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Senior**Times**

The magazine for people who don't act their age

Stars and sparkles

The growing popularity of celebrity winemakers

Mary's Musings

Mary considers women in politics, Christmas and the Transition Year

Mother Courage

Profile of Majella O'Donnell

Guess the year

Another teaser from Jerry Perkins

Neven treats

Recipes from Neven Maguire's new book

A window on winter wildlife
A guide from BirdWatch Ireland

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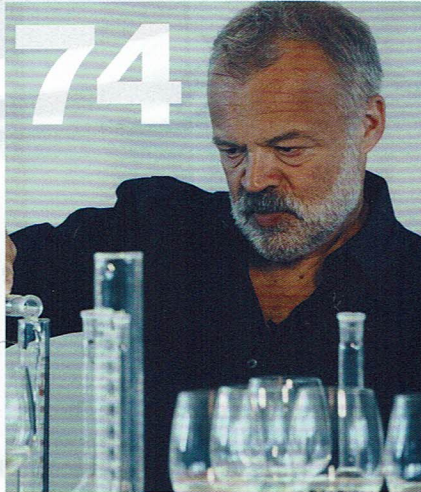
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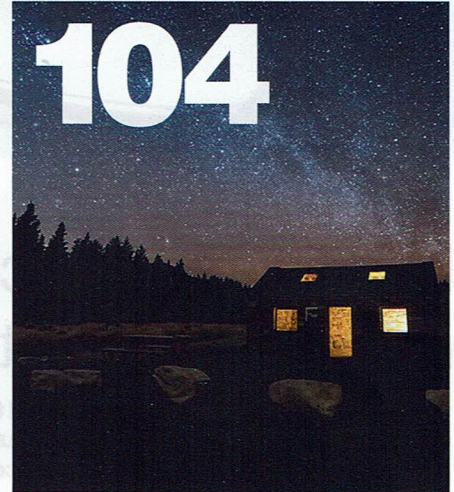
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Graham Norton is one of the most successful 'celebrity wine makers' with a popular range of reds, whites and sparkling

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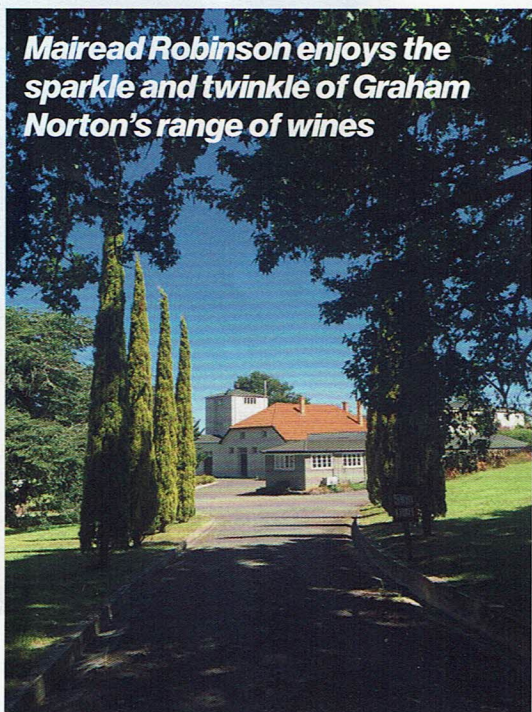
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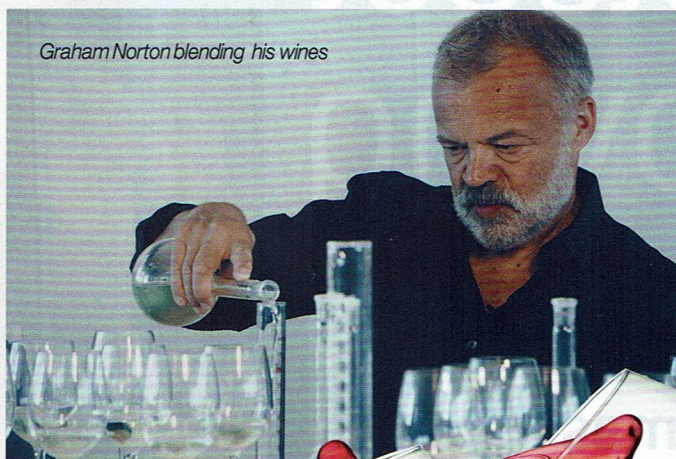
Celebrity wines appeal

Mairead Robinson enjoys the sparkle and twinkle of Graham Norton's range of wines



Invivo Te Kauwhata Winery

Graham Norton blending his wines



Over the last decade or two there have been quite a number of celebrities lending their names to certain wine ranges, and this endorsement has led to an increase in the perception of the wine quality and therefore a resulting rise in sales. Celebrity endorsement is nothing new, it happens in clothing, make-up, cars, sport – indeed even in coffee machines!

