



February 2025

www.fawg.org.au

What's on at this months FAWG Meeting:

Hello Everyone,

And welcome to February,

After a false start by yours truly, (COVID caused) I think I we are back on track to lead you memberberries through another year of winemaking and all that it entails.

Many thanks to P Enness and crew for taking on the January meeting at Hickinbothams in my absence.

I hope everyone had a wonderful break at Crissy/New Year so lets get to it.

Febs meeting is a doozy with our first minicomp for the year being sparkling and David Hart is going to lead us through the highs and lows with some tastings of the Pinot Noir variety, which there is a big interest for in the club.

Cheers for now Glen

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Coming Up

Friday 21st February 6:30-7:30pm
Best's Riesling Zoom Masterclass \$220.00
includes 4 bottles of Best's Riesling
delivered to taste during the zoom
<https://www.bestswines.com/product/riesling-zoom-masterclass>

Saturday 22nd February 11am-10:30pm
The Prosecco Festival at Abbotsford
Convent From \$70.00
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/the-prosecco-festival-2025-tickets-1061200863349?aff=ebdglgoogleliveevents&source=ecat>

Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday
Gin High Tea at Bass and Flinders Distillery
in Dromana \$175.00
<https://www.bassandflindersdistillery.com/pages/gin-high-tea>

Every Saturday and Sunday 11am and 2pm
Alcohol Inks Workshop at Elan Vineyard
Balnarring. Create your own artistically
designed wine glasses with wine tastings
and tasting plate \$75.00
https://www.elanvineyardgallery.com.au/booking-calendar/alcohol-inks-workshop?referral=service_list_widget

FAWG Calendar

Meeting Date	Club night Activity	Competition	Tasting Talk	Industry/Event	Committee Date
Feb 11 th	Pinot Noir comparison tasting	Sparkling wine mini Comp		Summer Winemakers Lunch To be Finalized	Tues 4th zoom 7pm
March 11th	Improving your liquors and fortified	No Comp	My Maltese and Sicillian journey		Tues 4th Zoom 7pm
April 8 th		Gordon Evans white wine mini comp		Autumn Winemakers lunch To be finalized	Tues 1st zoom 7pm
May 13th		Chris Myers Red wine mini comp		Wine Tour with Eltham To be finalized	Tues 6 th Zoom 7pm
June 10th		Sheila Lee Liqueur & Fortified Mini comp			Tues 3 rd Zoom 7pm
July 8th	The Guilds AGM Homemade Night		A chance to show what else you can make	Winters Winemakers Lunch To be Finalized	Tues 1 st Zoom 7pm



SENTIA WINE TESTING

The guild has a Sentia wine analyser available to members to have wine samples analysed for FreeSO₂ and Malic Acid.

The tests can be carried out prior to guild meetings, starting at 7pm. If you wish to have your wine analysed, please ensure you arrive early and advise Kevin Murphy that you require your wine analysed.

Samples should be kept away from air (ie in a sealed bottle, or sample vial with minimum air space). Only a very small sample is required for the tests.

Costs are: Members - Free SO₂ \$6.00 and Malic Acid \$15.00 Non-members - \$10 and \$20

