



**Vanilla  
PROFILE**

# The life and times of a Wine Merchant

**Steve Hearnden at Tastebuds Wines**

I WAS BORN in the East End of London but as a baby was removed to North West London where, as a child I had a tough but idyllic life. Hampstead Heath was my playground! I decided very early in life what I wanted to do as a career as I had two choices, the first was a chef and the second a funeral director.

I chose the first and went to college and trained in hotel and catering. When I left college I worked in the industry in London – my links to wine were rather tenuous and I learnt very little. But after seven years I was appointed as a junior lecturer at the college I attended, where I taught restaurant operations. The wine lecturer then left and I was given the job to teach wine to the hotel students – so I had to

study for my diploma as I taught!

At college, I moved up the ladder and became a programme director and re-submitted the course details with Gastronomy as a final year subject option. I made sure it included an annual field trip to the vineyards of France and so began my love affair with wine!

At the same time I started a PhD in Champagne, taught at my local college evening classes and made many friends who used to accompany me on weekend trips to the Champagne region. My work also involved wine education in the catering trade in London.

I eventually retired from a successful academic career and moved to Norfolk where my wife and I started a wine



club. We launched Tastebuds Wines Limited in 2002 and I now import wines – specialising in small family run wineries. I also import from Romania, Spain and Portugal and the USA and Niagara Falls are next on my list. Most of my wines are exclusively available to Tastebuds in the UK.

I run wine tastings and, for 2019, I plan to run some short wine appreciation courses, which will be informal and held in the warehouse/shop in Strumpshaw. Wine for birthday presents are also a regular feature of my work as well corporate clients who want wine to gift to their clients.

Running Tastebuds Wines Limited is a dream job – long may I be able to do it! ■

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