

The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog



'Show off the differences'

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A selection of wines from Majestic designed to 'show off the differences' between similar wine styles – could we taste the difference between Sauvignon and Verdejo or between different styles of Chardonnay for example? All prices quoted are Majestic's single bottle price – there'll normally be a reduction for two-bottle purchases

Welcome aperitif

M&S Ulmen Sauvignon Blanc 2012, Chile 5.99

A lively zesty Sauvignon with a good weight of simple but pleasing fruit, showing just the sort of value that can still be found in Chile at this low price point. Full marks to M&S...

The wines

Whites

1. Jose Pariente Sauvignon Blanc 2012, Rueda (Spain) 13% £12.49

Bright pale lemon colour, a grassy upfront sauvignon nose with noticeable stony backnotes. Palate more astringent, certainly not a fruit bomb. Some of the group thought nose and palate didn't really match. Plenty of clean acidity, not huge length, but a decent example of 'modern' European sauvignon. Expensive...?

2. Vega de la Reina Verdejo 2012, Rueda (Spain) 13% £9.99

Lovely greenish tint in the glass. A much more restrained nose, and on the palate a little softer with acidity present but less obvious. More restrained aromatics all round. Quite a light Verdejo – some from Rueda seem to have a little more body than this, but it can be tricky to assess a less 'forward' wine alongside a fairly upfront sauvignon. Again, not cheap.

3. Pascal Bouchard Bourgogne Chardonnay 2012, Cote d'Auxerre (France) 12.5% £9.99

This immediately caused some discussion in the group – colour very pale but nose quite 'developed' (for 2012) with some yeasty notes evident. Some of us liked the nose, some didn't (I did). A lively palate with reasonable length and firm acidity for a Chardonnay. Obviously unoaked because as Simon said, in a sense this is 'imitation Chablis' - the Cote d'Auxerre being the wider northern Burgundy area around Chablis. This was at least one person's favourite wine of the evening, although group reaction was mixed. It's not Chablis but I'd say it beats many a Petit Chablis for character.

4. Louis Latour Grande Ardeche 2011 (France) 13.5% £10.99

A much yellower colour here suggesting a touch of oak, but if oak has been used it's with very light touch indeed and it wasn't obvious on the nose. My notes say 'really opens out in the glass'. A round palate with a hint of butteriness, and - as

expected for a chardonnay from southern France - a bigger, richer, riper mouthfeel than wine 3. (Interestingly, although we detected a hint of oak the Louis Latour website does not mention it in connection with this wine – it says of the vinification '*Traditional in stainless steel vats, temperature controlled with complete malolactic fermentation*'.
http://www.louislatour.com/pages/index.php?id_page=41&id_vin=44&millesime=2011

Reds

5. Cantinadi Negrar Valpolicella Classico 2012, Veneto (Italy) 13% £7.99

Showing a little age (already) on the rim but a lovely typical northern Italian nose of fresh cherries really leapt out of the glass. Quite a lot going on here for a sub £8 Valpolicella Classico - the group generally thought it a good quaffable example. Looks like good value.

6. Domini Veneti 'La Cassetta' Valpolicella Classico Superiore Ripasso 2011, Veneto (Italy) 14% £13.99

A very different animal from wine 5 – this is made with raisined grapes to add body and richness. Domini Veneti is a well-respected (medal winning) producer of classy Valpolicella. A dense black cherry colour and nose, massive (coloured) legs on the glass, big and rich, with that characteristic Italian dry finish. Carries its 14% alcohol well.

7. Paul Mas Carignan Vieilles Vignes 2012, Vin de Pays d'Herault (France) 13.5% £9.99

On to two wines that we all agreed would benefit from something a little more substantial than cheese or even pate! Here we are into 'big chewy tannins' territory with Carignan – a challenging grape that demands appropriate food to soften the tannins. Those of us who tried it with the duck pate found that it did that job pretty impressively. This and the next wine are young yet, so time will integrate those tannins into a more cohesive whole. A very ripe sweet nose and plenty of future potential.

8. Paul Mas Malbec 2012, Vin de Pays d'Oc (France) 13.5% £9.99

Southern French Malbec also has the reputation of being a tannic beast, so which wine was the more tannic – 7 or 8? Pretty much all the group agreed on 7 but not without some debate. Both wines are very young, and both look it with their deep purple colour and very narrow rim. The Malbec's nose is ripe but a little less upfront than the Carignan, and seemed a tad less challenging in its youth, with tannins perhaps not quite so chewy. 'Big beasts' needing both time and food!

Well-chosen comparisons and interesting wines from Simon, illustrating some common themes between wines of similar character or the same grape, and the diversity that comes from different regions, climates and/or winemaking techniques.