

Sample Saturday

5 March

No tickets needed, just wander in to Barrica, taste the wines on offer, and give us your opinion!

OUT WITH THE OLD...



Wine expert Jane Cuthbertson listens to her customers when revising her stock and finding new vintages

January represents a new beginning for most people, but for me, February is my personal New Year. Perverse, I know, but there you have it. January is a time of lethargy, the last signs of Christmas have been packed away for another year, leftover sweets and cakes still jump out of the cupboard, and the darkness seems to close in almost as soon as it's become light. I spend most of the time in a state of limbo, waiting for the inspiration to seep into my veins again.

Come the first of February, it's almost as if someone's suddenly turned on the light! I look forward to the rest of the year with gusto and an excitement of what's to come. There'll be new vintages, new wines to discover and hopefully, new regions to explore.

Inevitably there will be casualties. Much as I'd like to think that I can just stretch the walls to

accommodate new finds, we have now reached the limits of making the most of available space. We will always have the core range which is so important to us at Barrica, but 'out with the old and in with the new', as they say. There's a great deal of wrangling and hand wringing, and tasting, before we decide on the lines which have to give way to better quality, or better value wines. No-one ever said spring cleaning is easy!

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One of the biggest influences in any change to our ever-evolving range, is listening to what our customers want to see on the shelves. It's easy to create a range in an atmosphere which we think is great, but that's only half the story. Years ago, I learned

very quickly that retailing isn't just about finding a shop and filling the shelves. I believe it's about offering products in an environment which customers like to be in, so that's what we try to create.

To that end, no wine gets onto the shelf unless it's been tasted by one or all of us. But now, any candidate has to pass another, more stringent test. Last year, we initiated our 'Sample Saturdays'. Any shortlisted possibles are

available for tasting throughout the weekend and verdicts are collated and duly noted. With hindsight it all seems to make sense – after all, it's customers we hope will buy the wines off the shelf – why not take it one step further and REALLY listen?

Our next Sample Saturday will be Saturday, 5 March – no tickets needed, just wander in, taste the wines on offer, and give us your opinion! You don't need to know anything about wine, just what you like and don't like. Most of the wines which pass muster will be on the shelves just as soon as space allows.

On Thursday, 17 March we are holding our increasingly popular annual spring portfolio tasting where we will be showing a number of our 'new babies'. You'd be very welcome to come and give us your opinion – just contact us for further details of tickets.

In the meantime, Happy New Year! ■

Barrica Wines
 Huntley Gate Farm
 Samlesbury, Preston PR5 0UN
 01772 877 933
 wines@barricawines.co.uk
 www.barricawines.co.uk