

# Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit 2020

Day 1, Session 2 featuring Gus Gluck, GB Wine Shippers

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## Session highlights and takeaways

- Authentically leading from the front can make all the difference.
- The customer is a lot more savvy now following lockdown. What can you do in order to get them comfortable paying on-trade prices again.
- Support those businesses who put their staff first during lockdown, wherever you can.

## Full Session Transcript

**Gus Gluck** [00:00:00] When you're an employee, like there's only so much work you can put in. There's only so much like vibe and energy you can put in. But when you lead from the front. It's just it's like it means everything.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:00:19] The Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit was recorded in September 2020, with the world recovering from the global pandemic and the hospitality sector still particularly challenged. Allow me Interpreting Wine founder Lawrence Francis to be your guide to this series of seven episodes featuring some of the UK's most respected voices discussing the impacts of the pandemic on food, wine, cocktails, bars, retail and events. Listen, share ideas and reconnect during this four day virtual summit held across web, podcast and social media. Please do share content and ideas using the hashtag #iwsummit and encourage anyone who might be interested to sign up at [www.interpretingwine.com/summit](http://www.interpretingwine.com/summit).

**Lawrence Francis** [00:01:20] Welcome to Day One, Session Two of the Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit 2020. We continue with wine and pay a visit to Quality Wines Farringdon to meet Gus Gluck. Possibly my favourite place to drink wine in London, not least down to Gus's warm welcome, wine selection and intimate atmosphere. He led innovation in response to COVID 19 and was the first person I saw using taster sizes for Instagram live tastings. Gus reflects on the days and weeks before lockdown when the writing was increasingly on the wall about the severity of COVID. Before he brings us up to date and discusses how Quality Wines has adapted and continues to operate without losing its soul. He talks about the challenge of converting former retail customers back to eating in and paying the premium for service. Gus gives a high-level review of

innovation in the sector during lockdown, discussing the can do attitude he saw and continues to see. The impacts of lockdown on mental health at all levels in the industry in the wake of those businesses who closed their doors for good this year. We discussed the idea of no shows, post COVID and the unseen cost of rent before looking ahead for his new business, G.B. Wine Shippers and the clients he serves. Enjoy.

**Gus Gluck** [00:03:05] Hello, my name is Gus Gluck and we are current in a place called Quality Wines Farringdon, which I founded in 2018. But my experience started off quite a few many years ago I've done three vintages across the globe and have worked in wine bars since I kind of started work. So it's really my expertise. I now have a wine importing business called G.B. Wine Shippers, which we are drinking one of the wines that I import from Chablis, from Yannick Cadiou. But yes, we are currently in somewhere called Quality Wines Farringdon, which is my definitive work up until this point in which I was working when COVID struck.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:03:47] As it tends to happen a lot. You know, we were sort of talking before the mic came on about some of the things that stood out for me about you really in the lockdown. So, yeah, I guess really. Maybe take us a bit more inside of like what was that like being primarily in a service environment? And yeah, those that have not been there, maybe just describe a little bit. Yeah, that charm and the idea of the of the venue as well.

**Gus Gluck** [00:04:16] So Quality Wines Farringdon is a magical little place because I was tasked with turning it into the best wine bar in London, which I still think it to this day under Chris and Joey and Nick. It is one of those places which was very socially undistanced. It was a small place where people would come in and be jammed up against each other. People would share wine, hug each other. So my customers end up in relationships together. My customers are extremely good friends with each other. They've gone to each other's weddings. It was a very community led place, which it still is. But obviously in this new world, it is no longer as touchy feely because that's basically what I am. But we can kind of start at the beginning, which is not so much in March when the lockdown hit, but was probably a little bit before, which was with a lot of hospitality businesses they started to feel a lot of pain around the late Jan Feb time where suddenly footfall was starting to dry up massively.

**Gus Gluck** [00:05:26] People stopped going out. They were getting a bit more worried. And us personally as team members, we started to get a bit more concerned with the potential ramifications of that. So I'm not sure the exact date, but it was the Saturday before lockdown for us was almost a last hurrah of what it used to be. But it was mostly filled with regulars. Quality Wines it's always been somewhere where it has almost 60 to 80 percent regulars every night. It's one of those wine bars. It's not like a come in, come out destination. Even though it became a destination, it was supposed to be always a community place. But if we go back to the start, it was already to slow. And I think a lot of businesses got quite slow in that kind of February time.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:06:13] But presumably, though, as you say, that mix of regulars versus non regulars, for want of a better word, I guess there was there was some cushion there, though, right? It was like people were willing to take what risk there was, what fear they felt they wanted to support you.

**Gus Gluck** [00:06:34] Like, we had a great reputation that helped us weather that kind of January, February time of when customers started to drop off somewhat. And because we were such a small business and we'd always worked it where it was so small that we all did everything. So Nick, who's the extremely talented and amazing chef here. Like when he was on holiday, I'd be cooking because in a weird way, it was nicer for the customers to see me cooking than like another chef because they felt like they can it's still it's still family. It's a family restaurant with no one who's related to each other. Yeah, we were lucky that we or they are because I'm no longer with them. I support them from the sidelines, selling them wine, but lucky at that point that we had such a good reputation to keep us going during that tough period.

