

The first vines flowered on June 30th. Incredible - a week early!

Bitterly cold winter, cold spring, near-drought, hot and dry easterly winds - they love it, must be just like they were growing in the Mosel.

Now can we order up some lovely soft South West rain to swell up the berries, and a September like last year's to concentrate the flavour.

Easy - really - this vine-growing lark. Anyone could do it.

Getting away from the media, one of my main ambitions in moving to Devon 16 years ago, is proving much harder. One morning last week Juliet was being auditioned for a role in Nigel Slater's Simple Suppers, while I tried to dream up vineyard games for Oz Clarke and comedian Hugh Dennis, as their researcher sounded us out as a venue for the next series of Oz's Big Wine Adventure.

Why is it all BBC producers want to hear that you are not only an organic producer but that you grow grapes bio-dynamically as well! When one asked what made our vineyard philosophy different I told her it was simple: we actually try to make mone...We may not hear from that one again!

Oh and before we leave the Mass Media - don't miss Dragon's Den on July 17. The panel gets to taste a Devon pink fizz - and, here's some inside information, give a bit of a grilling to a Devon vineyard owner well known to many in the Topsham area.

Now there's always something to celebrate isn't there? So, if someone gave you a choice of a bottle of Cornish fizz or a 1999 Charles Heidsieck Rose Champagne. which would you choose? Well, save yourself £20 and choose the Cornish fizz - Camel Valley just won the International Wine Challenge in London - beating the field. With a fizz that's selling at half the price of the Heidsieck - surely a no-brainer. Any time now there's going to be a deluge of English fizz on the shelves, - 4 million bottles in the pipeline according to some estimates...as all the big new plantings come on stream.

Finally a note to our dear new MP and the Coalition,

You want us to suggest laws and rules to abolish.

Well here's one. Get rid of the requirement for vineyards to pay alcohol duty on the first few thousand bottles of wine they produce to let them get at least a start on the road to making a small profit. Level the playing field with cidermakers. You won't lose any revenue to speak of, and you will transform the prospects of the hundreds of new vineyards planting up. We've got where we are subsidy-free, and now is the time to give the start-ups a helping hand. Every time a bottle of Devon wine is sold, about £4 of the £7 goes straight back into the local economy.

Meantime I'd better write out another cheque for a thousand pounds to Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs - and forget about taking on a winemaking assistant!