FAWG Calendar

Cordon Corner

By Mike Payne

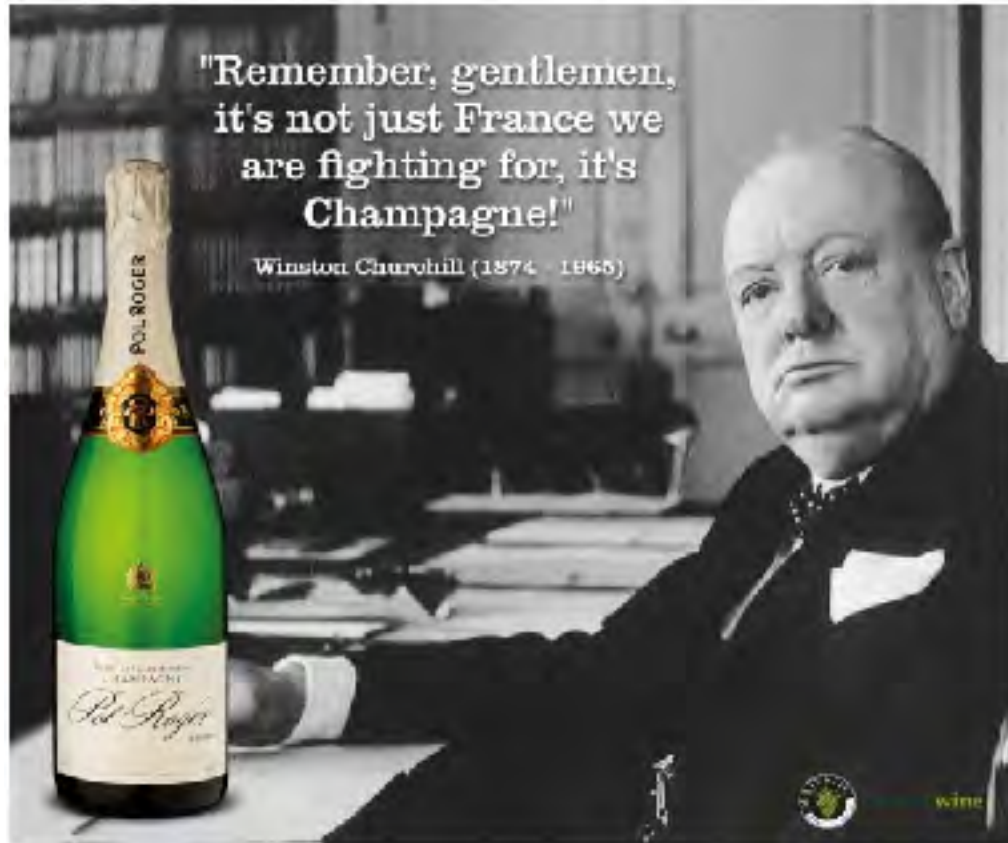
February in the vineyard usually means monitoring, measurement and maintenance depending on the quantity of vines and the varieties you have.

You should be conducting regular bird checks of the nets and if you have easy access under the net you should be checking not only the progress of veraison but also the fruit and canopy condition and if your vines are young don't be afraid to give them a little drink of water. For those who have only a small quantity of vines or small quantities of various varieties, don't fall into the trap of constantly tasting and testing berries unnecessarily or you may find you have less fruit than you thought. For the reds, you should wait until veraison has gone through before you even think about testing. Concentrate on the earliest ripening variety and leave the others until later. As a rough guide, the time from veraison to harvest is around 6 to 8 weeks depending on the weather.

Harvest may be a little earlier than usual but still too early to tell, so make sure you have a plan and be prepared



Sparkling Wine quotes - to inspire us all for the mini-comp this month



A Perpetual Champagne, Built One Year at a Time

By **Eric Asimov**

Reporting from Reims, Ay, Ludes, Vrigny and Le Mesnil-sur-Oger in France.

• Dec. 23, 2024

A new method of making nonvintage Champagne is taking gold. Producers see it as a hedge against climate change while improving overall quality.

All most people need to know about Champagne is how to safely uncork a bottle. Pouring and savoring the wine are the easy parts.

Few Champagne drinkers will interrupt their holiday celebrations to dwell on the laborious process of creating this wine, which can feel so elegant, refined and delicious.

But in the Champagne region of France now, many producers are adapting a new element to their production method. They see it not only as a significant improvement in nonvintage Champagnes, the vast majority of the bottles produced each year, but as a major hedge against the effects of climate change, which for many producers has altered both the way they farm the grapes and how they make the Champagne.

First, a bit of background on how nonvintage Champagnes are created, or, to use the term that many Champenois prefer, multivintage Champagnes.



With climate change, Champagne producers rush picking grapes too ripe, said Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, the cellar master at Louis Roederer.

Credit...

James Hill for The New York Times

These cuvées are, as the name suggests, blends of several vintages. To create one, producers will use as a base wine from the most recent harvest, itself most often a blend of different grapes from different areas within the region. To this base, producers add wines from older harvests that they've kept in reserve, experimenting and tasting until they find what they consider the best possible blend.

Why do they do this? Blending wines and vintages permits a producer to aim for stylistic consistency while hedging against the highs and lows of single harvests. While vintage Champagnes vary from year to year, reflecting the characteristics of the growing season, multivintage wines are intended to transcend the nature of any single year.

