

The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog



'Joie de Vin – Loire Valley'

Presenter: Tim North

22 February 2017

The very welcome return of Joie de Vin who gave us such an enjoyable Languedoc tasting in 2016. This time Tim chose to highlight small producers from the Loire with a couple of rouge interlopers...

Prices below were for purchases or orders on the night

The wines

Whites

1. Domaine Salmon Imperial Sparkling Brut

12.5% £12.00

Poured as aperitif and much enjoyed around the room, this looks exceptional value for a really well made method traditionnel wine from the classic Champagne grapes Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. A lovely soft, mildly bready mouthful with a splendid mousse of small bubbles (noticeably persistent in the glass) and admirable balance and freshness on the finish. VGV

2. Domaine Salmon Vieilles Vignes Muscadet de Sevre et Maine sur Lie 2014

12% £9.50

Two contrasting but neither very typical Muscadets to compare, with varying degrees of oak influence. This one is made from low-yield old vines and is briefly matured in oak foudres to soften but not impart oak flavour. Rich palate, almost tropical, structured and round. Unusually for a Muscadet no spritz at all on the tongue, and some thought it finished a bit flat. Some also noted a distinct pear drop nose, and 'tinned fruit salad' was also overheard - more as an observation than a criticism!

3. Domaine Salmon Muscadet de Sevre et Maine sur Lie Eleve en Fut 2014

12% £10.00

Part blended in oak barrels, this had more overt oak influence – still not at all dominant but for some of us it perhaps had the effect of neutralising the fruit. Maybe a slightly shorter finish too. It produced quite mixed reactions in the room – some really liked it as an unusual Muscadet style, some thought it less successful. All found the comparison interesting though.

4. Domaine de la Chaise Touraine Sauvignon 2016

12.5% £9.50

Perhaps partly due to coming straight after the less overtly fruity Muscadets, the nose on this Sauvignon hit you with a wallop of perfumed kiwi fruit, immensely aromatic, almost Chilean (thought one of us) in its intensity. Limestone terroir, hot-off-the-press (2016) crisp freshness on the palate, which compared to the nose was a little more restrained and balanced. A classy characterful fruit-driven Touraine Sauvignon with clear modern appeal. Much liked!

5. Domaine de la Grange Touraine Chenonceaux 2014 13.5% £14.00

A newish appellation Chenonceaux, and on this evidence one to watch. 9 months on lees with stirring gives complexity and a fuller palate than wine 4, rich and broad, with secondary flavours of apricot and peach evident on the finish which is long and elegant. Wines 4 and 5 were a terrific example of the diversity that can be achieved with different treatments of Sauvignon Blanc. A lovely wine.

6. Domaine de la Chaise L'Originelle Touraine Chenin Blanc 2014 13.5% £12.50

Dry Chenin Blanc can be a majestic and long-lived wine at its best (Savennieres, Montlouis, Vouvray) and in a top Loire vintage like 2014 a good Touraine Chenin can get close. Chenin ages superbly with its acidity and structure, and this one should develop some richness and a more honeyed palate over a few years. Not much 'wet wool' on the nose and a softer palate than some, but still big acidity with the edge taken off by fermentation in old oak barrels. A nicely balanced wine with proper Loire Chenin character that should develop well. Generally liked, but it's a more backward style that takes a bit of getting used to when the wine is young.

Reds

7. Domaine de la Grange Clos Mabile Touraine Rouge 2014 13% £11.50

The only Loire red of the evening – they can be an acquired taste (someone mentioned the 'crushed beetles' characteristic of some Cabernet Franc!) but they can be very successful in a good vintage which 2014 was. A superb deep garnet colour with good cherry fruit on the mid palate, a fairly short finish perhaps, but overall quite ripe and elegant. Micro-oxidised to maximise fruit so this is a winery making use of very modern techniques.

8. Domaine Trilles Calignan 2015, Cotes Catalan 15% £11.00

100 year old Carignan bush vines. A biggie this one, a robust 'garrigue' wine (think scrub and gorse with the odd old Carignan bush vine dotted around...who knows what else gets into the wine...) Someone mentioned rosemary bushes which resonated with many of us! The 15% alcohol is carried very well by a deceptive structure (it's not that obvious), plenty of bramble fruit (very ripe in 2015) and nicely softening tannins. Much enjoyed.

9. Domaine La Toupie Quattor 2013, Cotes de Roussillon 14% £12.00

Jerome Collas the winemaker uses some interesting techniques such as barrel-turning rather than lees stirring, and hand-harvests his Grenache, Syrah, Carignan and Mourvedre grapes – the classic Languedoc-Roussillon blend. A third is matured in one year old oak. A slightly vegetal nose (in a good way) due to some development, a mature and spicy palate with a distinct cool 'minty' character which is very attractive, and a good finish. Again, much enjoyed.

Another cracking tasting from Joie de Vin with some really interesting comparisons and a raft of individual wines made by producers who clearly care about maximising regional character