



Golden age of pink wine produces gem

January offers a chance for reflection within sight of water, with cricket on the radio and your toes having forgotten what it's like to be trapped in shoes. This is ideal thinking time, and thinking is often aided by drinking, and when thinking and drinking through the languid infancy of a new year, the thoughtful glass is usually filled with wine the same colour as legs left a fraction too long on the beach.

I've been thinking a lot about the rise of rose, how we're living in a golden age of pink wines, and how I'm still a little bit haunted by a wine I tried a few months back that turned out to be the best rose I drank all last year.

When I started out in the wine trade, rose was Mateus, Portugal's second worst export after the millipede, or a handful of confected Australian examples various shades of neon pink, ranging from Drag Queen's Lipstick to Barbie's Boudoir. They were sickly sweet, more confected than Twitter outrage and as closely related to serious wine as an Adam Sandler movie is to *Citizen Kane*.

But now rose is afforded the respect it deserves. Where once there was pragmatism in pink wine — lightly stained juice was drained off early during maceration to concentrate the red wine being made and producing a quantity of pink wine that could be tricked up and sold off as rose — winemakers are treating the production of rose seriously. That means beginning the process with a quality rose as the goal, selecting the right vineyard sites, giving greater consideration to what varieties perform best in a paler guise and picking at slightly earlier maturity levels, where flavours and aromas are in the sweet spot for lively, vigorous rose.

Dedication towards the production of serious rose is spreading right across the Australian wine industry, but nowhere is it more keenly focused than in the pure pink play a pair of old friends have decided to call Mazi.

Toby Porter and Alex Katsaros have significant day jobs within wine. Porter is a winemaker at d'Arenberg in McLaren Vale and Katsaros is a winemaker with roving commission and the Australian agent for esteemed French cooper Tonnellerie Baron, but they've both been putting in a bit of overtime in pursuit of the pale grain.

They make only two wines and they're both pink. Taking obvious stylistic cues from the great pink wines of southern France, and leveraging their good fortune to be working in McLaren Vale, the Australian region where the varieties that drive those French benchmarks are at their best, Porter and Katsaros are setting new benchmarks for rose in this country.

While both wines are distinctly different expressions, they share some strong common traits. They're serious and savoury, fine and dry, and they clearly show the benefits of being built from the ground up and having been destined for pale pink greatness from the very beginning.

Mazi is a Greek word meaning togetherness, and if the early days of the Mazi project can produce results as impressive as the two wines from the 2018 vintage, those of us who love serious rose will be hoping Porter and Katsaros stick together for a long time to come.

A note on pricing. The Mazi wines are available only direct and in six-bottle lots.

MAZI ROSE 2018, McLAREN VALE, \$150 FOR A HALF-DOZEN

The McLaren Vale subregion of Blewitt Springs is the most sought-after address for Australian grenache, and while it has been the fragrant and expressive reds from the area capturing most attention, this wine shows it can produce spectacular rose as well. It's a pale, petally pink and offers up lifted aromas of quandang, dried raspberries and a swirl of souk spices. It's taut and linear, invigoratingly fresh upfront and beautifully tapered towards a fine, savoury finish.

MAZI LIMITED RELEASE ROSE 2018, \$240 A HALF-DOZEN

If you're serious about rose, buy as much of this as you can before every winemaking school in the country grabs it all to demonstrate to students just how good Australian rose can be.

The wine is predominantly mourvedre (86 per cent with 10 per cent grenache and 4 per cent cinsault) and it's that variety's capacity for brooding savouriness that this wine celebrates.

It's an achingly pale colour, a whispered suggestion of pink, rather than a shouted statement. It smells of pink grapefruit, bitter orange, dried wild herbs and the sterner elements that give Campari its edge. It's perfectly balanced, holding an incredibly disciplined line. The best Australian rose I've seen.



Nuukio National Park

As we enter Nuukio National Park, an hour from Helsinki, a tall, tanned Finn is walking out, basket brimming with golden chanterelles. It's a good sign.

