

The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog



'An evening with no French wines'

Presenter: Elaine Longstaff

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The wines

Whites

1. Monnow Valley Ty Hafod 2013, Wales

10% £8.99

Madeline Angevine/Huxelrebe/Sauvignon Blanc – two stalwarts of many English blends plus a dash of Sauvignon Blanc no doubt to add some liveliness. Exceptionally pale lemon in the glass, a slightly 'confected' nose (reminding some of 'pineapple chunks or even pineapple sweeties') and a touch of honeysuckle. 'PLJ' (the soft drink) was also mentioned... Big acidity and 'pink grapefruit' on a light palate that had stayed reasonably fresh given that it's not now in its first flush of youth (the screwcap will have helped). Very lightweight and not universally popular around the room, but we can all now have a legitimate opinion on Welsh wine!

2. Viore Bodegas Torredueiro, Toro 2017, Spain

13% £7.00

100% Verdejo from high altitude sites near the Portuguese border. Described by *The Wine-Man* (the source of all tonight's wines) as a 'fridge door favourite' at a competitive price. Aromatic nose, almost 'exotic' by comparison with Wine 1, some 'pear drop' notes, and one of us thought that 'behind the acetone there's wet straw'. Palate reasonably ripe, some felt it finished off-dry, acidity well balanced, aromatic and very fresh. My initial note said 'easy drinking crowd pleaser' but many of the group felt that it grew on us and was excellent value.

3. Blank Canvas Gruner Veltliner 2013, Marlborough, New Zealand

13% £15.99

On offer at £13.50 at the time of the tasting. Good to get a feel for what New Zealand can do with this grape which is native to Austria but being experimented with elsewhere. Greenish gold and oily in the glass - as expected since this was given 8m of new and old French oak (in the background though). I thought this had a nice, slightly 'reduced' nose, and a ripe and textured palate. Some of us thought it had less fruit than more familiar Austrian examples, some thought it had more! Elaine quoted a Jancis Robinson tasting note in which she'd approved of its 'oily mineral dry texture' with some 'complexity of bottle age'. An interesting take on a fashionable grape.

4. Spice Route Chenin Blanc 2015, Swartland, South Africa

13.5% £11.99

A properly characterful South African Chenin Blanc, of which there are lots of different styles. This one is at the fresher end of the spectrum, although it has had 9m of old French oak which some thought accentuated the spicy notes in an impressively rounded rich palate. On the nose the classic wet wool (or as one of us called it 'wet sheep') was prominent, as was some tropical fruit in good balance with the characteristic high Chenin acidity. This was generally much enjoyed around the room.

Reds

5. Vitiano Rosso Falesco 2015, Umbria, Italy 13.5% £12.99

Sangiovese/Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blend. Umbrian IGP Rosso, allowing the mix of traditional Italian Sangiovese with two 'international' grapes. Deep plummy colour and a lovely Italian nose with plenty of dark cherry notes. An ultra smooth ripe palate (some malolactic fermentation will have rounded it all out) with bitter cherry and a little oak, but the predominant impression was of ripeness with a silky smooth finish. Some comments overheard: 'that is slick', 'slips down' and 'I'm going to write *perfect!*' This certainly got the most enthusiastic comments of the evening – a splendidly drinkable Italian red which many of us had thought might cost more.

6. Hecula Castano 2015 14% £9.99

100% Monastrell (aka France's Mourvedre). Big bottle, no doubt to suggest 'quality' (but the shipping and environmental costs!). Some dried fruit - 'figs?' - and a slightly gamey nose. 6m in French oak, nice persistence on the finish, and the palate held its own pretty well against the spicy chorizo! A slightly hot finish maybe (or perhaps that was just the chorizo...). One of Decanter's best value red wines of 2017, and generally much enjoyed.

7. Douro Colheita Quinto do Portal 2013, Portugal 13% £13.99

Tinta Roriz/Touriga Nacional/Touriga Franca blend. These are grapes used in port so it's not at all surprising that a table wine made from these varieties will have a similar character and flavour. Quite a deep colour, but the palate seemed not quite as plummy as expected – a little lightweight perhaps, although very smooth, no rough edges, some spice and a little oak. One of us detected a 'custardy nose' indicating some creaminess maybe, but our overall reaction to this was mixed. There are some other examples of table wines made by the big port houses, and they can be excellent value.

8. First Edition Valle Secreto Carmenere 2013, Chile 14.5% £14.99

Valle Secreto is a boutique quality-driven winery from the high Cachapoal Valley, 130km south of Santiago. Their First Edition range of single-varietal wines is intended to showcase the high altitude Cachapoal terroir. Carmenere is Chile's signature red grape, now properly distinguished from the Merlot with which it had been confused in the past. Another massive bottle (all-too-common in Chile and Argentina) and this is a big wine in every sense, almost liquorice black in the glass, chocolatey on the palate, with a not-too-overwhelmingly alcoholic finish. 12m in French oak rounds it all out nicely although it probably needs some time yet.

This was an evening in which I could hardly note down the comments as fast as they sprung from the group, which surely indicates a tasting full of interesting wines. These were all sourced by Elaine from **The Wine-Man** in Yattenden, West Berkshire. A great advert for independent wine merchants, and a splendidly diverse selection of 'not on the high street' (and not French!) wines.