Small producers, who have limited storage space and resources may only have a few vintages on hand to blend. Big houses, especially the most prestigious like [Krug](#), have access to far more reserve wines and so are able to create more complex blends.

Here's where the new method comes in. Instead of storing their reserve wines separately and discretely, by vintage or even plot by plot, a growing number of producers are blending significant portions of their reserve wines together, creating what they call a perpetual reserve.

Each year, producers will add wine from the most recent harvest to this store, while removing an equal amount to use for the next multivintage cuvée. Over time, this perpetual reserve will get more and more complex as more vintages are mixed in, and the wines removed for the next multivintage cuvée will likewise gain complexity.

The perpetual reserve method is reminiscent of sherry's [solera system](#), in which newer wines are gradually mixed with older ones over decades to produce a sherry encompassing many vintages. But soleras are far more complicated, involving many different barrels, and are more labor intensive. The perpetual reserve is simpler, and generally stored in fewer, much larger containers.

Most obviously, the perpetual cuvée aids small producers, giving them a tool to create more multifaceted reserve wines. Not surprisingly, it was small producers who first developed and adopted this method.

But big producers are also embracing it, most prominently [Louis Roederer](#), which, under [Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon](#), the executive vice president and cellar master, has become a progressive leader among the big Champagne houses.

"The perpetual reserve gives you the ability to make a consistent wine in an inconsistent place," Mr. Lécaillon told me during a visit to Roederer in late November. "You create a sense of Champagne, neutralize the climate impact and emphasize the soil impact."

Climate change has created more extreme conditions in many years, he said, resulting in higher levels of alcohol and lower levels of acidity. He called the perpetual reserve a strong tool for mitigating these extremes.

"The risk for Champagne is to get too ripe, to lose minerality and freshness," he said. "Perpetual reserve is a tool for bringing minerality. I want the wines to be as much about the soil as fruity. The climate is increasing fruitiness. I had to rebalance."

Roederer started its perpetual reserve in 2012, adding a proportion of the new vintage to it each year, generally half chardonnay and half pinot noir, two of the three major grapes of Champagne, along with pinot meunier. It's stored in 1,000-hectoliter steel tanks, each the equivalent of about 26,400 gallons.

Each time Roederer creates a multivintage cuvée, it will typically comprise 55 percent current vintage, 35 percent perpetual reserve and 10 percent other reserve wines, stored separately in oak casks.

"That equates to: 55 percent vintage character, 35 percent Champagne character, 10 percent Roederer character," Mr. Lécaillon said. Before the perpetual reserve, Roederer's multivintage Champagne, Brut Premier, was a fine, reliable wine. Its composition included about 15 percent reserve wines.

Now, the multivintages made with the perpetual reserve are called Collection and labeled by number, representing the number of multivintage cuvées issued since Roederer was founded in 1776. With reserves making up 45 percent of the blend, they have gotten much better, more complex and chalky, rich yet paradoxically light-bodied and elegant. The first to incorporate the perpetual reserve was Collection 242, issued in 2021. Collection 245 is now on the market.

Among those who use a perpetual reserve, Roederer is a relative newcomer. [Billecart-Salmon](#) started its perpetual reserve in 2006 and actually has three different ones going, one with chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier, another just with pinot meunier and the third solely of pinot noir. About 35 percent of the blend in Le Réserve, its primary multivintage Champagne, is made up of perpetual reserve wines.

Far more small growers than big houses are using perpetual reserves, and they've been doing it longer. Few agree on which grower was the first to employ the technique, but most say the most influential was Anselme Selosse of [Jacques Selosse](#), the groundbreaking grower-producer whose Champagnes now go for hundreds of dollars a bottle.

One of the Selosse cuvées, Substance, is composed entirely of a perpetual reserve from a single chardonnay vineyard that includes wines going back to 1987. His reasoning in starting this reserve, [he told me in 2008](#), was to emphasize the qualities of the vineyard by eliminating variables like the effects of weather.

"It takes all the different years — the good, the bad, the wet, the dry, the sunny — and neutralizes the elements to bring out the terroir," he said.

Few producers are that idealistic. More typically, the perpetual reserve permits producers to keep a steady supply of reserve wines with a consistent character, regardless of the ups and downs of particular vintages.

