

# U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

## FEBRUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group Members

Welcome to our February newsletter, and with the relatively mild weather we have been experiencing I have changed the picture above to one with sunshine in the hope of warm and sunnier days ahead.

### **1<sup>st</sup> February is “Furmint Day” in the wine world.**

1st February 2017 brought us the first International Furmint Day – an idea supported by Dániel Kézdy, founder of Furmint February and writer of the beautiful book Tokaj and its People and Vineyards. He says, “I would like to draw winelovers’ attention to this special, very exciting and lovable wine. We wish to achieve this primarily with the use of social media. We would like to awaken interest in as many curious people as possible so they taste this wine and tell of their experiences. Just imagine if everyone who can would open a bottle of Furmint and then show what they had drunk with the help of the worldwide web.”

So, in 2019 Furmint February went international with events in London and a big Furmint tasting of 60 wines from 20 producers at 67 Pall Mall.

I have written before of Furmint with a review of a Dry Furmint (Newsletter February 2021) definitely one to try if you haven't yet, also see a supermarket recommendation later in this newsletter.

**5<sup>th</sup> February is “National Rosé day”** in Australia and New Zealand, whereas the rest of the World celebrates in June, obviously because in June it would be Winter there.

**18<sup>th</sup> February is “Global Drink Wine Day”** ..... as if we need a day to celebrate this!

So in conclusion a few “excuses” after possibly Dry January to celebrate one or all of these occasions and try a new wine.

**Belated Christmas Evening, February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 6.30pm to 9.30pm (taxis at 9.45pm) at the Arts Centre (set up from 6pm if anyone can assist)**

I am delighted to be able to say that our Christmas event will take place, with all details the same as for our original event. If anyone has forgotten what they pledged to bring, please see below, otherwise assume we are cutting our food into 30 bite size pieces on a platter. We will still hold a raffle, so if you have anything suitable please wrap in Christmas paper if you have it, or any other paper so as to hide the contents, or in a bottle bag, just to make choosing the prizes more fun. There will be a table on which to put the raffle prizes, and don't forget to bring some cash to buy raffle tickets with.

In-keeping with the Christmas theme, Christmas jumpers, hats etc are optional, but remember we will have the windows open so dress accordingly. Please also take a Lateral Flow Test in the morning to ensure everyone's safety, and for those who feel more comfortable wearing a mask, please do so.

I think this will be a great start to our wine group's 2022 activities where we can safely mix, catch up with each other and enjoy the many wines currently sitting in our garage just waiting to be drunk! See you there, suggest taxi for the return journey.

## CHRISTMAS FOOD

### NAME

### SAVOURY

### SWEET

Janet	1	Cheese board diced/sliced Mini quiche/cucumber tuna	
Elaine Nelson	1	canapes	
Ann Smith	1	Quiche slices - vegetarian	
Pete	1	Sausage rolls	
Nicky	1	Smoked salmon nibbles	
Ann Ford	1	Selection of meats	
Amanda & Chris	1	Selection of cooked sausages &	
Judith	1	Stuffed eggs	
Joan & David Hooper	2	Canapes	
Sue Smith	1	Cheese & pineapple!	
Shirley	1	Breads & biscuits & butter	
Ray Smith	1	mini vol au vents	
Mick	1	Mini toasts with pate	
Pippa	1	Blue cheese bites	
Lucinda	1	Savoury platter	Fruit kebabs
David & Libby	2	Focaccia with brie	
Margaret & Mark	2		Fruit Cakes
Ann & Malcolm	2		Stuffed dates
			Home made Stollen cake
Ian & Ros	2		Panetonne
Karen & Chris	2		Marzipan fruit cake
Jenny	1		Christmas Biscuits
Eileen Dunwell	1		Focaccia with Brie
David & Libby	2		

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## REST OF THE YEAR

I attach at the end of this newsletter a Schedule of Events, some yet to be finally confirmed, but at least dates for the diary.

For those few who paid for a visit to The Bottle in Newquay and have not asked for a refund, please let me know if you would like this taken off your next booking, with any residue carried over or refunded. If more people are interested later in the year I will look at this venue again, but we need a minimum number for it happen.

