

The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog



'Concha y Toro' Presented by Chris Horridge

22 June 2011

Always one to look forward to in the tasting calendar, Chris entertains and informs and always shows us excellent wines. The quality currently coming out of Chile at all price levels is truly impressive. Chris brought along two Rieslings from ever-reliable Cono Sur, two Chardonnays and two Syrahs from the dynamic Maycas del Limari, and finished by contrasting a 'commercial' with a 'fine' Carmenere

Welcome aperitif

'Stonehenge Ancestors' Seyval Blanc Dry 2010, Fonthill Glebe (Wilts)
11%

Peachy, fresh nose. Tinged with green. Not a lot of fruit on the palate but enormous acidity. This was brought in by a member and had been sourced from a Farmers Market near Salisbury.

The wines

Whites

Cono Sur Bike Riesling 2009

£7.00 13.5%

Cono Sur is a terrific brand with ultra-reliable classy wines throughout the range. And very well priced. The winemaker is the respected Adolfo Hurtado whose wines have true varietal and regional quality. This from the Bio Bio Valley in the south has a splendid minerally Riesling nose, fresh and pungent. Some oiliness starting to show on the palate. Distinct citrus grapefruit notes but the weight is typical of Chile (prominent 'legs' in the glass) as is the alcohol level of 13.5%. Very ripe fruit, slightly spritzy.

Cono Sur Reserva Riesling 2010

£9.00 13.5%

Also from the Bio Bio Valley and a notch up in quality and price. Here the yields are 20% lower giving more concentration. Interestingly the fruit seemed more evident on the nose – a highly aromatic but 'softer' nose with less obvious Riesling development (it's a year younger). But the apple character is more pronounced and the overall impression is of balance and class. Definitely a while to go until full development. Two terrific 'modern' Rieslings, showing how successful this grape could be as it gains a foothold in Chile's cooler climate regions.

Maycas del Limari Unoaked Chardonnay

£10.00 14%

The first Chardonnay of the evening was an unoaked example from the Limari Valley in the far north of Chile. 2007 a splendid vintage. The superb yeasty, minerally nose leapt out of the glass – this is cool climate Chardonnay from a region enjoying fogs like San Francisco's and temperature variations that slow the ripening and keep the acids high – so important for successful Chardonnay. The 'hang' time on the vine is relatively long and the wine spends 16 months on its lees. Very impressive concentration, lively palate, length very good. Splendid value, proving that oak is not an absolute pre-requisite for complexity.

Maycas del Limari Chardonnay Reserva Especial 2008

£13.00 14%

French oak (mid toast), some old, some new. Nice mildly oaky nose, and oak on the palate but well integrated. Chardonnay butteriness cut by lovely acidity. Really good length and no alcohol burn - even at 14%. Fruit, oak and acidity all in balance. Great structure suggests that this has a few years ahead of it yet.

Reds

Maycas del Limari Reserva Syrah 2008

£10.00 14.5%

Syrah not Shiraz – i.e. northern Rhone style rather than Aussie Barossa Valley. French oak for 1 year, 20% of it new, and not obtrusive on the nose. Opaque dense colour and deep purple 'legs'. Inky palate with pepper and spice to the fore but superb minty back notes adding freshness. Good value.

Maycas del Limari Especial Syrah 2006

£13.00

A notch up again, and two years more maturity. Older vines with 20% less yield than the previous wine. 14 months in 50% new, 50% old oak. Narrow rim but more age showing here. Leather, mocha, chocolate character with less primary fruit and more development. Smooth warm palate and finish. Someone was heard to say 'chocolate jam'! Up to 5 years?

Casillero del Diablo Carmenere 2009

£8.00 13.5%

On to Chile's USP Carmenere, and a complete contrast. This is from the Rapel Valley in the Valle Central. Casillero del Diablo makes a range of widely available well-made wines for early drinking, of which the reds are exemplary in their price bracket – not over complex but not meant to be. Perfect BBQ wines in fact! This has had 8 months in American oak (not all of it new) and shows typical blackcurrant leafiness with excellent ripe berry roundness on the palate. It's soft with only mild tannic structure but the acidity is again good.

Terrunyo Carmenere 2007

£15.00 14.5%

But here is 'structure' in spades - this one is designed to age. Rapel Valley again (the Carmenere grape likes warmth and dryness). This has had 17 months in 80% new French oak and is unfiltered. The oak is so restrained on the nose, with white pepper dominant and some development although there's undoubtedly more to come. None of the leafiness of the last wine - this is all about concentration and structure, with balanced fruit and acidity and a silky round palate. It's a multi medal winner and will be good for several years to come.

As always at Chris' tastings, a splendid snapshot of what Chile – and Concha y Toro in particular – is currently offering in terms of genuine quality for the price.

The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog is by **Julia Shaw**