

# Sample that wine and trust your tastebuds



**Blake Creedon**  
grapevine

**W**INE is a living thing. It never sleeps, slowly evolving even while still sealed in its bottle. When we open it and it meets the air again — for most wines this ought to be within a year or maybe two of bottling — it undergoes a far more rapid natural transformation.

The changes that happen when it's opened, principally driven by oxygen, are crucial to our enjoyment of wine. Sample from a bottle immediately on opening it. Then put it aside for a few hours, and try it again: there ought to be a significant difference between the taste of wine that's barely met the air, and the sample that's had a chance to open up properly. I'm happy enough to leave a wine open for half a day or even a day.

But leave it too long and you'll end up with something that wouldn't even deserve the name vinegar. Having shuttled off its mortal coil, it's now a dead wine, and its next appointment is not with your favourite glass but with the kitchen sink. This used to be one of the great impediments to bars and restaurants properly doing wine by the glass.

Unless a bar already has a thriving trade in a wide variety of wines, its drains were going to be seeing a lot of ex-wine. What's even worse as far as I'm concerned is how wine's volatility encumbers wine shops: A wine-seller may well have had a powerful urge to press sample sips upon prospective customers, but couldn't afford to keep more than a handful of bottles open at any one time.

Well that's all changed now, as there are a few systems on the market that allow bars to reseal open bottles, returning them to a state quite like that of the unopened bottle. Each allows bars to sell wine — and wine shops to offer samples — from several bottles at a time.

By The Glass is the latest variant of such systems, and I saw it in action this week at Bubble Brothers outlet on the Marina in Cork. Not only is that shop using the By The Glass system, but they are also the agents for it, and they'll be selling it into bars and wine shops.

The open bottles are lined up in a temperature-controlled glass case — the whites and roses cooled to about 7C, the red at a comfy 16C. A tube from each bottle is connected



You can now taste from among 16 wines using the By The Glass system at Bubble Brothers.

Picture: Blake Creedon

to the outside world via a little nozzle, and at the touch of a button you can "pour" either a tiny sample or full glass. But the really important bit is a second tube going into each bottle, replacing the displaced wine not with air but with inert nitrogen. This pretty accurately replicates the conditions your wine finds itself in before the bottle is opened.

It's the latest such system to hit the market. You may have seen the Vacuvin bottle-shaped machine behind wine bar counters — this is the gadget that opens and reseals open bottles which are kept on normal shelves or in coolers.

Then there is the enowine system, which can be seen in Enowine's stores in Mayor Square at the IFSC, and in Monkstown. An alternative take on By The Glass, the big difference is that it's self-service. To use it, you get a little ATM-style debit card at the counter and charge it up for whatever amount of money you think you're likely to spend. You can then help yourself from dispensers arranged around the shop.

Liberating bar owners to viably offer a choice of, say, a dozen wines is great news. But as far as I'm concerned, the big benefit of By The Glass and other such systems is the way it could revolutionise wine shops. If this column could be summed up in three words (and it can) they would be "trust your tastebuds".

Naturally the only way I could see the system put through its paces was to sample them. Let's take a look at some of my highlights starting right now in the glass case at Bubble Brothers. The wonderful thing about the By The Glass system is that you don't have to take my word for it — drop in, try them out, and decide for yourself which ones to buy.

■ Bubble Brothers, Marina Commercial Park, Centre Park Road, Cork. [www.bubblebrothers.com](http://www.bubblebrothers.com).



**Domaine de Laballe, Vin de Pays de Côtes de Gascogne** (€10.50)

My wine of the week is a great example of the value you can get from south west France — colombar and gros manseng lifted with sauvignon blanc delivering a lovely fresh white, quite delicate floral aromas atop pert acidity.



**Domaine de Haut Perron Sauvignon Vieilles Vignes, Touraine AOC** (€15)

Again, an answer to our terrible habit of overlooking the Loire: An assertive, powerful nose gives way to a well-structured complex palate of minerals and apples.



**Macon Chaintré Lalande AOC Macon Villages** (€17)

Burgundy is never cheap, but Dominique Cornin's elegant and beautifully-structured chardonnay is a good candidate for that special occasion. Its delicate floral nose is no preparation for the fabulous contrasting soft fruit and minerality. Love it.



**Carramimbre Joven Roble Bodegas Pingon** (€13.45)

Deceptively complex for such a young — and, in theory, simple — red wine. It's a tempranillo-led blend showcasing an attractive scent of sweet cherry pie.

For more, visit Blake's blog at <http://blakecreedon.wordpress.com> and if you have a comment or question, email him at [blake.creedon@examiner.ie](mailto:blake.creedon@examiner.ie).