

The North Hampshire Wine Society Blog



'Wines of South Africa'

Presenter: Andy Finklaire

23 October 2019

All wines sourced from Majestic. Single bottle price (Mix 6 price)

The wines

Whites

- 1. Acacia Road Sauvignon Blanc 2018, Western Cape** £7.99
(5.99)
Colour pale and bright (gleaming!) Nose only lightly aromatic, quite restrained, floral rather than tropical. On the palate a zingy attack, a mid-weight citrus-dominant middle and a slightly bitter finish. Fruit felt a little unripe some of us thought.
- 2. Steenberg Sauvignon Blanc 2017, Stellenbosch** 14% £14.99
(11.24)
Similar bright pale lemon colour to wine 1. However here was a traditional 'Sauvignon' nose, quite leafy and significantly more pungent. On the palate a slight fresh spritz followed by much bigger riper flavours - some of us thought even a little 'oiliness' – perhaps due to a much weightier mid-palate. A longer finish in which the high alcohol level wasn't too dominant. This one met with general approval!
- 3. The Vinologist Chenin Blanc 2018, Swartland** £9.99
(7.99)
Entry level Chenin from Marc Kent of Boekenhoutskloof Estate. Pale colour but some viscosity in the glass. Quite a delicate citrus nose, palate certainly not thin though, plenty of substance and texture and pleasantly citrusy with a touch of Chenin stone fruit and apple. Made in a fresh unoaked style for early drinking. Falls away a bit at the end perhaps, but a decent well-balanced wine for 7.99.
- 4. Alheit Limited Release Chenin Blanc 2018** £19.99
(13.32)
By contrast, an oaked Chenin – a style that South Africa can do so well. Colour richer here, pale gold and noticeably bright again – a lovely colour. Oak discernable on the nose but not dominant. Very bright attack on the palate, lively, a fairly oaky palate certainly but pretty well in balance with more tropical fruit than wood in the mix. Nicely ripe with big Chenin acidity keeping it fresh. It did generate mixed reactions in the room, and if you're unsure about oaked whites generally this style of Chenin might be a bit much for you.

Reds

5. Barista Pinotage 2018

13% £9.99
(7.99)

Pinotage is a Pinot Noir/Cinsault cross and a 'marmite' wine if ever there was one, usually guaranteed to divide a room. There have always been top quality ones but also some dire cheap examples in the past. However new wave South African Pinotage can be a different animal - some are styled 'coffee pinotage' due to deliberate smoky coffee overtones on nose and palate. The name of this wine gives a clue what to expect...after a funky slightly stalky nose the palate showed distinct liquorice and coffee notes. Comments overheard: 'coffee grounds', 'bottom of the cafetiere' – which didn't sound approving but a straw poll showed that most of us liked this, and astonishingly for a Pinotage *no-one* admitted to actively *disliking* it, which has to be a result.

6. Marc Kent The Winemaker Series 'The Red' 2017

£12.99
(9.99)

Marc Kent, winemaker of famous red 'The Chocolate Block' has produced a 'sub Chocolate Block' here at a more affordable price. It's a Syrah/Cinsault/Cabernet Sauvignon blend which you'd think might be quite dense and firm, but in fact this was more like a lighter version of a Rhone blend. A vibrant plum colour, not dense or opaque, some peppery Syrah on the nose and light spice on the fresh relatively midweight palate. Not everyone liked this, but seemed good value at 9.99?

7. Rustenberg John X Merriman 2016

14.5% £17.99
(15.99)

A Bordeaux blend from historic Stellenbosch winery Rustenberg. Deep garnet colour, showing very little age yet. Nose still restrained, some Cabernet mint, Malbec in the blend but many of us picked up plummy Merlot. A 'potent' palate, good strong tannins, ripe fruit, a big wine. May need a bit of time still to open up – we thought this might be more of a piece in a couple of years. Quality wine.

8. Capaia One 2015

14% £14.99
(12.99)

An estate founded by Comte Stephan von Neipperg of St Emilion's Canon La Gaffeliere and La Mondotte, so there is real pedigree here. Blend is similar to Bordeaux right bank (Cabernet Franc/Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot) and the colour is very deep, almost black. A herbal rather than a spicy nose - someone said 'a bit "garrigue"' - meaning reminiscent of the southern French scrubby garrigue terroir and the herbal notes common to those wines. Big tannic structure underpinning a soft ripe palate which we all thoroughly enjoyed. This 2015 is probably showing at its best about now, and seems rather good value at 12.99.

Yet another great selection of wines from Andy together with a wealth of personal anecdotes from his family travels in South Africa

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