

The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog



'Mick's Wines of the World' – 25 August 2010

Wine Society member Mick Gleed presented a predictably entertaining waltz round his world of wine, encouraged by the audience who entered enthusiastically into the spirit of the occasion. This was always going to be a 'fun' evening – but that said, the amount of research and preparation required to host a successful two hour tasting should not be underestimated.

Mick had put a lot of thought and work into this event, even preparing suitable musical introductions to each region's wine – definitely a 'first' for the society!

Welcome aperitif

Aussie Semillon

A few of us - with some prompting! - guessed Australia but I'm not sure if anyone pinpointed Semillon, which we probably should have by process of elimination – bright lemon colour, no oak, distinctive citrus/waxy notes, some 'development' (Semillon ages very well), not-too-up-front fruitiness on the nose (should eliminate Sauvignon) and prominent though not searing acidity. Simple once you know...

The wines

Mick had devised a novel way to introduce each wine country – by playing some music that we might all expect to recognize and so identify the wine region we were about to sample.

All wines were sourced from the Laithwaites showroom in Theale.

Whites

Italy (*Dean Martin*)

'Il Papavero' Sparkling Pinot Grigio NV, Mondo del Vino, Sicily

£8.99 12%

'Il Papavero' red has been one of Laithwaites' most re-ordered Italian wines for some years now, and this new venture into sparkling wine seems a successful move. I felt this had more character than other Il Papavero wines (they do a white too) – grapes grown at high altitude with long sunny days and cool nights seemed to give it extra finesse. Delicate melon & pear nose with some tropical fruit on the palate (one taster mentioned pineapple chunks – in a good way!) Fresh and ripe, dry but not bone-dry, with fine persistent bubbles. Better value than some Proseccos at this price – Sicily definitely a region on the up.

South Africa (*Vuvuzela – what else!*)

'White River' Chenin Blanc 2009, Bergsig Estate, Breede River Valley (Robertson)

£6.99 12.5%

A wine that's been on Laithwaites' list for some years and clearly sells well. Pale lemon colour, very restrained nose, hints of green apple and citrus, but the classic chenin lanolin and wet wool notes were not really apparent here even in embryo – perhaps no surprise in a wine that's essentially meant to be a fresh, fairly straightforward crowd-pleaser. Refreshing and crisp, a pleasant summer drink.

France (*Edith Piaf*)

Domaine Mercadier Chardonnay 2008, Vin de Pays d'Oc (Corbieres)

£6.99 12.5%

A perceptible move up in quality – though not in price – showing yet again that exciting winemaking and wonderful value can be found these days in the south of France. This was a wine that leapt out of the glass on the first sniff – lively mineral nose, not too much overt fruit (normal for Chardonnay) and some attractive buttery richness. Grapes picked at night to retain freshness – a new world technique. Whistle clean palate, again that hint of minerality

(always a good thing!), quite a big mouthfeel, and pretty good length for a wine at this price. V good value.

New Zealand (*All Blacks rugby haka*)

Hunter's Sauvignon Blanc 2009, Marlborough

£10.99

One of my personal favourites although I hadn't tasted it for a while. Laithwaites has been very faithful to Jane Hunter over the years, and while prices for lesser NZ Sauvignons have been creeping upwards, this classy wine remains a benchmark at around the £10-£12 mark. Although the gooseberry nose is apparent – it's a Marlborough Sauvignon after all! - here it is a little less obvious, a little less aggressive. A more subtle style altogether, with all the grassiness and freshness you expect but some nice rounded passion fruit notes too, and the acidity beautifully balanced with the fruit and weight of the wine. A top example.

Reds

Portugal (*Portuguese national anthem – not many of us got it...*)

Passa Pequena 2008, DOC Douro

£8.49 13.5%

A blend of native varieties (no doubt including some used traditionally in Port). Steep terraced vineyards dictate hand-harvesting, and the angle of the slopes will catch maximum sun ensuring optimum ripeness. This was nicely rounded with plum and vanilla flavours prominent. Soft mellow tannins - probably best drunk fairly young.

Argentina (*Madonna – Evita*)

J Opik Malbec 2009, Mendoza

£6.99

Purple-black colour in the glass, very deep and rich. Oak and tannins rather more to the fore here, still soft, but their prominence suggests this might repay a couple of years bottle age. My notes also say 'hints of liquorice and ink' (meant as a positive comment!) More minerality in this wine than the Portuguese blend, still not over-complex but extremely good value at 6.99 – and very definitely a food wine! Argentina increasingly impressive at all price points.

Spain (*can't remember – was it Julio Iglesias?*)

Marques de Lakua Rioja Reserva 2000

9.99

Moving up in price and maturity, a splendid example of Rioja Reserva with bottle age, showing pretty much at its peak 10 years on. Naturally a much paler colour than the previous wine, some development on the rim, and enough red berry fruit remaining to balance the secondary flavours of leather and nicely integrated vanilla oak. My notes also say that the palate here was quite 'savoury' – quite a different style from the two previous reds.

Australia (*Waltzing Matilda*)

Spencer Gulf Estate Baroota Reserve Shiraz 2008

£12.99 14.5%

A big blockbuster to round off the evening! 'Baroota' does subliminally suggest 'Barossa' with its world famous Shiraz, but these grapes were grown in a similar warm climate area north of the Barossa Valley – the Southern Flinders region. (The winemaker here, Kevin Mitchell, is associated with a highly regarded Baroota winery, Kilikanoon.) Fermented in traditional open basket presses, matured in French oak, and unfiltered. Big and black with spice, pepper and liquorice in abundance, but the alcohol sits nicely with the weight, making this a well-balanced rather than an over-the-top wine. Again, a year or two in bottle would no doubt settle it down into a nicely cohesive 'whole'.

A splendidly diverse selection of wines and styles, well appreciated by a particularly interactive audience on this occasion!