

The sun's beating down, the vines are all laid out in perfect regiments pruned, tied down and pulsing with sap. A new couple are ready to re-launch the vineyard cafe ( The Deli Shack Cafe opens on April 4 ) with new and creative menus and the trade orders for our wines are pouring in following glowing reviews in the top wine mags of France & Germany.

It's a real struggle to sit down and think about the Budget!  
But here goes.

First to Her Majesty's Ravenous – or is Rapacious – Collectors HMRC.

They certainly don't struggle to sit down and think about how to get more money out of me. Next week I'll be writing out an even fatter monthly cheque – another 11 per bottle, £1.90 in all. £2.50 per bottle of fizz.

And unlike brewers and cidermakers, ( they get 50% relief ) there are absolutely no concessions to encourage English vineyards.

But to be truthful hopes of getting equal treatment were never very high. The vineyard lobby can barely muster a squeak, currently split hopelessly between big City money and the green brigades. One is keenly interested in the social status of having “ my own Champagne” and the other on propagating the myth of global warming.

So, we'll just have to cough up another grand or two in wine duty – and decide whether or not we can pass it on to customers. That's a little tricky when you have a wine at £7.95. £8.06 a bottle doesn't quite cut it does it?

Yearlstone wines certainly shouldn't be hit by the current Demon Drink debate about minimum alcohol pricing anyway. While I hate the idea of the state telling us how much to pay for our pleasures, on the other hand the more we value food and drink, and are prepared to pay for quality, the more I shall like it – and hopefully, the better our profits will be.

But really that's enough on the Budget. It's much more exciting to think about the new menus which Iain and Lisa from the Deli Shack will bring to the cafe, and about all the new ideas for matching local foods and our wines across Devon for the Wine Week ahead. ( See the summer edition of Exmoor Magazine for more on that ).

Most of all I'm looking forward to getting our two year aged fizz back in time for the Wine Week – especially the pink fizz made out of the ripest Pinot Noir ever picked here. Here's to 2012 – and no spring frosts please.

Roger  
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