

U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP
FEBRUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group members

I don't know about you, but we feel lockdown January has whizzed past and cannot quite believe February is here. For our part, Chris and I have made sure we get out and walk every day despite the weather as its so good for our health and well being - and so we have *sloshed through rain, slipped and skidded through mud*, been dressed in full waterproofs and looked like *Nanook of the North* when we hit a very cold spell! We try to do our steps, sometimes achieving them, sometimes a shorter walk, but all in the local area, and what has been great is coming home to the smell of a tagine or casserole bubbling away in the slo cooker and deciding which wine would best go with it. (As it is January we have ***tried*** not to drink alcohol Monday to Thursday which has made the weekends even more enjoyable and our choice of wine more important somehow.)

After procrastinating for some while, we have at last compiled a list (spreadsheet) of the wines we have, as often we just didn't know exactly what was in the racks (some in the house, others in the garage) and that made our choosing a wine more difficult. However, I am pleased to report that I am now in charge of updating said list when we drink a bottle, and of course when we purchase more. We are making a note of where we bought the wine and any comments we have on it, especially if it's a new wine to us, and one we wish to buy again. It sounds very pretentious and hence our delay in doing this, but on a practical level it's a better option to actually know what the choice of wine available is. Let's hope I remember to keep updating.... Do any of you keep a wine record like this?

As February may be another long month for some, I recently saw information on **Waitrose virtual wine tastings running in February**, where you buy one (or all 3) of the bottles of wine featured and also **pay £10**. Then on the night, join a qualified Specialist for an entertaining and informative wine experience, where you'll learn how to taste, how to think about pairing wine and food, and pick up some top tips for entertaining. Enjoy a relaxed session to join 6 other households of like-minded people. Simply purchase in advance, a bottle of one or all of the following wines : San Leo Prosecco, Ara Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc and/or Catena Malbec. If you can't find these exact wines, it's not a problem to bring something similar. Sounds excellent value and a fun time. <https://experiences.johnlewis.com/events/explore-wine-tasting-at-home-10-83>

Wine Reviews

Furmint, Tokaji Hungary

In sorting out our wines we found a white wine from the Tokaji region in Hungary from 2011, and hoped it hadn't deteriorated as we fancied trying it that evening. It was a wonderful wine, dry and crisp with a minerality but rich, luscious in the mouth with apricots and peaches and was perfect on its own pre supper, and then a perfect match with our lemon chicken, but would also match seafood and hold its own against spicy dishes. Furmint (the grape variety) is incredibly versatile. It has aspects of Riesling in its ability to go from bone dry to sweet, with a streak of acidity. Then it has similarities to Chardonnay in its ability to

produce great sparkling wine, (think fiery, spicy Chablis) and complex layered ones (think Burgundy on steroids). We cannot remember where we purchased it probably a while ago, but **Waitrose sell a 2019 for £9.99, otherwise Laithwaites or Sunday Times Club.** We shall be buying more!



Just on a separate note, we found a very old Amarone wine in the corner of a rack in the garage which we were looking forward to last Saturday to accompany a fillet steak, however on opening it (luckily in advance) it was way over its drinkability and was brown and flat. We quickly opened a different bottle, however I have to say the Amarone made a beautiful sauce with the steak, and has made many of this week's suppers quite delicious being "slopped in", additionally poaching our glut of pears in it with spices was delicious never waste a sip!

Catena Alta Malbec - from Pippa & David Boardmann

Earlier this month with another lockdown looming we decided that treats were going to be needed. This Malbec wine from Argentina uses grapes from specific parcels of land within the vineyard that are classed as their "historic rows". This wine was a perfect accompaniment to a 7 hour slow cooked lamb dish for our first "treat day". A fairly dense, medium to full bodied wine. We both noted fruit and earthy tones with a slightly dryer

taste than one would have expected from a Malbec, but this wasn't detrimental. Definitely a treat for us - it was a present. We rated it as 9 out of 10 for taste but 7 out of 10 on a price to value ratio. **£29.99 from Waitrose.**



Below are some notes from the vineyard itself which you may find useful for more detailed information if you are interested. D&P.

WINE DESCRIPTION

Nicola Catena planted his first Malbec vineyard in Mendoza in 1902. His grandson, Nicolás Catena, is known as the man who revolutionized Argentine wine and introduced high altitude Malbec to the world. The Historic Catena Zapata vineyards are planted with the Catena family's proprietary selection of malbec plants: the Catena Cuttings. Catena Alta Malbec is sourced from Block 18 of the Angélica vineyard, Block 4 of the La Pirámide vineyard, Block 1 of the Nicasia vineyard, Block 6 of the Angélica Sur vineyard and Block 9 of the Adrianna vineyard.

VINIFICATION

Vineyard lots are harvested at different times to ensure optimal natural acidity and moderate alcohol levels. Whole berries are hand loaded into small format fermentation bins and 225-500 L barrels; lots from each vineyard are treated individually; fermentation and maceration last for 28-30 days; cold maceration. Wild yeasts. Alcoholic and malolactic

fermentation in barrel; wine undergoes active battonage to protect it and drastically reduce the amount of SO2 needed. Aged for 18 months in French oak.