Through tour company Feel the Nature, we've also come to raid nature's pantry. My fellow foragers and I push through narrow paths and past fallen spruce, dappled sunlight playing through the leaves. The star-shaped moss is soft and spongy underfoot, a sagging mattress. Our eyes are trained to the ground.

But summer arrived early this year, so most of the season's berries have already flamed out. Bilberry (wild blueberry) leaves are thinning, turning russet. Then there's a shout. Someone has spotted raspberries, bright red against the deep green foliage, unexpectedly sweet and tender.

Though other berries remain mostly elusive, our guide is adept at prising mushrooms out of their hiding places. Chefs favour porcini, morels and chanterelles, but he collects two varieties that have no easy translation to English.

Later, at a campsite, he slices, and cooks the mushrooms over an open fire. The fresh air and fragrant wood smoke has made me reckless, so I indulge with more than a cautious nibble.

The greenish ones are slippery, with a taste I can describe only as "mossy funk", while the ones with reddish caps are firm and nutty, a bit like Swiss browns.

Scandinavian folk have always been ahead of the foraging curve, thanks to "everyman's right", or the right to roam. First popularised a decade ago by chef Rene Redzepi of Copenhagen's Noma restaurant, the foraging trend has now crossed the globe.

More recent is the realisation that foraging tours such as this one offer travellers a dive deep into hitherto unfamiliar places. Foraging in a foreign landscape connects people with their surroundings on a sensory level, enhances their appreciation of local food and provides a whole new understanding of a destination.

GO: Feel the Nature runs foraging tours in Nuukio National Park from July to October and in Pallas-Yllastunturi National Park in Lapland from June to September.

■ feelthenature.fi/en

Northern Territory

Lemony green ants, plump witchetty grubs, long-necked turtles, wild yams, water lilies, bush tomatoes, Kakadu plums and more: the Kakadu region is believed to have the oldest foraging tradition on earth. It is a national park, so casual food foraging by visitors is prohibited, but several specialist tour companies share their secrets.

On an Animal Tracks safari, visitors head out with a local Aboriginal elder to find the likes of palm hearts, bush carrots and freshwater mussels. Native fruits also are harvested, and often pounded with the seed inside before being eaten, to ensure all the flesh and rich seed kernel is used.

Owner Sean Arnold says harvesting wild food is a way to connect with one's ancestors and environment.

"Foraging in a united group can produce feelings of tribal family and confidence," he says. "It increases our sense of belonging."

Karrke also offers small group tours on traditional lands in the Watarrka National Park in the Northern Territory. Its owners started the business to preserve their Luritja and Pertame (Southern Arrernte) language and cultural knowledge and heritage.

GO: Visitors may prefer the cooler months of the mid-dry season (June to August) for foraging tours. The indigenous food festival, A Taste of Kakadu, runs from May 10 to 19, featuring pop-up dinners, cooking demonstrations, traditional bush tucker feasts, guided walks and cultural activities.



OFF THE EATEN PATHS

Food-foraging tours are a hot new holiday trend

DENISE CULLEN

TRAVEL

■ animaltracks.com.au;
karrke.com.au; parksaustralia.gov.au/kakadu/taste

Britain

John Rensten was working as a commercial photographer in London when he took up foraging 20 years ago.

"It was a way of keeping myself sane in a stressful city," he says.

His expeditions taught him to view the urban environment with fresh eyes. That scruffy patch of land might support a wild plum tree. That unloved verge across the street? Thick with stinging nettles, perfect for pesto, soup, tea or sweet ale. Apparently, briskly blanching these greens in hot salted water will take away the sting.

Rensten now enjoys witnessing the same shift in others as they engage in a grown-up "treasure hunt" with Forage London. He and other guides lead urban walks in the capital, seashore foraging trips in Dorset, and Hampshire mushroom hunts. He says the urge to gather one's own sustenance is ingrained in the human psyche.

"It's the way we've behaved for the vast majority of our time on this planet," he says. "Foraging connects people with a part of themselves that is present but not utilized."

Concerns about the impact on food sources for wildlife has seen some London parks ban foraging. The debate is not one Rensten is prepared to weigh in on but he will say foragers should exercise restraint.

