



IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, OR SHALL WE SAY FIRST SIP! -GARGI KOTHARI



Being a complete novice (I wasn't even a wine drinker) when I started out in 2012, my introduction to wine was in the WSET classroom. Coming from a totally different field, with a background in research, advertising and event planning, I was looking for an offbeat career. That one day of WSET Level 1 made me fall in love with wine and I knew I had found my calling. What intrigued me were the depth and the vastness of the subject that included not just technical knowledge about wine but also the history, culture, geography and the people behind wine. You could spend your lifetime exploring wine and yet there will be something new for you to discover!

After completing my Level 2, I worked for 3 years with Wine Park – one of India's foremost importers of fine wines. I learnt a great deal about the wine business in India, about wines from around the world and about sales & marketing of wine. I also completed my Level 3 and thereafter took over the role of a Wine Trainer for the company.

Wanting to create something of my own, I moved on from the job to start my own company in 2016 and named it Magic Cellars, owing to all the magic wine has brought into my life! Recognising the need gap in the Indian market w.r.t to wine education and experiences, I wanted to create a community and conversation around wine, with a voice and a vibe that was informal yet informative. I've been curating wine experiences like wine tastings, wine dinners and wine trails since I started out and have managed to build one of the foremost wine communities in India with the support of wine loving consumers, wine importers, Indian wineries and industry seniors and peers. Yes! It takes a village!



My work also took me on various wine adventures around the world! In 2017, I had the chance to visit a wine region outside of India for the first time! I visited the world renowned region of Margaret River in Western Australia that is famous for its Chardonnays and Cabernet Sauvignons. It was here that I saw a beautiful harmony between the New & Old World of wines, both philosophies and styles coming together to produce world class, terroir driven wines.



My next wine adventure took me to Germany, the mecca of Riesling – my absolute favourite white grape! Travelling to Nahe, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Rheingau & Pfalz gave me a deep understanding of the Riesling grape and its terroir specific expressions. Meeting with quality producers & family owned wineries and learning first hand from wine makers ensured a holistic learning of how Riesling wines are crafted in Germany. During this wine trail of 10 days, I tasted over 250 Rieslings, visited 21 wineries, walked the slopes of the world famous Scharzhofberg vineyard and tasted the oldest wine I've ever had – a 1975 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese that was so young & lively even at 42 years!

More wine adventures came along in 2019 with a visit to Tuscany, Piedmont & Franciacorta. This is where I fell in love with wine all over again! Ten days of wine tasting took me through Chianti, Montalcino & Bolgheri and then up north to Barolo & Barbaresco and then east to Franciacorta, crossing paths with passionate winemakers who crafted wines that spoke of the land. Tasting over 200 different wines from top, family owned estates (I visited 23 wineries), made for one of the most enriching experiences, creating a lifetime of learning & memories that I'm re-living even today.



Since the Covid pandemic, I've been pursuing my love for wine virtually. I started with Virtual Vine, an intensely geeky webinar series, on topics ranging from basics to deep diving into specific regions. I've also been curating & hosting virtual wine tastings, wine webinars & designing wine gifts for corporate & individual clients. I've also been creating easy to understand wine content for my Instagram, a curated monthly wine selection called #Handpicked-ByGargi and doing customized wine buying for the ever-growing Magic Cellars wine-loving community.