

# Local man makes good... as well as excellent wines!



by wine expert, Rob Chase



David Rowledge

It must be nigh on thirty years since I first encountered David Rowledge, Managing Director of Alchemy Wines. He joined Adnams Wine Merchants back in the early 1990s, a year or two after my arrival in Southwold, and quickly took responsibility for the 'Agency' side of the business, selling a portfolio of wines from New World greats, such as Ridge and Saintsbury from California and Cullen, Mountadam and Yarra Yering in Australia, plus a fistful of wineries in Europe, South America and New Zealand. Having travelled the world visiting them all, he then set about positioning their wines in top restaurants, supermarket chains and merchants across the globe. In due course, David had absorbed, in every sense of the word, enough wine knowledge to set forth eventually under his own steam in 2002, launching his own endeavour, Alchemy Wines.

My own career path was not totally dissimilar. It would not necessarily appeal to everyone but David and I share an ethos and I find it hard to imagine why anybody with a sense of taste and adventure wouldn't want to work in – or visit – wineries and vineyards around the world. Even picking grapes in Châteauneuf-du-Pape in the bitter cold of

an October morning, where frosted fingers refused to work, I still felt I was living the life. A little discomfort just seemed part of the deal. And it was easily balanced by the many upsides, such as the occasion when working in Germany in the mid-1970s, my wine-growing village reached its 1000th birthday and I was included in the extravagant and exclusive celebrations, partaking of the very last bottles from the state-owned winery. For the record, they contained the 1921 Ockfener Bockstein Trockenbeerenauslese. An extremely rare mouthful of Riesling, and a piece of vinous history.

A year later, I packed up my secateurs and pipette, moved back to the UK and joined what was then the fledgling English wine 'industry' in Suffolk. Here I made several important discoveries, like the Low House in Laxfield and my first introduction to Adnams Bitter, which led to possibly the most significant revelation – which was that Adnams was also a leading purveyor of iconic wines. By coincidence, their award-winning list happened to include a handful of top Rieslings, at a time when the world and his father were busy assuming that German wines consisted solely of Blue Nun and Piesporter, so it was only a matter of time and inevitability before I was drawn to Southwold to work.

I continued to travel the vineyards of Northern Europe but this time under the auspices of Adnams and in the company of like-minded wine aficionados, including, in due course – the young David Rowledge. Gradually, however, it became clear that the life of a conventional merchant was not for him and he duly left the Adnams' mother ship. At the time, we thought he was mad but through a series of recent coincidences and tastings, our paths have crossed again, and I now realise

that his vocation was more to do with vinification. For many years, wineries have focused on making the wine that they wanted to sell. David, however, is primarily interested in the creation of wines that people want to buy – and drink; a subtle but significant difference and one that he set out to address when he launched Alchemy Wines. He has been looking through the telescope from the other end, and is now collaborating with his winemakers to tailor their wines specifically for his clients and their palates – and what they actually want to drink.

No one is suggesting that Ipswich-based David and his cosmopolitan band of highly talented winemakers are alchemists. The dictionary, however, defines alchemy not only as the study of how to turn base metals into gold, but also as the pursuit of a universal elixir, a target that two of Alchemy's European winemakers are certainly embracing under David's direction. Serbian-born Boris Kovac settled in the Languedoc-Roussillon twenty years ago. He now owns a vineyard in the Agly Valley and has become a highly sought-after contract wine-maker. Then there's Fernando Castro, who manages the family's 380 hectares of vines in the central Spanish region of La Mancha. The winery, Bodegas Fernando Castro, was established over 120 years ago, and is home to all the technical gizmos and wizardry that Fernando needs to work his magic. Between them, Fernando, Boris and David are very well placed to continue crafting their outstanding, value-for-money wines. Having tasted some seriously delicious creations recently, I was enthused to hear plans to heighten their presence for wine-lovers in Suffolk. Watch this space for a series of wine adventures – or visit [www.alchemywines.co.uk](http://www.alchemywines.co.uk)

## ESSENTIAL SUFFOLK SUMMER OFFER

**10% off all Alchemy wines for Essential Suffolk readers when you either call or order online.**

D&B Rosé 2018 (75cl) Syrah / Grenache, Southern France  
£12.99 – arrived in the UK in late May – perfect for Summer drinking!

After delicate crushing and destemming, this charming Syrah/Grenache Rosé blend is made from free run gentle press juice. The juice is fermented at low temperatures to maintain flavour and layers of complexity. Pale in colour and full of red summer fruit aromas of strawberries and raspberries. The hints of cherry and spice on the palate lead to a crisp, long, refreshing finish.

Please use code '**Essential 10**' when placing the order on online or please call 01473 290244 to speak to either David or Rebecca – (even better – pop in and visit us and discuss your wine needs both personal and trade!)



### INFORMATION

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