**March** - Andrew and Christine Johnson have bravely offered to host a **Wine Group Quiz** evening for our March event. This will consist of a blind tasting of four wines interspersed with several rounds of light-hearted quiz questions to suit all abilities from wine geography through puzzles and a chance to

identify the wines we share from a list of descriptions, regions and prices. There will be a small prize for the winning pair or individual - with a chance to team up on the night. Andrew & Christine, thank you both so much, this sounds like a great fun packed evening.

- **Please get booking now** as Andrew & Christine need to purchase wines to fit with the Quiz. **£13.50 per person**, book in usual way with **xxxxWGMAR** as reference – this includes the £1 room fee. **Deadline is 24<sup>th</sup> February** and please let me know once you have paid.

**April** sees a **visit and tasting at Ellis Wharton Wines** (if you remember they were one of our very first suppliers to come and hold a tasting at the Arts Centre) who are now based at Indian Queens. There is plenty of space for in-house tastings and an opportunity to buy wines at the end of the evening, and transport will be booked. We will be tasting a minimum of 5 wines with a theme “**Non-conventional Wine Tasting**” with nibbles to accompany led by Jim Bass (WSET qualified) and Nick Sowden assisting. This will cover “wines with personality and expression of terroir and we should expect the unexpected! A tasting to challenge the most conventional palates with some rare and forgotten grape varieties.” I am intrigued...

- **Cost is £20pp plus transport** so please **pay now the £20pp cost** and transport cost will be confirmed once we know total numbers - in the usual way **xxxxWGAPR**. **Deadline is March 4<sup>th</sup> as we have to confirm which transport is required.** Again please let me know once you have paid.

**May** will be a visit to a local vineyard - this time a lunchtime visit for a couple of hours at **Looe Valley Vineyard** with a tour and tutored tasting of at least 4 wines, by the very passionate and enthusiastic owner and artisan winemaker Charles. Great for any gardeners as he will talk a lot about the soil and growing of vines. There is only access for a minibus so numbers will be restricted to 16, so please book soonest to secure a place.

- **Cost £20pp** to include 4 wines and a platter of 3 Cornish cheeses, pickle, olives and bread, plus cost of transport in the minibus, to be advised. **Booking ref xxxWGMAY**, and let me know when you have paid.

**For June**, you will note that Chris & Karen Scott have yet again kindly offered their wonderful garden to us for another **Garden Party**, so very generous of them. Usual form, everyone to bring a large sharing platter plus their own wines. We will endeavour to see if the wonderful Band are available, for which donations only are required.

Additionally I would like to ask you all if anyone could perhaps help mow the grass beforehand, and others to help put out tables and chairs the day before. It would be much appreciated (Chris & Karen have not asked for this, but I feel it only right as we are using their garden to help get it ready).

**In August** we will go to **Le Mistral Wine Co in Lostwithiel**, who specialise in predominately French wines, for “**A tour around France**”. These are wines exclusive to them which cannot be found on the High Street, and a **minimum of 8 wines** with accompanying cheese & charcuterie. Just as well we will be booking a coach! **Cost is £15 pp plus transport cost.**

Currently we have **September** free, so if any members would like to run an evening or have an idea on a wine evening please let me know.

Meanwhile the end of the year we will again have a tasting by the excellent Carol Avery in either October or November, with another great tasting held by and at Old Chapel Cellars looking at wines for Christmas.

I hope you all feel that this schedule gives us some variety and more opportunities to try wines we don't usually buy. If you have any suggestions do let me know.

## **Wine Reviews**

**Margaret Steer** sent me this review from a recent online Zoom Tempranillo tasting:

### **Jesus Madrazo Rioja Crianza 2017, 14.75% £26 Tanners of Shrewsbury Wines**

“We have just recently tasted a wine by the legendary winemaker, Jesus Madrazo as part of a new range of blended wine. Jesus has been making wine for 30 years and considers his winemaking as a work of art. A blend of Tempranillo 80% and Craciano 13% from Cuzcurrita and 7% Garnacha from the Rioja Oriental.

