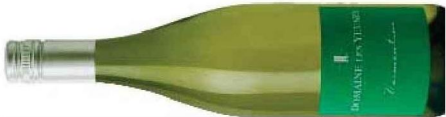


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Wines of the week

Bending the rules? Vermentino shines some sun into dark skies.
By David Williams

Domaine Les Yeuses Vermentino, France 2024
£11.39, Cambridge Wine Merchant

I've got a soft spot for vermentino, a grape variety that is perfectly adapted to the sun and sea breezes of the south of France, round the corner in Liguria (pigato) into Tuscany and on the islands of Sardinia and Corsica. It's a variety winegrowers appreciate these days for its ability to maintain enough acidity and freshness to make white wines of nip, zip and verve even in the blistering heat of a Mediterranean summer. Many of those wines are at their best in those very same conditions – refreshing, citrusy and gently floral unoaked wines begging to be drunk with grilled fish. At this time of the year, however, a cool glass of a wine, such as Domaine les Yeuses, has the effect of bringing a shaft of welcome southern sun to our darkening northern skies.



Château La Tour de l'Evêque Blanc, Côtes de Provence, France 2024
£21.25, Corney & Barrow

In Provence, rolle/vermentino plays a small but important role in bringing lift and life into many of the best examples of the region's ubiquitous pink wines. The soft, watercolour-shaded rosés of Whispering Angel et al might have anything up to 20% of the white grape alongside the gently pressed red varieties, such as grenache, cinsault and syrah. But Provençal rolle is certainly worthy of more than this supporting role. At Château La Tour de l'Evêque – which is described, alluringly, as a 'beautiful property deep in Provence, surrounded by forest and garrigue' – it's used to make a dry white wine of immense charm and elegance. Aged in concrete eggs, it's a snapshot of perfectly ripe apricot, honeysuckle and soft yet insistent acidity.



Domaine Terra di Nostri, Île de Beauté, France 2022
£10.75, Booths

Any exploration of vermentino will inevitably lead you to Italy and the Tuscan and Sardinian producers who are responsible for some of the country's very best white wines. From Bolgheri, on the Tuscan coast, Grattamaco Organic Vermentino 2022 (£48, or £42 as part of a mixed case of six bottles, Majestic), is a flat-out gorgeous expression of Mediterranean hillside herbiness, perfectly ripe nectarine and lime and grapefruit-inflected fresh fluency, while Sardinia's Is Argiolas Vermentino 2023 (£27, Hedonism) has a zesty, plithy and subtly salty raciness to go with its fleshier stone fruit. Finally, a wine from Corsica, where the wine scene has both Italian and French influences, and bottles such as the graceful, gently fennel-scented, white peachy 'vermentinu' from Domaine Terra Dii Nostri.