

## ETCETERA

# The return of German fine wines – and one little shop in Maida Vale

**How times, and tastes, have changed – and nowhere more than in attitudes to German wine, writes Liz Sagues.**

In the 19th century, the best was more valued than claret or champagne. Then came liebfraumilch... And now it's back to fine wines, but without the price tag of those top French bottles.

To say Britain's revived enthusiasm for these is thanks to one man and one small wine shop in Maida Vale is certainly inflating the truth, but David Motion and The Winery are owed a huge debt of gratitude by many wine drinkers here.

The story is almost as magical as the steep, terraced, castle-hung riverbanks on which the grapes grow.

Motion is a musician, whose eclectic CV runs through pop, classical, film and more. Twenty-five years ago he bought a long-established wine merchants in Clifton Road as an extra source of income. Achieving that wasn't as easy as he'd anticipated, and direct import – to avoid the middleman's cut – made sense.

Though the shop's stock was international, he ignored burgundy or piedmont in favour of a place whose wines were then, he happily admits, "impossible to sell".

"I always knew I had a love for German wine," he says, acknowledging riesling's "thrilling" minerality, so reflective of the place it comes from. But the pallet he brought back included dry as well as the expected semi-sweet rieslings – and it was the former that leapt



David Motion above the Rhinegau vineyards

Picture: COURTESY OF THE WINERY

off his shelves. Pallet number two reversed the proportion, with three-quarters dry. Same story. "Within 18 months we were buying at least 95 percent dry."

And he's still buying from some of the growers whose bottles were in those very early pallets.

Motion puts the success of these dry wines, riesling in particular, to the diverse profile of The

Winery's customers, increasingly different from buyers 25 years ago. They're young, often women, come from varied ethnic backgrounds and are ready to experiment. And they didn't experience the liebfraumilch legacy.

"The whole purpose of a wine merchant is to steer customers towards what they might like,"

Motion argues – which he does with wines from some 45 German growers, the UK's biggest choice, and the argument that riesling, food-wise, "works with absolutely everything".

The whites apart, he's an advocate of German reds: "Lots of bang for your buck", and cheaper than burgundy.

Yet The Winery certainly isn't

entirely Teutophile – other nations feature generously on the packed shelves. The 25th birthday has been marked with the opening of a second shop, in Fulham, and "by drinking nice wine all year". Join Motion and his similarly enthusiastic and informed staff in doing that with The Winery's Emergency Riesling 6-pack (£85). See details at [thewineryuk.com](http://thewineryuk.com).