personal drinking and for leaving under the cellar, under the stairs, under the bed, wherever. Encruzado is a white grape.

**Janina Doyle 00:11:40** Under the bed?

**Tom Surgey 00:11:41** Yeah. I leave lots of wine under the bed. I've filled my under the stairs and then the next best thing is under the bed and then we're getting to the point now where we're going to have to move house, I think it's the thing, but it's fine.

So, Encruzado, it is a white grape. It's like Chardonnay. Quite neutral. It's not like a fruit salad in a glass. It's not Sauvignon Blanc, right? It's not like a carnival headdress of bonanza of flavour. It is orchard-fruited, citrusy, quite elegant. It's not screaming out there.

And when it's good, like good Chardonnay, it's a wine that's about structure and tension. Actually, it's sometimes talked about as being Portugal's answer to white burgundy. In that sense, it can be very like that and it can be oaked beautifully. Some of the best examples have got some really lovely French oak to them or are made in concrete where it oxidises a bit and gets a bit more texture.

But I would say it always has more acidity than burgundy, like it's always fresher and zingier than burgundy. And it also has this little lithe kind of green gently sappy note that it's a classic Portuguese thing of high acid, a bit of herbaceous aromatics.

And it's such an exciting beguiling wine. It can age for a really long time. It gets better and better and better. But it's also capable of making wines that in the first year or two of being made, particularly if they've had a bit of oxygen through concrete or through oak, are actually just delicious and really good.

And the Encruzado, I just think, is awesome. I think in the next 10 years, we're going to be drinking more of this stuff. We're going to see more in Encruzado in the UK. People are going to get into it. They're going to know it.

But then there's a load of others, right? We talked about Bairrada in the previous episode and the same grapes exist here. There's things like Bical that turn up here. There is a bit of Fernao Pires, which they call Fernao Pires here. But the red grape of the region, the famous red grape of the region is Touriga Nacional, okay?

And we know because it's a more famous region, we know Touriga Nacional as being one of the best red grapes of the Douro. And for a decade or more when people have been talking about the Douro Valley and having that conversation of it's not just about fortified wines, they actually make some non-fortified table wines in the Douro.

In that chat, usually it ends up going to, 'And the best of them is Touriga.' Touriga is a great grape variety in the Douro and it makes an intensely flavoured kind of really, black fruited kind of full bodied staunch styles of red wine, always with like a lovely gentle perfume to them.

They're really elegant, multi-layered wines, big tannin, but smooth kind of easy tannin at the same time. The thing about the Dão that people need to know is that the Dão is pretty much like where Touriga comes from. The Dão is only just below the Douro.

And to speak to winemakers in the Dão, so you've got to bear in mind, I have been indoctrinated by winemakers in the Dão more recently than I have in the Douro. They say that it is a Dão grape variety. There's more history of winemaking in the Dão with Touriga than there is in the Douro.

And I would say whether that's exactly true or not, it probably is true. What is undisputable is that it was in 1908 that the Dão was the first ever Portuguese wine region that was demarcated as an area. The Douro was demarcated earlier, but for fortified wines. The Dão was the first in Portugal to be still wines, non-fortified table wines. And that's really important.

So, table wines made with Touriga have been made in Dão for a lot longer because the Dão is cooler. It's higher altitude in most places. It's a cooler climate than Douro. Touriga in Dão is much more

elegant, much more perfume. lighter style, fresher. It's amazing. It smells like Earl Grey tea. It's got lots of bergamot in there.

And the thing I found with every producer was this menthol, minty kind of thing. It was just like, I'm salivating now. That's what Touriga in Dão is about. And it's called Touriga Nacional as a grape because it's national, literally the Touriga of Portugal, it's gone all over the place and it's now planted elsewhere.

But yeah, Dão is its home. So, that's good. What else do they have? Baga. They have a grape variety called Alfrocheiro. And Alfrocheiro, I love.

**Janina Doyle 00:16:25** Well, I mean, I don't know. You tell me. But most of the other grapes are darker. Maybe they're smokier. Maybe they're bolder, but Alfrocheiro seems to be the more strawberry-like, the kind of a little bit juicier, softer, brighter style.

**Tom Surgey 00:16:42** Yeah. It's sort of like it exists in the same world, flavor-wise, as Pinot Noir, Frappato from Sicily. It's that sort of end of the spectrum. Fresher, lighter, cool climate Grenache, that lovely, kind of crunchy, kind of delicious, kind of unctuous kind of fruit.

The tannins – what's interesting is I've had Alfrocheiro a lot from the kind of Alentejo inland, kind of very hot bit in the south of Portugal, and I've found them always to be quite easy, quite light, quite soft stuff.

