



The pairing of wine with spicy cuisine gives rise to much heated (forgive me) debate amongst wine lovers, with many claiming that wine and much Asian cuisine simply don't work together, a cold lager being the only sensible recourse, whilst others think that certain wines can work. I tentatively fall into the latter camp.

Chicken Jalfrezi is a fairly hot dish, and even if not eye-wateringly so it constitutes an undoubted challenge. However, there are wines which are capable of taking up the gauntlet. I have enjoyed success with dry, crisply refreshing, overtly mineral whites – the thirst-quenching 2012 Muscadet that I recommended with last month's fish recipe is a personal favourite with Indian cuisine, and I have heard positive reports with Sauvignon Blanc – those from New Zealand have a slightly sweeter, more assertive fruit than the arguably too subtle versions from the Loire. An interesting and inexpensive alternative might be a Verdejo-Viura from Rueda, our 2013 Finca Remendio having the requisite cut combined with a lovely ripe fruit.

Some argue that whites with a slightly sweeter or richer character are better at coping with spice, and Pinot Gris from Alsace is amongst the most highly regarded in this respect. The Sorg family make a particularly delightful version from their tiny, sustainably farmed holding. Whilst at the drier end of the Alsace spectrum, it has sufficient richness to carry the dish. There is a strong argument too in favour of Rosé. I feel that a reasonably full bodied Syrah would work better than the lighter *Provençale* style much in favour at the moment. Yves Cuilleron makes a particularly compelling example from his lair in the Northern Rhône, a gastronomic wine in the best sense, bone dry but with a ripe, well-structured fruit that arches across the palate, and a lingering finish.

The useful website 'Omniglot' informs me that the Hindi for 'Bon Appetit' is 'kripyā bhojan kā ānand lijīyāi'. I trust it is correct!

- 2012 Muscadet Sur Lie, Yves Bretonnière £10.70 (£9.95 if you buy 6 bottles)**
- 2013 Verdejo-Viura, Finca Remendio, Rueda £9.40 (£8.75 each for 6 bottles)**
- 2012 Sauvignon Blanc, Isabel Estate, Marlborough £15.80 (£14.70 each for 6 bottles)**
- 2012 Pinot Gris, Domaine Bruno Sorg, Alsace £15.35 (£14.30 each for 6 bottles)**
- 2012 Syrah 'Sybel', Yves Cuilleron £10.60 (£9.85 each for 6 bottles)**

These and many other artisan-made wines are available from The Black Dog Wine Company at Ashlyns Farm Shop in North Weald www.blackdogwines.co.uk 01992 525009.