

# U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

## NOVEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group members

November is nearly with us ... and later this month at midnight on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Beaujolais Nouveau will be released – a light and fruity wine made from the Gamay grape, released within 6 to 8 weeks of the grapes being picked. As a result Beaujolais Nouveau is almost like a white wine, despite its purple pink colour. It is often served slightly chilled at about 13degC, it doesn't improve with age so needs to be drunk!

Well over 100 events throughout France are held with fireworks, music, and, of course, tastings, as the whole world vies to sample the new batch of Beaujolais. The 1960s saw the start of an obsession with getting the new vintage before anyone else and what began as a sprint to get the wine to Paris, spread to become a race to get bottles to locations across the world. I can remember back in the 80's driving madly over to France in convoy with friends to buy some early bottles and to see the very lively and quirky labels, but generally was disappointed in the thin young wine although had a great time nonetheless! Beaujolais itself however is a light, fresh and fruity low tannin wine with some great examples, especially Beaujolais Villages and Beaujolais cru.

**Review of October's Tasting – Wines of South Africa by Old Chapel Cellars.** On the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month Louisa Fitzpatrick, (ex St Austell Brewery

Head of Wine) and now co-owner of Old Chapel Cellars, gave 18 of us a fabulous tasting, with great insight into the history of, and quality now of South African wines, dispelling for some the inferior quality hitherto thought representative of the region that has been making wine since the 1600s. She gave a clear, concise and fact driven presentation in a relaxed and fun style, prompting many questions and discussions. Personally I enjoyed all 5 wines, very different in their own way, all of great quality and depth of flavour. If you see a label with “Bush Vines” this is an indication of quality, with more concentration of flavour from the grape. The wines were as follows (with u3a members receiving a 10% discount from OCC who will deliver a mixed case to your home):



**Forge Mill, Chenin Blanc 2021 12.5% £8.99.** Very pale dry, with tropical peach and apricot flavours with a dry fresh flavour. A summer wine or aperitif.

**Greenwood Chardonnay 2019 14.5% £22.99.** 50% of this wine had been aged in new oak French barrels giving a toasty caramel flavour on a golden wine. It was wonderfully luscious with a long finish and only a hint of oak, would suit seafood, creamy pasta and cheeses.

**Holden Manz Blend 2019 14% £21.99.** The quality of this blend of Chardonnay, Viognier and Chenin Blanc surprised us all and I was delighted to be able to note the slightly perfumed viognier flavour amongst a full bodied complex delicious creamy wine with hints of minerality. A luxurious quaffing wine or bold enough to accompany a Christmas lunch with all the trimmings.

**Lanzerac Pinotage 2018 14.5% £15.** Lanzerac (1692) were the first to bottle Pinotage (cross between Pinot Noir and Hermitage (Cinsault)). Deep dark cherry colour giving plenty of fruit spice and oak which developed in chocolate and mocha. Will age for 5/10yrs easily.

**Holden Manz Big G 2016 14.5% £29.99.** A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot using hand picked and then hand selected

grapes, aged in old French oak barrels for 24 months. Small production of only 44 barrels a year of this quality big wine. "Big G" is named after the owner Gerald Holden. Rich deep fruits of black and blueberries, slight oak buttery richness with again a hint of chocolate. We were given squares of very dark chocolate to taste alongside which certainly enhanced the flavours. This will keep for years.

This wine tasting I think, is a great example of something we have achieved within our wine group, which is to open our minds (and tastebuds) to new or unusual wines, and to be able to taste wines of £20 and £30 with the experience of someone imparting their knowledge. We are able then to add to our own knowledge, and should we not favour a £30 wine we at least know what it is like to try.

Old Chapel Cellars have many tastings up their sleeve, and it may be a good venue to visit towards the end of next year for a "Christmas tasting".



## Forthcoming Events

**November 16<sup>th</sup> at The Ship Inn, Pentewan 7-9pm** (make your own way, suggest sharing a taxi) **Cost £20pp**

Bookings for this are now closed, and I am very much looking forward to our next tasting with 20 members booked in for A "selection of 5 wines for Winter from around the World" – red, white and a dessert wine along with complementing nibbles provided by the Ship. The evening will include some surprises along the way and a fun wine themed quiz. Hosted by Carol Avery

a local wine aficionado from Pentewan, with a wealth of wine knowledge, and a chance for us to hear from someone new at a new venue. A review will follow next month.

