

# U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

## AUGUST 2020 NEWSLETTER



Dear Fellow Wine Members

Yet another month has passed without the joy of our U3A Groups, and of course our wine tasting meetings. However I hope you all remain well and safe, and look forward to the time we can meet again face to face.

Listening to William Sitwell's "Biting Talk" (on a Tuesday and Thursday evening, just 45 minutes where he has some very interesting guests in the food and drink industry) Will Lyons of Sunday Times Wine Club fame and a known wine expert, reminded us of how to store and serve wines and I thought it may be of use to repeat that here.

Wine can be stored anywhere dark and still with no vibration. Obviously ideal if the temperature does not fluctuate much at around 10 – 20 degrees, but the first two points are the crucial ones to prevent wine deteriorating. Most wines under £15 are made to be drunk fairly soon, but if you collect wine or buy expensive wines it is worth storing them carefully (on the basis you do not have a wine cellar). Our previous house luckily had a large built in wine chiller which kept wines at the optimum temperature and was so easy to just place bottles in, - it held about 48 bottles, but now it's the garage which is integral and so does not fluctuate too much.

Serving wines. Red wine should be served between 15 -16 degrees and be cool to the touch. Never warm reds by the fire, (or on the radiator as we have done in the distant past) to expedite drinking! This will accelerate the tannins.

White wine should be served not too cool, better at room temperature to reveal flavours, however Sherry must always be served very chilled.

Will Lyons was asked what he is drinking as a Summer white, perhaps as an aperitif and his reply was twofold. Firstly he recommended a Picpoul St Clair 2019 and remarked that most 2019 Picpouls should be very good, and secondly was excited by the newly enhanced quality of Touraine Sauvignon Blancs which are zippy and crisp.

Funnily enough, at our zoom wine tasting with friends last weekend, we compared two Sauvignon Blancs and one was a Touraine SB, Domaine du Vaux St Georges 2019, 12.5% from Majestic £9.99. The other a Rod Easthope Reserve SB 2019, 12.5% from Hawkes Bay NZ at £10.99 from Naked Wines. Opinion was split and in fact veered back and forth as the wines developed. The French SB had a crispness from the flinty terroir with citrus and elderflower nose, and a long length, overall quite delicate and lovely as an aperitif or with fish. The NZ SB had a floral and passionfruit nose (seaspray also according to tasting notes) and was quite complex and worth the additional £1 in our opinion. Having tasted the NZ the majority preferred it as having more “oomph” but then reflected that the French was more subtle. Both were very palatable and unlike the mass produced supermarket SBs you see so often. You get what you pay for ... The following day for lunch both SBs were finished to accompany home made smoked mackerel pate, a good match.

A few whites perhaps for you to look out for. Talking of which, some of our lovely members have been good enough to send me some more wine recommendations, which I hope may inspire you to try and enjoy.

Firstly from Janet Harvey on her Round the World in wines....

“Continuing my lockdown tour of new wines, I have reached Italy. All three of my choices are whites.

My first choice is Canaletto, 2019, Waitrose, £7.99. A Pinot Grigio from Venezia, it's dry, with a surprisingly floral nose initially though those odours die away quite quickly in the mouth. It has a crisp finish. It cannot

be called exciting but it is a good every day wine to go with an evening meal, comfortably accommodating a range of food from salad to curry.

My second choice is Prosecco Brezza Bianca, 2019, Laithwaite's (online), £7.99. Also from Venezia, and produced by the family vineyard Vinicola Tombacco from the region's Glera grapes, its label references the south-westerly Garbin wind, which blows inland from the Venetian Lagoon and helps the ripening grapes to retain their flavour. It is a lightly sparkling vino frizzante with a creamy mousse. The flavour is subtle, of peaches or melon with a slightly lemony aroma. Chilled, it makes a wonderful aperitif for a sunny evening and also goes well with food. Getting into the bottle can be an interesting challenge as the cork is strongly tied in with string!



My final Italian choice is La Roccaccia Verdicchio di Matelica, 2019, Laithwaite's (online), £10.49. From a vineyard in the Appenine foothills near Matelica, as its name indicates this wine is made from Verdicchio, one of Italy's best white wine grapes. It is presented in an elegant bottle of unusual shape (for which I am trying to think of a good upcycling use). The aroma is faintly peachy and very discreet, but the flavour is ripe and full, strongly citrus with mineral notes lasting to a good finish. The label

recommends it as an aperitif or to accompany a mushroom risotto, but I opened it to go with a Guangdong-style chicken stir-fry and it coped easily with the spices so it is potentially very versatile.”

Thanks Janet a good selection of Italian whites there, and I love the idea of a cork attached by string, I don't think I have ever seen one like that.

Now for a review from Ros & Ian Mitchell.

“We have continued to enjoy the wines we ordered from Ellis Wharton earlier in lockdown. We compared two Beaujolais wines which come from near Lyon in France. Beaujolais is made from the Gamay grape which is lower in tannin due to a thinner skin than Pinot Noir used in other burgundy wines. We found the wine shown below to be a little sharp and bitter, as though you could taste the grape skin.



The Raisins Gaulois wine was light, bright and fruity. We were a little put off by the graphic on the label but enjoyed the wine enough to order some more.”



Thank you Ros & Ian. Interesting about the label, “never judge a book” etc. If a wine is good enough to hold its own, the label does not need to be gimmicky, often the simplest labels hold the best wines. Of course, some wineries can afford excellent marketing budgets and sometimes the labels are just fun to look at, some works of art!

Chris, on a recent foray into Ellis Wharton Wines at Indian Queens (next door to Da Bara bakery which is very handy), bought some Appassimento Rosso from Puglia, Italy which had NO label, but a very attractive wrap around cover instead. Luckily we knew the wine well and so were not influenced by this, a novel wrapping. For info, the wine was £10 and is made from carefully selected Negroamaro, Malvasia Nero, Merlot and Cabernet grapes which are prepared following the Appassimento method, the process of drying grapes in ventilated drying lodges (fruttai) over the winter months. Through the drying process the grapes lose around 30% of their water content, the sugars and flavour compounds in the grapes are concentrated. In addition, acidity decreases while the

compounds linked to antioxidant properties in wine) and glycerin levels increase, lending balance, richness and a unique 'glossy' texture to the wines. This is a wine that is full bodied, rich and complex. Lots of complex and fruity flavours with notes of ripe dark cherries, fresh herbs and vanilla. An eminently decent "every day" red which complements many meat, pasta and cheese dishes.



Finally, if you enjoy French Bordeaux wines but not the price tag, take a look at South African Cabernet Sauvignons, which come a good second to Bordeaux at a fraction of the price. Now is the time when the 2017, an exceptional vintage should be hitting the UK shores (two other notable vintages are 2009 and 2015).

Happy wine drinking,

Kind regards

Amanda