

Wine Review: The Wine Tasting Shop, London SW12

You really can taste the difference at this independent wine shop.



From left: L'Eglise Vermentino 2011, Champagne J Lassalle Premier Cru Brut NV, Torre d'Orti Valpolicella Ripasso 2010 Photo: PEARTREE



By [Susy Atkins \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/susy-atkins/\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/susy-atkins/)

7:00AM BST 29 Apr 2012



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When Julia Michael opened the Wine Tasting Shop in Balham, south London, she wanted it to be 'as far removed from the supermarket wine experience' as possible. Ironic, then, that she started her business in a derelict building right between a huge Sainsbury's and a branch of Waitrose.

One year on, though, and she has lured customers away from the big stores – when they want a treat, at least. The shop has a perfectly humid cellar to store her inspiring selection of wines, and on the ground floor the bare brick walls, and plenty of space between uncluttered displays, invite a leisurely browse. And a taste.

About 20 wines are open to try, for 50p to £1 a pop, with advice from Julia and her assistant, Devon, who fizz with knowledge and enthusiasm. Julia, who worked for many years for British Airways as a stewardess, sitting wine exams on the side, is, unsurprisingly, the consummate host.

Her customers – 'at least 50 per cent female' – are young professionals, mothers pushing buggies, diners digging out an interesting gem to take to a local BYO. And they are fine-wine buffs, to judge from her range, which isn't exactly cheap. There's a small crop of wines at £7.50, but many others around £10 to £12 and, then, whoosh, they whizz right up to £50 and more.

The quality is impressive, especially the champagnes, Rhônes and Italians, while the small-batch, hand-crafted New World labels make a change from big brands. Everyday wine? No. But for a special buy I'd rather take my tenner here, chat and taste, than do the trolley dash up, and down, the road.

[A good year for wine lovers? \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/wine/9209058/It-could-be-a-very-good-year-for-wine-lovers.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/wine/9209058/It-could-be-a-very-good-year-for-wine-lovers.html)

[Wine Review: Scented red wines \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/wine/9208741/Wine-Review-Scented-red-wines.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/wine/9208741/Wine-Review-Scented-red-wines.html)

[Ordering wine: how to navigate the social minefield \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/wine/9207084/Ordering-wine-how-to-navigate-the-social-minefield.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/wine/9207084/Ordering-wine-how-to-navigate-the-social-minefield.html)

[Wine Review: What to serve with egg recipes \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/susy-atkins/9175728/Wine-Review-What-to-serve-with-egg-recipes.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/susy-atkins/9175728/Wine-Review-What-to-serve-with-egg-recipes.html)

[Wine Review: Cava \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/wine/9163178/Wine-Review-Cava.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/wine/9163178/Wine-Review-Cava.html)

[The Wine Tasting Shop, 18 Hildreth Street, London SW12 \(020 8616 8658\) \(http://thewinetastingshop.co.uk/\)](http://thewinetastingshop.co.uk/)

TRY THESE...

L'Eglise Vermentino 2011, Pays d'Oc, France (£7.50)

A clean, summery dry white with a crisp squeeze of lime over softer pears. Chill well to enjoy with simple white fish and seafood.

Champagne J Lassalle Premier Cru Brut NV, France (£29)

Long aged, this has developed creamy depths with a top note of fresh raspberry. Lively acidity and tiny bubbles make it a great aperitif.

Torre d'Orti Valpolicella Ripasso 2010, Italy (£12.50)

An Italian red of character with damsons, even a hint of sloe, and a cherry-drop tang to the finish. Sip with a piece of fine parmesan or cheddar.

TIPPLE TIP green shoots...

'Asparagus season is here again. A dish of England's finest covered in rich, buttery hollandaise sauce is matched wonderfully well by a ripe, fruity New World sauvignon blanc, preferably from New Zealand'

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