

# U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

## JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group members

As 2021 approaches tomorrow, leaving behind the strange year that was 2020, I think this is a time for reflection and also hope.

I am reflecting on the two years of running this Wine Appreciation Group and the fun we had in our first 12 months of 2019. We had high hopes of continuing our tastings and outings during 2020, unfortunately suddenly curtailed in March. However, we have remained in touch through these monthly newsletters and I thank those who have given their input to inform and educate others. I have hope that sometime this year we may again be able to meet and recommence our tasting pleasure together when we all feel safe and comfortable doing so, hopefully having been vaccinated. Meanwhile we can continue our enjoyment of this fascinating subject in the comfort of our own homes, often buying online with deliveries straight to our door, how lucky is that in these strange times. Even if we do not all want to try everything mentioned within the newsletters, perhaps it is just interesting to read of something different, file it away and bring out when the occasion demands – for instance when an unusual gift is required??

## Tasting Wine

I am often asked questions about “tasting wine”, and so I thought I would just make a few points again, forgive me if you already know all this.

Most of what is commonly called the sense of taste, is in fact the sense of smell, whether talking about wine, food or any drink. (Try tasting with your nose pinched shut or when suffering a heavy head cold, to verify this). I won't bore you with all the technical and biological factors involved in our olfactory receptors (sense of smell), suffice to say our olfactory sense is extremely acute and a smell can transport us back to something we smelt many years before. The tasting capacity of the mouth is more limited, and our that sense can register fizziness, temperature, viscosity and extract, the heat generated on the palate by excessive alcohol and the sensation induced by tannins of drying out the insides of the cheeks. The tongue has taste receptors we call taste buds, which can sense the 5 primary tastes of sweetness, acidity, bitterness, saltiness, and umami. There is genetic variation in how many taste buds we have, and approximately a quarter of the population are considered extremely sensitive “supertasters”. These people make excellent Sommeliers.

Most wines will not give a saltiness or umami taste, but sweetness and acidity are two important measures in tasting wines. The apparent sweetness of a wine however is not necessarily the same as its residual sugar. High acidity can make a wine taste much drier than it actually is for example. Our mouth's tasting ability, linked to our olfactory sense, is in measuring the wine, assessing its dimensions of sweetness, acidity, bitterness, fizziness, viscosity, potency and astringency. In addition, the mouth can assess a wine's texture and structure, while the nose senses what we call its flavour. Confusingly, the sense of taste is really the sense of smell, and what is called flavour is really aroma (bouquet)! When all this is added up, the balance of a wine can be assessed and the length of the aftertaste, two important indicators of quality. To taste wine correctly, we should firstly assess the colour in the glass, agitate the wine in the glass to release the aromas, take a good sniff and then take a slurp swilling the wine around the mouth to hit all the taste buds and if possible inhale air into the mouth at the same time, before spitting out! Each stage of assessing the wine could occupy many pages as to how to identify and recognise, but not for now. Suffice to say everyone will taste wine differently, there is no right and wrong, and our physical

well being also plays a part, but the key factor for us all is “Did we enjoy tasting the wine and will we enjoy drinking it again”.

Meanwhile onto some reviews.

After previously recommending Pinot Noir as a good match for Christmas luncheon, Chris and I enjoyed a couple of bottles of **Long Barn Pinot Noir 2018 13%, Napa Valley**. We had tasted this wine at Penrose Kitchen, just outside Truro, inbetween lockdowns, where we had a fabulous meal in a very Covid safe environment, and enjoyed the Chef's wine choices with each course. (Thoroughly recommend the restaurant). This particular wine was sourced from Ellis Wharton at Indian Queens, and so on a trip over there to get Christmas wines and spirits we found the wine and purchased a couple of bottles within a mixed box, together with some excellent Limoncello (more about that below) and Cornish Gins.

Meanwhile, Long Barn is from a producer in the Napa Valley, California - Fior di Sole, who create premium wines from the Napa Valley, Sonoma, North Coast and California and produce all of the wine in their state-of-the-art winery and bottling facility in Napa. The wine is pale ruby red in colour with a soft nose of red cherries. On the palate, notes of bramble fruit and cherries combine with a subtle sweet spice character and a fresh acidity. Well structured with soft tannins and a silky feel in the mouth, the fresh fruit flavours linger on the palate. It went exceedingly well with all the rich accompaniments to the turkey, and perhaps not a wine we would have previously chosen, but now we are converted and another order will be placed soon. Should match roast chicken or pork. Normal price £13 but currently on offer at £12.



**Bepi Tosolini Limoncello 28% £24**

Going back to the subject of Limoncello....I always have been a “Cointreau girl”, love the “bitter sweet virtues of orange”, remember the TV ad? However as we have visited Italy so many times my allegiance has swapped to Limoncello, an excellent after dinner digestif/tipple poured over an ice cube...



