

My first sip of wine came at my 12th birthday meal; it was very good wine from my birth year but at the time I preferred cola. Growing up in such a great wine growing region as the Loire Valley, my love for cola over wine didn't last long!

I started training to be a chef at college but much preferred working in the restaurant and I was given my chance at the famous Cordeillon-Bages restaurant in Bordeaux. I then did national service with the French navy in the south Pacific before working under Michel Roux at the Waterside Inn which has three Michelin stars.

When I asked Monsieur Roux where I should go next, he recommended Sharrow Bay. I still remember what Monsieur Roux's words when I left: "At Sharrow Bay, you know when you arrive, but you don't know when you leave." This couldn't be more true. I have been here seven years and I love the place and its surroundings and don't plan on leaving.

I often get asked: 'What is a sommelier?' Put simply, a sommelier is someone who is an expert on wine but it also more complex. A sommelier should have an understanding and be able to talk about the wine, compose a wine list, recommend a wine depending upon a certain dish, be able to serve a wine at the correct temperature and condition, have knowledge of the grape with respect to the glass and, most importantly, they should understand the needs of the guest.

The importance of the match between grape and glass is crucial. For example, a Sauvignon Blanc gives a lot of acidity to the side of the tongue and drinking it from a narrow glass makes the wine go to the middle of your tongue. This means the balance comes at the right moment on your pallet as you won't taste the acidity until later, allowing you to taste the Sauvignon Blanc in all its glory.

Sauvignon Blanc is the perfect wine for spring and summer: fresh, dry and crisp with a lovely balance of acidity and a very fruity flavour.

Here are my four recommended Savignon Blanc's to try this spring:

France:

Pouilly Fume cuvee SILEX Didier Dagueneau 2005 - £45

Sancerre les Caillottes Pascal Jolivet 2006 - £15

New Zealand:

Sauvignon Blanc Goldwater Estate, New Dog, Marlborough 2007 - £15

Sauvignon Blanc Cloudy Bay Marlborough 2007 £22

A votre santé,

Nico