



A fashionable taste of wine with a roll of drums thrown in!

Nova Collette was a fashion designer who travelled the world. Her husband, Dhanya was a drummer who regularly recorded and performed in London. Today they produce a variety of wines from their vineyard in the Languedoc. 'Why?', you may ask. 'Lifestyle,' they'd reply. Cheshire born Nova and Parisian, Dhanya, now have two children Kaiya, 9, and Etienne, 5, and they wanted them to grow up in a free-and-easy environment so 5 years ago they abandoned London and found their haven in the south of France. The former fashion account manager who studied at the London college of fashion, wrote about fashion for *Woman and Mother* magazine and travelled the world working for renown companies like French Connection, met her musician husband in 2000. Their lifestyle was the sort many people, including them, dream about. But when they had Kaiya everything changed. 'Dhanya decided he didn't want to carry on with his music career so he stayed at home to care for her while I carried on working,' says Nova. 'But we knew that we wanted a different

life where our family life would be exactly that, a family life.' They thought about buying a ski chalet but the fears of global warming put paid to that. Then one day the couple were sitting down enjoying a glass of wine when they realised that the answer to their dilemma was a vineyard. 'I stayed in London while Dhanya returned to his home country to look at vineyards,' says Nova. 'He came back with loads of films and together we picked one that had 11 hectares of vines, a cave and two properties - an ancient church dating back to at least 1738 and a derelict house, if you could call it that. It had no windows, no bathroom and the lounge still has no roof! 'We planned to restore the old church and live there but, unfortunately, it was so unstable that recent heavy rains brought it down so we're doing up the other property with help from friends.' The couple still plan to restore the old church which is rumoured to have a secret passageway to the Château de Cassan in Gabian. Meanwhile they work the vineyards single-handed,

employing help only in the harvesting season. 'I have to confess that Dhanya does most of the work,' says Nova, who still works part time for an international sports fashion company. 'We have to pay the bills,' she laughs. 'It'll be a while to go before the vineyard pays its way.' They have, however, two harvests under their belt producing 10,000 bottles which include Chardonnay and Savignon, and they have a capacity to produce 70,000 bottles a year. 'Not bad since we started from scratch,' smiles Nova. 'And we've achieved our real aim of a free-and-easy life for our children.' They welcome visitors to their vineyard, *Domaine de Montarels*, just outside *Alignan du Vent* near *Margon*. Dhanya entertains guests on his drums in the cave and Nova wears her specially-designed t-shirt. In August they present a free-entry wine festival with wonderful music and a taste of a lifestyle dream. Call: 04 67 24 64 27 or www.montazellis.com