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LUXX WINE

Cero Maurizio

Saluti,  
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# AIR BUBBLES

Top tipples that still pack a punch on a plane. By *Nina Caplan*

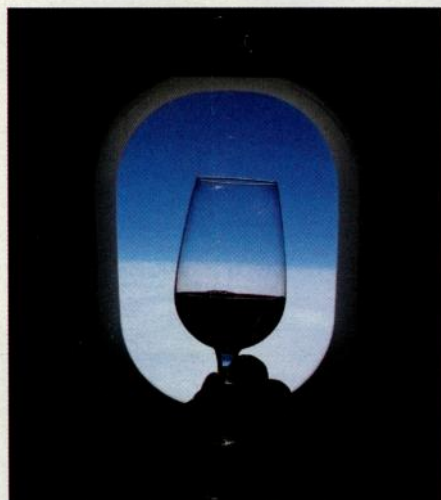
**I** ONCE MET a Michelin-starred chef who had begun to design first-class menus for an airline. Normally unflappable, he was at his wits' end. "Everything changes in the air," he told me. He couldn't get fish skin to crisp or vegetables to keep any crunch. And nothing tasted quite the way he expected. The reduced humidity of a pressurised cabin dries out our palate and nasal passages, and lowers our oxygen levels, which messes with our ability to taste and smell. Sweetness and salt suffer particularly.

"In the air, food and drink taste like they do when we have a cold," says Dr Andrea Burdack-Freitag, an aroma chemist. This is bad news for gourmets – and terrible news for wine lovers.

Airlines have been trying for years to solve the fact that first-class fine wines no longer taste as they did on the ground. They hire wine experts, lay down wines to age and spend fortunes. Qantas is the third-largest wine purchaser in Australia; Emirates has a cellar that holds 3.8 million bottles. Air France has enlisted Paolo Basso, named the world's best sommelier in 2013, to pick wines that work in the air.

And Vistajet, the private jet airline, has launched a Wine in the Air programme to keep its clients well watered at 35,000ft, with a cabin pressurised to 8,000ft.

Private jets don't fly at the same height as commercial jets; they go higher, where the plane burns fuel more efficiently and there's less air traffic. Cabin pressure can be altered slightly –



during a flight from Bordeaux to Burgundy on the 14-seater Global 6000 Nick van der Meer, Vistajet's chief operating officer, constantly adjusted it while a small cluster of wine ambassadors and sommeliers worked on answering the question: what tastes good in the air?

"There are no bad wines that taste better in the air," Basso had told me. "You must choose wines that are very good on the ground. Only those will be drinkable at altitude."

Basso wasn't part of the Vistajet experiment, but he surely would have approved. These wines were very, very good on the ground – although much affected by altitude. Those with a healthy amount of

lees (the tasty gunk that collects during fermentation) held their flavour, we agreed. So did those with oak – although not too much. There were surprises ("I think this wine tastes even better in the air," said Allegra Antinori of her family's Solaia 2005) and disputes. Would muscle-bound Aussies show better than Old World aristocrats? At first they did. Of two top chardonnays Albert Bichot's leafy, aromatic Corton Charlemagne Grand Cru 2015 from Burgundy had a cool salinity that didn't fly well, while the powerful Leeuwin Art Series 2014 became more gentle at altitude.

While Château Lafite Rothschild's 2003 – so autumnal, full of dried figs and apricots – faded in flight, Henschke's 2014 Mount Edelstone Shiraz, which was an incredible swirl of black fruit on the ground, turned aggressive once airborne. Drinking it resembled being punched by a blackberry.

Sparkling wine, like premium travel, is always a treat, but aroma and flavour are mostly in the bubbles, which disappear much faster at altitude. While this can be simply a good excuse to down it at speed, this wasn't necessary with Ca' del Bosco's Annamaria Clementi 2006. In the air this franciacorta, the northern Italian sparkling wine that is to prosecco what private jets are to Ryanair, remained fresh and deliciously full of raspberries.

When our ears popped as the plane rose to 45,000ft, we had a fine excuse to sip some more. I wished my chef chum were with us. His fish skin would still have turned soggy, but these wines would have dulled the pain nicely.

## What to drink when you're mile-high



### QANTAS

Champagne Taittinger Comtes de Champagne 2007  
White Grosset Polish Hill Riesling 2015; Australia  
Red Penfolds St Henri Shiraz 2015; Australia



### SINGAPORE AIRLINES

Champagne Krug 2004  
White Bernkasteler Lay Dr Loosen Riesling Kabinett 2016; Mosel, Germany  
Red Albert Bichot Château Gris Monopole Premier Cru 2015; Nuits-Saint-Georges, Burgundy, France



### EMIRATES

Champagne Dom Pérignon 2009  
White Paul Jaboulet Aîné, Le Chevalier de Sterimberg 2014; Hermitage, France  
Red Grgich Hills Cabernet Sauvignon 2013; Napa Valley, California, USA



### SWISS AIR

Champagne Laurent-Perrier Grand Siècle NV  
White Erich Meier Pinot Gris 2018; Zurich, Switzerland  
Red Château Pichon Baron 2e Cru Classé 2011; Pauillac, Bordeaux, France



