

## Wine Chat with Ahmet 'Ossie' Osman

### At the Wine Rack

with Christopher Reckord  
Thursday, February 27, 2014

A recent dining experience at Strawberry Hill Hotel by the Jamaica Observer Food Awards judges afforded the opportunity to enjoy some new and different wines courtesy of Ahmet 'Ossie' Osman of The Wine Shop located at Southdale Plaza.

My interest was sufficiently piqued...



Ahmet 'Ossie' Osman showing some of his favourite wines from a producer named Domaine Chiroulet. One very interesting wine is called Floc de Gascogne which is a "mistelle," a vin de liqueur (a fortified sweet wine) made of 1/3 of Armagnac and 2/3 of fresh grape juice both from the wine area of Côtes de Gascogne (Armagnac). Both of these must be produced by the same vineyard. Floc de Gascogne is produced in both white and rose varieties.

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Christopher Reckord (CR): How long what you been drinking wine?

Ahmet 'Ossie' Osman (Ossie): Many many years! I fell into it while training in London when I was 20 years old.

CR: How did you get involved in the world of wine?

Ossie: I was always involved with the hospitality business and my initial training was in food and beverage, so it was a natural progression into learning about wine.

My first involvement was working with a French sommelier in a frightfully posh London hotel where I got some excellent insights into the world of wine. I subsequently worked as a sommelier at the London Waldorf hotel managing their cellars and simultaneously attending classes with WSET (Wine and Spirits Education Trust).

I decided to open my own wine business in Jamaica as a consequence of the lack of interesting "personal" wines on the market and that there was a need, especially for the tourism sector, for more variety and quality. At the same time I noticed that the Jamaican dining experience was missing a vital ingredient.

The Wine Shop, together with the wine club, is now positioned, geographically and with its wine portfolio, to both educate and make accessible wine drinking and appreciation.

CR: What is your style of wine?

Ossie: I enjoy a style that is crafted into a finished product with no "frayed edges". A fine wine with a little complexity to it. This, I feel, is more from the old-world countries with their particular style of blends. Having said that, there are moments when I will enjoy a simple varietal wine... it's more to do with the mood I am in.

CR: Do you have any favourite wines?

Ossie: Right now I am in love with the wines of Chiroulet in the Gascogne region of France.

CR: What's in the cooler at home now?

Ossie: It's empty (laughs)... I drank them last night

CR: Which wine country have you visited?

Ossie: I have visited both Italian and French vineyards, not necessarily for the winemaking processes but more to understand the culture of the farmers, the villagers, and their foods, which all go into the pot and translate into the character of the wine they make.

CR: Where else would you like to visit?

Ossie: Turkey. A country full of mystique and intrigue. I would also like to bring their wines here. Although I am Turkish by birth I have not had the pleasure, yet, of experiencing fully this country.

CR: What's new and exciting on your shelves?

Ossie: Some great South African wines. The Cedar Grove wines by Ken Forrester are particularly good for the price, and also the Chiroulet range of course with their refreshingly sweet Gros Menseng wines and their Armagnac range of brandies. That's the other great "Cognac" of France.

CR: What are your thoughts on the local wine scene?

Ossie: The wine scene is growing, slowly, and needs to be more of a part of any food promotion or restaurant activities to make this beverage a part of the landscape. There has been a recent resurgence of interest, but it has fallen back somewhat. We need more accessibility and training within tourism, restaurant and bars to make staff more comfortable working with wine.

The quality and variety have improved tremendously over the years but much more can be done. I hope that I can contribute to this improvement.

The Wine Shop is owned by Ahmet "Ossie" Osman and Sean Gonzales.

**Christopher Reckord - Businessman, Entrepreneur & Wine Enthusiast. Send your questions and comments to [creckord@gmail.com](mailto:creckord@gmail.com). Follow us on twitter: [@Reckord](https://twitter.com/Reckord)**