This is a ripe rich sweetly wooded style wine with a good balance, aged in barrels for 12 months. On the nose currants, toasted vanilla cherries and cassis. Would go well with lamb. This is a good choice for keeping until 2025, however if you can't wait we are advised to decant for at least 2/3 hours. From our perspective highly recommended. Tim Aitken gives it 92 points. “*Thanks Margaret sounds like a very interesting wine and one I have not personally tried, but perhaps should.*”

## **Chateau Musar (known as the Lafitte of The Lebanon) ..Seven years in the making, and generally a blend of Cab Sauvignon, Cinsault and Carignan.**

For many years Chris & I have enjoyed this wonderful Lebanese wine from the Bekka valley, and generally buy it for special occasions (prices vary according to vintage but start around £30). When we were speaking to friends who had in their “rack” a 1998 and 2001 bottle, and we had a 2022 bottle we decided to do a mini vertical tasting at our home a couple of Saturdays ago, with us providing a meal to accompany. I thought I would write about it here as this just shows how a wine from the same vineyard and maker, can vary so much in style and taste depending upon the vintage, and so perhaps we all should ask more questions or do some research on vintage of our chosen wine....

As “homework” the evening before our tasting, we watched a documentary film on Amazon Prime “Wine and War 2020”, which covered people in Lebanon making wine throughout the war years and their determination that nothing would stop them. Serge Hochar who made Ch Musar known to the world, was interviewed many times talking about his obsession with his wines. A very fascinating and moving film 1.5hrs.

Bit of background:

In 1930, at just 20 years old, Gaston Hochar (pronounced Hoshier) founded Chateau Musar, inspired by Lebanon’s 6,000-year winemaking tradition and his travels in Bordeaux. French in origin the Hochar family have been in Lebanon since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. His ‘wines with noblesse’ greatly impressed senior officers in the army following on from the French mandate of the 1920s. Major Ronald Barton, of Château Langoa-Barton, stationed in Lebanon during World War II became a great friend, strengthening the links between Chateau Musar and Bordeaux that remain to this day.

Serge Hochar, Gaston’s eldest son Serge trained as a civil engineer, then decided to study oenology and with the encouragement of his father became a student of Emile Peynaud at the University of Oenology in Bordeaux.

Having declared to his father “I want to make the wine my way, I want it to be known world-wide – and I want you to quit!” he became Chateau Musar’s winemaker in 1959, Gaston senior having graciously given way. He then spent 18 years perfecting the formula for Chateau Musar’s Red and was selected as Decanter Magazine’s first ‘Man of the Year’ in 1984 for his dedication to producing superb quality wines during Lebanon’s Civil War

(1975-1990). Serge had two sons: Gaston and Marc, both of whom are now taking care of the running of Chateau Musar.

The Hochar family's philosophy of respect for the environment means that the 220 hectares of Musar vineyards are managed with minimal human interference and all the wines are made with minimal intervention.

Chateau Musar was the first producer in Lebanon to achieve organic certification for its own vineyards in 2006. Most are located in the Bekaa Valley, cradled between two mountain ranges running parallel to Lebanon's Mediterranean coastline. Vines have been cultivated here for at least 6,000 years: the Phoenicians (seafaring ancestors of the modern Lebanese) were instrumental in bringing vines and wines from Byblos across to all of the areas around the Mediterranean.

Flanked by snow-covered mountains, and nestled at 1000m (3,000 feet) above sea level, the serenely beautiful Bekaa Valley is blessed with 300 days of sunshine a year, fresh mountain breezes and an average temperature of 25°C (encompassing snowy winters and hot summers). Remote and unspoilt, the Musar vineyards were 'organic' by default before the term was coined. All the grapes are hand-harvested by local Bedouins between August and October. In the winery, ambient yeasts do the work of fermentation. The bare minimum of sulphur is used and the Chateau Musar Red wines are neither fined nor filtered.

Although they now produce White Rose and Red wines, it is the Musar Red that is so well known and sought after. Each with their unique signature and imprint in the world of wine. Since 1930, every aspect of production – grape sourcing, fermentation, oak-ageing and bottle maturation – has been trialed to achieve the ultimate expression of Musar's specific 'terroirs' (Interactions of soil, vine, climate and time). Seven years in the making, Chateau Musar Red is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan and Cinsault.