In Dão, it's the kind of the examples I was tasting. Alfrocheiro is quite kind of generous in the amount of fruit it gets, the yields are quite high. And so, a lot of people were talking about green harvesting, getting rid of quite a few bunches and only leaving the original first ones that come through.

And I think because there's an element of doing that, the maturity, the ripeness, the intensity of flavour that's developed in those grapes in Dão is kind of greater. So, it was like the Pinot Noir from Burgundy of Pinot Noir, as opposed to being soft, juicy Romanian Pinot Noir. It was a bit more intense, but they were amazing, lighter style, like beautiful wines.

**Janina Doyle 00:17:56** No, I was going to say you haven't mentioned Mencia.

**Tom Surgey 00:18:00** No, exactly. Yeah, it's there. Called Jaen, yeah, so Jaen out there is Mencia and we tasted quite a lot of Jaen. I really like Jaen, lower acidity, more meaty, more bacon-y, kind of smoky, forest flory, earthy, kind of textural reds. What people like about Jaen is it's low acid.

It's really low acid comparatively to things like Encrezado, things like Touriga, and it makes it a much easier drinking style. And that was good. There's a lot of Tinta Roriz. There is a general dislike of Tinta Roriz in Dão. Tinta Roriz is Tempranillo or Aragonez, depending on where in the world you're talking about.

It's the lighter easier reds from Rioja and lots of the winemakers, I found it really funny and I'm always I'm more interested in people in the culture in lots of ways with wine, and I was really interested that all of the winemakers we spoke to almost had to kind of caveat and apologise for showing us stuff from Tinta Roriz.

They they quite often would sort of say, "Now look, I don't want you to think this is going to be rubbish and do please bear it out and listen to us about why I think this particular wine from Tinta Roriz is good and is not like most Tinta Roriz. I don't like Tinta Roriz but I quite like doing this with it." And so, it felt like there was a sort of a general thing of people feeling like, oh, it's a bit less interesting. I found it amazing. I had some Rosé at Taboadella actually made with Tinto Roriz that was aged in cement tanks and had a little bit of oak to it sort of thing, but was so beautiful.

It was one of my wines of the trip. In fact, it was the wine that I was doing some interviews on camera and whenever it was like, okay, we need you for 10 minutes to come and do a piece in the vineyard, bring some wine. I was always bringing this Rosé every time. It was just beautiful. And so, I think Tinta Roriz is really, really, really cool.

There is a great variety there called Rabo de Ovelha. And Rabo de Ovelha is very cool only because it means sheep's tail. It's not even like a colloquial term. It literally just means the tail of a sheep, which we found quite fun.

There's loads of this in Portugal. There's dog strangler. There's loads of varieties that just have brilliantly wonderful random names. So, we had a lot of fun. It was really, really cool. I've mentioned Taboadella. I went to a place called Quinta do Ribeiro Santo, which was very, very good. And kind of tasted wines from across the spectrum, from really high end, quite high price point wines that could age and would sit brilliantly on like really high end restaurant wine lists, very foodie wines.

All the way to stuff that is just delicious and quaffable and super easy drinking, you know? Yeah, there's a lot of diversity and I think that's one of the fun things about Dão. And at every price point, it was great. Every price point was really, really good fun.

Carlos Lucas has that winery, they were doing, I mean, an enormous spread of wines. They were working with concrete a lot and stainless steel and making just delicious, super easy drinking styles. Often indigenous yeasts, very little intervention again, much like when we were in Bairrada.

So, modern, thoughtful, considered wines, but made in a way that was super accessible and delicious. And the whites, what I love about Portuguese white wine in general, and from the Dão, I would say in particular, they're not white wines that are New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. They're not like, bang, here you go, love me, love me, love me, love me.

They're not wines to get your children into wine with when they're old enough, they're thoughtful wines. They're often wines that are based on texture and multiple layers of character. There are loads of beautiful fruit in there, but they're often gastronomic, interesting styles.

And actually, I think ultimately, once you really get into wine, I think that's way more what you're after. I think they're really engaging, really interesting wines that you can just try forever. Yeah.

**Janina Doyle 00:21:57** Great finesse, good acidity, textural and absolutely gastronomic. Now, actually, a lot of my kind of more favourite producers of the wines that I've tasted are actually more in the southeast on the foothills of the, in English, the star mountain. What an amazing name, the Serra da Estrela.

