

# Features

## Realising a passion for wine

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Like many businessmen that become gripped by the grape and follow their passion for wine into the wine business Martin Krajewski is learning that there is something very peculiar about running a successful wine company.

Talking to Martin you get the feeling that creating and running the Blomfield Group, a leading company in executive search, recruitment, contracting and HR consulting and outsourcing, with offices and representation around the world and a sales turnover of £70,000,000 per annum, was challenging, but managing a wine estate and making a profit is even more challenging. However it is also abundantly clear that he is doing something he loves.

Martin was initially approached in 1997, along with a number of other people, to invest in [Chateau de Sours](#), an estate near Saint Emilion, that was and still is renowned for making very good rosé. In fact the Spectator's erstwhile wine correspondent, the late Auberon Waugh, once pronounced that the Chateau de Sours Rosé was "probably the greatest rosé in the world."

In 2002 Martin was asked by Esme Johnstone, then Managing Director, now of [Fromvineyardsdirect.com](#), to join the board of Chateau de Sours.

By 2004 he had acquired all the equity in Chateau de Sours and since then he and his wife, Nicolette, have embarked on an ambitious program which has included the renovation of the chateau and outbuildings providing accommodation as well as the redevelopment of the winery, cellars, bottling facilities and offices. In addition the estate vineyards have been almost doubled to 40 hectares through the purchase of surrounding vineyards and there has been extensive renovation and replanting done.

In 2004 Martin also appointed a young winemaker, [Sebastien Lamothe](#) as technical director with the support of consultants [Xavier Choné](#) and [Florent Dumeau](#). The vineyards are planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc.

So whilst Martin was gradually selling down his interests in the Blomfield Group he was investing substantial amounts of money and time into Chateau de Sours.

The son of a Polish father and a German mother, Martin grew up on a small mixed farm north of London. His father was a Polish cavalry officer that had been captured by the Germans early in the Second World War and spent six years as a prisoner of war. After the war his father decided returning to Soviet held Poland was not an option so he emigrated to England in 1946. He was joined in 1947 by a German girl he had met in Berlin and they were married.

Martin's parents were not drinkers but when the local Polish priest visited for Sunday lunch there was always a bottle of wine on the table. Experiments with homemade elderberry wine and exposure to wining and dining at some of England's and Scotland's greatest golf clubs during two years playing on the British Amateur Golf Tournament circuit ignited Martin's keen interest in wine.

What followed was a steady rise in the ranks of recruitment and executive search when he joined Canadian recruitment company, Drake Appointments, in London in 1976 before starting his own executive search practice in the City specialising in banking and commodities senior recruitment in 1983.

During the 80's and 90's dealing with major US, Far Eastern and European banks meant plenty of travel and entertaining for Martin and so further exposure to wine and increased passion for it. Regular visits were also made to Bordeaux, Burgundy and other French wine regions as well as to Australia.

Bordeaux has always remained a favourite for Martin so he jumped at the opportunity to invest in Chateau de Sours in 1997. After opening an office of his recruitment firm in Sydney in 1989 frequent trips to Australia and, in particular, the Hunter Valley north of Sydney lead to a love affair with all things Australian including the wines. Martin met and got to know legends of the Australian and Hunter wine fraternity like Murray Tyrrell and Brian McGuigan, both larger than life characters and pioneers in exporting Australian wine.

He was enamoured by the classless and can do attitude of the Aussies as well as their ability to combine new technology and tradition in winemaking. "All their wineries seemed to be spotless, neat and tidy and well organised."

So in 2002 he and Esme Johnstone embarked on another wine project with the aim to produce a truly great Australian Shiraz. It was conjured up with Australian winemaker and consultant David Fatches, formerly of Orlando Wyndham, who worked several vintages at Chateau de Sours. They approached John Duval, who had been Chief Winemaker at Penfolds for 17 years and responsible for making Penfolds Grange, one of the world's great wines and arguably Australia's greatest shiraz, to come on board as a consultant. He agreed to.

Thus [Songlines](#) was born and the first wine, the 2004 Songlines Shiraz, made from 40-110 year old vines in McLaren Vale was described in Decanter magazine by UK wine writer Steven Spurrier as “perhaps the Latour of McLaren Vale.” Also in the range are the Bylines Shiraz, which is a bit more approachable and the fruit driven Leylines Shiraz - all from McLaren Vale. Additionally there is a Leylines Hunter Valley Chardonnay which is very much in the modern style with vibrant tropical fruit and hints of integrated French oak, yet quite complex.

“We had a meeting with John Duval as his initial contract came to an end with a view to hopefully renewing it” said Martin. “There was stunned silence when he said he did not want to. He then said he would rather become a shareholder. Of course we said yes.”

In 2009 Songlines Estates plans to make a Grenache-Shiraz-Mourvedre blend from McLaren Vale, a dry Riesling from the Canberra District with its cool continental climate and a Tasmanian Pinot Noir.