**Gus Gluck** [00:07:36] But then obviously that Monday was the disaster really week and that was the first of lockdown. For us here it was quite tough week because Quality Wines is part of a group which is Woodhead restaurant group and there's some amazing restaurants, part of it including the Quality Chophouse next door. But Clipstone, Portland and Emelia. And on that Monday, Tuesday, we just like everyone in the business, we assumed that the worst had happened and that there was no government help for this situation. So the majority people thought that they were just redundant overnight. And some people were told by their companies not here, but they were told by other hospitality companies that they were made redundant. So that was that was probably the toughest week I think. I turned up to work and we obviously weren't going to do nights, but I came to turn up to start selling wine. So we started moving on from the other restaurants, start selling. And then on that Friday, I think that was when the furlough announcement came in to support hospitality. I'll be unequivocally clear and honest during that period, that I think it was at least out of those four days, at least two or three of those mornings I'd wake up and just burst into tears in the shower. I just thought every friend like all my friends and colleagues, have all lost their jobs. It wasn't for me so much, but it was far more thinking that there's just too many talented people in this business. And people do it for the love of it, but it just can't end like this.

**Gus Gluck** [00:09:16] But thankfully, we had furlough scheme come in, even though it wasn't already explained. And that was when the kind of the start of the business turning into something different happened. So because there was obviously no service it was retail took off. It went up by 300 percent of what it was. And also, we kind of changed how this was. So we moved out all the tables and chairs. I was just like booze everywhere. And there there was stacks of pasta and there was literally booze everywhere. My personal task in that time was to make sure that we were selling a lot of wine. Firstly, because for me at that point, even though it was never, ever said to me, but I just thought at least every bottle sold could be another hour of wage that I'm making for someone else. And that's for every bit sold as it's helping the company, like

the owners of the company are personal friend and they've been like, absolutely critical for my career. And I really felt that this was a period to be counted and not to shy away from these moments.

**Gus Gluck** [00:10:39] But it wasn't just that though, we weren't just retailing, but also my job was also to cook staff food for everyone. It's very important to make sure everyone eats and do some cleaning, obviously, but also to keep up the communication with our really long list of regulars and locals and people who are vulnerable, both with making sure they had wine and food. But if they needed something dropped off that they could, that making sure they are okay. Because a lot of them are American or Australian and they're very far from home. So that was always quite a concern, was these people have paid my wage for the past two years. I'm not going to just sit at home and not think about them. But then the next stage was then thinking, okay, people are going to be drinking a lot of wine. But what wine will they be drinking? I need to keep up communication of that so started, which you've seen before, the virtual kind of tastings I did on Instagram Live. I did the blind wine tastings. I had wine producers, tried to basically keep up positivity during that time with those kind of projects, which were very, very funny and good fun, but also just to remind people that that drinking is not always supposed to be serious, that it is supposed to be quite fun and that it should be whimsical and that even with wine, it's not something just to be like stared at and kind of fetishised. It is also truly like a product that gets you a bit tipsy and hopefully helps you engage with someone you wouldn't normally engage with. So it was for me, it was the nicest thing when people were like flirting with each other over Instagram chat on these on these silly blind wine tastings.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:12:33] But I gotta say, though, I mean, you know, I suspected as much that you'd be sort of too modest to mention it. But I told you outside, I mean, for me, you were the first account, the first person I saw, you know, that really, I think made an important distinction between, OK, we're going to be going out to an event where there's going to be wines poured and they can each pour us, you know, a serving portion. Versus hold on, we're gonna be a home now, and if we're on a on a Wednesday night Instagram Live or a zoom or whatever the channel, we don't necessarily want to be opening like six 750ml bottles and you decanted your wines into smaller bottles. And I think there was a local geographical restriction because they had to get to people but hat's off to you, you were the first one, I saw that of actually realised we need to do this slight differently. And then also beyond that, it was just that element of the blind tasting and learn with you. And there was actually then for me, there was there was a reason, as well as the actual content there was an additional reason to tune in live. The guesses started coming in through through the chat, sometimes a big wide of the mark.

**Gus Gluck** [00:13:55] It didn't really matter, it was just more about the kind of like joy of it. I mean my biggest worry is I wake up one day and then no one is drinking wine again that they're all just drinking hard seltzers and that no one actually cares about it when it's like, it's like a way to travel, it's I guess a moment in time trapped in in grape juice. It's kind of something that's fundamentally for me amazing and romantic and like I never

want to be I don't want to look back at myself and say that in hard times I wasn't helping push that and make sure that people were still drinking wine and being passionate about it, because that's all I can. Like, if you've got a platform, you've got to use it, just like you have to make sure people are still really interested in the wine and just love it as much as we do. So that was the other side of it is to keep up that communication.

**Gus Gluck** [00:14:49] Which was funny for me because I never made it much more if I never talked to so many what would be considered like wine influencers over that period of time just because they were all being so nice, like to me personally and also just because just to bounce ideas off them. So that was really like great, just because a lot of people who, let's say, have big Instagram accounts on wine, people think of them as some sort of like some sort of terrible narcissists who are doing it for the money when really most of them actually just do it and don't really make any money at all. They literally get sometimes a free bottle here and there, but they do it mostly because they truly just care. So that for me was a really important distinction to to grow, to grow with during that time. But yeah, they were fun tastings.

