

Wine

Chardonnay made the Feng Shui way

A COLLEAGUE has taken me to task for, as he described it, "going down some way-out paths" in recent columns – Fairtrade, organic, biodynamic, experimental South African.

In response, here's a red and a white made in a winery constructed according to Feng Shui principles!

If you're not familiar with the concept, Feng Shui ensures that the basic elements of water, metal, earth and wood are strategically positioned to enhance energy flow in a building.

Chile's Montes Alpha, which produces nearly 500,000 case of wine annually, consulted Feng Shui gurus before installing new equipment for production of their premium products.

How much this has helped produced such stunning wines is anyone's guess, but I heartily recommend the **Montes Alpha Chardonnay 2005** and **Montes Alpha Syrah 2003**.

The Chardonnay (Majestic, Tesco and Morrisons, £9.99) is a restrained oaky riot of creamy peach and apricot. The Syrah (same price, from Waitrose) has been aged in French oak for a year and reminded me more of a fine Northern Rhone example than its Australian shiraz cousins. A plummy, spicy treat.

Three other Chilean wines, produced along more orthodox lines, have also impressed. **Errazuriz's Wild Ferment Pinot Noir 2004** is not quite the norm, being created using natural wild yeasts found on the grapes. Errazuriz claim this adds greater complexity and depth. Certainly, combined with a high vineyard site up in the Casablanca Valley,

cooled by sea breezes, the technique is forging remarkable wines from the notoriously tricky Burgundian grape variety. The 2004 is a huge 14.5 per cent alcohol but medium-bodied with elegant tannins and smooth cherry fruit (www.everywine.co.uk, D Byrne of Clitheroe, £9.99). A few years' bottle age and it will be even better.

Its similarly priced **Wild Ferment Chardonnay** partner from 2005 is also a ripe, balanced lovely. Sainsbury's stock it.

Oddbins have long sourced interesting 'special parcel' wines from Concha Y Toro. A terrific bargain, at £5.99, is the current **Winemaker's Lot 500 Malbec 2005** from the Cahapoal Valley.

Brooding bitter cherry flavours and sturdy tannins make this a great steak wine.

Another consistent Chilean producer is Cono Sur and

Morrisons are currently stocking two of its better wines. **Cono Sur Reserva Sauvignon Blanc 2004** (£6.99) is pale yellow, smells of lime and grapefruit and unleashes a surprising amount of melony, citrusy fruit. Even better is

newcomer **Isla Negra High Tide Cabernet Sauvignon 2005** (£8.99) (pictured), exclusive to Morrisons. Winemaker Adolfo Hurtado has produced a soft, velvety, black fruit gem.

It's called High Tide because, according to the label: "It's that magical tide when the ocean subsides to the gravitational pull of the moon and reaches its maximum potential."

Oh dear, going all biodynamic again!
Neil Sowerby



STREETWISE Channel M's Stephanie Elmore gets animated over lobster while grilling Corrie's Antony Cotton at – where else? – Grill On The Alley

The world is feisty Antony's lobster

THESE are words that you wouldn't normally hear coming from the mouth of Coronation Street's Sean Tully – the soap's part-time bar man and knicker stitcher: "I'll have lobster and pink champagne, please."

But Sean, aka Antony Cotton, has a taste for the finer things in life. "People will think I'm such a toff ordering this, but I'm up at 6.45am and work till 7.30pm six days a week. I've got to take opportunities like this. Plus you're paying," he laughs.

After years of misery and being rejected for acting parts, Antony makes the best of his regular income and eats in this restaurant, Grill On The Alley, at least three times a week. But this is one man who has worked his ticket to decadent luxuries. He's had nothing handed to him on a plate – apart from today's lobster.

His acting aspirations began at the Oldham theatre workshop as a youngster where he honed his craft for 10 years alongside pals Anna Friel, Lisa Riley and Marsha Thomason.

Now camping it up on the cobbles, having formerly played Alexander Perry in Channel 4's *Queer As Folk*, Antony has never phoned in sick and appreciates how far he's come.

He's just scooped the award for funniest character at the Inside Soap awards for the second year running – although his on-the-spot attempt to make me laugh (What is a fly with no wings? Answer: A walk) doesn't quite cut it – and he is even the

Table Talk WITH STEPHANIE ELMORE

creative genius behind his current character.

Rather than follow a conventional route of auditioning for a role, Antony delivered a cheeky note to Corrie's then producer, Tony Wood.

"I told him they needed a homosexual in the soap, that I had a car, was reliable, have won awards for remembering lines and am cheap. I wrote, 'Come on Tony, you know you want to!'," he laughs.

"I got a call from my agent saying Tony wanted to know if I was

serious. He liked what he had seen of me in *Queer As Folk*, and so I created Sean Tully with the writers."

It's little surprise that Antony talked Tony into taking him on – he is an affable character who really could chat the claws off his lobster.

And neither is it astounding to find out what his ambitions are. "I'd love to explore entertainment, maybe do a game show," enthuses Anthony, who recently appeared on the Sharon Osbourne show.

"When I'm on the shows, I love it – I can't help facing the audience, I want to chat to them. I love Paul O'Grady and Ant and Dec, they talk right down that barrel to the audience and that's what makes it work."

In real life, Antony has a number of bugbears. During his meal, he muses over Manchester's taxi service, being recognised, the floundering club scene and the police.

But he raves about his heroes – his actress mother Enid Dunn, who started acting at 54 and played Joyce in *Phoenix Nights*, and Sir Ian McKellen, who once told Antony, "What anybody else thinks of you is no concern of yours".

He finds solace in this when people criticise him for not being as outgoing as Sean in real life.

His sights are set on bigger things, but Antony is a Manchester lad at heart. "Manchester is who I am, I love it. The kettle's always on and the door is always open."

» Grill On The Alley, Ridgefield, Manchester (0161 833 3465).



CORRIE CALLS Antony filming an episode in the Village

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