

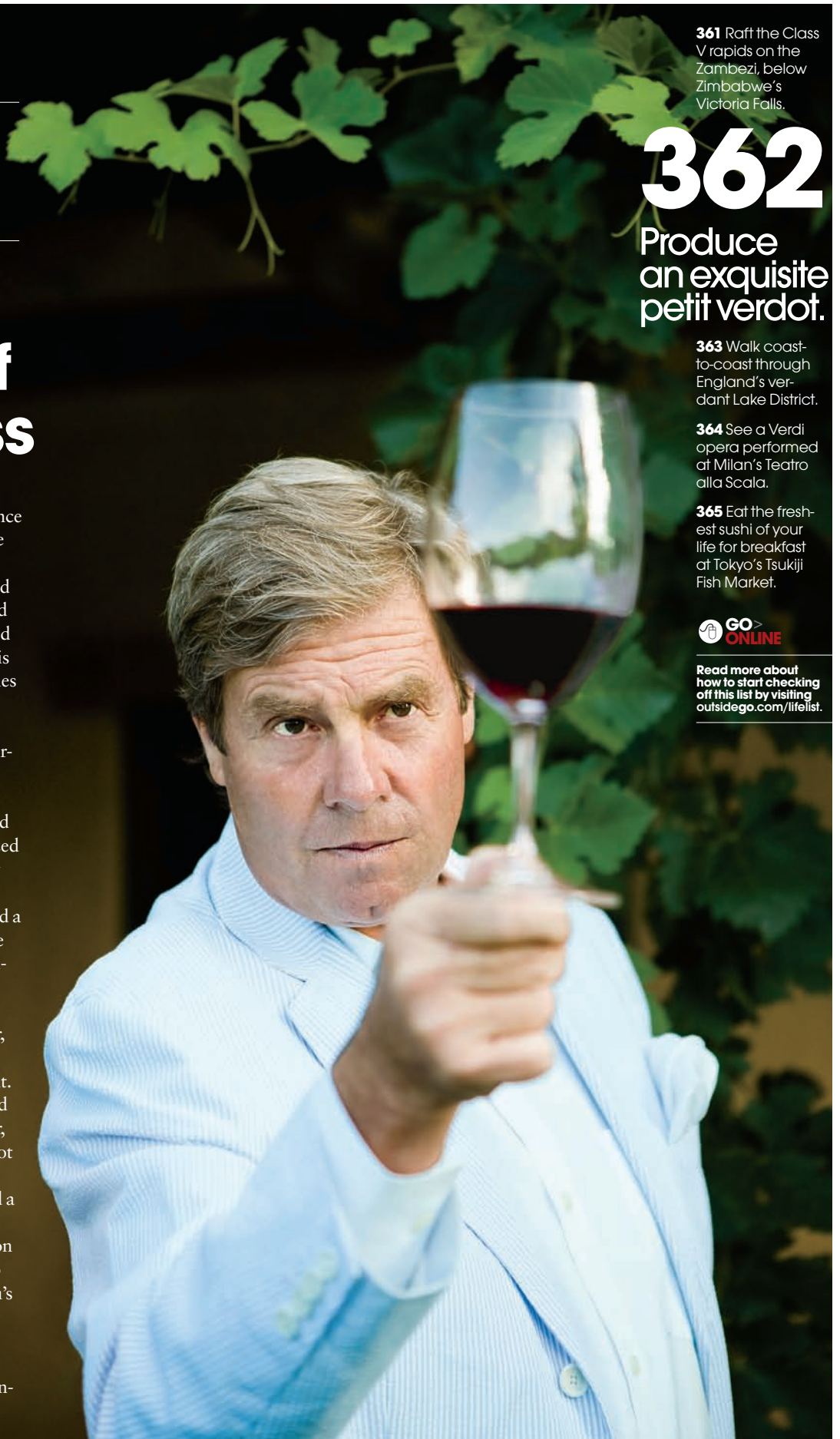
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Taste of Success

JOHN SUTCLIFFE'S emergence as a vintner is much like the wines he produces: unexpected. The Brit, who's lived in western Colorado on and off for four decades, planted grapes 13 years ago after his architect suggested that vines would look nice. But when Sutcliffe tasted the fruits of his landscaping, the 65-year-old, who once managed iconic New York eateries such as Maxwell's Plum and Tavern on the Green, realized the grapes were "somehow quite compelling."

Inspired, Sutcliffe released a first vintage in 2001. "There was not a great deal of ambition in it," he says candidly. "Not a great deal of confidence." Since then, however, the self-possessed oenophile has more than made up for it. Sutcliffe Vineyards produced 3,800 cases of wine last year, including chardonnays ("Not the ghastly type," he says), cabernets ("Magical!"), and a petit verdot ("Sold out in a week."). The wines have won quick acceptance—with top restaurants, including Nobu's Matsuhisa Aspen, pouring them. Says Sutcliffe, "We're trying to make something lofty, of an international standard. I think it shows." ☺



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