**Gus Gluck** [00:15:38] So then so me personally, I planned to start importing wine anyway with my business partner, Richard Bray, who's a fantastic winemaker and wine writer. And so for me, that had to quicken the pace because what became quite apparent early on was that I firstly couldn't do two jobs at the same time. I wanted to try and do something in the worst possible time ever, which is COVID, and trying to do logistics in a time when everyone else is doing it. But it was an important time, I mean, for me. A lot of my friends across the globe are people who make wine or grow grapes. And my ultimate aim has always been, I think in life, to always know that I represent them. So I've always represented them by selling them at a wine bar or a wine shop. And now I get to each day actually talk to them about how best we can position their wines or how best that or like what I'm doing to do with their wines or see how they can be sold. Some of them are not easy to sell. They're like they're not simple or even something like that we're drinking now is Chablis. So it's so competitive. There's probably one hundred and forty producers in Chablis. And this is a guy who's in his late 40s who's this is his first vintage. And it's just like it's not an easy sell, but I have to communicate his story, his plot of land and that the wines taste really nice. So that was for me, my own personal journey and I think for everyone at the moment, it's like they can stick to their job and make sure they get their wage, which I would recommend to almost everyone. I would not do what I did and try and start something too risky where you have to try and pay yourself. But also, like if you're willing to deal with the kind of mental strain of it, then it's like a good idea to do. It all depends on if you're willing to go through those sorts of mental struggles of starting something. But thankfully, the business is actually technically a very family business, wine in general and the amount people who have been so supportive, people that I'm technically in competition with has been utterly astounding and generous and lovely. So it makes it gives me faith for the future really, of wine in general, that people aren't being too competitive about it. It will always have like a future where people, no matter who they are and what they are, as had been brought up, even if they really difficult people who are like technically slight

psychopaths, some of them, wine, helps them to engage with others and it creates a bond between you and them. So that's been really joyful, actually.

**Gus Gluck** [00:18:27] But also, it's not just been me as well who's had quite big transitions as well. It's just this business has had such a transition during then I'd be remiss to not talk about Nick and the work he was doing when he wasn't working. So because Quality Wines didn't open again until June, but he was cooking for the NHS like every week making hundreds of meals for an organisation called deliberate. And we were taking food to the local homeless shelters each each Sunday as well. So I thought it would be worth mentioning that.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:19:07] I presume this was kind of so early, I guess, into the pandemic that a lot of those services of those people were depending on had gone, by the way.

**Gus Gluck** [00:19:17] Yes. We were even talking to local churches as well to make sure they had food and stuff. And it's just one of those things where if you truly basically, but if you go into hospitality, you're doing it for two things you do it for the money because there's nothing else you can do, because you maybe have committed crimes or not even legal crimes. It's a place which doesn't judge you on your before. It just judges you on your ethic of that day or you do it only purely for the love of it. And those two are interchangeable. They're very easily interchangeable those two things. And the people who truly love it, they really care about because they want people to be able to enjoy themselves. And they and they just want people to eat. And Nick has that in him. And a lot of chefs have that in them. And a lot of chefs took part in these in these projects. And it shows to me that just again, how many amazing people there are in the business who really care. And it wasn't just even just us. Like the Whisky Exchange, Dawn (Davies MW) and people like that who did a big old fundraiser, which I actually bought some whisky from it. And it's like small fry but they're big things, they're statements of intent. In this business no-one makes loads of money. But it was lovely to see people who didn't have loads of money trying to give whatever they had or just to keep it going.

**Gus Gluck** [00:20:46] But what's so interesting now is to see what Quality Wines was and now is, which is people wear masks and half the tables. It's just it's a very different sort of business. It's very different sort of dining experience, I think, for anyone. But I think even being here for me, the soul's not gone. And I think that's a really important thing to say, is that truly great places, I think, always like keep their soul. Even if things change, there are still restaurants you go to which are like terrible now. But they've got history or great times had there. They still have that spark. So and what's great for them is the team's stronger than with with me because I was I was very good at what I did, but not as good as they are now because they've been through it. They've been through a really tough time together. And that kind of stuff helps focus you so much more.

**Gus Gluck** [00:21:41] But yeah like, well, and I'll don't know what to say really about it. But with me, with the new business, and I have this weird brain where I flip flop between

things so I'm really sorry about that. The projects I'm working on with like some of my clients is to make sure they have, that they're not just buying wine, but seeing what they need for their future. So even helping them make and label wine so that people don't actually know how much they cost in the first place so they can try and make back some margin. there's this hilarious thing with restauranting, which everyone's afraid to talk about, which is making money. That it's a sad thing to try and make money. And I felt ashamed. My whole career, I've always felt like things have been too expensive for what they are. But that's not defined by me. That's defined by the economy and bloody rent like. The fact is that I'm so small fry. And so I think no one should ever be ashamed of trying to make their business work and making margin. So I'm trying to find products for them that work and they can make some margin on to help them succeed. And that is for me a really exciting kind of kind of next step really for a lot of businesses is to how do they move forward, because what's interesting is how many businesses have moved to retail. Now they move back to restauranting. They have to get people to pay back what they were being charged in a restaurant before. But now a lot of customers know how much wines are retail, but they don't want to buy those wines in a restaurant because they're like, oh, but that costs me £25 retail. Why is it now £70? And they feel very affronted. So if you like, take away that conversation, it makes it so much easier for them because it's so it's it's like it was always quite tiresome before to explain to people how much it costs to put on a show because a restaurant service is a show. It's not a it's not like a charity and it's not a it's not just cooking at home. It's it's like you're going for a show. And again, the best people at it treat it like a show that it's a stage. And as such, like you need to pay for what it's worth to pay for the enjoyment of the soul of the fun of it. So I'm just hoping to help my clients. Make it simpler with, with their clients. Because, yeah, that's been a big change.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:24:13] Yeah, yeah. It's it's an interesting one, isn't it? Because I mean, I've been watching and seeing a lot of restaurants suddenly then they're sitting on all this wine, which through April and May, they didn't have an outlet for, you know, a physical outlet like in the old times and you would say innovation and survival together, and pragmatism means let's what do we got to sell? You know, what are we sitting on that we can actually sell. I mean, it makes me makes me kind of sad maybe is not the right word, but it just it's it's almost like that that situation has come about by the innovation and just the kind of survival attitude. And it's like it's a shame that they're then potentially being punished for that further down the line by the kind of savvy customers who remembers the prices they were they were paying to have it at home.

