

# THE WINE SHOW

Every wine supplier wants to show Soho House sommelier Christopher Cooper their wines – but it’s not just him that needs to know about wine, it’s everybody who serves them. So House Tonic decided to put on the first ever Soho House Wine Show. Here, he explains more.

By Christopher Cooper

Photographs by Dai Williams



Following the amazing success of the Soho House Bar Show and more recently the Food Show, we began planning another big event and in October 2013 Shoreditch House hosted the Soho House Wine Show.

I invited all Soho House UK’s major wine suppliers to attend the two-day event to show off a selection of their wines...boy, did they bring out the big guns, with over 250 wines on show.

The day started at 9am with all the wine suppliers arriving and the madness of putting it all together. With coffees and croissants flowing, the Secret Garden on the roof at Shoreditch House began to resemble the biggest wine-tasting Soho House has ever seen... a mini London Wine Fair if you like?

Rather than being a dreary and sterile classic wine tasting with posturing wine buffs and spitty old duffers, we selected dream teams from bars and front-of-house in all the UK restaurants and clubs to come and visit. At

11.30am the doors opened and over 100 people of all levels and wine experience arrived for each of the two days of tasting.

The schedule was fast-paced and the tasting was busy and educational. I took to the mic and introduced the attendees to the show and explained how the day was running for them. Armed with a tasting glass and a thirst for knowledge they foraged through the banquet laid out before them. First stop for many was a glass of fizz. This was ably provided by Maison Marques et Domaines in the form of Louis Roederer Champagne and a selection of their wine portfolio, with highlights from Marques de Murrieta and Pio Cesare.

Next stop was Enotria, who provide much of the Italian wine on our lists. However they focused their tasting selection on classical French wines and bottles from Tuscany with a Riesling from Trimbach being a particular hit among the staff.

Eurowines focused on unusual Italian wines, Venus looked at affordable classics and

Fuller’s showcased high-quality, everyday wine and of course, an amazing selection of Champagne Collet.

Before everybody got too carried away it was time for a live-tasting demonstration, and I got back on the mic to introduce Mark Bingley of Maison Marques et Domaines.

Mr Bingley wowed the staff, asking questions and waxing lyrical on Champagne and why it’s a kick-arse drink as well as an affordable luxury. After his sparkling presentation it was back to the tasting and the attendees were drawn to Liberty wines, who were conveniently next to The Chef’s Deli stand. Liz Lowe from Liberty beamed as she poured tastings of her great wines under screwcap. The staff were pairing Liberty’s selection from the south of Italy with an amazing selection of charcuterie from next door.

Ben Milne from The Chef’s Deli was on hand serving up amazing In Fosa cheese with truffle honey and carving Cinta Senese prosciutto from Siena, plus rich cured meats



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- 02 Special T-shirts for the event
- 03 Wines to taste
- 04 Treats from the Chef's Deli
- 05 Tutored tasting

- 06 The timetable
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- 09 Christopher Cooper, with glasses, introduces his speakers

*“Rather than being a dreary classic wine tasting with posturing wine buffs, we selected dream teams from bars and front-of-house in all the UK restaurants and clubs to come and visit”*

like duck speck and lardo, 18-month cave-aged Tuscan pecorino with damsons preserved in wine and syrup, lamb speck with Robiola Freschella and fig balsamic, Barolo carpaccio with cave-aged pecorino, sea salt and Puglian extra-virgin olive oil.

What a perfect way to re-energise! For those with a sweet tooth there was an enormous selection of cakes, cheese and desserts on the now legendary Jake’s Bakes table. In-house UK pastry chef Jake Rigby-Wilson and his team kept the troops fully sugar-loaded throughout the day with his salted caramel tart, sherry trifle and Lancashire cheese with proper Eccles cake. What a treat!

Everyone gathered back in the demonstration zone to await our next guest speaker, a full-on wine industry character talking up a fairly misunderstood wine... sherry.

Who better to explain that ‘it’s not just for grannies’ than the gregarious and larger-than-life Willie Lebus from Bibendum, complete with red trousers and his dapper getup. (Though missing his trademark bow tie?! Shame on you Willie!)

Sherry is a fantastic drink and really is not just for your grandmother to sip over Christmas. It’s a wonderfully versatile drink and Willie so passionately pressed it on the thirsty crowd that they were well and truly converted. Bring on 2014 and a big year for sherry in Soho House.

With all that fortified wine the show could have taken a turn for the worse, but thankfully we were rescued by the arrival of Dirty Burgers to line our stomachs.

Berkmann wines were hugely popular as they were showing off an enormous favour-

rite of the Soho House Group, Gavi di Gavi, and a notorious Tignanello from Antinori in Tuscany. John Armit showcased their autumnal selection including Le Difese (from that other Tuscan powerhouse, Tenuta San Guido in Bolgheri, makers of the famous Sassicaia).

The final and most enormous stand was provided by Bibendum Wines who not only focused on modern classics and their amazing portfolio selection from Iberia but introduced a real highlight of the show amongst the staff, the Bibendum Taste Test.

All you had to do was answer a few questions and you would be given a score out of

Soho House’s spa-brand Cowshed’s moods... yes, that’s right, there is a “knackered wine” and a “horny wine”!

Before everyone got overwhelmed and their palates too exhausted, we were up for one final live-tasting demonstration. It had to be exciting enough to keep everyone alert and excited before we released them back into the world, and what a guest we introduced: Tom Harrow is a bit of an industry legend and general all-round great guy (aka the Wine Chap) and he introduced us to his world of “Sexy Wines”. As you can imagine, the crowd was by now pretty lively and needed no encouragement to help create noise for the “woof-ometer”, which was how we were to judge how sexy these wines really were. The clear winner was the Cowshed’s horny wine pairing in the form of a sparkling Pink Moscato by Innocent Bystander from the Yarra Valley in Australia. It’s lively and refreshing and the perfect palate cleanser after a day of tasting.

A huge thanks to all the suppliers for taking part and being so generous, to Jake Rigby-Wilson for his sweet treats, Michal Buben for mixing up cool wine cocktails all day and of course to the House Tonic team for making this all happen.

Go forth, and talk confidently about Champagne, enthusiastically about sherry and think sexy wines. We’ll do it all again soon.

### *Wine Show Tasting Highlights*

Louis Roederer Champagne  
 Riesling, Trimbach, Alsace  
 Rosa Chiara, La Scolca, Piemonte  
 ‘Le Difese’ Tenuta San Guido, Tuscany  
 Tignanello, Antinori, Tuscany  
 Pink Moscato, Innocent Bystander, Yarra Valley

15 and a badge to proudly display your tasting character. Whether you had a fresh or a fruity personality, they had the perfect wine to suit your palate, and from this wine, the world of wine is your oyster. The Bibendum Taste Test is the perfect way to introduce wine to the uninitiated palate or any curious consumer. For example, a score of six out of 15 leads the taster to the awesome Riesling Kung Fu Girl by Charles Smith from Washington State.

Just enough time before the final testing demonstration to compete in the blind-tasting competition and sample the wines paired with

**Would you like to get behind one of Soho House’s bars around the world? Email [housetonic@sohohouse.com](mailto:housetonic@sohohouse.com) or visit [www.housetonic.com](http://www.housetonic.com)**