

# Festive Tipples and Gifts

BY QUENTIN SADLER



CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR FUN, FRIENDSHIP AND INDULGENCE. RECENTLY I HAVE TASTED A COUPLE OF DRINKS THAT SEEMED SO PERFECT FOR AN INDULGENT CHRISTMAS, THAT I THOUGHT I SHOULD SHARE THEM WITH YOU:

## 2020 Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria Donnafugata

Donnafugata is one of the leading wineries on Sicily, where they make an exciting range of wines. One of their stars, however, comes from vineyards on the island of Pantelleria some 120 km to the south and much nearer the coast of Tunisia than it is Sicily.

This windswept, volcanic island has a tradition of growing Muscat (Moscato in Italian) grapes,

known locally by its Arab name of Zibibbo. It's hot here so the grapes can become intensely ripe with a high sugar content. The winemaker then dries some of the grapes to reduce the water content and so increase the sugar even more.

The resulting wine is astonishingly delicious, complex and powerfully aromatic. It explodes across your senses with aromas of orange blossom, burnt toffee and candied orange peel. While in the mouth it flows across your palate like liquid caramel with swirls of buttery

toffee, rich fig, nuts and apricot jam. It is sweet, but there is also a freshness and mineral purity that balances that richness with some spice and saltiness.

Ben Ryé is one of the world's great desert wines and its lushness makes it a perfect match for Christmas Pudding, Mince Pies or a Panforte, as well as blue cheese.

Ben Ryé and Donnafugata wines are distributed in the UK by Liberty Wines



## Reverend Hubert Winter Gin Liqueur

This amazing liqueur is no less a labour of love than the Ben Ryé. Originally created in 1904 by the Reverend Hubert Bell Lester it has been lovingly recreated by his great-grandson Thomas Lester. He cut his teeth creating fine, artisan limoncello and cherry gin with such success that his aunt dug out the almost forgotten and somewhat incomplete recipe for the Reverend Hubert's Winter Gin Liqueur. Tom enlisted the help of broadcaster and bon viveur Joe Wadsack as co-blender and they set about bringing this long-lost drink back to life.

Together they zested thousands of oranges and lemons, sliced and crushed prodigious quantities of ginger, cloves and other spices. The result is a drink that is warming, satisfying and perfect for winter. It tastes like the very finest mince pie, making you feel Christmassy and happy – it really is a fabulous addition to the Christmas drinks cabinet and would make a superb gift as well.

Reverend Hubert liqueurs are distributed in the UK by [ReverendHubert.com](http://ReverendHubert.com), [craftdrink.co.uk](http://craftdrink.co.uk), [specialtydrinks.com](http://specialtydrinks.com), [venusgic.com](http://venusgic.com)

Talking of gifts, here is another idea of what to give the wine lover in your life this Christmas – even if it's you.



CHEF

## On Champagne – A Tapestry of Tales to Celebrate the Greatest Sparkling Wine of All

This sumptuous book is a sumptuous anthology of writing on the subject of Champagne. Every aspect of this wonderful wine is covered, the geography of the region, the technical side of production, the history of Champagne, the evolution of the styles, how to enjoy it and some well known Champagne lovers reminisce about enjoying Champagne in some surprising situations. The book is beautifully produced and superbly written, with articles by the likes of Oz Clarke, Hugh Johnson, Anne Krebiehl MW, Tom Stevenson, Evelyn Waugh, Stephen Skelton, Serena Sutcliffe, Andrew Jefford and even Evelyn Waugh and Peter Carrington.

On Champagne is an absolute delight of a book that can be devoured from cover to cover like a book of short stories, or dipped into when the fancy takes you.

It is published by the Académie du Vin Library and our readers can get a £5 discount by going to [www.academievinlibrary.com](http://www.academievinlibrary.com) and using the discount code CHEFS.

Quentin Sadler is a wine writer, wine educator and mapmaker.

