Armagnac bites back

Cognac may be the more established brandy, but there is a far greater variety of Armagnac styles, and in this part of brandy country, your money will take you the extra mile

Words
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Photography
Studio 21

Armagnac has suffered unfairly, largely through accidents of geography and history, in having around about six per cent of the market that its cousin, Cognac, has achieved worldwide. But the consumer can benefit by the same accidents to buy high-quality Armagnacs at far lower prices. Armagnac differs, in general, from Cognac in being oilier and sweeter, but there is also a far wider variance between Armagnacs, and this is being picked up on in the UK, with sales up 45 per cent in the last year.

Andrew Maillard (pictured), General Manager of the Lonsdale in Notting Hill, gave us his expert assessment of a fine selection.

The Lonsdale, 48 Lonsdale Road, London W11. 020 7727 4080, www.thelonsdale.co.uk

With thanks to ADI Trading (01629 56190) for providing the Schott Zwiesel tasting glasses

Chateau du Busca 1986

• This has a really good muscovado sugar colour. The nose is quite light and gentle – there's a sweet cherriness that's really pleasant, and mahogany. There's also new wood there, like new g-plan furniture. Unlike any of the others so far, this carries on the wood from the nose to the palate – this is such an individual quality that I'd stock it for that alone. I'd put this with a really nice rice pudding. Putting a cigar with this would be a mistake because you'd lose all the subtlety.

• *£28.99 + VAT, Prime Wines, 01737 358057 or primewines@aol.com*