**Tom Surgey 00:22:15** Yeah. So cool. Yeah. I mean, literally. And this, it goes back like the amazing grape names. Portugal's got some wicked names for things. It's just so beautiful. The people are amazing as well. Like Carlos Lucas, who's a huge producer there, came to see us and hosted us for lunch and was so inviting and so welcoming.

Lots of wine regions that you go to in the world, they really put on a bit of a show and it's great and it's understandable and it's always so generous and that's very lovely. But sometimes you come away with the sense that they had really thought about, like, 'Okay, we've got to be showy. What will they really enjoy? What do they like? What do they get in the country? What's the best? Let's get a Michelin star chef to do something like this.'

This wasn't that. We had some of the best winemakers in their individual winery, hosting us for lunch, and they were serving us mega traditional dishes. We went to see three winemakers, two of them had a really friendly fight over which of them was going to serve us Bacalhau, the kind of classic baked salt cod dish of the region. They were like, "I want to do the Bacalhau! No, please! I want to do it."

And then the one that didn't, which was Carlos, did this amazing dish where it was almost like risotto, rice cooked down in red wine with more pork, of course. And it was extraordinary. It was so lovely and so simple. And like I said in the other one, when you're travelling in wine regions, we're not there to go and see the latest Four Seasons and kind of have international five-star hospitality. You're there to meet these people.

And the Portuguese get it. They're like, we're gonna make it a really lovely time. It's super generous and the food is extraordinarily good. But they want you to meet them and see them as they are and on their terms and that is so exciting.

And Serra de Estrela, they want you to see that. They're proud of the natural beauty of this place. They're so proud of the Roman elements. They're so proud of the amazing work they're doing in the vineyards. There was a real authentic and unintentional – I know it wasn't for PR, but it was, there was a real focus on we are doing the right thing in our vineyards with thinking about sustainability.

There was a lot of talk about water. Water's a big deal all over the world now. I think they were really taking their responsibility in terms of what they do and don't do in their vineyards very, very seriously. I think that's awesome. That's definitely something that in the last 10 years is an enormous change.

**Janina Doyle 00:24:39** It's so important.

**Tom Surgey 00:24:40** Yeah. But I think people are getting it. When you're high-level looking at a wine region or a country or whatever it might be, I think you can get quite a negative view of what people are doing for sustainability sort of thing.

You look at the big picture and then when you delve down, you actually go and see an individual and what they're doing, like the amount of effort and work that they're putting into it, I always just think it's extraordinary. And the producers we've visited in the Dão were really doing that, like really hot on it. So it was really cool. It was amazing. It was a really good visit.



**Janina Doyle 00:25:05** Did you taste any wines from the Quinta dos Roques, that's how I would, I guess, pronounce it because there's so many of their wines in the UK and I love them.

**Tom Surgey 00:25:17** They are absolutely awesome. They're really cool. I've met the winemaker a few times. They come to the UK quite a lot. They're imported by Raymond Reynolds who are an amazing, amazing Portuguese importer. And we should shout out to Clark Foyster as well who imports Carlos Lucas, including Quinta do Ribeiro Santo and things.

We're very lucky in this country. We do get a lot of the best producers in this country. There's a producer in Dão as well called Lusus, who are very cool, very high price point, really high price point, very small, super sustainable. But I think if you were still at Beast, if you were simulating and doing restaurants of that level, I would be introducing you to Lusus very quickly. They are extraordinary wines.

And Quinta dos Roques, I didn't see this time, but I just love their wines. There's some wines made like Malvasia Fina and there's some really great, really great kind of gently aromatic styles of wine that they make as well that I just think are absolutely beautiful.

Dão has a lot of diversity, there's a lot of different grape varieties, different producers champion different things, there's some international grape varieties Chardonnay and Syrah and Cabernet and things planted as well, but the bounty, the exciting thing, is all the indigenous stuff. Yeah, and well mentioned on Jaen, on Mencia, because it's a huge proportion of it for sure. Yeah, it's good.

**Janina Doyle 00:26:37** And do you find that people are still typically releasing their better wines as blends? Or is there a lot more experimentation now for mono-varietal wines?

**Tom Surgey 00:26:47** Good question. I think there's still a big part of the Portuguese wine industry that is around blends, and I'm a big fan of blends. I really love blends. I definitely saw a lot of people. Carlos Lucas had a wine. It was called ET. ET because it was Encruzado.

**Janina Doyle 00:27:05** "ET Go Home."

**Tom Surgey 00:27:07** Yeah. And the labels got like a little drawing of the ET sort of fingers or whatever. Steven Spielberg, if it is him.

