



Rural Alsace – home of a great diversity of food and wine.

ALSATIAN LIBATION

THERE are some amazingly beautiful wine regions in the world, from the wild valleys of the Douro to the tranquil villages of Alsace on the German / French border. It is probably here in Alsace that I have been fortunate enough to taste an amazing diversity of wines and food.

Alsace has the highest density of Michelin restaurants in the whole of France. However, if you visit the region you do not have to fine dine all the time. I had the most amazing tart flambé in a local tavern, washed down with a big glass of pinot blanc.

The long, thin strip of Alsace vineyards is protected by the high Vosges mountains which give a unique micro climate and one perfect for the growing of grapes.

Unusually for France, the wines of Alsace are actually named after the grape variety, not the village, which makes life a lot easier.

The Mann family have been vigneron in Alsace since 1793 and began to produce wines for themselves back in 1948. The vineyards are located around Wettolsheim and they have substantial holdings in the Grand Crus of Hengst and Steingrubler.

The wines are sensitively produced, following principles of "viticulture raisonnée" and reflecting the particular characteristics of each vintage. Organic methods have been practiced for many years and the 2011 vintage was the first to be certified as fully organic. The Mann's pinot gris is my wine of the month it is an amazingly versatile wine

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and it will surprise the gourmets amongst you with its astonishing ability to age well and its ability to match a range of foods from foie gras and liver to white meats and fish.

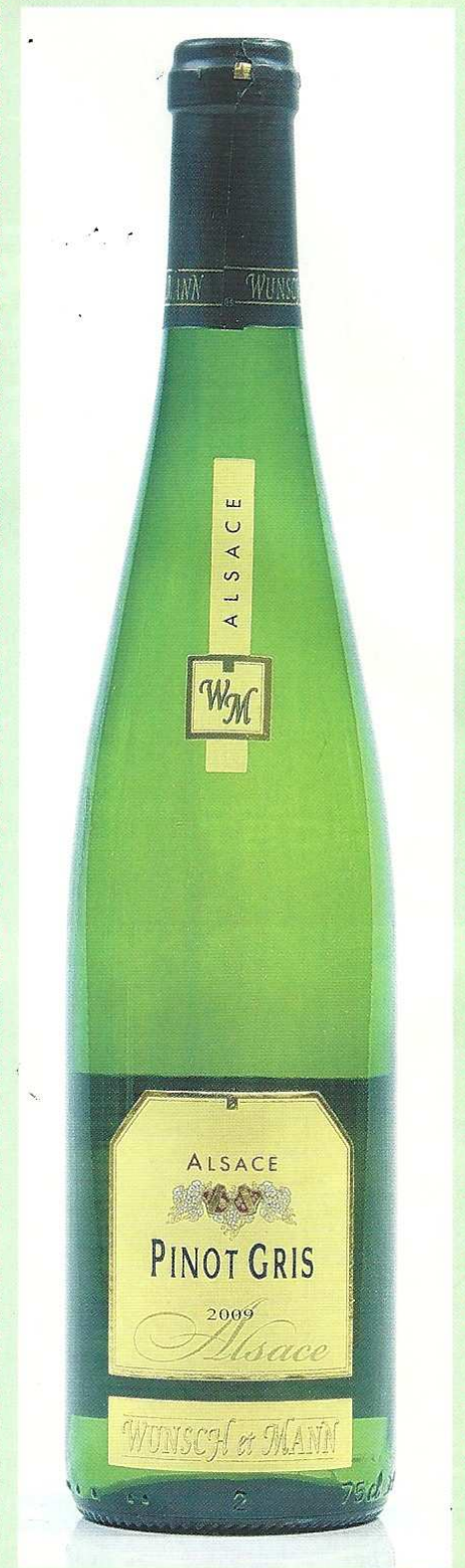
The other key grape varieties of Alsace are the Gewürztraminer and Riesling, both amazing food wines. All the wines of Alsace come, by law, in a Germanic tall bottle.

They are beautifully balanced and dry (unless you specially choose a late harvest style). Do not think of them as Germanic in style as they are quite different. The Cave de Pfaffenheim Riesling is delicate, with floral, citrus and peach aromas, and excels with fish, ham and gourmet sausages.

Belying its outward disguise – a façade of geranium-fringed, half-timbered medieval kitsch - this ultra-efficient winery, lined with gleaming tanks, is supplied by contented, well-paid vigneron, many of whom own Grand Cru plots.

Also from this great co-operative, the Gewürztraminer is a stylish, fragrant, spicy drink perfect for a midweek Chinese or Thai supper. It has all the depth of character you'd expect.

Buy of the Month



Wunsch et Mann Pinot Gris,
Alsace, France, £12.90

This type of wine develops opulent and rich aromas and flavours. With balanced, crisp acidity, good concentration and a long finish, it has complex hazelnut flavours with a slightly smoky finish. When young, the wines of the Hengst vineyards present a wild character that the origin of its name does not contradict – Hengst means stallion. Maturity softens and refines it.