We noticed a bottle amongst the choices in Ellis Wharton, of an Artisan produced Limoncello handcrafted in Italy 100% natural, no preservatives or colourings. The colour is pale lemon with a slight green tinge and similar to homemade lemonade, not the bright yellow of other commercially produced versions. Limoncello is traditionally made from Femminello St. Teresa lemons, which are also known as Sorrento lemons or Sfusato Lemons. Tosolini Limoncello is made using the peel only of yellow summer lemons and green winter lemons harvested from the Amalfi coast, which is considered to be the best area for lemons. The peels are steeped in neutral grape spirit which releases the lemon oils into the solution. This lemon alcohol infusion is then mixed with a simple sugar syrup to produce the Limoncello liqueur. The producers Bepi Tosolini donate the lemons after taking the peel, back to the Community in an effort to remain sustainable. Pungent lemon and lime zest aroma, well balanced taste (not as sweet as others), zesty lemon and lime with slight sherbet sweetness and creamy finish. Eminently quaffable, I love it! Friends have, in the past, made Limoncello for me, however I am sorry to say not a patch on this one. Have seen on Amazon recently for a bargain £20.

Now for some reviews from **Janet Harvey**:

“Firstly a wine review. This wine was a new one for me. I am happy to recommend it.

**Queen Bee Viognier (Laithwaites, 12.5% £12.99 or £8.99 for a mixed case of 12)** Named for the local Cape honey bee, and produced by the Mount Rozier winery in Stellenbosch South Africa as part of their “Bees Knees” range! It’s not entirely accurate to call it Viognier as it is a blended wine, though with only a small proportion of Chardonnay added. It’s a nice dry, bright white with a peachy aroma, and a strong finish. The vineyard apparently uses French oak but I did not detect any oakiness. It goes well with the strongly flavoured food of Christmas time.”

*Thanks Janet, I can also imagine it going well with spicy food and seafood.*



“Responding to Amanda’s request for reviews of gifts, mine included:

### **Arran Gin**

Produced on the Isle of Arran in Scotland, using hand-foraged botanicals growing wild on the island, at first taste this gin is unusual and I wondered if I was imagining the odour of spruce. However when I checked the ingredients, the first botanical listed is noble fir. Also used are hogweed, sea lettuce (a seaweed), fuchsia, lemon balm and meadowsweet. Despite a broadly floral feel which develops in the flavour, none of the other botanicals came through as strongly as the fir. Served with tonic, I felt it still needed a slice of lemon or lime, but it is a good gin as gin goes, and like all good gin I am pretty sure it will go! I understand it can be ordered from the producer:

see <https://www.isleofarrangin.com/> £38.99 for 70ml or £15.99 for 20ml

### **Andresen 10yr old White Port 20%, £14.99 50ml**

This may already be well known to group members. For those less well acquainted, this white port has all the sweet honey and raisin quality of tawny port but is just a little more delicate in both aroma and taste. If you require something really powerful to take on Christmas pudding, it may not work for you, but it is fine with mince pies and absolutely ideal

with cheese, nuts and both fresh and dried fruit. The lovely deep apricot colour also looks good among candles on the table, and it does not require decanting. It's widely available."

*Janet I appreciate your reviews, always an interesting choice. I enjoy Cornish Gin botanicals and can image the taste of the Arran gin from your great description. As for the white port, sounds like it could be great chilled as an aperitif too perhaps.*

And now a review from **Jenny Skipp** :



"Christmas was ok for us - just much quieter. I bought Mick a case of Mature Reds from Laithwaites and he chose the above bottle for our Christmas dinner. This was the bottle that was lowest in alcohol - as we had already had a few glasses of bubbly during the day. The **Diego de Almagro Reserva 2014 13%** comes from a family cellar that has twice been awarded 'Best producer in Spain', and is described as being a barrel aged, seductively mellow Reserva. We both agreed that it was most definitely mellow - a really smooth red from Tempranillo grapes, with a pleasing and inviting spicy nose, and what felt like layers of intense flavour.

On reading the write-up we found this is produced from the 'old-timers' of the vines in the vineyard, which only yield a frugal harvest - hence the concentrated flavour. It has spent a year in oak and over 3 in the bottle. We don't think the remaining bottles will remain bottled for very long at all!"

*Thanks Jenny, sounds like you enjoyed it very much. This wine is from Valdepenas, central Spain and generally retails for around £14.99 unless buying 6 with Laithwaites when it is £12.99.*

Thanks as ever to our contributors, a few more wines and spirits this time, to note down.

Well everyone, that is it for this month and so I would just like to finish by wishing each and every one of you a Happy and Healthy New Year. Stay safe, and I look forward to hearing your reviews perhaps from your “stay at home New Year celebration”.

Kind regards  
Amanda