**Gus Gluck** [00:25:22] I know it's a funny thing, isn't it? Because, um, and we all do it. We all complain about price and for numerous things across our daily lives. And it's always such a tough thing. But if anyone is actually listening who is not in hospitality and never has been into it, I can utterly promise you that no one I really know makes that much money. And that is even the people who have big restaurant sites. I'm not talking about the really big boys, but they they've done it ever since day one because they love it and they wanted to do it and a little bit for everyone's ego, because you know what like is I'm very happy to admit that I have got a medium to large size ego because I have to do that to perform and to be on top of my game. But no one's doing it

because they're out to stiff anyone or to make loads of money. Look the taxman makes far more than than anyone that like no matter what I sell to one of my customers, which is Quality Wines now for a bottle of wine, £2.23 is just duty and then twenty percent VAT. So for something that so it's just it costs are huge massive and their costs are massive and it just like I want everyone to know do this just because they truly want to do it, they, they love it and they're not going into it for a big payday. They're going into it because it's what drives them everyday. And and that's why I'm so proud to be part of the business because. And well actually now I'm really not, I'm outside. I feel I feel I feel like a bit sad. I miss it still. And I did a service on Monday and after, I forgot how lovely this was to to like serve customers. But now I find it weird because like. Oh, like it's not my place. So it's what Quality always felt a bit like my place and it always will remain that.

**Gus Gluck** [00:27:25] But yeah, it'll be interesting to see if we can move over and move around from this kind of stage of people being very concerned on the price of of something from retail to to being in a restaurant. But that might change by people not eating out as much. So instead, when they do go out, they will spend the money on that and not feel upset with it. They just won't be going out as much, they'll be drinking more at home, which looks like more more than likely.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:27:58] One of the things that I'm keen to sort of draw out as well from the guests, right the way across the series is that idea of innovation. You know, the idea of, as we've just covered, you know, kind of turning on a dime and and, you know, want to purposely keep it fairly broad. But I'm just curious, you know, are there are there any or were there any innovations that kind of surprised you that you that you kind of saw a brand or saw a restaurant doing? I mean, we obviously can't name check all of them. But I'm just wondering. Yeah. Were there some that really kind of stood out for you?

**Gus Gluck** [00:28:42] Well, for me, there were numerous ones that stood out for so many different reasons. So some like Nick at the Draper's Arms because he backed his staff. So he was always try to make sure his staff got paid. Which for me, is the most important thing, that he saw his team as being the most important thing. So massive shout out. Just just for the ability to empathise because empathy is the biggest skill you have in a restauranting. And I think he was a great example of that. But obviously, people like Top Cuvee I mean, obviously have done such a great job with creating really good vibes, which is was so important in that time of like creating energy and not just like, hey, we sell stuff and it's a disaster being like, no, this is let's be honest, life is tough, but let's still have fun, which I think it was so important. I mean, my old businesses at Vinoteca did such a great job from being able to actually use Deliveroo as a platform. I don't think it's a good platform but they actually used it really well. But also that one of their owners, they've got five sites, was out driving like meals and wine to people. I mean, it showed that he really cared. And that they care about their customers and their business and their staff. They were they were in the trenches. So leading from the front was one of them. One of the major things. But even with, like here and lots of other places was people decided to almost take not so much a pay cut, everyone's now



taken a pay cut. If again, if you're not in hospitality, almost everyone in hospitality has taken a pay cut taking a job like that, their job roles have changed, like people who had head positions now have to do a lot more stuff. And if they and a massive shout out goes to all of those people who are very willing to do all the crap jobs just because they knew they had to.

**Gus Gluck** [00:30:38] Also, there's a there's a great chef called Anna Tobias and like big respect, to people like her who were cooking at home for the NHS in her home kitchen, which is tiny, like cooking hundreds of meals. I mean, that kind of stuff is like absolutely astoundingly amazing. There was obviously, 67 Pall Mall did a great job on their online tastings and deserve a lot of credit for taking the idea of what I do think was the first small scale tastings, as in like 100ml. But they they took that sort of idea. And if they are first, I'm very sorry. And you deserve all the credit they took that on board to such a great scale and got such great winemakers and guests and stuff. And they really kind of they created like a greatest hits album of wine producers. And in doing so, they they can look back on this stage with real pride. But it's not just it, but also loads of wine producers. So like Blackbook and stuff who were doing like great online tastings, but also delivering, home delivering to people all the time to also wine importers who are coming up with ideas to keep their customers happy like Nick at Modal (Wines), who is obviously such a lovely guy, but also lots of businesses like across the country who try to keep staff on for as long as possible or who've weathered this storm. It's been look, I mean, people like to say how amazing it's been. How I see it is, is there's no other way. Like, it's like think about having your own business is you don't have a boss, but your boss is if you fail, there's nothing left. So their boss was breathing down their neck harder than ever these past few months.