Forage London maintains good relationships with the owners of land on which its

tours operate, to ensure sufficient supplies for future generations of gatherers.

GO: Tours run year round.

■ foragelondon.co.uk

New York

As the green lungs of a busy metropolis, New York's Central Park is a magnet for visitors. It's also a cornucopia for foragers, says ethnobotanist Leda Meredith, who learned the skill from her Greek great-grandmother who used to scour San Francisco's Golden Gate Park for dandelion greens, miner's lettuce and wild mustard. Now Meredith's tours of Central Park and Brooklyn's Prospect Park are booked out months in advance.

Meredith says foraging draws people for different reasons; chefs seeking gourmet ingredients that can't be store-bought, survivalists who want to live off the grid and individuals who just want to save a buck have all participated in her tours.

As in London, the sight of people gathering edible wild plants from public parks has drawn the ire of officials. But Meredith's tours highlight ethical and sustainable harvesting. "Some plants may be endangered in certain locations, often from overharvesting, and should be left alone no matter how delicious they are," she says. Others are invasive species that are crowding out native plants and so can be picked freely.

As a forager, there's always something new to learn.

"I'm an expert on wild edible plants and mushrooms in eastern North America and Europe, but when I travel to the tropics I am a complete beginner when it comes to the plants around me," Meredith says.

GO: Tours run year round.

■ ledameredith.com

Canada

Woodland fields and forests outside Stratford, in Ontario, Canada, are the hunting and gathering grounds for Puck's Plenty. Nettles, fiddleheads, wild ginger, trout lilies, garlic mustard and marsh marigolds are plentiful in spring, while summer and autumn bring "mushrooms, mushrooms and more mushrooms", according to Puck's Plenty owner Peter Blush.



Participants can spend the morning gathering produce before indulging in a four-course lunch featuring foraged ingredients and prepared by local chefs.

Blush believes in the health benefits of wild foods. Pregnant women are encouraged to consume stinging nettles, for example, because they are packed with vitamin A, potassium, calcium and iron. Wild leeks are said to help support brain function and maintain optimal blood pressure. Wild foods also taste better, he claims.

"There's a sweet strain that runs through these plants and mushrooms that's hard to describe." The pheasant back mushroom, for instance, can be eaten raw and is like biting into a sweet cucumber. "Then we have cattail

hearts that have been described as having the taste of rain (and) you don't get that from processed foods," he adds.

Novice foragers should go out with a seasoned professional to avoid not-so-friendly lookalikes.

"Many edible plants and certainly mushrooms have poisonous species that grow alongside or in the same region," he says. Another caution is to take it slowly, especially with wild plants eaten raw.

"Our bodies are used to processed foods and with certain wild edibles it can be a bit of a shock to our system."

GO: For the most diverse and plentiful harvests, visit in early spring or midsummer through to late autumn.

■ pucksplenty.com

North Carolina

Alan Muskat reckons there's no such thing as a bad mushroom. True, there are inedible mushrooms, but that's hardly the same thing. It's an important distinction for the founder of No Taste Like Home, who has led "off the eaten path" tours through the southern Appalachians near Asheville, North Carolina, for the past two decades.

All plants have value. And with more than 300 different wild edibles growing in these mountains, it's not like anyone is going to go hungry.

There are bountiful but ever-changing pickings in the form of persimmons, acorns, amaranth, onion grass, sumac, violets, nettle, black walnut, burdock and chickweed. Then add mushrooms such as boletes, black trumpets, chanterelles, leatherback milk-caps, black and yellow morels, turkey tails or reishi.

Muskat says wild gathered foods are fresher, more diverse, and packed with more flavour than their garden-variety peers. He attributes the increasing popularity of foraging to disillusionment with the global food system.

"Like gravity, coming down to earth is inevitable," he says. "Sooner than later, we have to get back to nature."

GO: Foraging can be fun year-round, though the main season runs from March to October. Morels are plentiful in April, while most other mushrooms rear their heads from July to October.

■ notastelikehome.org

Valuing this generation's emotional intelligence will keep the robots in their place

The AI stealing our jobs may be good at routine tasks but they cannot fake sincerity

ED CONWAY

Anyone want to be a billionaire? Well, I have just the business idea for you. It's an app that, in the absence of any better name, I'm planning to call Big Brother.

