

Brentwood Wine Society

The Wine Press

Summer Edition

July 2026

EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to the Summer edition of the Wine Press

In this edition I will take a look at the Scottish wine industry, there is the ever-popular Corkscrew Corner, a round up some of the current news stories and a trip down memory lane, where we explore the infamous wines of the 60's.



All contributions for the Autumn edition are welcome please send them to Philip Knowles at knowlespj@btinternet.com

A BARREL OF LAUGHS

I have tried to find some new wine jokes but they are all vintage. So here are a few of my favourite Tim VINE jokes.

Believe it or not, there are twice as many eyebrows in the world as there are people.

My mate asked me "What do you think of voluntary work?" I said "I wouldn't do it if you paid me."

I've just been on a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. I'll tell you what, never again.

The health of the world wine industry

Production Rebound: Global wine output is recovering, up 3% from the historic lows of 2024, though it remains 7% below the five-year average.

Export Contraction: Global export volumes dropped by 4.7% to 94.8 million hectolitres, extending a downward trend that began in 2022. Only a few countries, such as New Zealand and Portugal, managed to post export growth.

Price Stagnation: with declining export volumes, global wine export values dropped by 6.7% to €33.8 billion. Average prices per litre only fell slightly by 2.1% to €3.56, meaning prices historically remain elevated compared to pre-pandemic prices

The impact of Trump's tariff wars on USA wine exports

When Canadian liquor stores pulled American products from shelves in early 2025, it delivered a bruising blow to the U.S. wine industry, and data shows just how much of a headache the booze ban has been for the U.S. as the two countries are set to begin free trade talks later this year.

According to trade data from the U.S. Census Bureau, wine exports from the U.S. to Canada dropped by \$343 million US between 2024 and 2025, a devastating blow to the American wine industry. That represents a 77 per cent year-over-year drop in wine exports to Canada, which was previously the largest buyer of U.S. wine.

Other markets have also shrunk since Trump's tariff wars started.

China down \$69 million UK down \$14 million
Panama down \$11 million Netherlands down \$9 million.

Data shows winemakers in the U.S. found other international customers, with export bumps to places like South Africa, Belgium, Japan and the United Arab Emirates. The increase, however, was nowhere near enough to counteract the significant decline seen in other countries, totalling only \$39 million.

All of this on top of the fact that American wine exports had already seen recent declines, with global exports (excluding Canada) dropping by 18 per cent between 2022 and 2023.

The devastating May frosts in the UK

English wine makers have suffered their worst spring frost in a decade, raising fears it could wipe out harvests at vineyards across the country...

Nicola Bates, the chief executive of industry group WineGB, said a number of vineyards would not make "a lot of wine this year" after they were struck by plunging temperatures in May

Parts of the UK recorded their coldest May temperatures in 30 years at the start of the month. A sharp cold spell, driven by Arctic winds, meant temperatures across the country were between 3C and 7C lower than normal.

Typically vineyards are able to recover from frost damage if it comes earlier in the year, with many grapevine varieties having secondary buds, although they are less productive.

Clovis Meath Baker, who established the Walsingham Estate Vineyard in North Norfolk in 2019, said he may decide not to harvest a crop at all this year as the secondary buds and primary buds on his vines are now maturing at a different rate, making it "really difficult to do the picking in autumn", adding: "It gets incredibly complicated."

Sam Carlisle, who runs Wyken vineyard in Suffolk, known for its sparkling wine, said this year he expected to lose around a tenth of his crop to frost. We're lucky, he said, because we've got a bit of a micro climate. I think we've lost about 12 percent to frost. I've heard of other vineyards in East Anglia where they think they've lost 100 percent. It's pretty miserable because your costs [in running a vineyard] are so high.

World OF WINE

Brave New World: Scottish Wines

To complete my journey around the UK wine industry we visit Scotland. This could be the shortest newsletter piece so far.

Scotland's wine industry is beginning to bloom, with a growing number of vineyards and wineries registering with Food Standards Scotland (FSS). In 2025 alone, five vineyards have joined the register — and more are expected to follow.

"This is just the beginning of what could be a remarkable journey for Scotland as a wine-producing nation," says John Currie, Wine Inspector at FSS. "With climate change and the development of grape varieties suited to cooler climates, it's no surprise that new vineyards are emerging across the country."

One such success story comes from the Scottish Borders, where grower Lorna Jackson, of Borders Bubbly, has made strides producing the country's first sparkling wine. "We planted vines in 2016 on a disused tattie field as part of a farm diversification project and experimented with three grape varieties," says Jackson.



"After attending viticulture courses, we had enough grapes to try making sparkling wine ourselves. It is a long process with multiple stages — we even trod the grapes by foot in the traditional way.

"It's been a steep learning curve, but the response to our Borders Bubbly has been incredible. People are genuinely excited about the prospect of buying a truly Scottish wine.

During their 2024 harvest, Lorna and Trevor picked around 32lbs of grapes, enough to create eight bottles of wine.