**Gus Gluck** [00:32:31] And they still are. And the mental anguish it's caused, loads of people from top down has been absolutely massive. But there are hopefully some people listening who have businesses who were literally on the front lines like even Paola and Mike at Vindinista. They were on the floor the whole time during this time they're the owners those are the kind of people who deserve almost all the credit because when you an employee like there's only so much work you can put in and there's only so much like a vibe and energy you can put in, but when you lead from the front, it's just it's like it means everything. Like it helps everyone feel better. I mean, even with here, like Dan, one of our owners was here every single day. His wife was here every single day working with us. You know, they didn't need to because when it was really shit, we had the greatest sales force in the world. They've got a shop manager called Alberto, who is literally one of the greatest salesmen I've ever seen. And Richard, the butcher can sell anything.

**Gus Gluck** [00:33:36] So it was very, very lucky. So for me, the innovation is not so much on the tips and tricks and ideas, it's far more in the heads of people having to mentally realise that their life has changed now for potentially a long time. Like if you had shares in something that was a hospitality business, they're now worth not much because all the growth they have. It's gone. So it was the mental capacity to say, okay, I've got to start again mentally. And that is the well, it's to quote frozen. Like letting it go

is is the hardest thing to do. But it's a fundamental thing to do. Like, you can't go back in time. And as such, the big thing now is to make sure amazing people are being able to be offered jobs and get into and get into the business. Because it's now an obligation of all business owners now to make jobs because no one is going to help them. I mean, the government might give them a leg up somehow, but they have to keep on pushing to try and give jobs.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:34:48] And, yeah, I totally echo that. I think it's I think it's it's actually refreshing that the innovation is like what's between the ears basically, and how people are thinking and how and how they're acting. I think that's what's actually really refreshing because yeah, you can you know, you can buy apps or you can, you can buy anything. You can get your word out there on many different platforms. But the actual being there, as you say, with the wine in your hand behind the till, rolling up your sleeves. You can buy that. You can't outsource that. That's that's on you. And it's it's obvious to those around you. And I'm guessing especially somewhere like this. But in so many venues that that just went so much further than many other gestures, didn't it?

**Gus Gluck** [00:35:42] Well, also, it was kind of interesting to see people who had a way like who had already found the bite last year quite tough, who would basically had basically just decided that they just couldn't do it. Which is fair enough, really. And no-one should feel bad about doing that by saying, you know what, this is too tough for me. I can't do this. But like, if it's a case of survival, people have to dig in mentally very, very deep. I mean, like I point out, I'd be the first one to talk about my mental anguish, my own mental health over this period. But it's been so up and down that it's unbelievable and it stabilised massively, which is fantastic. But it's so important to realise that in hospitality especially it was only last year people started or maybe a year before people started coming to terms with mental health first aiders and stuff. And that whole concept of mental health was becoming much more prevalent in the business. So I think ideally this sort of time is good to grow from that because ideally the really terrible people who've given people such mental anguish have not survived as well as they have in this time because they've had to work very hard and they may not be into working that hard, but it's a real time for growth on that to make sure that what happens now is that companies, businesses make sure that staff have as nice a working environment as possible because everyone's getting paid less plus less customers. So it has to be assured that with less money comes less stress. And it's sad because owners will have to shoulder some of that burden. And it's just life. And it comes back for around that margin being it being a being like being not afraid to make people pay for what you need to pay to meet your budget. Your budget is your budget. No one else knows it. And but you need to make money and live and survive and ideally be able to have children or house one day, because that would be quite nice.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:37:48] This tends to happen. We know our minds kind of go to the same places. I was absolutely thinking back to to that margin question. You you know, you brought it up in a in a wine context in terms of the the advice that you were giving there. I mean, again, I want to try to amplify and get things out there. Has that led into potentially other suggestions and other areas. I mean, the area that kind of came to

mind and I've been following the conversation a lot, has been the element of no shows because I because I'm guessing that is it's no margin. Yeah, it's massive. That's going to be, you know, huge. It's like a cancer, isn't it? It's I think it just was sits there and and draws. I don't know that that that that there is a universally agreed upon silver bullet.

**Gus Gluck** [00:38:48] Well it's interesting to talk someone like um like Alexis Noble at Wander. Who's got a very, very strong cancellation policy. She's got a lot of stick from especially with customers, but it actually works. That's the funniest thing. It's like people don't no-show people don't no-show as much or they don't like they they they come and they make the intention because it's almost like the intention is pointless if you don't show up. So I intend to buy this. I intend to do that. It's an absolute it's like a booking is actually pointless like this. Everything is pointless if it's just an intention. You've got to follow through. So I think the only way to do it is by being as strong as possible and saying, this is it. And if someone gets upset about it, it's just like this is a new world. But everyone has to be on the same page. Every single business has to do the exact same thing, because otherwise people will start being like, well, this place doesn't do this or doesn't. So might, might, might, you might believe, look, Alexis has done the right thing in making sure that it's as strong as possible. Which is interesting. She has less budgetary constraint than most people as she works alone as a chef. So it's really an unusual and interesting example. Someone who's made it work during this time.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:40:10] Is that is that brought that was brought in during this time and is now staying?