At [Pierre Péters](#) in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, François Péters started the perpetual reserve in 1997 after a very small harvest. Rather than accept a shortage of reserve wines in the future, Mr. Péters put them together into one perpetual reserve.

Rodolphe Péters, who took charge of the domaine from his father in 2007, has maintained the perpetual reserve. He finds it particularly useful because, he said, wines from Le Mesnil, where most of his vines grow, are reticent when young. Blending wines from elsewhere, he said, balances the nature of the Mesnil wines.

"The old wines educate the young," he said, "and the young wines keep the old fresh." The perpetual reserve wines now make up roughly half of the Péters Cuvée de Réserve, its flagship multivintage wine.

"The character of Péters is in the perpetual reserve," he said. "The new vintage adds the spice. I don't want to mask the new vintage, but we want consistency. The perpetual reserve makes my life so much easier, it amazes me."

Many of my favorite growers use the perpetual reserve. [Lelarge-Pugeot](#), which makes excellent natural Champagnes, says it hedges against both climate change as well as market fluctuations. [Ruppert-Leroy](#), another natural Champagne producer, makes [11, 12, 13](#) ..., a cuvée made entirely of a perpetual reserve started in 2011. [Dhondt-Grellet](#), [Bérèche et Fils](#), [Etienne Calsac](#), [R. Pouillon](#) and the midsize house [Bruno Paillard](#) are among those who use perpetual reserves. I'm sure they're not alone.



The Pierre Péters flagship Champagne, grown in the chalky soils of Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, is made half of the most recent vintage and half from a perpetual reserve.

Credit...

James Hill for The New York Times

One that I particularly like is Mémoire by [Huré Frères](#), a cuvée made entirely from a perpetual reserve. The reserve was started by Raoul Huré in 1982 because, his son Pierre Huré told me, he didn't have room to store the different vintages of reserve wines separately.

After Pierre Huré and his brother, François, took charge of the estate in 2007, they kept tasting the perpetual reserve and loved it. Finally, they took a portion of it to store in two foudres, big oak vats, rather than steel tanks. They used the reserve in the foudres to bottle their first Mémoire in 2010.

Each year now they take out 20 percent of the foudre wines for the Mémoire and add back a similar proportion from the latest vintage. The result is a fresh, savory, complex Champagne with great depth and finesse that is a pleasure to savor. And each year it gets even more so.

Champagnes Made With a Perpetual Reserve

Bruno Paillard

The Première Cuvée (\$75) is a graceful Champagne of great finesse.

Billecart-Salmon

Le Réserve (\$65) is elegant and refined.

Dhondt-Grellet

Both Dans Un Premier Temps (\$85) and Les Terres Fines, a blanc de blancs, are excellent (\$110).

Huré Frères

Invitation (\$65) is lively and harmonious, and Mémoire (\$110) is superb.

Lelarge-Pugeot

Tradition (\$60) is delicate and subtle.

Louis Roederer

Collection No. 245 (\$65) is fresh and chalky.

Pierre Péters

Cuvée de Réserve (\$70) is energetic and exquisite, while Réserve Oubliée (\$140) is savory and complex.

Ruppert-Leroy

The naturally made 11, 12, 13 ... (\$90) is lively and deep.

Eric Asimov, the chief wine critic of The Times since 2004, has been writing about wine, food and restaurants for more than 30 years.

Should You Change Your Wine Consumption?

What happens when your passion and life's work are called a health risk? Our wine critic contemplates the surgeon general's recent warning.

Jan. 16, 2025



Recent scientific studies have questioned the health benefits of alcohol. Marissa Alper for The New York Times

When the surgeon general [described alcohol as a preventable cause of cancer](#) and recommended that alcoholic beverages carry warning labels, I felt conflicted.

As a wine and food critic, I have been writing about the pleasures of wine for 30 years and recommending bottles for just as long. I have also, especially over the last 25 years, tried to live a healthy life, eating a balanced diet, eliminating processed foods and beverages, and exercising regularly.

During that time, I have been drinking wine more or less daily, usually two or three glasses with dinner, which skirts the longtime [government guidance](#) of two drinks or less per day for men, but felt moderate and appropriate for me.

The surgeon general's warning suggested that I've not only been engaging in risky behavior but recommending it to others as well. I felt bad, and defensive. How could this beautiful beverage that I love be considered hazardous when consumed in a thoughtful, careful way? Does that make me the equivalent of a drug pusher? Why single out alcoholic beverages? What about the risks of sugary soft drinks or [ultraprocessed foods](#)?