As if Martin was not busy enough, his talented winemaker at Chateau de Sours, Sebastien Lamothe, came to him in 2006 saying he had been looking for some time for a suitable vineyard in Saint Emilion to produce Grand Cru wine and had found the perfect small holding. Was Martin interested in joining him? Thus ‘Clos Cantenac’ a 1.7 hectare (4 acre) vineyard planted with 15 – 35 year old Merlot, a smattering of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc complete with a small shed in one corner was purchased. The vineyard is on a gentle slope with deep gravel and clay soils and the shed has now been renovated into a small winery.

The first releases will be small quantities of the 2007 Clos Cantenac Saint-Emilion Grand Cru (90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc) and minute quantities of the 2007 Petit Cantenac Saint-Emilion Grand Cru (70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc).

So how has he got on with the locals as a Brit of Polish and German extraction running a chateau in Bordeaux? Martin says there have been occasional mutterings as they set about renovating and developing the chateau but the local mayor has been extremely helpful and “we have had great support from people like Pierre Lurton, CEO and Managing Director of Chateau d’Yquem and General Manager of Cheval Blanc.”

Martin splits his time between living at Chateau de Sours and London as well as being on the road peddling his wares around the world, and says it is quite different “living above the shop” at Chateau de Sours with visitors all the time, some even dropping in unannounced on Sunday mornings. “But we welcome them all, no matter when they arrive.”

Chateau de Sours has markets in the UK, Ireland, Canada, the Far East and even in Australia. Currently the wines are not available in the United States but this is likely to be the next target in Martin’s sights.

Early this year Krajewski was invited to present his wines to the Opimian Society, Canada's only mail order wine business and a long term customer of Chateau de Sours, at their annual conference being held in South Africa.

As he is want to do he got chatting with a local winemaker, who had a project and a vineyard in mind. So he went and had a look and was very close to getting involved. Upon returning to Bordeaux he decided that he had enough on his plate so reluctantly declined. But there are other plans afoot. Like most driven entrepreneurs there are always plans and projects.

There is also a strong desire for excellence and success.

So what about the wines I have tasted.

#### [2008 Bylines Chardonnay, Hunter Valley, Australia](#)

The 2008 Bylines Chardonnay from the Songlines Estates Hunter Valley vineyard has delightful citrus and melon fruit aromas mingled with fig and nut as well as subtle oak. On the palate is an attractive mixture of fruit and zesty acidity and integrated oak on a long textured finish. This is a good example of the modern Australian approach to Chardonnay showing restraint and sophistication, not always associated with Australia, but plenty of flavour and good complexity.

Available from Private Cellar for £17.95 per bottle.

#### [2005 Songlines Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia](#)

The 2005 Songlines Shiraz made from old vines in McLaren Vale is a swirling heady mass of aromas and flavours such as spice, raisins, black fruits, fruit cake and liquorice that finishes long with firm but not astringent tannins. The oak contributes without dominating this generous, complex wine which will age gracefully for many years.

The 2005 Songlines Shiraz is a serious wine made by one of Australia's best winemakers, John Duval, that combines rich fruit, classic savoury Shiraz characters with a structure that seems to provide just enough restraint to make it all work.

It is not cheap at £49.00 per bottle from Private Cellar but could be destined to be a classic.

Also available from Private Cellar in the Songlines Estate range are:-

[2007 Leylines Shiraz, McLaren Vale @ £12.40 per bottle](#)

[2007 Bylines Shiraz, McLaren Vale @ £23.50 per bottle](#)

[2006 Chateau de Sours Bordeaux Blanc, Bordeaux, France](#)

Pale straw colour introduces restrained citrus, subtle gooseberry and lime aromas whilst on the palate there is zesty citrus from the Semillon (40 %) and grassiness from the Sauvignon Blanc (60%) ending in a crisp finish, making this wine the perfect foil for creamy sauces and partner for delicate fish.

Available from Private Cellar for £10.95.

[2007 Chateau de Sours Bordeaux Rosé, Bordeaux, France](#)

Attractive pale pink and onion skin colour with beguiling rose petal and cherry perfumed aromas. In the mouth are delicate sweet fruit characters and rose water counteracted by a clean acidity and a reasonably long finish. This is why rosés have become popular again.

Available from Private Cellar for £8.46.

Private Cellar will be releasing an en primeur offer for the 2008 Chateau de Sours Rosé shortly so contact them to receive details.

[2006 Chateau de Sours Bordeaux Rouge, Bordeaux, France](#)

Lovely bright purple plum colour complementing dense aromas of maraschino cherry and black fruits, some spice and hints of dark chocolate. Made from 100% Merlot the palate has lively blackberry and boysenberry flavours, chalky tannins with medium body and length. A very cheerful and attractive wine that would work well with most red meat dishes.

Available from Private Cellar for £11.95.

**PS Preliminary Notice**

**The Spectator Wine Club, Private Cellar and Songlines Estates Wine Dinner June 17th**

The Spectator Wine Club, Private Cellar and Songlines Estates are holding a special wine dinner featuring the wines of Songlines Estates and hosted by John Duval, for 17 years winemaker of the legendary Penfolds Grange, one of the world's truly great wines, and now a winemaker and part owner of Songlines Estates.

This fantastic event will be held in London on June 17th this year. Details to follow on the Spectator Wine Club website or please contact [Private Cellar](#) if you wish to be kept informed.