Before I give some brief tasting verdicts on the 3 vintages we tasted, Chateau Musar themselves keep tasting notes on every vintage they have produced, talk about the conditions that year the vines experienced together with wine "experts" comments too - some tasting sublime after 20 years and more. We were cautioned to take extreme care with the corks after so long in the bottle, and we should have used prongs, but in the absence used our normal opener, the cork was beginning to crack. We decanted all the wines during the morning of the evening tasting.



To start our evening, we tasted a small amount of each in 3 tasting glasses per person, firstly with just some biscuits to get a true flavour, following alongside a rich Boeuf Bourguignon with which to enjoy this unctuous nectar of a wine from 3 quite distinct vintages, something we don't get to do often especially when the wines are around 20yrs old.

**2002:** 14%. The 2002 Musar is a blend of Cinsault, Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache and Carignan, one year in French Oak and bottled in 2005. Deep crimson – even blood red - in colour, the 2002 has an intense and complex nose of spicy red fruits and cedar with deeper plum notes and very slight barnyard smell. Generous red and black fruit characters follow through to the palate, combining with notes of Christmas cake spices, figs, dates and stewed plums. This richly-fruited wine shows good acidity, silky tannins and a long, finish. As with all the wines as the hours went on it developed more and more complexity in the glass, quite amazing. Drink to 2030. This was my favourite and with a slight sweetness suited the cheese course admirably.

**2001:** 13.5% Bottled in 2004, a blend of Cab Sauvignon, Cinsault and Carignan, aged for one year in French Oak. Scarlet in colour with terracotta tones at the rim, it has a complex nose of cigar box spice, warm leather, baked fruits, ripe morello cherries and blackcurrants. The palate has intense flavours of red cherries, dark chocolate, olives, figs and velvet smooth tannins on the very long dry finish. Its suggested drink by date was 2020 so perhaps this is why none of us preferred it, although still a lovely wine.

**1998:** 13.5% Blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault and Carignan, bottled 2001. This has a Cinsault dominance – lots of acidity, some fine structure. It



reveals a gentle style on opening, with a tawny colour and quite musty nose, but as the time went on it certainly improved, and came into its own with the main course. There is plenty of flavour, tannin and high acidity, but there is also some balance. I was outnumbered with all favouring this oldest vintage – I found the acidity too much. Just as well we are not all the same! Drink now to 2030.

## **SUPERMARKET WINE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **WHITES**

#### **Carpinus, Furmint, Tokaj, Hungary 202 Lidl £7.99 11%**

A dry Furmint with a touch of residual sugar from vineyards in the heart of the region. Volcanic soils give this a delicate minerality with juicy pear peach and citrus. Generous juicy fruit character with modest alcohol level.

#### **Villiera, Sauvignon Blanc, Stellenbosch, S Africa 2021 M&S £8 13%**

A portion of fruit for this crisp Sauvignon is from Villiera's 37 year old heritage vineyard and the style is more lean and herbaceous due to early picked grapes. Packed with gooseberry, nettle and ripe citrus, a great value buy.

#### **Gordon Ramsay, Vibrante Bianco, Abruzzo / Tuscany Italy 2020 Tesco £10 12.5%**

A collaboration between chef Ramsay and winemaker Alberto Antonini, combines 25% Tuscan Vermentino with Abruzzo Chardonnay, Trebbiano and Pecorino. This gives bright lemon herb and apple aromas with a light fresh palate.

### **PINK**

#### **Winemaster's Lot Rosé Cotes de Provence Pierrefeu France 2020, Aldi £7.49 13%**

This Grenache Syrah Cinsault blend is the pick of Aldi's new seasonal line of rosés. Bone dry with citrus acidity, the creamy palate is filled with tangy summer pudding fruit.