**Gus Gluck** [00:40:16] I think so. Yes. And I'd never want to comment on like like Alexis's future, because firstly she is she can talk for herself and she's an absolute machine like she's unbelievable. But I think just as seeing as an example, it's just really tough seeing other friends businesses go through such tough times with no shows. And it's it will mean, some people won't turn up, but it's like you can't go into a service thinking 10% won't show up then you just have to change the prices for everyone. Because just to pay for the staff is going to be absolutely massive. I mean, most customers, I think if they don't turn up, that they're maybe costing someone a job that is literally what they're doing. Not them identically. But if one table comes in a four who don't come and they should be spending 60 pounds. That is that is at least two staff members wage for the night. I think it's got to be as strong as possible.

**Gus Gluck** [00:41:24] In hospitality sometimes. I think we've got this adage especially that the customer is always right. I think maybe that time has gone. That you have to fall back on this thing of trying to bend over backwards for with everyone, even if they don't love you. It's like being an abusive relationship where someone is constantly abusing and you come back and you come back. And I think the time is to say this is being very open and honest and saying this is why we have this policy and being very strong on giving that example. If the customer says that's ridiculous then that is completely fine for them to believe that way. But it's also hopefully with the customers you do you have will completely understand why you're doing it because they want you to have a job. They have a sense of purpose, and they want you to have a future. So I really firmly believe

that. And I could also be completely, completely wrong. This is just my opinion. But it just seems like an example, Wander have done a good job of making sure no-shows haven't comeback. It's a contract, isn't it? Like going out to eat if you're going someone's home. What do you think or not. And it's like it's funny when he reviews the moment and I love reading reviews over on Google of like people's businesses and stuff. People have been really tough on businesses for not social distancing when it's still a contract of having guests in your house, when it's not always up to the business to control people. And and normally people who write the reviews are people are "it's not like personal. I'm just really just trying to help them out" Guess what? It's so personal, like everything said is so personal. And it's like if like you can like feedback is always really important but remember that this is like this is someone's entire life and it may not seem like it, but it is their entire life. Just be nice, empathise. Empathy is the most important quality always is. That's why Joey is the bloody best in the business. I'm not joking. Joey, who took over from me, is one of the absolute gems of the business. I was so lucky to work alongside him when he was at the Chophouse. He's a very gifted guy. And very modest, which is very rare sometimes in our business.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:43:45] It's very interesting, though. I mean, kind of tying back in with your earlier analogy of service and hospitality, and the theatre. So it's always struck me as there are so many services that we pay for that are entertainment related. Would you book a theatre ticket and then expect to not have to pay anything and then just be able to pay for a hotel room? football game. Yeah, for a flight. Yeah. There's literally car rental to you just. OK, that they're not they're not the same and there there have been norms that have been established in food and drink outlets that are different, and it has sort of evolved in a different angle. But I don't know how it feels as though a precedent has been set by all those other industries. And I think the idea of everyone sort of moving together, it's a bit like the offside trap. You know, you've all got to go together. You can't just have one.

**Gus Gluck** [00:44:53] I mean, because also I like it. And it has to be given hand hand with that. It's the greatest time in the world that you could be eating out in a restaurant because in restaurants past, like we were in like London in like 50 years ago, you go out for dinner, spend about the same. You would today. But even inflation, but ingredients used would be absolutely terrible. So just imagine if all of that changed. It's just imagine if... like a guy outside just just drunkenly just gestured at us.

**Gus Gluck** [00:45:32] I think that's what saying is that. But today the ingredients being used by chefs across this whole country. And the wine that's being sold is the best quality it could have ever been. They're paying the most money they could to make sure that you drink literally the greatest thing and eat the greatest thing possible. They are not. No one is stiffing you. Really. There are certain business that do. But if you go to the kind of business that has been rated by Eater or anyone like that. Like I can really promise you that the quality of ingredient is a million times better than what would have done previously. So they're not making that much margin. They're not making a lot money on it. Look, you look at a retail shop, you guys say, oh, well, it's I buy jamon in Sainsbury's for 10 quid. And it's like 22 quid somewhere but firstly, like, economies of

scale. Huge. And it's just the quality is so much better. I think people just forget sometimes that right now people spend chefs and professional kitchens and professional restaurants, spend so much money on products. They're trying their best to give as best as possible. And I think because of that, people should just realise and say, okay, it's a maybe just most places should just start selling worse produce again.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:47:03] But with you, with your soul, it and with your heart, you're not going to want to do that. Exactly. You might serve less of a better ingredient. I'll open Pandora's box and kind of see where we go. That's always been the point that I've made because. Yeah, you're right. There is there is a lot of misconception that the restaurants are totally killing it in terms of marking up and. Yeah. But at the end of the day the the the kind of unseen costs, the costs that you can eat and you can't touch and you can't taste is the rent isn't it. That is of course that is the one that's always there on the on the bill and is a part of the mark up isn't as a part of the piece.

**Gus Gluck** [00:47:54] Like you rack up like a cost of a day of operating somewhere it becomes absolute mental like is. I once talked to my dad about it. So he's eating in restaurants for a long time but never really understood how much money they actually make. I was just like, oh well, in a good year as a restaurateur, you might make, a very good year you might make three or four percent profit overall. And he was like, are you joking. I was like, no. And I'll give you an example at Vinoteca one day. And someone put the wrong chemical into a glass washer and it actually broke the glass washer. So that's what three four grand like. In a moment something can happen or on a night you lose four glasses and they cost you four pounds each. So that's sixteen pounds. But then also then you break two plates or forget chips, you then replace those. Staff member's ill you have to that have a sick day so that you can say you lose basic days of wage, which is pretty fair. You have to throw away some food. You don't sell it if we throw it away. So if someone says that they don't like it or there's something on it that they didn't like or they have an allergy that came out of nowhere, that suddenly they said that they can't have garlic or they taste it and they say, oh, I don't really like it instead of being okay actually, that's really interesting. I'll sit with it for a second.

