

## The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog



### 'Hix & Buck'

Presented by Chix Chandaria and Dan Roebuck

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Hix & Buck is a relatively new (est 2009) wine importer and distributor [www.hixandbuck.com](http://www.hixandbuck.com)  
They brought wines from France (Ardeche and Cognac) and Italy (Tuscany, Piemonte and Chianti) from their current list.

### Welcome aperitif

Classy Chenin Blanc from **Ken Forrester - Tesco Finest Chenin Blanc 2010**. Full and rounded - no harsh edges here though the acidity is zingy and refreshing. Nice S African slightly 'animal' nose, honeyed palate, lovely mineral finish, 13.5%. A great value introduction to Ken Forrester's wines.

### The wines

#### Whites

#### **Pepi Lignana "Leopoldino" Vermentino/Viognier 2008, Toscana IGT (Italy)**

£13.99 12.5%

Mainly Vermentino with a dash (15%) of aromatic Viognier. In the glass, pale lemon with a hint of green. Fresh restrained nose. On the palate, nice acidity with a little weight from the Viognier. Some of the group commented that the 'body' suggested there might be more than 15% Viognier in the blend? No spritziness (there often is with Vermentino) and no great length, but easy summer drinking. The bottle was actually 2008 (not 2009 as on the sheet) so it had lasted quite well given that this is surely an early drinking wine. Perhaps just lacking a little of the Vermentino zip that a more recent vintage would have provided. We thought it rather expensive, but that's Tuscany for you...

#### **La Maison des Maines Mainart Sauvignon Blanc 2009 (France)**

£8.99 12.5%

From Cognac, and a Remy Martin connection here. Lively pale lemon colour, good and bright. Reasonably obvious sauvignon nose but with the expected French restraint. My notes say 'promises more than it delivers' - the palate had greenish notes with some pleasant elderflower perfume (label said 'acacia') but it was a little thin on the mid-palate and rather died away on the finish. Acidity nicely balanced but I thought just a slight hint of mustiness at the end. Pleasant, but the £9 price tag felt a little ambitious.

#### **Mas d'Intras Cuvée Isidora Rosé 2009 Vin de Pays des Coteaux de l'Ardèche (France)**

£8.99 13%

Chix said that this wine was the reason she started the company, so that's quite a build-up! The first of three Mas d'Intras wines (Vin de Pays de Coteaux de l'Ardeche) shown tonight, this producer makes 'natural' wines - a growing trend for which no legal definition yet exists, but usually described as being made with as little chemical and technological intervention as possible, though sulfites are still used. Bottled in a 'light' bottle. Merlot/Syrah/Cinsault/Grenache blend. Quite a deep colour and a wide-ish rim, a little dusky.

Nice strawberry nose (one of us commented 'Scottish tinned strawberries!' with great precision...) Hint of menthol on the palate, and some weight - this is not a frothy Anjou-style rose, more like a Bergerac maybe. Body and structure here, and the very good 2009 vintage may be responsible for this weight and ripeness.

#### **J&L Charlemagne Sparkling XO Methode Traditionelle (France)**

£11.99 13%

It was unusual to show a fizz after the other whites but there was a good reason. We were asked to taste it without any prior information. An unusual palate – on first taste some of us immediately thought apples or pears, and perry was mentioned as a possibility. In fact this was 99% chardonnay with 1% XO Cognac 'dosage', which may have accounted for the slightly 'fermented' character that made us think of cider or perry. Prosecco also came to mind, but this was dryer. The chardonnay character wasn't really apparent. Idiosyncratic, a real one-off, and a well-made wine that was generally enjoyed.

### **Reds**

#### **Mas d'Intras 'Cuvee La Louche' Syrah 2007, Vin de Pays des Coteaux de l'Ardèche (France)**

£9.99 14%

Upping the alcohol levels now with the reds. This one had been decanted. 100% Syrah, 6 months oak. Deep purple, very little rim, fruit-forward nose. On the palate the peppery Syrah notes were definitely present. There was also a welcome freshness here (these wines do seem quite vivid and clean) but very soft – no tannins to speak of – so this is not one to keep much longer. Good Syrah character though.

#### **Mas d'Intras Cuvée Ferdinand 2007 Vin de Pays des Coteaux de l'Ardèche (France)**

£9.99 14%

Classic southern Rhone blend – 40% Syrah, 40% Grenache, 20% Carignan. 12 months oak, and had been double-decanted. Colour and rim almost identical to the previous wine. Vibrant nose with noticeable development, a bit backward at first but opened out nicely in the glass – always a good sign. More tannins here but still quite soft on the palate. But it's all in the attack really, not a lot of mid-palate and no great length. But definitely a bit more structure here for your tenner than the previous wine.

#### **Tenuta Rocca Langhe Rosso Barbera-Cabernet 2007, Langhe DOC (N Italy)**

£13.99 **15%**

A whopper. Barbera-Cabernet blend from Piemonte weighing in at 15% alcohol. At that level the balance has to be right if the wine is not to feel like hard work. Black and opaque with very little rim. Tobacco nose, good cigar and cedarwood character (Cabernet). Chewy palate, dark damson fruit, plenty of tannic structure but quite an alcoholic finish suggesting perhaps a slight lack of balance. But it's a nice wine at £13.99 (in an expensive region) and of course it badly needs food to do it justice. And possibly another year in bottle.

### **Sticky**

#### **Fattoria il Lago Vin Santo del Chianti Rufina 2004**

£33.45 (50cl)

Malvasia/Trebbiano blend. My notes say 'palate very spirit-y'. Rather lacking in the unctuousness that the price might suggest. Even mid-range Vin Santo is expensive of course, but the general view was that this was over-priced for what it delivered, and was not perhaps the most successful example. The group thought it was quite a 'thin' Vin Santo at this price. No faults that we detected – just a bit disappointing.