

U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

NOVEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group members

The clocks have gone back, the dark long evenings are upon us, and Christmas is appearing in the shops....its nearly November and time for another missive from me. Perhaps also a time to start stocking up on deep luscious wines to keep us going through the Winter, over the Festive period and especially if we have to endure another lockdown.

A lot of us would automatically think of red wine in the Winter and we discussed Pinot Noir last month, but for those who prefer a white, wines that are high in acidity or alcohol (or both) are some of the best varieties to drink in the Winter, because they can stand up to heavier foods. Sparkling wines are also ideal for Winter celebrations as they are festive and pair well with both light and rich dishes. Some whites to look out for would be:

Viognier, bold and creamy. A full bodied **Chardonnay** especially New World oaked. **Chenin Blanc's** acidity will lift heavy rich foods. Off dry and sweet Riesling pair well with heavier dishes and spicy food. Remember not to chill whites too much in the Winter, let their flavours develop fully. If you're looking for a wine to pair with dessert, try an ultra-sweet white wine like Sauternes and Tokaji. As to other dessert wines, my "go tos" are the Andrew Quady dessert wines from California, I came across many years ago and think they are just fab. Made from the finest

quality Muscat grape: Elysium Black Muscat ideally matched with chocolate based desserts (not an easy pairing), Essensia Orange Muscat with notes of orange marmalade, great with peach apricot and apple desserts or cheesecake. Both full bodied and give a clean not cloying finish. Dip biscotti in them or put a good glug into some fizz.....delicious! Sold in half bottles.

Meanwhile I have received some interesting reviews from our members, as below for which I thank them all.

Nicky Tombs gave us a great review on comparing two Chianti Classico wines..."If I'm honest I have never been a great fan of wine; I drink it to be sociable and have never paid much attention to the wine other than some were more palatable than others.

During 'lock down' with a small group of friends, we have had a weekly online Zoom wine tasting evening. This has become one of the highlights of the week as an opportunity to socialise and taste/compare two different wines. I am amazed at how much I have learnt about different wines, types and regions, also this has highlighted how much I still have to learn!

I am now beginning to distinguish between different aromas and tastes. Also recognising how wine varies depending on weather, mood and food. I'm much more interested in pairing wine and food.

This week we compared two Chianti wines which we all agreed we rarely drink and the general feeling was that in the past they had a poor reputation of being inferior quality.

First we tasted:

Montemajone Chianti Classico 2018

Alc Vol:**13.00 %vol**

Grape:**Sangiovese**

Region:**Tuscany**

£11.99 exclusive to Waitrose



Colour is deep red but when swirled in the glass was quite thin and looked more deep pink. It had very little bouquet. My initial response was to suck my cheeks in and thought this is far too raw for me. My husband found it drinkable. However later we drank it with an Italian hearty beef stew and it greatly improved. Not a wine I would actively seek out or drink on its own but acceptable with food particularly beef, lamb and cheese.

Followed by

Villa Cafaggio Chianti Classico 2016

Alc Vol:**13.50 %vol**

Grape:**Sangiovese**

Region:**Tuscany**

£13.99 from Waitrose



Colour bright deep red and consistent when swirled. Here was a rush of spicy clove notes on the nose, with a wonderfully refined black cherry and plum fruitiness. My initial taste was liquorish, followed by fruit. It was soft but with a rich roundness and layers of flavour that lingered in the mouth. For the first time I recognised what others have talked about. This is a wine that can be drunk on its own but equally good with food as it is versatile and smooth. Pairing well with red meat, possibly game, pizza's and pasta – a good all-rounder.

The Villa Cafaggio is very different from the Montemajone Chianti. I found it interesting that both Chiantis were from the same region with the same grape but so different even allowing for different vintage. Was the Villa Cafaggio Chianti worth the £2.00 extra? Most definitely YES at £13.99 a bottle a very good buy. (An even better purchase when we bought it with 25% discount).”

Thanks Nicky, an interesting comparison and as you say the old 1970s Chiantis that came in to replace the German wines the UK had been used to, were often rough and ready. These days I believe (since 2006)

Chianti Classico cannot have white grape varieties added to the blend and the quality has improved.

Janet Harvey has continued her wine travels around the World...“As we now seem to be locking down again, I have resumed my international online tour of wines new to me. Following a recommendation in a newspaper article, I visited the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. I was previously unaware of the Lebanese wine industry. Apparently it is struggling because of recent events in The Lebanon, so I was happy to make some purchases to support its trade.

My first choice was Chateau Ksara Blanc de Blancs, 2018, allaboutwine (online), £12.89. A blend of Sauvignon (55%), Semillon (25%) and Chardonnay (20%), uncorking the bottle releases an astonishingly powerful and complex aroma of nuts and spice even before the wine is poured. The initial taste includes pineapple and lemon and the flavour lingers to a long finish. It goes well with food: the label suggests using it to accompany “delicate” fresh fish or seafood but I tried it with a rich crab pasta sauce and it was not overwhelmed. A good all-rounder white, it’s one I may well buy again.

My second choice was a Chateau Ksara rosé called Sunset, 2018, allaboutwine (online) £12.59. Sadly I found this disappointing. It’s not the palest of rosés but lacked depth of flavour. The aroma was mineral, slightly salty, but very faint, and the taste was not just very dry but too acid for my preference. Finding a wine one does not like is a useful experience but it’s unlikely to return to my cellar.