The current U.S. Dietary Guidelines for alcohol advise two drinks or less a day for men and one drink or less for women.

We've always known about the inherent risks of alcoholic beverages when consumed recklessly. Out-of-control consumption can be a menace, posing dangers to oneself and to society. That can't be ignored. But neither can the social, emotional and aesthetic joys that wine and other alcoholic beverages have provided for centuries. These can't entirely be dismissed.

In 2023, [the same surgeon general, Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, warned of an epidemic of loneliness](#) and social isolation in this country. In my experience, wine has always been a social beverage,

a component of meals that bring people together and create community. Whether you drink wine casually or love it enough to want to learn more about it, shouldn't that figure into the actuarial equation?

When I drink wine, it's almost always in the context of a meal, with food. I believe that's the best way to experience wine's joys and complexities. In fact, I think of [wine as a food](#), a staple of my table. Not as an element of some fussy food-and-wine pairing, just as a basic ingredient of a meal.

That's historically been the best role for wine, and I think that how wine and other alcoholic beverages are consumed should be examined further. The surgeon general's recommendation does not distinguish between the various alcoholic beverages nor consider how they are consumed, socially or in isolation, with food or without. I'd like to know a lot more about that.

Let me be clear: I have never consumed wine or any alcoholic beverage because I believed it was good for me. Back in 1991, after "[60 Minutes](#)" reported on what it called the "French Paradox," which associated moderate consumption of red wine with a low rate of heart disease, sales of red wine took a leap. For years, the wine industry benefited from promoting itself as healthful.



In the 1990s, the moderate consumption of red wine was associated with a low rate of heart disease, but recently scientific studies have found no health benefits to alcohol. Marissa Alper for The New York Times

Now, as the societal view of wine and alcoholic beverages has turned in the other direction, sales are declining, and the industry has cried foul. I'm not overly sympathetic, except with individuals whose jobs or livelihoods are affected. If the wine industry wanted to portray itself as healthful, then it ought to have been prepared for being called unhealthful. What goes around comes around.

But are alcoholic beverages, and wine in particular, truly unhealthful, regardless of how they are consumed or in what quantity? I'm not a scientist or a doctor, and I've frankly found many of the reports on both sides of the health issue confusing and in conflict.

Last month, the [National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine](#) found that, when reviewing all the available evidence, [moderate consumption of alcohol](#), compared with zero consumption, was "associated with lower all-cause mortality," by which it means "the total number of deaths in a population due to any cause."

This report concluded "with moderate certainty" that moderate consumption of alcohol is associated with a higher risk of breast cancer compared to zero consumption. It also said, with the same level of certainty, that moderate consumption of alcohol resulted in fewer deaths from cardiovascular disease.

The findings of this report, which will be used to help shape [new government dietary guidelines](#), run counter to other recent scientific studies, including a 2023 report from the World Health Organization, which [warn that any consumption of alcohol](#), even the smallest amount, is not healthful.



The surgeon general's recommendation does not distinguish between types of alcoholic beverages. Marissa Alper for The New York Times
Compounding my confusion, the W.H.O. and the National Academies reports have been criticized for not being entirely objective. [Several scientists involved in the National Academies report had received funding](#) from the alcoholic beverage industry at some point in their careers, and the W.H.O., in compiling its report, was [advised by people associated with temperance movements](#) like [Movendi International](#), whose stated goal is to prevent consumption of alcoholic beverages.

I'm now in my mid-60s, so my life's choices are largely behind me. I may choose to drink less if that feels right as my metabolism changes. But my two children are in their early 30s. What would I advise them or other younger people who might be among my readers?

When my sons were young, I used to tell them I planned to live until 100. I still tell myself that, and although I understand at a certain point longevity will be [out of my control](#), it's nonetheless a goal. How can I give myself the best chance of achieving that?

I find myself falling back on the old saw, moderation in all things. It sounds clichéd and even sanctimonious. But I have seen too many conflicting and changing opinions over the decades about ingredients like trans fats, oat bran, carbohydrates, caffeine and alcohol. It's made me suspicious of abrupt changes in thinking and behavior. In the end, I can think of no better guiding principle than moderation.

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