**Janina Doyle 00:27:14** That's so cute.

**Tom Surgey 00:27:16** But it is really good. And that was extraordinary. And that was a wine that was 80% or 85% Touriga and 15, 20% Encruzado pressed together and co-fermented. And there's a big tradition in Portugal of co-fermenting white and black grapes together, which is quite unusual, and results in wines that are more elegant and more gentle than just a big brooding kind of red wine.

And it's also the natural home, in many regions in Portugal, of field blends. And actually, this is a big thing for me. I sometimes get on my high horse for that. The field blend is a term that's used by a lot of producers, often quite natural producers and producers wanting to show that they do lots of work in the vineyard and they're like, hey, we've made this amazing field blend.

The first thing I always ask when someone says they've made a field blend is like, have you? Is it? Really? Because most people when they make field blends now, what all they mean by that is, we've

picked a bunch of grape varieties from the same kind of area and then we've fermented them and blended them together. And it's like, that's not a field blend.

A field blend is when you go and pick all of that fruit at once. I want you to pick five varieties from the same site. Some of it's really ripe, some of it's not that ripe, just pick it all, press it all together and ferment it all together.

And Portugal is the home of that. And it's amazing. You get wines that you just sit there for hours, mind blown, often lower price point. The lower price point wines of the Dão, the wines that you can buy for £10 in the UK. We were still sitting there for 20 minutes discussing these wines with the winemaker, finding new things, evolving in the glass. And often because they had a bit of a blend to them and that lovely thing of field blends where some of it's a bit riper than other bits, you get some slightly green textures in there, but you also get some really ripe kind of character.

That's some of my favourite wine in the world made that way. And co-fermenting grape varieties, I think is a really, really special art form that people can do. But yeah, anyone calling it field blend when you haven't actually picked it all together and pressed it all together, we're coming for you. That's what we're doing.

I had a travel agency that started this. My new trading standards agency. That's what we're coming for. Question and field blends. So, just to answer your question, having gone off on one. Blends are really important.

In Dão, we're seeing a lot more in mono-varietal wines and people are being really proud of that expression. And actually, I really don't dislike that. I think that's great. I think it's really, really lovely. If you go up north from Dão into the Douro, blends are still totally the common thing. I think there's a lot of pretty relaxed approach to admitting to what's actually in that bottle as well in the wine world in general, right?

**Janina Doyle 00:30:01** In general, everywhere.

**Tom Surgey 00:30:03** I think I would say anyone who thinks that when a wine label says 87% this, 2% this, 4% that, that is a fag packet maths that's been done after a session in the pub sort of thing on the fly.

And I think that should be celebrated. I think that's really, really good. But yeah, no, the mono-varietal, I think both have their place. Different regions do different things. I would say Vinho Verde, I would say Dão, I would say Bairrada, Alentejo to a great extent, Setúbal for a good extent.

They're all making really good single-varietal wines, but they all do still make lots of blended wines as well. It's like traditional methods and Charmat method sparkling. It's not an indicator of quality. It's just an opportunity to make something that's a different style.

**Janina Doyle 00:30:50** So, now I want to touch on how good Dão wines are with food with that beautiful high acidity, with the freshness, with the finesse. And in your book, because come on, let's get back to your book.

**Tom Surgey 00:31:03** Let's talk about the book!

**Janina Doyle 00:30:03** That you're about to release.

**Tom Surgey 00:30:04** How to Drink Wine.

**Janina Doyle 00:31:08** Yeah, why not?

**Tom Surgey 00:30:08** In every good bookshop and bad book, every bookshop. One's run by nice people and run by horrible people, and everywhere. Please go get it.

**Janina Doyle 00:31:21** You're not personalityist. You can be a bad person and still have my book because I need to make some money. Now in the book, you have a whole section on food and wine pairing because of course this will forever be a subject that people like to dive into. So, let me challenge you now. Let me ask you with Dão wines, and of course I know there's red and white, so I'm leaving this open. How would you go about paring food to these wines?

**Tom Surgey 00:31:50** I think it's a really good question. You've hit the nail on the head. Its acidity and intensity of flavour is a thing. And the Dão has both in spades. The great varieties in the Dão on the red side, the other thing to think about is tannin. And there are wines with some pretty good tannin in Dão, as in heavy tannins in Dão. Touriga can do it.

I would say our general experience was not that. These are not enormously heavy, brutish, brooding red wines. Even the Douro, which isn't all about that either, but the Douro would be in general, a more rich, rugged, heavy red wine.

**Janina Doyle 00:32:27** Bolder and bigger in general.

**Tom Surgey 00:30:28** And so, I think we're dealing with wines that are quite fresh in acidity, quite elegant in their style, even in the reds. They have some tannin, but yeah, they're kind of limber and lighter in style.

