

him. I remember his woe when, after the school closed, the next bill arrived more accurately from the Old Malthouse School. Still, this urban Pa Larkin could always restore his equilibrium with lunch at the Contented Sole or Sweetings.

He was a surprisingly slim man and rejoiced in the role of the Charles Atlas of Swanage beach, where his own gastronomic career began during the war at his Aunt Nancy's hotel, the Wolfeton. No slouch in the kitchen, she got the hotel into one of 91 slots in the first-ever *Good Food Guide* in 1951.

He had no interest in making friends, and was bemused by the concept of seeing anyone regularly, but my father revelled in the sociability of restaurants and pubs.

He was only too happy to talk to neighbouring tables in London or on holiday, heckling them with his views on his pet topics, Charles and Di in the nineties and Madeleine McCann in the noughties. While his various audiences regaled him with their own conspiracy theories, he would suddenly burst out laughing at his own sense of the absurd before delivering another well-honed soliloquy on Edwina Currie and John Major.

My last lunch with him was in September at the Pier Head, overlooking Swanage Bay. Like a boy released from boarding school, he leapt out of the car, forgetting he was tethered to a small oxygen tank the size of a fire extinguisher. It was the weekend of the Folk Festival; a passing troupe of Morris dancers untangled him and sat him down. We devoured a massive sea bass for just £38, he still adhering to his childhood rule of eating all the vegetables first.

Like me, he wasn't a perfect dad, but he didn't mind a bit. When my brother and I were small, he loved to ask us, 'Would you prefer this daddy or another daddy?' And he delighted in our guaranteed response: 'ANOTHER DADDY.'

I've changed my mind.

DRINK

BILL KNOTT

MODERN GREEK

As I recall, the wine list in Angelo's Taverna at the western end of Agios Georgios beach on Corfu was brief: retsina, Demestica white, or Demestica red. That was 40 years ago – and I drank Henninger lager for a week.

The Henninger brand has, sadly, gone to the great *Bierkeller* in the sky, but the Greek wine industry's star is definitely in the ascendant, as I discovered at a recent tasting organised by Greek wine specialists Maltby&Greek. More than 100 wines

from 25 wineries were on show, with styles ranging from bone-dry Assyrtiko to ambrosial sweet Muscat, via strawberry-scented Xinomavro and sparkling Vidiano.

According to Maltby&Greek's co-founder Stef Kokotos, Greece's great strength – a multitude of ancient, indigenous grape varieties, each with its own personality – is also perhaps its biggest problem – 'especially pronouncing them!' He singles out Agiorgitiko as being a particularly difficult mouthful.

Business partner Yannis Hadjiioannou, who left his job as an investment banker to start the business and was soon 'driving, delivering, cleaning the loos, cooking for the team... actually, I still do that' sees Greek wine's strong suit as in the mid-market, between £10 and £20 a bottle 'where we can offer a lot more individuality and excitement for drinkers, compared with many traditional regions like Bordeaux and Burgundy'.

Their website – maltbyandgreek.com – lists 40 or so wines in that price bracket; like that of many wine-importers, their pre-COVID business was heavily focused on the on-trade, and they quickly realised that retail sales would be crucial to their survival.

These days, the restaurant trade has returned, and they supply independent wine merchants around the country – but their retail arm is thriving too: as well as wines, the website offers artisanal cheeses, Cretan sausages spiked with wild thyme, olive oils, honeys and preserves.

On the wine side, I recommend trying one of their dozen mixed cases: the six-bottle For the Love of Burgundy case (£167.45), perhaps, featuring whites from Santorini and reds made from the Pinot Noir-esque Xinomavro; or a six-bottle case of winter reds (£102); or three bottles of winemaker Chloe Chatzivaritis's stunning natural wines from her family estate near Goumenissa, in the hills above Thessaloniki.

And what of the future? Greece may have an ancient history of winemaking, but as Stef points out, 'It's not a continuous history, and the industry has only recently started to modernise.' Stef and Yannis have supreme confidence in the winemakers they represent and in 'the unique sense of place that their wines offer'.

Yannis's tips of grape varieties to look out for include Savatiano (traditionally used to make retsina), and two Cretan varieties: Vidiano, an aromatic white grape; and Liatiko, a pale, early-ripening red grape once used to make Malvasia. Getting your tongue around the names on the bottles might be tricky, but doing the same with their contents is gratifyingly simple.

The Oldie Wine

This month's *Oldie* wine offer, in conjunction with DBM Wines, is a 12-bottle case comprising four bottles each of three wines: a Chardonnay with a nice weight to it, a classic, clean-as-a-whistle Grüner Veltliner, and a pleasingly fruity and uncomplicated Sicilian red. Or you can buy cases of each individual wine.



Montsablé Chardonnay, IGP Haute Vallée de l'Aude 2021, offer price £9.50, case price £114.00

Aged on its lees, with a judicious amount of oak, plenty of fruit and a dry finish.



Funkstille Grüner Veltliner, Ferdinand Mayr, Niederösterreich, Austria 2021, offer price £10.99, case price £131.88

More rounded in style than many Grüners, with agreeable notes of grapefruit and melon.



Frappato Incanto del Sud, Baglio Gibellina, Sicily 2021, offer price £9.99, case price £119.88

Fresh, lively, unoaked Frappato with plenty of red fruit: great with charcuterie.

Mixed case price £121.92 – a saving of £30.99 (including free delivery)

HOW TO ORDER

Call 0117 370 9930

Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm; or email info@dbmwines.co.uk

Quote OLDIE to get your special price.

Free delivery to UK mainland.

For details visit www.dbmwines.co.uk/promo_OLD

NB Offer closes 28th March 2023.