

The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog

'Four Tables' - 28 July 2010

As ever, a good turnout for the annual 'Four Tables' meeting, at which four members of the society volunteer to present two wines each at an informal walkaround tasting. Presenters provide some information on the wines and their reasons for bringing them, and their choices invariably produce some interesting and unusual comparisons. 'Four Tables' is a much-looked-forward-to midsummer social evening, and as Derek remarked at half time 'this is what it's all about - enjoying good wines, cheeses and pate, and chatting about them with friends'.

Welcome aperitif

Domaine La Moriniere, Muscadet Sevre et Maine sur Lie 2007

Everyone gets a welcome glass of a mystery wine and we usually have a very informal 'guess the wine' competition. It's fair to say that very few of us got this one as it was quite atypical on the nose and palate – possibly the 2007 just a little over the hill even for a distinguished Muscadet such as this? One bottle was a little fresher than the other. Sourced from BBR Factory Outlet.

The wines

Paul brought along two lesser known wines from Galicia in northern Spain. These were terrific examples of modern Spanish wine making. And by a happy coincidence(?) both have appeared as wine choices on www.decanter.com in the last couple of weeks – the white as 'wine of the week' at the end of July, the red as August 'connoisseur's choice'. Sourced from Caviste in Overton.

White

Mara Martin Godello, Martin Codax 2008, Monterrei

Godello is the grape, Monterrei the DO. Lovely fresh peach flavours and some spice, with impressive weight on the palate and plenty of lemony acidity. Crisper than you might expect and very nicely balanced.

Red

Dominio do Beibi, Lalama 2006, Ribeira Sacra

A blend of four grapes – Mencia (85%), Garnacha (7%), Brancellao (6%), Mouraton (2%). DO is Ribeira Sacra. Old vines, fermented in old French oak barrels, aged 18 months in bottle before release. Complex, mineral, interesting aromatic notes lifting the dark fruit. Some biodynamic practices are used in the vineyards.

Ann had recently been to the US on business and brought back four interesting bottles from the Finger Lakes region in upstate New York. This was a popular table – not only was there was a lot to taste! – two whites, a cracking red and a half bottle of ice wine – but these were also unusual wines that few of us would have come across before.

Whites

Hermann J Wiemer Vineyard Semi Dry Riesling 2007

As one might guess from the winery name this was an off-dry Riesling in a recognisably Germanic style – quite similar in mouthfeel to a Spatlese or Halbtrocken from the Rheingau. A good whiff of petrol on the developed nose, then a lightish body with some sweet floral notes, cut with hallmark Riesling acidity.

Wagner Vineyards Gewurztraminer Semi Dry 2007

Although the Riesling could well have been mistaken for a German wine, this was a quite different style to an Alsace Gewurztraminer. Much lighter bodied with less overt spice, but plenty of perfumed lychee on both nose and palate. This grew on me, having a more persistent palate than seemed apparent at first. Total production (in 2007) a tiny 360 cases.

Red

Wagner Vineyards Meritage 2001

Another wine from Wagner – this time a Bordeaux blend (for which Meritage is a US term) of 55% Cab Franc, 35% Cab Sauv, 10% Merlot. Wagner only makes this wine in good vintages. Ripe dark berry fruit, a hint of mint on the nose, nicely integrated oak and tannins. Probably just about at its best 9 years on from the vintage.

Ice wine

A little bottle of dessert ice wine made rather surprisingly from Chardonnay (if my memory is correct!) Sadly I have no record of the label details. But those of us who were close enough to the cheese board enjoyed the classic combination of an intensely sweet dessert wine with lovely acidity, matched with the saltiness of blue cheese. An unusual treat.

David brought along a Riesling from a favourite New Zealand producer of his, Villa Maria, and as a contrast an interesting modern Fitou from the Midi in south-west France.

White

Villa Maria Private Bin Riesling 2008, Marlborough (NZ)

Ultra-reliable family owned brand, consistent medal winning wines so no real surprises here. Those of us who compared this with Ann's Finger Lakes Riesling will have sampled two very different styles of the same grape - this one having all the zesty lime-driven fruit that defines Aussie and NZ Riesling. It might be interesting sometime to compare Villa Maria's entry level Private Bin wines with their highly-regarded Cellar Selection or Reserve wines to see the different characteristics that come into play closer to the £12 mark - perhaps one for a future tasting along the lines of the successful Concha y Toro evening a while ago?

Red

Mont Tauch Fitou 'Les Douze' 2008, AC Fitou, Corbieres (SW France)

Carignan/Grenache/Syrah blend. Soft round red, packing a punch in a concentrated fruit-driven style that surely owes something to new world techniques. 'Les Douze' is an annual blend of the best grapes from 12 local growers. Dark spicy plums, soft tannins, and very nice with the cheese!

Simon went with Portugal for his white – a nice left field choice as the new-style Portuguese whites are not yet as widely-known as the reds. And a red from mainland Greece – a Syrah blend from Naoussa in Macedonia.

White

Altano Vinho Branco 2008, DOC Douro (Portugal)

An interesting reference to Symington (the Port family) on the label revealed this wine's pedigree. This was 100% Verdejo - Spain/Portugal's answer to Sauvignon Blanc - but much less aggressive than sauvignon can sometimes be, with mellower (though still prominent) acidity and some interesting herbal notes. A good wine to compare with Paul's Godello from northern Spain.

Red

Dyo Elies 2004, Domaine Kir-Yianni, Naoussa, Macedonia (Greece)

Syrah (60%), Merlot (30%), Xinomavro (10%). Thoroughly modern blend (Syrah and Merlot) that includes a dash of the 'best' Greek red grape Xinomavro. Spicy, structured, deep coloured wine with lovely soft vanilla oak, dark plum and bramble fruit and plenty of tannic backbone still apparent 6 years on from the vintage.