

The Guardian

The world in a wine glass

Matt Skinner, sommelier at Fifteen, suggests six wines for 2006 – and where to drink them

La Guita Manzanilla Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Spain

For me, some of the most amazing food and wine matches on the planet happen in Andalucía. You get a seaside influence with Manzanilla, and the best place to try it is Sanlúcar – served icy cold at one of the seaside tables in 30C heat. The boats pull up, drop off the fish and it almost walks 10 paces into the fridge, and then on to the plate. We had Manzanilla with snap-fried calamari.

La Spinetta Moscato d'Asti Piemonte, Italy

We take the students from Fifteen to Piemonte every year. Whereas Tuscany is all about aristocracy, and the flavours tend to be bigger and more robust – like wild boar and chianti – there's more finesse and elegance to the cooking and flavour-matching in Piemonte, and you get a bit of French influence coming over the border. The best food and wine experience I've ever had was in a place close to Asti and it was so simple: just three scoops of freshly made sorbet – fennel, wild mint and blood orange – served after five or six courses with a glass of Moscato, which is only 5% alcohol. It was fresh, slightly fizzy, feather-light and just so refreshing. Genius.

Château de Capitoul Rosé Languedoc, France

I went down in the middle of summer and stayed right on the coast at



La Clape. The guy whose place we were staying in did this barbecue in an old 40-gallon drum with some gnarled vine embers, and just put a grill over the top. His wife made rabbit legs and breasts marinated overnight in her own family recipe of aioli with about 15 cloves of garlic in olive oil. So simple again, served with green salad and rosé.

Hugel Riesling Alsace, France

I was desperate to have proper Alsace choucroute – ham hocks, sausages, the works. We went to a restaurant, and the only way we could have it was to have a set menu of three courses. Dessert was deep-fried Münster cheese, which is like heart attack in a lunchtime. We didn't eat for days afterwards. But the Riesling worked incredibly well at cutting through the intense flavours. It was racy, it was fresh, it cleansed your palate.

Fontodi Vigna del Sorbo, Chianti Classico Tuscany, Italy

Coming from Australia, I thought I knew about meat – until I went to Tuscany and had bistecca Fiorentina. It was cooked for us by Dario Cecchini at his butcher shop, Antica Macelleria Cecchini, in Panzano, which is an institution in Chianti – great big T-bones rubbed in good oil and sea salt and cooked for five minutes on each side and left to rest for 15. It was charred on the outside and red in the middle. Really delicious. Served with Chianti Classico from the Fontodi estate, which is literally around the corner – an incredibly rich concentrated wine.

Joseph Sparkling Red Adelaide Plains, South Australia

The best sparkling shiraz in Australia is made by Joe Grilli, an Italian based in South Australia. He gets a whole load of Amarone-style cabernets from different years, buys a load of vintage port from auction and pours them all into a great big tank, and makes this global patchwork of chunky reds, then ferments it to give it fizz. In Australia, people flock to buy it when it comes out. They drink it every year at the Coonawarra Cup, the race meeting held each January in South Australia.

Plus one for tonight

My favourite champagne producer is Louis Roederer. The non-vintage Brut Premier is just brilliant value for money (£29.99 from Majestic). Serve it with some really good native oysters from Colchester. Lovely. The best place to enjoy it is at home with good friends. Happy New Year.

● *The Juice 2006* by Matt Skinner is published by Mitchell Beazley at £7.99.