### AIR FRANCE

Champagne Krug Grande Cuvée NV  
White Louis Jadot Les Combottes 2015; Pernand-Vergelesses, Burgundy, France  
Red Château Canon 1er Grand Cru Classé 2012; Saint-Émilion, Bordeaux, France



# Win the battle of the inbox

The time-management system that doesn't just teach you how to deal with information overload, but helps you to realise your purpose on Earth. By *Kate Reardon*

I PROBABLY DON'T get any more emails, WhatsApp messages or texts every day than you do. But I probably do get more hysterical about them. The thought of them sitting there, little unexploded hand grenades of pressure, freaks me out. Often I can't look at my inbox because I am so scared of the amount of unsolicited work I will find. For every life-enhancing communication, I get at least 20 that drain emotional energy I simply don't have.

Enter James Harwood. Harwood is a coach from Next Action Associates, a company that specialises in delivering seminars and one-to-one training in the Getting Things Done (GTD) work/life-management system. Created by the American author David Allen, the GTD literature promises to alleviate feelings of being overwhelmed, "instilling focus, clarity and confidence". Which I need. Very much indeed.

Which is why I come to spend two whole days and several follow-up sessions in my dining room being indoctrinated by Harwood. A humane and engaging former actor and teacher of the posture-improving Alexander Technique, he trains me in how to actively and accurately record every single piece of incoming information – email, message, voicemail, Post-it Note, letter – then, vitally, filter it through a simple decision funnel. While you don't have to deal with everything right away, he explains, what you do have to do is decide immediately, there and then, what the next action for each item is.

For example, rather than writing "Mum's birthday" on your to-do list, you put (on your clearly marked list of calls to make): "Call Mum to ask her what she would like to do for her birthday." This is so that, instead of skimming your to-do list endlessly or opening and closing the same email 20 times as you defer doing anything about it, you do the thinking only once.

For those of us who enjoyed getting a new pencil case for school every September – those of us who prefer systems to chaos because everything is put into neat files and folders – the system works, because what you end up with is a single organisational structure encompassing every part of your life, created specifically for you.

Instead of another monstrous, jumbled, unachievable to-do list, you have a system that embraces the mundane and the extraordinary, with precise instructions from someone you trust: you.



Allen developed this model, Harwood explains, because the brain is terrible at remembering. Humans can only pay attention to a limited number of things, so getting stuff out of our heads and on to a list is essential to stop something cognitive psychologists call the rehearsal loop – in which we endlessly toss instructions around in our minds because we are afraid that we are going to forget something.

"Buy pesto, buy pesto, buy pesto..." we say, as we walk out the door and it promptly goes out of our heads. Rather than writing things down to remember them, in Allen's system you write things down so you can forget them in that moment,

trusting that you will see them again when you're ready to deal with them.

I used to wake every morning to my bedroom floor littered with a flurry of Post-it Notes. Scrawled, urgent, middle-of-the-night thoughts – things that were so important to remember that they woke me up – and unintelligible, because my carefully contrived belief system didn't allow me to turn the light on to write. It would wake me up "too much".

Now, thanks to a GTD-prescribed rigorous weekly brain dump, using the cues on the handily supplied flashcards, my subconscious knows that I have "captured" everything, that everything is under control and, thus, I can sleep.

This system is not about working harder and harder to achieve some slight sense of control. GTD sends a genuinely helpful email newsletter with prompts such as: "Boxer, the horse from George Orwell's classic text *Animal Farm* had one answer to adversity: 'The solution, as I see it, is to work harder.' In the end, the pigs in charge of the farm reward Boxer's hard work and heroic bravery by sending him to the glue factory."

To enormously oversimplify it, the GTD method teaches that there are five steps to regaining control of your life: capture, clarify, organise, reflect and engage. Repeatedly asking, "What's the next action?" always moves you forward, and that sense of momentum is intoxicating. While the system may seem to be primarily designed to organise workflow

*"Everything is under control. Thus, I can sleep"*

and so beat your inbox into submission, GTD coaching also encourages you to reach into the deepest recesses of your soul to define your purpose. Harwood asks me to define goals that could be achieved in one to two years, to outline a vision that could be achieved in two to five years, and to write down my purpose and principles, which he helpfully characterises as: "Why are you on Earth?"

This, he explains, is so that everything can be considered in the round. If you're spending time this week on things that don't move you towards your goals and visions, he says, it's up to you to do something about it. Big stuff, but you're in safe hands. Your to-do list is the unavoidable proof of the way you are spending, as the poet Mary Oliver described it, "your one wild and precious life", so make it a good one. This system forces you to set your intention.

"The great secret about goals and visions," Allen says, "is not the future they describe, but the change in the present they engender."

I still have a lot on my to-do, but the anxiety has melted away (as long as I keep up with the system). I have a clearer idea of what I want out of life, I sleep better and I get the almost mystical pleasure of having an empty inbox several times a week. (In Microsoft Outlook, when you get there, there's a jaunty picture of a balloon, BTW.)

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