When I start approaching food pairing, we talk about this in the book, so I won't destroy too much of it, because you must please go and buy it. But the approach that I always take is one of, one of three ways, basically.

You either have the idea of a complimentary style of pairing, which is you're trying to find a flavour that broadly matches or rather specifically matches the flavours that are available in that wine. So, the key thing with when you're trying to make a complementary pairing is that the number one thing is the flavour intensity of both those things.

Before you even think about what flavours that may be, you need to have a relatively shared level of intensity of flavour. There's no point in having something super spicy and intense with a very light style wine.

So, once you think about that, you can then start thinking about aligned flavours. Like, are there citrus and orchard fruits in the white? Okay, what does that pair beautifully with as a complementary pairing in food? And then, that would be your kind of, that you'd be going down the seafood, the fish kind of angle.

Is it quite dark, quite dense, quite cherries, quite black, you know, fruit flavours, black currants and that sort of thing, and a bit of tannin, in which case you might be going more protein and more heavy kind of lead directions sort of thing. So, the first thing is that flavour intensity.

Another way to do it is I would say contrasting pairings. I would approach this less in the Dão, but this is where you've got two very polarised styles. You've basically got either food or wine with quite a strong character. And what you want to then do is you want to think about what could we put up against that, that is going to be the complete opposite to it.

If you're dealing with super salty, really funky, say blue cheese or whatever, you're going to need super sweet, really intense wine alongside that to kind of meet in the middle, to bridge it, to sort of gently balance the effect of the extremes of one with the extremes of the other. That's contrasting.

Then the final third way of food pairing that I always approach is kind of regional. What grows together, goes together, that kind of idea. And it's not a fail safe by any means. It's definitely something that goes wrong sometimes, but there is a lot of time where if you forget everything else, actually there's loads of really good reasons why the food that comes from and is grown in that local region goes well with the local wine.

And that's twofold. One is terroir. One is this idea that actually there is a natural flavour of that region that is a combination of the geography, the geology, the climate, the local culture around it. And that affects both wine and food. The cheese that's made in Dão, the mountain cheeses in Dão are sheep's milk cheeses. They are matured, so they're quite soft in the middle, but they're quite hard on the outside. And the flavour on the outside is quite intense and quite salty. The flavour on the inside is much softer, much more gently sort of creamy, these amazing mountain sheep's milk cheeses from down.

And then if you put that alongside some Encruzado, for example, that's grown in the same place. Encruzado is made in such a way that there is piercing fresh acidity, but there's also this quite tense, quite sort of lemon peel, orchard fruit kind of body and structure to it, where it can really stand up to something.

And so, those two things alongside each other are like, they're built for one another. They're naturally tasting like they're very complimentary. It is a natural thing. It's also, because if you imagine you can have the fun job, if you grew up in a family where your family were making wine in Dão, and I grew up in a family where we had sheep and we were making sheep's cheeses, over the centuries, our family's sitting around dinner tables together, going to the local festivals and I don't know, whatever, school fates, all that sort of situation, you're eventually, probably just naturally start trying to make some wine that tastes quite nice with the cheese that I've been making and vice versa, right?

And so, there's this both a natural thing and a human culture thing that brings local things together beautifully. So, that's a very long way of saying, the wines of the Dão, sheep's cheeses with the whites were extraordinary. They make very good sparkling wine there, much like in Bairrada, the fizz there, super dry, zero dosage, made with a whole range of grape varieties, including Touriga Nacional they make fizz from, amazing with those kinds of sheep's cheeses.

The seafood in general in Portugal is just extraordinary. Some of the best seafood in the world with that Atlantic coastline. And even though Dão is not super near the sea, the seafood available was amazing.

Salt cod, the bacalhau is quite an intense dish. There's lots of potatoes, like smashed up potatoes and very salty, rich kinds of meaty cod and garlic and things. That goes absolutely beautifully with the sort of slightly more oily textured kind of rounder Maria Gomes, Fernao Pires, Bical style wines, maybe with a year or two of age, often made in concrete tanks and vats there so they get a bit broader and richer.

And then, the reds are just perfect with grilled meats, such as simply higher fat, higher flavour, heavily salted, rib eyes, pork rib eyes, meaty grilled sort of situation. The black pork that you get in Portugal is about the best pork in the world, as far as I'm concerned. And the suckling pig and things in Bairrada are the same. High acid, beautiful red wines with intensely kind of cherry, crunchy kind of flavours go beautifully with that kind of grilled meat situation. That's the idea. Does that sound all right? That's an enormous amount of information.

