

## The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog



### 'The Pretenders' Presented by Mick Gleed

28 September 2011

Mick's theme for the evening was wines that 'pretend' to the style of their better known neighbours, but with a more affordable price tag. This threw up some fascinating comparisons and some lively opinions from around the table

#### Welcome aperitif

No notes I'm afraid! The wine was brought by a member though, and was much enjoyed.

#### The wines

##### Whites

**Jansz Premium Cuvee NV, Tasmania** 12.5% £16.85  
BBR

'Champagne pretender'. Cool climate sparkling wine that's had some good press. Chardonnay-predominant blend. Typical new world freshness, fruit-forward style, decent body, good nose with a little development and yeastiness. Creamy mouthfeel, vanilla notes, round with reasonable length. Lively fine bubbles. Very good quality without being hugely complex.

**Coteaux du Giennois 'Les Larmes de Pierre', Pouilly-sur-Loire 2010** 12% £8.99  
Laithwaites

'Sancerre pretender'. Some slightly surprising (but certainly not unwelcome) floral notes initially on the nose. Perhaps a less obviously mineral nose than you'd get in a Sancerre, with fruitier notes, but that's probably modern style winemaking (cold fermentation, stainless steel, etc). Palate almost more akin to Pouilly-Fume since everyone thought 'smokiness' obvious, but not as dry or flinty as a Sancerre/Pouilly-Fume would be - softer on the palate. However, nicely balanced in a modern fruit-driven way that seemed to take equally from new world and traditional Loire styles. Very successful.

**Isabel Estate Chardonnay 2007, Marlborough NZ** 13.5% £14.95  
BBR

'White Burgundy pretender'. What a good wine to choose as a comparison, since Isabel Estate wins all sorts of accolades and is a distinguished NZ producer of quality wines. Really bright colour, very yellow. Oaky nose with lemon/citrus notes. Palate pretty oaky - needs food to soften. Full and complex mid-palate, but interestingly a rather hot alcoholic finish which isn't so attractive and would certainly distinguish it from most white Burgundies. Full-bodied and fat in a 'new world' sort of way. Quality certainly, but without quite the charm or subtlety of a chardonnay from Burgundy, and it's not the same animal really. (Isabel Estate not my own favourite Marlborough producer - the wines I've tried seem a bit prominent in alcohol and oak for me, but they have a real following.)

**Saint Ferreol 2007, Vin de Pays d'Oc** 13% £11.20  
BBR

'Condrieu pretender'. Brave to even try! Viognier can be difficult anyway, and Condrieu is a real pinnacle for anyone else to climb... However most of us thought this a pretty good effort. Pungent, rich Viognier nose with the right exotic peachiness. Fruit, spice, apricots on the palate, with thankfully a good vein of acidity to cut all that exotica (some less well-made Viogniers can lack acidity). Restrained oak but it's there as a backbone. General view was that this is an impressive wine at the price - Condrieu comparisons notwithstanding.

## Reds

### Verduno Pelaverga 2009

13.5% £13.25

BBR

'Barolo pretender'. One of the bottles (perhaps both?) contained a lot of floating sediment which detracted from the look in the glass and demonstrates the need for care with reds that may not have been filtered. My notes say: 'very slight prickle on palate - perhaps this bottle not quite right? Rustic. Correct colour for Barolo (pale) but not the perfume or delicacy'. One member was heard to comment 'Not so much Barolo's little brother – more like his 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin twice removed'... So maybe not the most successful pretender of the evening! - but one of the bottles may just have been slightly faulty.

### Dairo 2007

13.5% £8.15

BBR

'Rioja/Priorat pretender'. A Crianza from DO Montsant, a mountainous wine area in Catalonia that surrounds the more famous Priorat. Dairo is made from Garnacha Negra, Manzueta (Carignan) and Syrah - the traditional blend here. Cherry red with a narrow rim and prominent legs. A good nose with restrained vanilla oak. Very soft palate, American oak, quite reminiscent of Rioja in that sense. Nice uncomplicated stuff with a distinct Spanish character. Good value.

### Domaine Les Cassanets 2010

14% £8.99

Laithwaites

'Chateauneuf-du-Pape pretender'. Laithwaites' own note says '*Because the soil is the same across the road and the grapes are the same the wine is every bit as good as Chateauneuf-du-Pape*'. Of course what that statement leaves out is the all-important winemaker's influence. That said, we all felt this was a jolly good Cotes du Rhone. One comment overheard: 'It's SO Cotes du Rhone...but possibly not quite SO Chateauneuf-du-Pape!' My note says: 'you can smell the Syrah here, slight characteristic burnt rubber aroma (in a good way). Alcohol evident at 14%, esp on finish'. A straw poll taken by Mick asked us to score this wine firstly as a Chateauneuf-du-Pape, and then at its Cote du Rhone price of £8.99. Result: 7/10 as a Cotes du Rhone (good) but less as a Ch'neuf-du-Pape (unsurprisingly). Verdict – a good Cotes-du-Rhone, generally much enjoyed around the room.

### Frankland Estate Olmo's Reward 2004

14% £17.75

BBR

'Bordeaux pretender'. Although it's a Bordeaux blend this is a different animal – altogether a bigger riper style of Cabernet/Merlot, although cool climate Western Australia gives it relative elegance and restraint. Frankland Estate is a top winery, rated by James Halliday's Australian Wine Companion 2011 as a 5-star winery and in the top 3% of Australian wine producers. Organic vines. This is 51% Merlot, 43% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1% Malbec. My note says: 'for the first time among the reds there's real concentration here. Good cedary notes but much bigger riper fruit than you'd get in a typical right bank Bordeaux'. At 14% the alcohol is a factor and with the concentration too it really does need softening with food. Significant bottle age already, so probably to drink over the next couple of years?

A splendid variety of wines from Mick, with some interesting comparisons and talking points.

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