HISTORIC ROWS

Catena Alta is an assemblage of historic rows within the Catena family Estate vineyards. The blend of these historic rows, like the marriage of sounds that create a symphony, yields a highly aromatic and elegant wine that speaks for the earth and the vines that have been tended by the Catenas for four generations. The Catena Alta wines can usually be drunk starting at three years after harvest and into the following one to two decades.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

- **Varietal:** 100% Malbec
- **Alcohol:** 13.8 %
- **Total Acidity:** 6 grams/liter
- **pH:** 3.61
- *Unfined and unfiltered*

Thanks to David & Pippa for this very detailed description, the wine certainly got my juices going as well as that 7 hour slow cooked lamb!

Talking of wine “reviews” I recently saw a list of “Best value Supermarket Winter Red wines” and thought I would jot them down here for you. At least you can order a bottle or two with your weekly shopping without leaving the house, and I know Aldi sell on line if you buy 6 bottles. I don’t think Lidl’s online service is up and running yet, but if a friend or neighbour were going there in person it may be worth trying a bottle. Of course many supermarkets have their **25% off promotions**, worth looking out for in addition. Cannot guarantee availability or price long term as these will sell very quickly.

Aldi Princes de France Gigondas 2018 £9.99 vegan & vegetarian (spice and fruit)

Asda Extra Special Valpolicella Ripasso 2017 £9.50 vegan & vegetarian deep full bodied wine.

Coop Irresistible Fairtrade Organic Malbec 2018 £7.50 vegan & vegetarian, full bodied, bursting with plum, cherry and jam.

Lidl Saint-Emilion Grand Cru 2017 £10 vegetarian, dry firm, plummy fruit with a note of oak.

M&S Classics Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 £8, vegan & vegetarian, smooth and intensely fruity with plum and red ripe berries

Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Cotes de Ventoux 2018 £10, vegan & vegetarian, juicy raspberries meets aromatic spice and finish with a silky elegance

Tesco Finest Malbec 2019 £8, vegetarian, elegant blackberry and plum flavours and lighter notes of blueberry and white pepper with long and fruity finish

Waitrose No1, Cederberg Syrah 2018 £10, vegan & vegetarian, rich red fruit flavours of mulberry with ripe juicy cherries balanced with elegant oak

Another review from Janet Harvey on her virtual “World tour of wine” -

Having rediscovered the joys of White Rioja last summer, I have been exploring this variety further, most recently with **Finca-Montalvillo (2018)**, <https://www.laithwaites.co.uk>, **£12.49 (£11.19** if purchased as part of a case of 12).

This estate-bottled wine is a new venture from a long-established wine-making family, the Murúas, who also make the Barón de Barbón white Rioja I recommended last summer. Their Montalvillo estate is just over 500 metres above sea level in the foothills of the Sierra de Yerga in eastern Rioja. The vineyard is very small, producing only modest yields, but the location, with a slightly cooler and more even climate than most of Rioja, and well-drained soil, apparently provides ideal conditions for the Tempranillo grapes. This was particularly so in 2018 when long slow ripening promoted good quality taste and aroma in the crop. This wine has a citrus aroma and taste and is deliciously crisp: akin to a good Sauvignon but with a lemon, rather than gooseberry, finish to the flavour. It is fine on its own but also good with food, particularly chicken and fish. I understand this vineyard also produces a good red Rioja, should anyone wish to seek it out.

Janet, thank you so much for this information and I am sure our readers will be interested in the white variety of a well known red wine varietal.

**Another review from Pippa Boardmann - Las Parcelas Crianza Rioja
2015 £11.99 - £14.99 14%**



“The wine rack was full, so we brought this inside to warm up, without giving it proper consideration. What a result! The wine had a slightly earthy aroma, a hint of cloves but pleasing to the nose. On tasting it was smooth, almost creamy, with a lingering of soft berries. I was surprised to see 14% as it had seemed very gentle to my palette. The Las Parcelas came as part of a Christmas Box from Naked Wines and I’d like to find it in my Christmas stocking next year.

Thanks Pippa, always great excitement to see a bottle in one’s Christmas stocking. It looks like this wine has been aged for 5 years, and will drink quite comfortably for another 5 to come, so here’s to your next Christmas stocking contents!

A big thank you to our contributors this month for their wine reviews.....which brings me onto something else. As with the U3A, this wine group is about sharing ideas, knowledge and information and should be participatory where everyone gives an input. It would be really good if everyone reading this could have a think of what they could contribute from **time to time** to our monthly newsletters. Of course I am happy to prattle on about wine, but it would be so much better if we had your views too. Perhaps you have a wine anecdote, or a story to tell about a wine holiday, or just memories of a special occasion with a special wine. Otherwise just tell us about a recent bottle of wine you have enjoyed; a supermarket special offer which you enjoyed (or didn’t)

is of as much interest as a more expensive bottle. I very much look forward to receiving some interesting “titbits” from you.

So to finish, I wish you all another safe month where some of you may have already received the vaccine and others may soon, and a month where we all enjoy a glass of wine, albeit not together face to face, but perhaps together in spirit.

Cheers!



Amanda