**Janina Doyle 00:38:18** Now in the book as well actually, I really appreciated you talking about some of the things that we don't mention. The cost of wine, the markups, how much you're going to be paying if you buy wine in a wine shop. I was really upset when you mentioned our duty, which is obviously nearly £3 a bottle. And in France, like a penny? What?

**Tom Surgey 00:38:40** France has been hit very hard in the last few years, actually, significantly hard with their taxation on wine. They had a 25% hike in their duty on wine last year. So, we should feel very sorry for the French, but that took it from two cents a bottle of wine up to three cents a bottle of wine. So, they've been hit pretty hard.

**Janina Doyle 00:39:02** Outrageous.

**Tom Surgey 00:39:03** We paid just under £3 for a bottle of wine in this country and purely in duty. I really wanted to put that in there. And actually a bit, we talked on the previous episode about biodynamics and organics and how much I fought to make that a segment that I really wanted it to be there.

The same with this actually is because it's a bit of an outlier in the book where I actually genuinely break down all the costs in wine in a restaurant, in a shop. And the economics of wine is not something people often always think about. I've simplified it as much as I can. I want people to understand, actually it's largely for my mom, because my mom is still a person that if I take a £20 bottle of wine to my mom, which is an expensive bottle of wine, and it's privileged to be able to do it.

And I don't always drink £20 bottles of wine by any means. But when I take a £20 bottle of wine to my mom's, my mom's first reaction is, "What an obscene thing. Tom, you've got children! You should be putting this in the bank or something. What a ridiculously opulent thing to do. Why would you do that?"

And I think a lot of people feel like that. I think a lot of people still have the approach of, well, if you can spend £5 on a bottle of wine, why? What an obscene thing to do. And the whole book is about

the democratic element of wine. This crazy idea that we have in this country of these things are for the elite and this is really kind of us and them kind of product. That's the biggest challenge wine has.

Drinking a £20 bottle of wine when you've saved up for it and you can afford it, and it's an occasion that you wanna make special, such a joy. And the economics of it really stack up as well. And I wanted that to be part of the book because it takes you through it, as you've kindly said. Like, if you buy a bottle of wine at £5 in England, you're paying pence like pence for the actual liquid in the bottle, because the base costs of travel and transport, the high taxation on it, which by the way, also, I completely agree with, there's loads of people in the wine trade who hate the high taxation on it.

I'm super pro it. I don't know if anyone's heard alcohol can cause some societal problems and illness. So, I do slightly feel like it's all right. It's okay to give something back in getting involved in it. And so, it would be nice if it was spent more wisely. I'm not talking politics.

**Janina Doyle 00:41:17** I'm not getting involved in it.

**Tom Surgey 00:41:19** I'm fine with. But yeah, the idea is you spend £5, you get a couple of pence worth of actual liquid wine. Really rubbish. You spend £10 and you get something like three times the value, you know, which is getting much better. You start getting into the £15, the £20 a bottle, and you start getting to nearly a third of that price you're paying just on the liquid itself. By the time you start getting up into the £40, £50 a bottle, you do have to bear in mind at that price point, you are paying for some degree of marketing for somebody incredibly beautiful to tell you why their bottle is worth that much money.

**Janina Doyle 00:41:55** Or scarcity or whatever it is, but it's not going to be, precisely.

**Tom Surgey 00:42:00** By the time you do get to that price point, you're actually spending more on the wine than anything else. So, I think the idea that it's crazy to spend lots of money on wine. It's all about circumstance. Of course it is. And wine is a luxury item. Don't put it in before buying nice food. You don't have to have wine to have a nice time, all the rest of it.

But if you're really into wine and you derive a lot of joy from it, actually, I think it really does make a lot of sense to spend a bit more on it and drink a bit less. It's great.

**Janina Doyle 00:42:24** So, I love that you really touch on it so people can fully understand. And also even just how to buy and how to choose wine. And you touched on an issue that I am going to now talk to you about, which is light strike. It's something that when I speak to a general consumer about, oh, like, Rosé wine in a clear bottle, you talk about if it's in the window of a shop, don't pick up that bottle.

Don't let the wine shop owner take it and put that in a bag. That wine is going to most likely have suffered from light strike. I love that you have touched on this in the book. Would you care to explain to people what Light strike actually is and why it's really bad?

**Tom Surgey 00:43:08** 100%. It's an enormous issue that we have with wine. It's one of the biggest issues we have with wine. And the reason for that is because we choose to bottle wine in glass bottles, which have loads of really great attributes.