FOR ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BOOKED: PLEASE BRING YOUR TASTING GLASSES, THANK YOU.

**December 16<sup>th</sup>, Arts Centre from 6.30pm, Christmas Wines & Food social evening** cost for wines & room fee **£12.50pp**

Another opportunity for a fun and social evening, where members are asked to bring a platter of “finger Christmas party food” – I will coordinate the food to ensure an even balance of sweet and savoury, so please have a think of what you could cook and bring and let me know. Ideally individual items/sliced finger food easily picked up, to avoid the need for sharing (so no dips). Items such as: canapes, sausage rolls, cheese boards (cheese cut please), smoked salmon & fish delicacies, quiches cut into slices, mince pies, Christmas cake cut into slices, stuffed dates and similar will go down well and we shall have a feast with accompanying alcohol beverages. The wine group will purchase champagne, white, rose and red wines, a dessert wine and a Port or Madeira from the cost of the evening. There will be also be a raffle, so look out any wine or food related items you could donate and bring to November’s meeting, get to me or on the night, many thanks.

To book your place on the above event, please pay in the usual way as below by 10<sup>th</sup> December. I hope you can all understand that due to the nature of our group, once the deadline booking date is passed for any meeting, there can be no refund as either us, or outside presenters have to order and pay for the wines in advance. Your reference for each event will be your 4 digit membership number followed by “WG & the month” WGDec

Bank account details as follows:

St Austell u3a.                      Account 23132587 (Barclays Bank)  
Sort code 20-30-47

**Regarding a programme for 2022 ....** (first few dates for the diary and I hope you approve of my choices)

**January:** As usual and after the excesses of the Festive Period, there will be no meeting in January.

**February 17<sup>th</sup>:** I am hopeful we can kick off 2022 with a tasting in February at “The Bottle” in Newquay - this has been on my radar since opening, and having recently read a great review in a foodie magazine, I thought we should explore it. “The Bottle is a fun new eatery, deli and wine bar set back off the beaten track in central Newquay, offering a twist on the traditional. Inspired by visits to France, Rob and Toyah have recreated a haven that reflects the informal and friendly style of French wine bars and offer two levels of wine tasting and two levels of food.” I thought we would start off in February with the basic level and if all goes well perhaps a return visit later in the year for the more advanced tasting.

A wine tasting of 5 wines with paired cheeses, and a minibus/coach to transport us there. They require a deposit to confirm a booking, **so part payment** will be needed by December 15<sup>th</sup> of £15 pp paid as above please and confirm to me once paid. Once numbers are confirmed I will add the cost of a minibus/coach to the balance of £10pp and advise you accordingly.

**March 17<sup>th</sup>:** Andrew & Christine Johnson have **very kindly** offered to plan and host a “Wine Tasting Quiz Night” for our March meeting at the Arts Centre – something new where I won’t know anything about the evening including the wines to be tasted!! An outline will appear in a later newsletter. So very grateful to see members actively participating in organising one of our meetings.

**April 21: tbc**

**May 19<sup>th</sup>:** A visit to Looe Valley vineyard – established in 2008 on a sunny site in the East Looe Valley, by owners Charles Boney and Sue Brownlow (been on the local news this week about the ups and downs of the grapes this year due to the climate). 5,500 vines on 4 acres, their aim is to create high quality local hand-crafted artisan wines. Minibus transport, a private 2 hr visit hosted by the owner and winemaker Charles with some hands on experience! Includes a tour of the vineyard and discussion on growing vines and good for any gardeners, moving onto the wine making area and finishing with a wine tasting with cheese or vegan platters on their covered terrace. Again a deposit will be required to secure the booking.

**June:** Garden Party slightly earlier than usual in the hope of better, more stable weather! Date & venue tbc.

In the spirit of the u3a, it would be nice to think other members could plan and host an evening during the year. It can be anything to do with wine, I am happy to either purchase the wines or give you a budget to work from. Perhaps you and a partner or group of friends could have a chat to come up with an idea? It was a member who suggested the wine tasting at the Ship Inn, Pentewan and knew Carol Avery as a wine presenter keen to offer her services. Another member is currently looking at the possibility of a Gin or Cider tasting, which could be an addition to our wine programme if enough members are interested. I have enough admin with running wine events and so if you think of something else you can arrange, plan, cost and do everything for, all the better and I am happy to mention in these newsletters.