"We were just trying to make a product that didn't taste like vinegar, so we're very pleased that we've got a nice product that we think is very drinkable," Lorna added. "My husband and I were really surprised. We jumped up and down. It didn't taste of vinegar, it was really bubbly, and it had a light and fruity taste that will only get better after maturing."

Their plans to expand will take time, however. "We need to build something more industrial to make the wine, rather than my feet trampling on them in a garden trough," Lorna said. "It was initially just a proof of concept to see if we could make a champagne-style wine in the Scottish borders — and we did."

So that is the story of Scottish wine — a tiny number of experimental wineries — none yet producing commercially. But who knows — as we saw with the expansion of the Welsh wine industry climate change and new grape varieties might soon change the picture.

WINE TIMES

MOMENTS IN HISTORY

Sixties Shades of Grape: When Wine Got Hip

I thought it might be interesting to revisit the wines I drank as a student during the mid sixties. Of course choice was more limited then compared to today but as I recall PRICE was the most important determinant of purchase. I also recall using a bottle of Bulls Blood as an entrance 'ticket' to get into many parties, once into the party the bottle would be hidden somewhere and then used again and again at different parties.

So what has happened to the three favourites, Mateus Rose, Bulls Blood and Blue Nun?



Mateus Rosé is an iconic, lightly sparkling Portuguese rosé known for its slightly sweet, fruity profile and distinct flask-shaped bottle. Launched in 1942 by Fernando Guedes the then head of the Sogrape company. It is a versatile, low-ABV (approx. 10-11%) wine crafted from native grapes like Baga and Rufete.

Production grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, and by the late 1970s, supplemented with a white version, it accounted for almost 40% of Portugal's total export of wine. At that time, worldwide sales were 3.25 million cases per year.

I recall using a bottle of Bulls Blood as an entrance 'ticket' to get into many parties

Portugal's largest winemaker Sogrape is the brand's owner it has diversified as the Mateus brand lost favour with consumers. In the UK in 2002 the wine was re-packaged and relaunched to capitalise on 1970s nostalgia, with the wine being less sweet and more sparkling as drinkers preferred a drier wine. Its flask-shaped bottle, with unique "baroque historic mansion" and cork stopper were retained, although a screw top version was offered in Northern Europe.

Some interesting facts:

Mateus rosé was among the alcoholic beverages which were stockpiled in the cellars of Saddam

Hussein's palaces

It was a preferred wine of Queen Elizabeth II (in 1999)

A bottle of Mateus can be seen in the cover photograph of Graham Nash's 1973 album Wild Tales, positioned on the mantelpiece just behind Nash's head

And no student flat would be complete without an empty Mateus bottle with colourful candle drippings down the sides



The Mateus Palace which famously decorated the flask shaped bottles is located in the civil parish of Mateus. It is not where the wine is produced.

A Palatial Mistake:.. The owners of the Palace famously accepted a one-off payment for the use of the palace's image instead of royalties—a branding blunder considering the billions of bottles sold.

The bottle's unique, round shape was inspired by the flasks carried by soldiers during World War I. Fernando Guedes chose the design for its distinct shelf-standout.

In 2025 Mateus Rosé exported approximately 20 million bottles across 120 markets worldwide. As Portugal's most popular exported wine brand, it accounts for about 13% of all bottled-wine exports from the country and is now celebrating its status as a timeless global classic

In 1964 a bottle of Mateus cost around 15 shillings today at Tesco and Sainsbury it cost £6.50 however 15 shillings in 1964 translates to £18.57 in 2026.



Bull's Blood (known in Hungary as Bikavér) is a legendary, full-bodied Hungarian red blend originating from the Eger and Szekszárd regions. It is traditionally crafted using indigenous grapes like Kékfrankos (Blafränkisch) and Kadarka, blended with international varieties such as Merlot or Cabernet.

The Legend and History

The Origin Story: The name famously traces back to the 1552 Siege of Eger. Legend says the Hungarian defenders fortified themselves with copious amounts of deep red wine. The invading Ottomans reportedly mistook the wine staining their beards for bull's blood, fearing the Hungarians possessed supernatural strength.

Historical Reality: While it has ancient associations with heroic battles, the term bikavér was actually first recorded in the 1840s as a slang term for deeply coloured, full-bodied red wines. Not only that

Hungary mainly produced white wine until the Phyloxia outbreak – only then did Hungary really get into the production of red wine.

Styles & Characteristics

Egri Bikavér (from Eger): Elegant, high in acidity, and historically the most famous iteration. The native Kékfrankos grape usually serves as the backbone.

Szekszárdi Bikavér (from Szekszárd): Warmer climate, fruit-forward, boasting red fruit aromas complemented by sweet barrel spices.

High-quality Bikavérs have seen a major renaissance, moving away from cheap mass production to complex, premium bottles.

In the 1960s, "Bull's Blood" (Egri Bikavér) was Hungary's most famous and widely exported red wine. However the wine was often, inconsistent, thin and sour This resulted in inconsistent wines that were often thin and sour.

There were several reasons for this.

Mass Production Over Quality: Winemaking was entirely nationalized. State-owned companies favoured volume and cost-efficiency over the strict viticulture traditions of the past, significantly damaging the wine's reputation over time.