The negative of them is that they let in UV light, even dark coloured bottles, all of it, ultraviolet light gets in, to one degree or another. That is why when in wineries, people are ageing wine in bottles, they tend to do it in cellars that are pitch black all of the time.

When you go to really good wineries, what you never wanna see when you go to a winery cellar is they go, welcome to the cellar, and you go down there and it's pitch black, and then they press a button that kind of goes, bing, and it's like a sort of football pitch. Well, you don't want that, because even, it's to a lesser extent than the sun, but even halogen lighting has a massive effect on the wine.

You want really low-level lighting. Ideally, you want to go wine shopping somewhere that you're kind of, you're going to trip over boxes and that sort of thing because you can't really see. But obviously, in reality, you do need to go to a wine shop and be able to see what you're doing.

The issue here is that when UV light gets in and has a presence on wine, a chemical reaction takes place where there are awful aromas and characters that are derived from it. The UV light takes the more fruitier, joyful, wonderful, exuberant edges of wine and the clarity and cleanliness that you get with delicious white wine, say, for example, and it transforms that through to characters that are more like...

**Janina Doyle 00:44:37** Fart.

**Tom Surgey 00:44:40** Onion skin. There's a bit of fart. You've said fart in every episode of this that I've done with you. Is that part of it? Is that a sponsorship thing?

**Janina Doyle 00:44:48** This may be the first time I've ever said fart in two episodes. I don't think I've used the word fart before.

**Tom Surgey 00:44:52** I'm going to listen back. Yeah, that could be a thing. So, yeah, it starts off. often tasting a bit like onion skins, like when you've been chopping onions or something or like...

**Janina Doyle 00:45:04** Old cabbage.

**Tom Surgey 00:45:04** Yeah. And then it goes all cabbagey. And the thing you'll notice is the fruit character really diminishes and you'll smell something that's a bit almost like pickle brine you get in pickles.

Like, that it's a really weird funk. And it's one of those faults in wine that isn't absolute. So, you can often smell it a little bit and kind of go, I still quite appreciate this. It's quite nice, but it also gets up to a certain stage where it's like, this is awful and smelly, cabbage, horrible kind of wines, grim. And it's something that, I mean, it's an enormous issue.

So, clear glass bottles are the worst culprits for it. They simply protect glass. They protect the wine worse, more UV gets in. The darker the glass, the better, but you still don't want to leave a really dark, pure jet black bottle in a shop window all the time.

I've got some friends who own shops and I feel very bad about this chapter because it's a thing. I've spoken to people in shops about light strikes where they've said, oh, it's not a problem for us because we rotate the wine in the window at least once a week, it's absolutely fine.

**Janina Doyle 00:46:12** No, three to four hours they say, light on a bottle.

**Tom Surgey 00:46:15** Yeah, I worked with a winery where we researched Light strike and we put the same wine in different coloured glass bottles. We put them in different areas. Some just hung out outside in England for a month, as some were in a cellar in complete darkness, others were under halogen lighting.

And we tasted it every few days and kind of evaluated it. And so, in actual sunshine, if you go for a picnic, if you go and sit with your loved one on a picnic blanket and you drink a bottle of lovely Provence Rosé, keep that Provence Rosé somewhere in a basket or out of light.

By the time you've had your first glass, when you go back to your second glass, it will have affected it and it will be different. And you might not notice it because you're so, you know, you're staring into each other's eyes, you're drinking delicious rosé and that's the point of this stuff, you know, and do do that, for heaven's sake, that's literally the fundamental point of this stuff. But it does have an effect, and I'm not weird or militant about it.

**Janina Doyle 00:47:05** No, but it's worth knowing about because, well, you just mentioned a £20 bottle of wine. Most Provence wines that are really worth drinking these days are between £15 upwards. You spend that money, you want to make sure it tastes like beautiful fruit. Full stop.

**Tom Surgey 00:47:21** 100%. I think it's totally true. Don't buy the stuff in the window. If you want to be really selfish about it, try and buy the wine that's at the back, like if you find a bottle of wine that you like, and there's like five of them in a row, get the one from the back. That's what I do. Maybe the second from the back, that sort of thing, when they're not looking. Because otherwise, you look really rude. It's like when you go shopping for eggs, do you do that? And you kind of look for the one that's got the longest sort of date on it sort of thing. My local shop hates me.

**Janina Doyle 00:47:52** I do that with everything. I always go to the back and get the longest date. But yes, exactly. This is useful advice for life, Tom. Absolutely.