### **REDS**

#### **Domaine de l'Agly, Les Cimes, Cotes du Roussillon Villages, France 2017 Co-op £17 14.5%**

Smoky plum, blueberry and cherry liqueur on the nose. This blend of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre and Carignan is rich in blueberries and inky minerals, spiced up by wood tannins, cigar box and clove. A long finish of prunes and herbal spice. (sounds like a lovely food dish!)

**Domaine Bousquet, Finca Lalande Malbec, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina Waitrose £10.49 14%**

This wine is from organically farmed high altitude vineyards. A good nose of black cherry, plum fruits, violets and spice. Unoaked palate rich and spicy. The fruit is balanced by fresh acidity and has supple tannins. Great value.

Well that's all for this month, look forward to seeing you all at our "Christmas Evening" when we can belatedly celebrate the past months of 2021 and look to 2022 for more wine based events.

Regards

Amanda

Wine Event Schedule 2022 on following pages



## U3A WINE GROUP 2022 PROGRAMME

<b>JANUARY 2022</b>	<b>No meeting</b>
<b>FEBRUARY 24<sup>th</sup> 2022</b>	<p><b>BELATED CHRISTMAS EVENING, Arts Centre from 6.30pm onwards</b>  Members to bring platters of food, there will be plenty of Wine to accompany, plus a raffle  Festive jumpers optional!</p>
<b>MARCH 17<sup>th</sup> 2022</b>	<p><b>WINE TASTING QUIZ EVENING, Arts Centre, St Austell, 6.30pm onwards</b>  Andrew &amp; Christine Johnson to host a fun quiz with a prize and accompanying wine tasting.  Cheeses, biscuits &amp; bread to accompany.  <b>£12.50 pp includes room fee £1</b></p>
<b>APRIL 21<sup>st</sup> 2022</b>	<p><b>WINE TASTING AT ELLIS WHARTON WINES, Indian Queens 6.30pm arrival there with departure 9.30pm</b>  <b>“Non Conventional Wine Tasting”</b> - 5 wines with cheese etc  <b>£20pp plus cost of coach transport</b></p>
<b>MAY 19<sup>th</sup> 2022</b>	<p><b>LOOE VALLEY VINEYARD VISIT, St Keyne, Looe</b>  <b>Arrival 1200 for 2 hour</b> Vineyard tour with tasting by owner and artisan winemaker Charles. Minimum 4 wines with a platter of Cornish cheeses and bread   <b>£20pp plus cost of minibus transport (access issue) Maximum number 16</b></p>

<p><b>JUNE 19<sup>th</sup> 2022</b> <b>SUNDAY</b></p>	<p><b>SUMMER GARDEN PARTY</b> <b>Chez Karen &amp; Chris Scott, St Austell from 12000 noon</b> Once again, their hospitality shines through and Karen &amp; Chris have offered to host this wonderful event in their beautiful garden. Hoping to have the band again if they are free. Members to bring platters food to share plus wines.</p> <p><i>Volunteers to help prepare garden please</i></p>
<p><b>JULY 21<sup>st</sup> 2022</b></p>	<p><b>FOOD &amp; WINE PAIRING, Arts Centre, 6.30pm</b> Members Pippa &amp; David Boardman to host this fascinating subject.</p> <p>More information to follow together with cost to include £1 room fee</p>
<p><b>AUGUST 11<sup>TH</sup> 2022</b> (note not 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday)</p>	<p><b>WINE TASTING @ LE MISTRAL WINE COMPANY, Lostwithiel 6.30pm to 9pm, depart 9.45pm</b> (transport to be arranged) Topic "<b>A tour around France</b>". <b>Minimum 8 wines</b> with accompanying cheese &amp; charcuterie <b>£15pp plus transport cost</b></p>
<p><b>SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> 2022</b></p>	<p><b>TBC</b></p>
<p><b>OCTOBER 20<sup>TH</sup> 2022</b></p>	<p><b>Carol Avery Tasting either October or November</b></p>
<p><b>NOVEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup> 2022</b></p>	<p><b>Xmas Wines, @ Old Chapel Cellars either October or November</b></p>
<p><b>DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> 2022</b></p>	<p><b>CHRISTMAS SOCIAL EVENING, Arts Centre 6.30pm onwards</b></p>