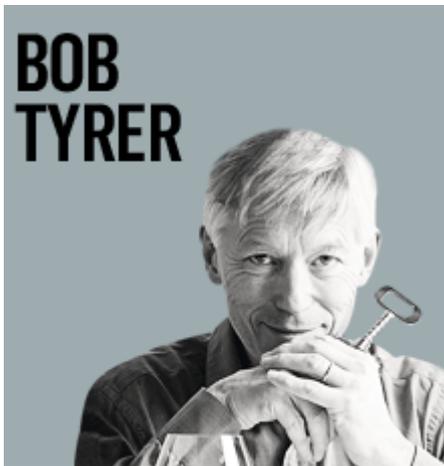




THE SUNDAY TIMES

On the bottle

Bob Tyrer Published: 17 June 2012



As I'm feeling guilty for being absent from this column so frequently recently, I'm determined to get this written before Cliff Richard comes on the telly and I lapse into a frenzy.

Yes, it's two weeks ago; we're still in the grip of the jubilee and the Buckingham Palace concert is beginning.

I'd planned to write while waiting to see the Queen on her boat, but standing on a ledge in the rain, with a tiny chink of the river in view, wine was the last thing on my mind and I couldn't hold my iPhone, let alone use the keys.

So here we are: it's freezing June, the rosés at lunch didn't help, and I'm in need of some adventurous, soul-warming reds. In honour of Prince Philip, and, as this will be appearing on Father's Day, let's say the theme is patriarchs.

Noah has, I think, a fair claim to be the daddy of all patriarchs. As his ark apparently made landfall on what is now the Turkish-Armenian border, it's not far-fetched for the makers of a new super-premium Armenian wine, Zorah Karasi, to point out that it comes from vineyards "nestled in the shadows of biblical Mount Ararat". This is serious, expensive and exceptionally tasty stuff, made from a local grape and aged in amphorae, the huge clay pots of antiquity. Zorah was set up by an expatriate Armenian living in Milan, who brought in an Italian winemaker — who just happens to have worked for my next patriarch.

There can't be many wine drinkers who haven't bought a bottle of Mondavi over the years. Robert Mondavi, who set up his Napa Valley winery in 1966, was most certainly the daddy of the modern Californian wine industry. Towards the end of his life, he regretted that his company had shifted its focus from top quality to mass market. Constellation, the global conglomerate that bought it in 2004, has, counterintuitively, bolstered the top-end quality. There are some super single-vineyard bottles, but I prefer the straight Napa Valley Cabernet, which has all the old man's virtues while being just about affordable.

My third morale-boosting bottle comes from two trainee patriarchs, Chilean schoolfriends turned business partners who set up the Anakena vineyards under the Andes mountains. They've created a warming super-premium called Alwa (sunrise in the indigenous language, they say). A glass or two of this would surely have saved Prince Philip from hospital.

Liquid hunches



Zorah Karasi Areni Noir 2010 (£24.15) An elegant and slightly exotic beauty (philglas-swiggot.com).

Robert Mondavi Napa Valley Cabernet 2008 (£19.99) Extremely drinkable dark fruit and spices (cellarviewines.com).

Anakena Alwa 2007 (£20.49) Coffee, chocolate and loganberries (oldbutcherswinecellar.co.uk).