**Tom Surgey 00:48:02** And on that, talking about the pricing thing as we just did, finishing the UV thing, the biggest culprit alongside shop shelves, is your house. So, all of these people that I go to his house with beautiful, lovely kind of wire, steel, wine racks and things that are usually, somewhere beautifully sunlight and sort of lit in their living room or even worse in the kitchen. We'll talk about temperature another time. That's the whole thing.

But don't have your wine out on a big open rack. I know it looks beautiful. I know it makes all your friends think that you're really clever or whatever. Instead of that, just buy my book and put it on your bookshelf and they'll think exactly that same thing.

And then just going back to the pricing on wine. The book also details how pricing of wine works in restaurants and how it works in shops and the relative value of those, why you're paying more for it in a restaurant. It's something I'm really hot on professionally and I think the price of wine in restaurants is by and large entirely justified.

And I think it's something that 's been a generally easy option for a lot of food critics. I've seen a lot of restaurant reviews and food criticism in recent years where they've said the food was amazing,



the wine was so overpriced, it's horrific. And then they've also gone on in the final chapters to say something like, "Isn't it wonderful that we still have a great restaurant culture despite all of the enormous costs of everything and standard of living and all the rest of it, the crises we're having with the economy. Isn't it great that we can still continue to do this and this restaurant will survive?"

**Janina Doyle 00:49:30** Because of the cost of the wine.

**Tom Surgey 00:49:32** Wine list is such an important part of that. And so, the book, I won't spoil it, but the book, it was a very easy bit for me to write and it was a bit that I feel very passionate about. It explains why you're paying what you pay in a restaurant. And to some degree, hopefully without too much bias, defends why it is correct that you are paying that price in a restaurant.

There are obviously some egregious restaurants where there is no justification whatsoever. And most importantly, how to, within a restaurant wine list and shop, find the best value. It's crucial. So, it's not just about going, you should be paying lots of money, that's why get on with it, spend lots of money. It's saying, 'but you can be really savvy. Here are some examples of wines that are definitely better value for you on a wine list than a shop.'

**Janina Doyle 00:50:15** And you've put loads of that in the book. So just to finish off Tom, when is this book out? What date?

**Tom Surgey 00:50:23** Everyone could preorder it now. And I think a really important part of releasing a book is getting pre orders in because they all count for your first week of sales. They will basically kick in in the first week. And so, that's a really good thing.

So, if anyone wants to be really, really nice, you can preorder it now. There is a link on the bio on my Instagram @tomsurgey. That takes you to a link that gives you the option of Amazon, Waterstones, or Bookseller, which is a whole range of independent bookshops, and you can pre-order it there.

There won't be a better price than doing it that way. You don't get charged immediately, I don't think, in most of those examples, and they then charge you whatever the price is that they promote it to when it goes out sort of thing. So, you won't be paying more to pre-order, so please do that.

But if you want to hang tight, they are going to be available in Waterstones, lots of independent bookshops, Amazon, all the rest of it, from the 29th of August and lots of Waterstones things. We're going to do a little, I don't know if I'm allowed to talk about it, but we're going to do like a little promotion thing and there will be various opportunities for signed copies and things like that.

And if anyone comes to see me at a gig, wine is best live. I do lots of live stuff. You're going to struggle to come to that and not have the book marketed to you for quite a long time. I warn you.

**Janina Doyle 00:51:38** Perfect. Tom. Thank you for enlightening us on your experiences in Dão, making wine more interesting, more fun. Keep continue sharing the love of wine and all your light. Shine it bright.

**Tom Surgey 00:51:49** Janina, you are amazing. Thank you very much indeed! Thank you for having me!

**Janina Doyle 00:51:52** We did it. Boom!

**Janina Doyle 00:51:58** Don't forget the linked pre-order Tom's brand new wine book. It's in my show notes. And to sum up, I have a quote from H.W. Carter who said:

“Wine and books, food for the soul and the mind.”

Well I think that beautifully encapsulates this episode and the endless journey of lifelong learning and the profound joy that wine can bring us. And so, I ask all of you on your pursuit of knowledge and the enjoyment of life's simple pleasures. If you are getting any value out of these podcasts, do go to your podcast app, leave a review, leave some stars, like it, subscribe, press the bell. And may I remind you that next week is the last episode of Season 4.

And so, as we go into the summer holidays, I will finish off with a 3/4 day itinerary in the Languedoc, in the South of France, based around the Corbières, Minervois and Limoux wine region. And may I wish you this week, with every glass of wine and each page turned, that you find the opportunity to learn, to reflect and to celebrate the very beauty of existence. And so, until next Monday, wine friends, cheers to you!