**Gus Gluck** [00:49:13] All these costs about to make in literally why you ever get into it. Why did you literally ever get into this business? And really because you're probably a little bit mental or stupid. Or most importantly, you're so passionate about it and you truly love it. And I think that the last thing is the most important thing to really sit on is that this is all passion. This is all this is all for that little part of your ego. You say, you know what, I can do this. You might not do it forever, but. It's just it. Yeah, it's tough, those things, when people start to make comment on those things. Almost all my friends from home aren't in my business. So like, I've had a lot of those sorts of those narratives.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:49:59] Totally. And I guess the the big, you know, government support since furlough and since any support for sole traders and limited companies. I guess where things have been promoted as having roared back has been the Eat Out to Help Out. It has been that as a as a programme. And I don't know it is that has that

been relevant for the for the people that your your customers now and what what has been their You know, I'm sure varying reactions. And and as we sit here, interestingly, Eat Out to Help Out having run throughout all of August, and we were just to that sort of finish point, you know. And what what is the sort of immediate future for for some of those people that you're working with?

**Gus Gluck** [00:50:52] Well, so firstly that they were busier than ever in any August they would have ever had, because August is historically the slowest month of the year for hospitality businesses. Because everyone goes on holiday and people don't really drink and eat out that much, they do barbecues and entertain and go away. But it's the busiest August most businesses have had ever this coming off of a situation which was very tough. They've been so busy. It's been quite relentless for them. Which is one thing to think about that they've had quite a tough time, both mentally and physically, but at least have had money through flowing through the coffers. The real thing to ask is, is that will customers still be coming back after this because will they have just said they that they've kind of drunk and eat now enough. And they what will they come back and will they go to those restaurants they went to during eat out to help out? Or did they just go because it was like food tourism, or was it because they genuinely wanted to go? So it's a reprieve. And I think most business will say that they were happy to have taken part in it. But in the long term, it might not help them because people might just get into their head that that's what food costs these days when it just doesn't. It's just for most businesses that I've talked to, they can't afford to give 50 percent off on food for a lot of people. That's the difference between them even being able to make money for themselves, let alone to keep their staff afloat. So we have quite a bad thing in this in this country, but not just in this country, but across the world of discount culture. And I think the discount culture can really bite you in the bite you in the bum quite hard. I mean, the supermarkets have found it so hard where they've been in these price wars for so many years that they've now been beaten really by Lidl and Aldi. Who come in with less product numbers and can actually make money. But that discount culture has really, it can be like a slow rot. It can be sitting in your, like your vine trunk for a long time before it kills off the vine. And so I just really hope that on a consumer level, people just realise. That was a great time and they were doing it for a good thing, not just to get a discount. They were doing it because they were helping out local businesses. But who knows if that remains true?

**Gus Gluck** [00:53:25] And also, we'll see how Christmas is. We've got Brexit coming up, which is another big, big thing which a lot of people have had not they've not had time to prepare for, which is the massive elephant in the room, which if anyone has read any legislation on that, most things will stay the same when it comes to food and drink, but will be matched by currency. So if our currency goes up, it's fantastic. But if it goes down, it's going to be a very expensive time for a lot of people. Suddenly there will be a lot more arguments of why is it so expensive? So, yeah, I like very interesting times and it's impossible to predict. I think I think you can't really go into it to predict it, saying this is what's going to happen. But what else to really say about it really is. Eat out to help out was good short term. Bad long term. What do you think?

**Lawrence Francis** [00:54:26] Well I think the sort of. Yeah. Looking in the media it was very there was. And social media, you know, you get the micro feedback from from punters, from restaurant owners. And it has been. Such a mixed such a mixed set of responses. There have been people that, yeah, definitely, I think have got the kind of we need, you know, cash is king. And, yeah, we need we need the coffers we need. We need people through the door, literally or virtually. We you know, we need we just need to. We're on a run like recovery. We need yeah. We need a boost, you know. And there's no people that have said I've heard they're saying they're happy. It's finishing. And I would imagine for similar sorts of reasons that it is. And I think it was probably intended as a short term sticking plaster. Yeah, that's true. And that it's probably not sustainable for you, for your government to, you know, subsidise a whole industry indefinitely.

**Gus Gluck** [00:55:36] While a few business owners stick with it as well. So some of them, their landlord are going to pay for it, which is pretty amazing. But it shows you how much landlords actually how much money they actually have.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:55:46] As much as the government. Exactly right. They can take on the government's scheme. It's true. Furlough by landlords really coming soon.

**Gus Gluck** [00:55:59] Some are continuing it because they they do fear if no one turns up, then they'll have to close. They like that. They will just go in with it. So they're saying, well, we'll have to kind of go along with it. But I still believe that the best places will always get customers through the door, as in like the places with the most vibe. I mean, like, if I don't worry about places like Max's sandwich shop or something, because Max is hilarious and also has got a very magnanimous character and people go not just for a very, very good sandwich, but because of the fun and they realise, again, it's a performance. So I think those places should still succeed. Is something a lot places who aren't that too much or part of, like an industry as such should do better. Well, that they will that they'll kind of struggle without having eat out to help out. Yeah.