However, when it gets interesting is when the celebrity in question actually knows, likes and uses the product in question. When it comes to top guest show host and author, Graham Norton, he makes no secret of his love of wine and sips away on his favourite tittle while interviewing a never ending couch full of real A-List stars season after season on his popular programme. Like many people, I have been a fan for years, and never miss an episode of his lively cheeky show which is far superior to all the other more stilted chat shows, and the fact that he can get the top stars to come along for a chat is proof of his credibility.

And so to his love of wine. You have probably come across his GN wines in SuperValu, Centra and Tesco. Produced in red, white, rose and now sparkling, their popularity as quality wine has proved that they are not only about the name. However, what really interested me is that Graham Norton himself is actually the Chief Winemaker. The idea for GN wines came from a New Zealand company called Invivo – www.invivowines.com.

invivowines.com – which was set up in 2008 by former school friends Tim Lighthbourne and Rob Cameron. You can read more about Graham's winemaking at this website, but when he began working with Invivo Wines he proved that he had not only the enthusiasm for the wine but also a keen palate. He is very clear about what he likes and what he looks for in his wines, and is currently working on the 2018 vintage.

His best known is Sauvignon Blanc – which is what we see Norton and some of his guests sipping away on during his chat shows – 2017 is now on the shelves and got his stamp of approval with the words 'That's it! My perfect blend. And it's lovely. Tropical fruit, a bit of zing. Cheers to that'. It is the recipient of numerous awards and is a very aromatic wine, lively and fruity with a lingering finish. At 12% it is restrained in its punch and powerful subtlety. It is available nationwide in SuperValue, Centra, Dunnes and Tesco priced at €15 but now on offer at €12. As most of the GN wines are now so widely available and also on special offer, I strongly recommend stocking up for the festive season. Either to bring as gifts to friends, serve at home, or keep for yourself!

And so to the red – GN Shiraz 2015 is another Gold Award winning wine, blended in Cork with grapes from different areas in South Australia to create 'a wine that will bring a twinkle to your eye and warm you to the



tips of your toes! This is a rich plummy spicy wine full of dark fruits and warm character with a rich 14.5% alcohol. Also on sale now for €12, the Shiraz is normally priced at €15.

With a clever label, the Rose (Pink by desiGN) is a lovely New Zealand Pinot Noir with notes of raspberry and strawberry and will make a lovely sunny aperitif even in the depth of winter. Serve slightly chilled with nibbles, or a light lunch. Once again a bargain at €15 currently on offer at €12.



And finally to the bubbles – Graham Norton's collection includes a Prosecco Frizzante which is new to the market and is crisp, light and sparkling and made with 100% Glera grapes from the Treviso region - the home of Prosecco. Of course the Frizzante is a gently sparkling wine and for the fully sparkling wine, it is my favourite Spumante which really stands out. This is extra dry – a taste I share with Graham Norton as the frizzante is generally sweeter – and is a seriously good bottle of bubbles. This is certainly one that I would recommend for a celebrity special occasion. This is available in Tesco, recommended price is €17.99 and currently on offer for €16. Meanwhile the Frizzante is reduced from €12 to €10 and available in Centra and SuperValu.

So while our favourite chat-show host is back on our screens, and also has just published his new novel titled *A Keeper*, we can enjoy his exceptionally good wines while watching the television or reading his book!

Bad news from Down Under

The exceptional weather we have had this year has had differing impacts on harvests around the world. Wine producers in New South Wales are worried about drought. The state is now in 100% drought with the second driest autumn conditions on record. Plans have already been put in place for the management of vine stress and irrigation for the 2019 harvest.

Good News for Bubbles

The growth of the sparkling wine sector shows no sign of slowing down. Prosecco, which can cost a third of the price of champagne, continues to grow in popularity. There has also been significant growth in sparkling wine from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, Argentina and Spain, as well as from regions in France. This has been especially evident during our hot dry summer, and will continue as we head towards the festive season.



Another gin competition!

The lucky winner of the Blackwater Strawberry gin last issue was Mar Morley from Louth. We have another great gin to promote this issue, and it is also from our friends at Blackwater Distillery – www.blackwaterdistillery.ie – this time it is the delicious No. 5. Blackwater No.5 is a classic London Dry Gin, distilled from the purest spirit, the finest botanicals and soft local water. It balances the confident juniper notes of a traditional London Dry Gin with bright coriander, warm cinnamon and zesty lemon. Blackwater No. 5 is crisp and elegant, great as a G&T and excellent in a cocktail. If you would like to try this one, contact me at mairead.seniorbeauty@gmail.com and tell me the botanical found in all gin.