

# U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

## DECEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group members

Firstly, a trivial fact... **1,770 million bottles of wine were consumed in the UK during 2020** (the world of wine report). I wonder what the figure for 2021 will be?

We are nearly in December, and I remember this time last year I really did not believe we would have been able to enjoy 6 months of wine tasting events during (the latter half of) 2021...and, we still have December's Christmas social wine group gathering to look forward to later this month. Looking back on the events and tastings we have had I am grateful to you all for your support and trust in our wine group. We are lucky in that we are all like-minded people who enjoy trying and learning more about wine, and I think we can safely say we have achieved that this year despite the Covid situation. I do hope that for next year 2022 gives us more opportunity to safely spend time together on this fascinating and sociable topic.

### **Review of The Ship Inn, Pentewan**

I was so very disappointed not to be able to attend, especially when my trusted "deputy" Chris came home very merry, with great reviews of an extremely entertaining and enjoyable evening, perhaps all the more enhanced by very generous pourings from Carol and her husband Miles!



The Ship Inn were very hospitable and provided tasty crisps, a good selection of meats and cheeses, with smoked salmon and then chicken to accompany two of the wines – and with mince pies and clotted cream for the Triana Pedro Ximenez. A fun wine quiz was on each table for completion with answers at the end. I shall be meeting with Carol in the not too distant future, to discuss any other ideas she has for future tastings. More photos are on our u3a website, under Wine Appreciation and “Gallery”.

Especially for those who were not present, here are Carol’s notes (cut down) on the wines including her own introduction, together with a couple of members’ reviews:

“20 years as an Officer in the Royal Air Force. My interest in wine started as the first (and I think only female President of Mess Committee at RAF St Mawgan). On leaving the RAF I got to choose a resettlement course. I chose to do a Level 2 in wines and spirits at Ashburton Cookery school followed by my level 3 or ‘A’ level in wine at St Austell Brewery. The result my husband Miles (who is assisting tonight) would say is trying many more expensive bottles wine than we used to choose!

These wines were all from Walter Hicks (St Austell brewery) but can be purchased elsewhere, so price is a guide

Villa Sandi Rose Prosecco, Veneto Italy 11.5% ABV £14.99

Grand Arte Alvarinho Lisbon, Portugal 12.5% ABV £9.99

Dreambird Pinot Noir Banat, Romania 12.5% ABV £7.94

De Bortoli Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley, Australia 13.5% ABV £13.19

Pedro Ximenez Javier Hidalgo, Spain 15% £

### **1. Villa Sandi Rose Prosecco Veneto Italy 11.5%**

I hope like me that you think it is always good to start the evening with something sparkling! As you probably know Prosecco is a protected origin

wine and Rose Prosecco only recently became available. The Prosecco Grape is Glera. This one mixed with Pinot Nero (Or Pinot Noir if you are in France or most of the rest of the wine world...keep that grape in mind) before that only white Prosecco was allowed under the DOCG Denominazione di Origine Controllata (e Garantita) (DOCG) Pink Prosecco only has the DOC currently Grapes: 70% Glera 30% various including Pinot Nero. Fruity and flowery with delicate notes of unripe golden apple. This rose is dry, fresh and zesty with harmonious summer fruit finish and small mountain flowers. Pale pink light and elegant. Villa Sandi is a Palladian style villa within Veneto (the whole area near Venice) dating back to 1622 and has been owned by the Moretti Polegato family for generations. Excellent as an aperitif. Ideal companion to finger foods, linguine pasta, delicate cheeses (Brie comes to mind....)

**Ann Ford** commented: *For someone who doesn't like Rose and only very dry Prosecco, I really enjoyed the Villa Sandi, definitely a Christmas treat.*

## **2. Grand 'Arte Alvarinho Lisbon Portugal 12.5%**

Real finesse with an intense aroma of ripe orchard fruits. The body is full with a delicious, soft creamy tropical character yet has a fresh, citrus quality and a long finish. Tastes of • Lime • Peach • Floral • Lemon • Sea spray • Grapefruit Its pear and apple flavours give it a ripe character that is mitigated by the acidity that shoots through at the end. The grape is • Albarino in Spain • Alvarinho in Portugal. Alvarinho thrives in the coolish maritime climate and this vibrant Spanish/Portuguese grape variety is characterised by a uniquely palate-tingling, light-bodied freshness. Ideal for Christmas Salmon, white meat such as turkey, soups, salads and any light flavoured dishes.

