HAZY DAYS OF SUMMER

The season for al fresco dining calls for crisp, clean Champagnes and chilled reds. Plus, find tapas trails to follow and meet one of the world’s best sommeliers.

What We’re Drinking

James Brooke, head sommelier, Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud

This summer, I’ll be drinking fresh and aromatic whites from Galicia, Alsace, Alto Adige and Austria. I’ll also be chilling some fresh Loire reds and good Cru Beaujolais to drink on a summer’s evening. For me, the best value wines today are to be found in Spain and Portugal. Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Priorat, Blasco, Valdeorras, Douro Valley and Alentejo would be my favourites. Barolo and Barbaresco in Northern Italy also offer great bargains compared to their French counterparts. This won’t last for long so buy now while you can.

Wine events

Follow the Campo Viejo Tapas Trail in Dublin (June 7 - July 3), Cork (July 12 - 27) and Galway (August 24 - September 1). The guided trail runs twice weekly in each city and takes in tapas and matching wine at four participating restaurants, including Dublin’s Drury Buildings, Galway’s Cava Bodega and Cork’s Fenn’s Quay. Tickets (€30 per person) are available at campoviejotapastrail.ie.

Wines to Watch

Fancy Champagne’s class minus the price tag? Reach for Crémant, the French shorthand for bottle-fermented sparkling wine produced outside Champagne’s jealously guarded boundaries. Try the well-balanced Louis Bouillot Grande Reserve Crémant de Bourgogne, €25, Donnybrook Fair and independents, or snag a bargain with Aldi’s Philippe Michel Crémant du Jura, €10.79.

Wine editor Aoife Carrigy explores the converging worlds of wine, design and culture.

BATTLES OF THE SOMMS

Congratulations to the French-born, Irish-based sommelier Julie Dupuy of Dublin’s Greenhouse Restaurant, who represented Ireland at the World Sommelier Competition in Mendoza, Argentina earlier this year. Julie ranked third place in the overall competition, picking up a bronze medal and officially becoming the best female sommelier in the world.

The number of places climbed by Penfolds wine to top Drinks International magazine’s list of most admired wine brands. Torres slipped to number two, followed by Ridge, Casillero del Diablo and Michel Chapoutier.

The number of bottles of allegedly fake Domaine de la Romanée-Conti wine at the heart of the latest $2.45 million lawsuit involving jailed wine fraudster Rudy Kurniawan.

The Australian Government will invest $50 million to support domestic wine tourism and wine export growth, in support of the sector that contributes over $40 billion to the Australian economy.