The Blend: Unlike strictly regulated modern recipes, the 1960s blends were often composed of whatever red grapes were available in the Eger region. They typically featured a mix of Kékfrankos (Blafränkisch), Kadarka, Oportó, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon.

The reputation of Bull's Blood sadly hit its lowest points in the decades following the 1960s, before a massive industry revival in the 2000s when independent winemakers returned to strict quality, terroir-driven standards. Today, authentic Bikavér is strictly regulated and can only be produced in the Eger and Szekszárd regions.

In 1964 a bottle of Bulls Blood typically cost around 10 shillings equivalent to about £12 in 2026.

Bulls Blood today retails at anything from £12 to £25 and upwards.

Blue Nun is a German wine brand launched by the Mainz-based company H. Sichel Söhne in 1923 with the 1921 vintage, and which between the 1950s and 1980s was a very popular international brand. For most of its existence, Blue Nun was a single German wine, which until the late 1990s was classified as a Liebfraumilch, but the name is now used for a whole range of wines of various origins.

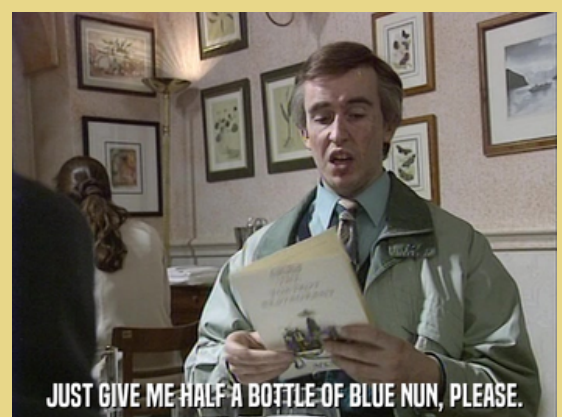
When it was created, the label was designed as a consumer-friendly alternative to the innumerable German wine labels with Gothic script and long, complicated names. With the creation of its UK office in 1927, Sichel targeted the export market. Blue Nun can be said to have been the first wine to have been produced and effectively marketed with an international mass market in mind.

After World War II, the brand became widely popular in the United Kingdom and the United States. At its peak of popularity in 1984–1985, annual sales in the U.S. were 1.25 million cases, with another 750,000 cases sold in other markets.

From the late 1980s, easy-drinking, semi-sweet German wines began to decline in popularity. Consequently, the brand's popularity declined, and the wine began to be perceived as tacky and dated. This change was reflected in Blue Nun being the drink of choice of Alan Partridge, a fictional, over-the-hill British television and radio presenter. However, sales increased after Blue Nun was purchased by the Mosel-based German family firm Langguth, which bought the previous owners Sichel in 1996. They repositioned the brand, reclassifying it from a Liebfraumilch to a regular Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete (QbA), changing the grapes from Müller-Thurgau to 30% Riesling, and making it less sweet. It remains relatively low in alcohol at 9.5%.

Blue Nun 'The wine that goes everywhere' was reasonably expensive in the mid sixties retailing at between 15 and 20 shillings about £18 - £22 in 2026 value.

Today you can buy a bottle of Blue Nun at Tesco for £5.15 - how the mighty have fallen.



The Corkscrew Corner

Minlature and Mini Corkscrews

Recently I have developed an interest in miniature corkscrews or more specifically those produced almost exclusively in France in the late C19th and the early C20th.

Corkscrew collectors, (helixophiles – really we have a name) have long argued about the purpose of these delightful corkscrews. Some claim they were for perfume bottles, but I think the helix is far too wide – most perfume bottle corkscrews (mainly C19th) have very fine helixes to fit the narrow aperture and tiny corks of perfume bottles. The vast majority of perfume bottle corkscrews do not have horizontal ‘handles’ but straight handles normally in ivory or a similar expensive decorative material. So I come down on the side of those who say they are ‘travelling’ corkscrews. Smaller for taking out than their normal sized cousins.

My first was this lovely corkscrew which I received as a gift. Clearly the theme is French and all to do with boar hunting.



Since then I have been lucky enough to find a few – but they are hard to come by, usually the handle is a hard wood like ebony.



When they do appear on the market they can cost several tens of pounds or more. However two recent buys show, that despite the current increase in antique corkscrew prices, bargains can still be found. The first was found in Spain at a collectibles market. The seller, English by chance, asked one euro – I didn't haggle.



The second I bought from an antique stall at Battlebridge. The vendor asked £2.50 – again no haggling.

Dating this one proved a little difficult. There is no makers mark or country of origin symbol. However the handle is ivory and the design of the handle reminiscent of French corkscrews of the first decade of the 20th Century.

The helix appears man made rather than mass produced, as they were later in the century, so that's my best bet. The only point of concern is the method used to fix the handle to the helix , a small pin, more common in France in the 20's and 30's but I'm sticking with my first idea.



The editor accepts no responsibility for gramatical,,, speling, factual errors or the quality of any wine mentioned