## **3. Dreambird Pinot Noir Banat Romania 12.5%**

This Romanian Pinot Noir is light cherry red in colour, with aromas of cherry, red raspberry and dried sage. It has flavours of cherry and red raspberry and a simple yet pleasant finish. Almost syrupy in it's concentration, dark, rich and powerful with layers of complex black cherry, raspberry and cinnamon. Slightly smoky. Deep with pretty fruit cake and spicy aromatics lingering aftertaste. Let's compare it with the same grape wine from Australia.....

*Interestingly a few members preferred the Romanian Pinot Noir, Chris being one of them particularly enjoyed the caramel smokiness. I recently read an article on Romanian wines asking why people don't drink (or know) about them as some are excellent. In the past 10 years there has been a huge effort in improving vine quality, Romania has the perfect geography, and there is a wealth of new generation winemakers in Romania. Watch this space perhaps.*

#### **4. De Bortoli Regional Reserve Pinot Noir - Yarra Valley - Australia 13.5% ABV**

Vibrant look, fragrant perfume and complex red fruits, violet, autumnal, spice, Textural, elegant, soft tannins, juicy acidity flavours of cherry, red fruit, and berries ... (Black or red) strawberry and background spice, soft and supple. The De Bortoli family philosophy is to produce wines with character. The Regional Reserve range is selected from the best varieties of the most iconic regions of Victoria. The cool climate of the Yarra Valley, an hour NE of Melbourne is ideally suited to the production of fine Pinot Noir. Serving suggestion - traditional roast chicken/ Turkey. Lamb & Rosemary.

#### **5. Pedro Ximenez Javier Hidalgo 15% ABV**

From Jerez, perfect with vanilla Ice cream and mince pie or sticky toffee pudding! A colour and complexity of molasses it is complex, intensely sweet and rich with pronounced raisin flavours. A blockbuster of power and sweetness and irresistibly fascinating. Pedro Ximénez a grape best known for its role in the blend of sweet sherries of Jerez, Spain. Pedro Ximénez shines as fortified wine either in a Sherry Blend, or as a fortified single-variety wine known as PX. The method is to overly ripen and sun-dry the grapes to the point where the juices concentrate and the skins start to raisin. This gives them an exceptionally high concentration of sugar. The liquid can be extracted is then partially fermented (the ferment is arrested by the addition of neutral grape spirit) and aged in a solera system of fractional blending in oak barrels. A dark, ebony coloured wine with pronounced tearing and a thickness to the eye. The ageing process, which is exclusively oxidative, gives the wine a progressive aromatic concentration and greater complexity, whilst fully preserving the characteristic freshness of the variety. Sweetest of all sherries.”

*I think it safe to say that everyone very much enjoyed this, especially when accompanied with the mince pies.*

I was heartened also to hear that Carol did two mini experiments, the first with a Jelly Bean in the mouth but holding the nose...result was no taste at all, again showing we use our nose and olfactory sense to taste. (I can bear witness to this as having had severe sinusitis with a head cold, my sense of taste completely disappeared, so very frustrating.) Secondly Carol did a test asking everyone to eat a salted crisp when drinking one of the reds, showing that the crisp counteracts the tannins of the wine.

**December 16<sup>th</sup>, Arts Centre from 6.30pm, Christmas Wines & Food social evening** (£12.50 pp – *please pay now if you have not yet done so*)

We virtually have a full complement of members for this event which, if anything like our previous one, should be a lovely evening and opportunity to get to chat to other members in a relaxed atmosphere, with plenty of Christmas style party food and drinks to match.