When at the Arts Centre, we will aim to keep to the third Thursday in the month starting at 6.30pm until 8.30/9pm. (sometimes when using outside speakers or venues this may change).

Regarding Camel Valley vineyard - It now appears even trickier than last year, in that they will still not pre-book a large group, and their booking system now only allows for 20/25 daily tour/tasting slots to become available **only a week prior**. Based on this and the fact we would have to pre-book and pay well in advance for transport, it simply would not be feasible. I can only suggest that you do try and book your own tour and transport on a day to suit as the reviews are excellent and award winning wines. Perhaps get together with friends to book a taxi there and enjoy?

## **Members' wine recommendations**

I thought some of you may be interested in a brief review of Edie's Wine Tasting Dinner recently held, at which 8 our members attended. Obviously Edie's wine supplier is a wholesale supplier, but I have had a quick look and all are available at various sources, so I have given an estimated price in brackets.

**Ros Mitchell** did a review of the aperitif:

"Croft Twist" 5.5% (before being mixed into a cocktail with gin) (£7.95)

Alongside bread and large succulent olives, we were welcomed at our table with a large glass of attractively presented cocktail. Pale yellow in colour contrasting with a black straw and a sprig of fresh mint on ice cubes. Perhaps we would have appreciated it more on a really hot day but the taste of the aperitif did not appeal, for me it was dominated by a bitter gin - Kelly from Edie's had chosen to serve this Croft Twist with additional gin and prosecco. The cocktail had clearly been popular in the restaurant over the

summer season. Croft Twist is made by Gonzales Byass in Manchester and is low alcohol and slightly sparkling using a traditional Croft Sherry and Fino Sherry mix with an elderflower lemon and mint cordial as the botanicals, using a sparkling water base.”

(...sounds to me that the basic Croft Twist would make a good low alcohol sparkling aperitif on its own.)

**Margaret Steer** commented on the White Wine which accompanied a crab starter:

“Lusco Albarino, 2020, 13% (eg Ocado £15)

Lusco – setting sun or twilight. Made from carefully selected Albariño grapes and hand harvested. Fermented with native yeasts and left to age on the fine lees for five months.

This lovely very easy drinking white wine was clear and bright with a golden colour. On the nose the aromas were an intense apple and pear with a floral hint. Despite its youth, on the palate the wine is rounded with a long finish, plus a hint of citrus. A structured and elegant wine. 100% Albarino, a good choice to accompany any fish or seafood.

**Ros** reviewed the Red Wine which accompanied the main course of chicken, dauphinoise potatoes, leeks, wild mushrooms and tarragon:

La Miranda Secastilla Garnacha 2017 14% (around £10)

This was a lovely wine, bright red in colour and quite light and smooth, very drinkable. It reminded us of sharp red fruits with some cinnamon type spice.

David Hayward from Gonzales Byass explained that the vineyards in Somantano which means “under the mountain” are exposed to a Mediterranean microclimate although this is north east Spain, near the Pyrenees. The vineyards are very sloping and the garnacha (grenache) vines are picked by hand, the soil is sandy loam and shingle. Trellises are used to avoid mildew. After drying and macerating in stainless steel tanks using natural yeast fermentation, the wine is aged in French oak barrels for 8 months. He told a lovely story of how the wine was named Miranda after the old lady from whom his company bought the vineyards. Apparently she was not interested in the vines and continues to take her living from a cash crop of olives and almonds grown between the vines.

Finally **Margaret** reviewed the “dessert wine” which accompanied a chocolate and cherry dessert:

The dessert wine was a different choice to usual, Pedro Ximenez which is a white grape destined for sweet wines. It is fortified at 15%, the grapes are laid out and dried in the sun, and is in cask for an average of 8 years and is an ebony colour. On the nose there are rich aromas of raisins, dates, honey and figs. The palate is velvety and smooth. Best served chilled in a small wine glass, should be able to accompany most rich desserts. (Around £11)

I think that is enough reading for you now, (I expect some of you have glazed over), so enjoy November and I will see 20 of you again for our next tasting.

Regards Amanda