



FORMERLY A BUYER AT SALUT WINES IN MANCHESTER, BOB HAS BEEN WORKING AT TOP SELECTION FOR TWO MONTHS AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NORTH OF ENGLAND, NORTH WALES AND SCOTLAND

I live in Warrington, Cheshire, and while it only takes me 10 minutes to get to the middle of the countryside, I also have great access to the motorway networks, so in terms of me getting out on the road, it's brilliant.

I worked at Corks Out for a long time where I learned a lot from Ruth [Yates]. When I first joined we were retail-only and then we started along the hybrid route, got the Enomatics and the business started to pivot. Ruth was great in terms of learning about the importance of margin. She really drilled that into me.

We have a growing reputation for California, but we have a truly global line-up. Our Bordeaux and Burgundy range is also very strong and we have some Italian classics

After five years at Salut Wines in Manchester, I felt it was time for a new challenge. I've got many years' experience in independent retail, so I think it stands me in good stead for this role. Taking on a region where we don't have very many accounts at present is just the right thing for me. I'm glad I'm not inheriting someone else's patch and that I can really make my mark on it.

For independents who aren't familiar with our portfolio, when they hear Top Selection their thoughts might go to California. Yes, we do have a growing reputation for our California portfolio, but we have a truly global line-up. Our Bordeaux and Burgundy range is also very strong, and we have some Italian classics, such as Baroli in Piedmont, who make amazing Barolo, and we have Egon Müller from Germany, one of the best fine wine producers in the world. For me it's about getting out there and giving people the opportunity to discover this really exciting portfolio full of wines that offer diversity, value for money and quality.

I am particularly excited to introduce Domaine du Peras to my customers. They over-deliver in terms of value. The white from the La Guerre des Bouchons range is brilliant. It's a Viognier-Chardonnay blend, fresh and clean but with a little bit of texture from the Viognier that gives it a bit more complexity. Just amazingly good value and it sits at around £15 on the shelf.

Another wine that's really impressed me is the Fontanassa Gavi Ca Adua. It's got minerality, a little bit of creaminess; it's really aromatic and complex and it retails at just under £20. Then there's the

Prototype Lodi Zinfandel from Precision Wine Co, which is perfect for indies because it's everything you want from a Californian wine. It's not jammy or sweet, but it has that ripe fruitiness.

My previous trip to California was blighted by pigeons.

I was booked on a wine trip a few years ago and the plane I was due to catch from Manchester was grounded because its engine had been damaged by a flock of pigeons, so I didn't even make it as far as Heathrow.

I've really enjoyed getting out and about to see first-hand all the exciting things the independents are up to and how they are developing their businesses. Getting the wines on to customers' shelves and into their customers' glasses is really important to us. We want to make things easy for people, so our minimum order is pretty reasonable.

Half of my weekends are taken up with things like swimming lessons, tennis and football with my son, who has just turned four. He and my wife support Liverpool and in theory I support Bradford City, but they're rubbish. I really enjoy watching horse racing as well. My father-in-law was a bookmaker so watching it with him is a whole different kettle of fish because he knows what he's talking about.



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