Ever wondered who really started that argument you and your partner had last night? Or whether you could have handled that pay negotiation with your boss a bit better? Simply install Big Brother on your smartphone, give it access to your camera, and it will sit there, watching, listening and, most important, judging.

Big Brother will use its artificial intelligence algorithms to rate

your behaviour and tell you when you need to be more charming, more delicate, more stubborn. It is the ultimate life coach and, best of all, you need never suspect it's just being personal.

There are one or two little catches. The first and most obvious is that it would be hideously intrusive. Second and more important, the technology simply isn't there yet.

AI is making enormous leaps and bounds but it will be decades before a computer can understand a human conversation, gauge the demeanour and emotional state of its participants and, crucially, determine how they could have handled it better. This is one of the much-misunderstood nuances when it comes to the so-called robot takeover.

Robots are brilliant at learning repetitive tasks with binary out-

comes that can be easily specified but they struggle when making judgments many humans take for granted. Social interaction is one of those grey areas humans often find themselves having to muddle their way through, making up the rules as they go along. AI, which is ultimately a set of self-learning algorithms, struggles in the absence of clearly defined rules.

While on the one hand this may well mean Big Brother is ultimately doomed, it also points to humankind's best hope of thriving through the next century. That may sound hyperbolic, but only until you get your head around the significance of the era in which we are living. Call it what you like — the fourth industrial revolution or, as the World Economic Forum has entitled its meeting this week, Globalisation 4.0 — but the arrival of AI

as a mainstream technology will be more disruptive than almost anyone can conceive.

The conventional wisdom is that at some point, post-Trump and post-Brexit, the world will revert to normal: centrist parties will reoccupy their rightful places in government and the world will carry on as it did for the three decades that preceded 2016.

But what if we are instead heading for decades of political instability and reactionary politics that will make the metropolitan elite yearn for years such as 2016?

That, at least, is the way economic and technological progress is heading. To understand why, it helps to recall that 2016 was at least in part a response to economic globalisation. In their own separate ways, Britain and the US had proceeded down an economically liberal path that had opened up their borders and economies to



The newly released Lovot by Groove X, a companion with artificial intelligence that will follow you around like a pet

AFP

overseas competition. The most obvious impact was the hollowing out of domestic manufacturing sectors as products once made in Britain or the US were now made in low-wage economies.

As technology allowed companies to outsource production, American factory workers found themselves competing with Chinese workers or, domestically, with machines that did their jobs faster and more efficiently. In 2016

they expressed their frustration at the ballot box. That was in the manufacturing sector, which accounted for only a minority of British and US employment.

Now consider the fact that the next stage of economic and technological progress threatens to do precisely the same thing to the services sector, where the vast majority of jobs are. In a book to be released this month, economist Richard Baldwin calls this "the

globotics upheaval". His point is that while the past couple of decades were disastrous for many blue-collar workers, the coming decades will be just as challenging for white-collar workers. Some jobs, especially those involving the processing of information and dealing with simple transactions, could be replaced by computer algorithms. Others could be carried out far cheaper by freelance workers in India.

Until recently, most professional clerical jobs were shielded by what Baldwin calls our "cognitive monopoly". But now that computers can think, jobs that required a human such as teaching physics or arranging flowers could be done remotely or by a machine. If, as seems likely, millions of middle-class workers lose their jobs, the backlash against globalisation is only just beginning.

The great irony is that our edu-

cation systems are taking us precisely the wrong direction to confront this challenge. For all sorts of understandable reasons, they prioritise the teaching of STEM skills: science, technology, engineering and maths. Yet jobs related to these skills are the occupations most at risk of being taken by robots.

Baldwin's controversial suggestion is that, in future, education should put more emphasis on teaching students "soft" skills: interpersonal relationships, working in groups, showing empathy, being ethical. Less brain, more heart.

That may sound like snowflake central, but my Big Brother app is unlikely to happen any time soon, social interaction will remain the one area in which humans are likely to trump robots for years to come.

THE TIMES