

Watery maturing

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'Saw those idiots again, dropping bottles into the sea,' was a fisherman's comment in the bar. 'Hope it doesn't frighten the fish'.

Most wineries are searching for novel ways of promoting their products, and what better than being able to put on the label 'Matured at 100 metres'?

Spain's Raúl Pérez was a pioneer when in 2003 he dropped Albariños from Rías Baixas into a watery cellar. No-one really knows what effect the underwater ageing of wine really does. Anecdotal evidence indicates that wines age quicker underwater, but is the wine better?

It all started when wine salvaged from shipwrecks proved to be surprisingly good. The maturing process involves zero oxygen and gentle tidal movement, both of which appear to be positive. Seawater is not essential. Australian winemakers use tanks filled with fresh water. But will consumers pay for such wines? Bodega Mira's underwater Cabernet Sauvignon cost 450 euros (yes, 450) more than its land-matured equivalent and sold out almost immediately.

Spain's Vina Maris, matured underwater for 16 months in French oak, sells for 70 euros.

But you really do have to wonder who buys the stuff. And if they buy it do they ever drink it or just keep the bottle to show off?

Why not just buy an inflatable swimming pool and chuck in a few bottles for a year, using seawater to increase authenticity? Your friends will think you are mad, so let them taste the underwater wine against the same wine matured on dry land. Will they be convinced? Frankly I doubt it. Nor has any blind tasting ever been organised. Funny that.

WINE OF THE WEEK

Com Tu 2018

No apologies for nominating another fabulous wine from one of Spain's most enigmatic regions. This Priorato from Montsant is made by Clos Mogador, founded by Rene Barbier, and is typical of these amazing Garnacha-based wines. Very fruity and fresh, this 14.5° example is one of the best. Only 3,000 bottles made. Around 30 euros.