I still have a Gris de Gris to sample but the tasting notes suggest it’s a summer wine so I shall save it for warmer weather.”

I was so very interested to hear of you buying Lebanese white wines and your comments above, as one of our favourite reds is a Chateau Musar also from the Bekaa Valley. Wines have been made in Lebanon for more than 6,000 years but its wines were not really heard of on the International wine scene until Serge Hochar of Chateau Musar made his impression on the wine community, and with a career spanning more than 50 years survived the Lebanese war, to transform the profile of Lebanon. We have, somewhere tucked away in our wine racks a bottle of 2003 which is just waiting for a special moment to open....but should we wait, perhaps in the next weeks we should just open it and enjoy this beautiful wine that has been highly rated. It is worth noting that Chateau

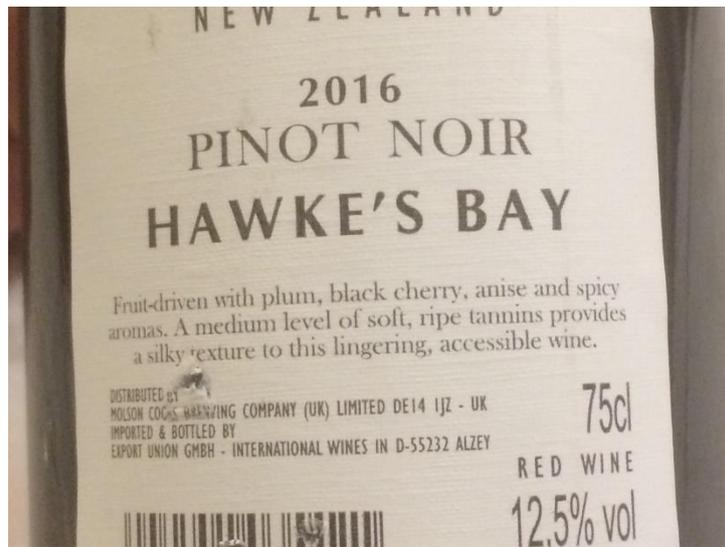
Musar themselves often hold onto great vintages for many years before releasing them, the 2003 vintage was only released in 2010 when they thought it perfect. Chateau Musar also produce some really great complex rich and perfumed whites again released many years after production, and will be at their best after several hours breathing time. Do look out for them.

Another review from **Pippa Boardman** “Sancerre Sur le Fort 2018 Domaine Fouassier.

A treat. This bottle appeared in our wine collection as part of a larger experiment. Having enjoyed Sancerre for years until the pricing stopped it becoming a regular tippie we were interested in trying some happy memories during the Covid times – anything to cheer the mood - Majestic had excelled themselves delivering Budweiser instead of the wine that we had ordered. The Sur le Fort arrived as a partial compensation package and so our experiment continued. The taste was expensive, delicious and just as good as we remembered Sancerre to be. Not too floral, not minerally, rich and a delight. £19.99 rather than £24.99 when on offer earlier in the year.”

Glad to know that Sancerre, a Sauvignon Blanc wine from the Upper Loire, is still as good as you remembered it. Always a good pairing I think with fish, white meats and slightly acidic cheeses such as Goats or Feta.

Finally a review from **Mick and Jenny Skipp** “We were away overnight a couple of weeks ago, and decided to try a Pinot Noir with our dinner at the hotel, as Amanda had mentioned in her last newsletter that it was a good one for Autumn and this Hawkes Bay was the only one available on the wine list. Although the description of being fruit-driven with plum, cherry, anise and spicy aromas was correct to some extent, we both found it very disappointing, and with no depth.



We were still intent on trying some more Pinot Noir, so this weekend we tried the Calusari from Romania, and the Alf (Alfrocheiro grape considered to be Portugal's version of Pinot Noir) and found them to be much more pleasing., especially with food.

The Hawkes bay, was of course well over-priced as we paid the hotel price. The Calusari and Alf were both purchased from Wadebridge wines, who suggested we compare the two. Calusari was £8.25, and Alf £11.75. I preferred Calusari after having it with food, my husband preferred Alf - he considered it to have more body and a richer taste. Thinking about the three wines, and the sometimes distinct, and sometimes subtle differences, it makes me realise I will just have to sample more!!

Take care everyone, we have bumped into some of you over the last months (socially distanced bumping of course) but really look forward to meeting up again properly some time to make some more happy memories. Jenny and Mick.”



So pleased you explored Pinot Noir, and your reviews just show how different climates, terrain and of course winemakers can vary the base grape. If you recall, one of our first members' tastings way back in May 2019 we sampled 4 Pinot Noirs from Chile, France, NZ and UK, with the French mid-priced wine voted the best wine of the night.

I am delighted to hear that some of you are interested in the zoom wine tastings I talked about in my mail earlier, and if you do attend any, perhaps you too could give a brief summary of any wines you liked, or indeed disliked. It is all education, and although we differ with our palates and preferences, it is interesting to hear of new, unusual or different wines and how our members perceived them.

So, happy wine glugging and stay safe.

Regards

Amanda