I took advantage of a supermarket's 25% offer on 6 bottles, and together with a personal voucher I had, managed to save £100 on the overall cost, and have bought wines I hope will be popular. I have also bought a few bottles as raffle prizes, together with 2 bottles we had left over from our members' tasting. I have supplemented the cost of wines from our wine fund which was boosted by the previous year's raffle so it all goes back to the group.

We will have a "raffle table", so if you have a relevant wine/food raffle prize, please **bring on the night wrapped in Christmas paper or in a festive bag**, that way the prizes will be a surprise. Please also bring some cash to buy a raffle ticket on the night!

There will be a glass of champagne on arrival, a choice of whites, a rose, a choice of reds, plus Port and Madeira to enjoy with the cheese and sweet dishes. There will be a generous amount of wine, but please do be considerate of others in your pouring and I strongly urge you to book taxis or walk. **Please bring your own tasting glasses** and platters of party food as advised to me.

If anyone could arrive earlier - from 6pm to help put tables up and decorate, or open wines it would be appreciated. We will not put chairs out so there is room to walk around, but for those needing a chair there will be some in the room.

Finally I would like to appeal to you all and suggest that you take a Lateral Flow Test on the morning of our event, and of course only attend with a negative result. The reasons are obvious to keep us all safe and well, and we will endeavour to keep the room ventilated as much as possible, but if you prefer to wear a mask please feel free to do so. I very much look forward to seeing you all on the night to finish off what has certainly been a year of two halves!

**February 17<sup>th</sup>: The Bottle, Newquay** £25pp plus transport cost. **Deposit of £15pp required by 15<sup>th</sup> December.** *Maximum number 20.*

A 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 £15pp 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. There is **a maximum number of 20** which The Bottle can accommodate so don't leave it too late.

***PLEASE ENSURE YOU ARE PAYING INTO THE CORRECT U3A ACCOUNT FOR OUR WINE GROUP, AND NOT ANOTHER GROUP!***

Your reference for each event will be your 4 digit membership number followed by "WG & the month" WGFeb

Bank account details as follows:

St Austell u3a. Account 23132587 (Barclays Bank)

Sort code 20-30-47

**Brief outline of first few months of 2022**, further information to follow next year, but dates for the diary.

**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 – 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 but hoping for a tasting by Ellis Wharton Wines

**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 recently 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. Price tba.

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

**David & Pippa Boardman** have kindly offered to run a “Food & Wine Evening” date to be confirmed.

### **Matching Wine with Cheese**

As many of us will be enjoying a cheese board or two over the Christmas festivities, I thought a mini reminder of “rule of thumb” may be of use when planning and serving your cheese board as it can be quite confusing.

1. If you want the cheese to be the star, pick a wine with less character that will complement it and stay in the background. If you want the wine to be the star, go easy on the strength of the cheese. If you pair the wine and cheese from the same country this can often work.
2. Hard cheese – go for a rich, dry white wine or a light to medium bodied red. A white Rioja or a Merlot.
3. Soft cheese – many of these can have big personalities, so choose a wine with a good acidity to cut through the high fat content of the cheese. A very dry sparkling would work, or a Chardonnay or Cabernet Franc.
4. Blue cheese – the obvious match is a sweet wine, which works particularly well if the cheese is a creamy style. Think Sauternes.
5. Goats cheese – a classic match is a Sancerre, but in general look for a fresh wine with lively acidity. Mature goat cheeses can be very strong, so be careful.
6. Washed rind cheese – go for a younger cheese whose character will not destroy the wine. Something like a Gewurztraminer would be a good match. If you prefer a stronger cheese, try a fruit laden red such as Pinot Noir.
7. If however, you want one wine to match the whole cheeseboard (and let’s face it, most of us probably do) then look at fortified styles. Tawny Port, Sherry, and Madeira would work with all cheeses.



Enjoy, and please do send any reviews of wine and cheese matching you try out at Christmas.

As you can see, lots to look forward to and more to plan. I am sure I will see the majority of you at our Christmas tasting, but for those who cannot attend I wish you a very happy and healthy Christmas and New Year and thank you for your support for our Wine Group.

Regards Amanda