**Lawrence Francis** [00:56:59] Okay. It's been it's been super interesting to again, I think give give the issues and give your thoughts and you know, the the thoughts of I think some of your customers and friends just just give them give them some air. You know, again, for it not to be a, you know, a 10 second slot on the on the news or a by-line in the newspaper to actually, you know, kick around some of these some of these topics. And but I you know, I do I do want to I think as well, you know, give you a chance to just expand a little bit more and more on what you're trying to do with your company now, because I think that was an interesting point you raised earlier about the, you know, working with the restaurants and I guess like navigating potentially people's awareness of the of the prices on different wines. And I'm just curious as far as you're able to or as far as you want to just talk to us a bit about what it is that is, you know, kind of on your horizon, really, what is sure what what is happening, what's going on with you and your business?

**Gus Gluck** [00:58:08] So obviously, how I originally was going to approach was? I thought I'd be selling wine to a lot more restaurant but obviously and I do sell wine to restaurants, but not that much because they don't have as many customers in so not selling well as much wine by the glass and stuff like that. So retail has become far more of king in general, but wine importing and wine distribution is not like technically, we can't reinvent the wheel, there's lots of ways to try and do it, but it doesn't always work because the fundamental thing still is you've got to get something from A to B and then sell that thing, and then you've got to make sure people understand the story behind it. And that's what I still do with my small set of producers. But again, we are making and labelling wine my business partner is a winemaker, but also have a winemaker in Australia as well. Who does some work for us. I mean, it helps us kind of helps people find wines, at a better price point that no one else really has. So it makes it a bit simpler for them ideally to to again find that margin so that they can survive and and not feel awkward or ashamed by the price of something they're selling for. Because what's hard with so many wines now is you can just see the price of something. But yeah. But for our sort of future really will become of like growing still into the regions that we take part of. We're going to help them build our producers because how wine importing goes is you buy a product off a winemaker. You represent them as well. So I'm always there for representation, I'm not just there to buy a product, sell it and then move on, because that's not how it should be.

[00:59:55] How I've always worked is regulars are the most important thing. And my producers now are my most important thing. We're making sure that they're looked after and that people get their wines and like that wines and understand them. And they and they get seen. They get a bit of airtime. So that is that's what I'm just trying to do with them. So not just to be like everyone else, but also make sure that they get seen by wine writers. To get seen out and about and seen more often than not. Just so they feel a sense of pride because a lot of them don't make any money, really, because winemaking is another one of those things like restaurants. you do mostly for the love bar if you're buying your your very, very mass-produced wine. And then it's done mostly on business... Or something. But I'm just trying to make sure that they still have a little bolthole that people can engage with that thing, because let's say this wine we're having now from Yannick is if suddenly no one can travel anymore and no-one could get to Chablis or even get to France. Then how are they ever come into contact with that? So would anyone even care about Chablis like, you know, I mean, like Chablis really famous wine region with some really funny old producers and some amazing ones as well. But it's but I'm there to try and hopefully have hopefully just bring a bit of that to a British consumer. Especially new one.

**Gus Gluck** [01:01:28] Is that the most important thing as well is to engage with younger with the younger generation to make sure that they're drinking wine, not in a weird like seedy way, but it's it's very fundamental that this is alcohol. It gets you drunk. It's like like ethanol. It gives you a hangover no matter what. It's an amazing thing to drink. It's like you've trapped a moment in time. And I think it's really, really important that that's what I always get across with, especially my business. But even with wines that I represent to make sure that gets across, but also the future hold that I'll have to source



more wine that is better value because if the economy goes down and people can't afford to drink as much I want to make sure they can still drink wine because I'd never want them to end up just drinking. \*\*\* and \*\*\* because let's be honest, do those companies really care about you? Maybe not. So I still want to take care of my poorest customer because that is always the most important thing, because otherwise it's just. Yeah, what's the point? Like, it's when I first drunk wine is I drank fucking \*\*\* , for fuck's sake. It's it's terrible to admit it, but you have to you have to say that your entry is a sometimes the most terrible product that there is.

**Gus Gluck** [01:02:48] But it helped start my whole life and my life is literally without this. I don't know what it is. I really don't know. I spend the majority my day thinking about it. It's that. And then my fiance, my family, my friends. But wine takes up the most time mentally and it came through one of the worst wines you could ever buy. So but also to be clear I'll never be be like selling that sort of thing or not my stage anyway. Not yet. Never know how big I'll get. But I have ambitions like have like with Quality Wines. I was tasked to make the best wine bar in london if I can try my best. I'll make the best wine importer in England. But the jury's out at the moment and we're very much at the start. And we've got what, seven people we sell to. So but thankfully they're at every end of the country, from St Andrews to Cornwall to London. So we're quite lucky.

**Lawrence Francis** [01:03:53] Another huge thank you to you Gus for taking part in the hospitality summit. I really feel as though your reflections took us on something of that journey that we've all been on through the lockdown. And I love that you were able to illustrate your points with specific examples from London hospitality. If you're listening on the Interpreting Wine website, you can, of course, check below for the full transcript of this session. The PDF also includes my key takeaway points, and I've, of course, included the website and main social media handles for G.B. Wine Shippers. That concludes day one of the Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit and our look at wine in the capital. Day two of the Hospitality Summit will focus on restaurants and features two highly influential chefs, Chantelle Nicholson of Tredwells. And Matt Gillan of Heritage Restaurant. Both sharing some really interesting insights into how their restaurants were affected during the pandemic. So do be sure to check back for day two of the Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit. See you then.