

U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

JANUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER



Happy New Year wine group members!

I do hope you had a great festive season, and enjoyed some “different to the everyday” wines? Welcome to 2023 and hopefully another year of tasting new and varied wines together starting with our February meeting.

For anyone interested, BBC Sounds has a show called “The Infinite Monkey Cage” with Prof Brian Cox and Robin Ince looking at the world through the eyes of scientists - the Christmas episode was called “Why does wine taste good”? It is an excellent 42 minutes of humour, facts and information on this subject, with some very fascinating results, (especially for those who cannot identify certain odours found in wine) recorded in Adelaide at the Australian Wine Research Institute. Happy listening....

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/b00snr0w?partner=uk.co.bbc&origin=share-mobile>

Alcohol Duty Freeze

The government will extend its freeze by 6 months on alcohol duty, which is a boost to both consumers and the alcohol industry. The duty freeze was due to end on 1st February but now extended until 1st August, in the hope of helping the hospitality sector through a challenging winter. Further details about duty rates may be given in the Chancellor’s Spring budget, but there is also a planned introduction of a new alcohol duty system due in August, around the concept of taxing alcohol based on its alcoholic strength!! Let’s see how this pans out and if indeed our wine prices rise again as a result.

Christmas Drinking wine reviews:

I had hoped for some reviews from your Christmas drinking, but perhaps you can send one in ready for next month?

Christmas & New Year is, I think, the best time of the year to pull out all the stops with your wines, perhaps the one time you can be a little extravagant and indulgent. We always enjoy choosing the wines for our own Christmas celebrations, and this year, my choice included one bottle, a true favourite of mine which I would like to review for you below. (I am not suggesting you rush out and buy a bottle, but if you see it on the shelf, you may be able to appreciate why it costs what it does, or even decide to treat yourself for a very special occasion).

It's a 100% Viognier, a white wine that just isn't drunk enough but one which is fairly versatile, and completely delicious. Many years ago before we moved to Cornwall, we enjoyed a bottle of Viognier from Condrieu, which I hadn't tasted before, but which I found very exciting. Since that bottle I have tried many other bottles of Viognier from other regions and countries but never really found anything to match the quality at a "reasonable price" (why did I think I could??). I was lucky enough to have been given this bottle for my birthday from a good friend and so was again reminded of the pure quality of this grape and region when deciding to open it over Christmas.

Viognier "Ceps du Nebadon" Viognier 2017, N Rhone, France 14%
(prices vary between £35 and £45)



The vineyard of "Ceps du Nébadon" lies on south-facing slopes and uses strict organic practices in the 1972 founded winery. On the nose, aromas of toasted subtle oak, smoke and spice with subtle and delicate perfume notes, introduce this rich and unctuous white. Filling the palate with waves of orange, cream and honeysuckle, it's a big textured, classic Condrieu with

100% viognier grape. A wonderful match with roast chicken, turkey or pork or fresh fish such as sole, halibut or turbot. Younger vintages would match seafood very well.

I found the following extract within an article by Jancis Robinson, which goes a little way to explain this wine.

“The most extraordinary thing about the story of Viognier is how very nearly and how very recently it almost shrivelled to extinction. In the 1980s almost all the officially planted Viognier in the world was planted in the Rhône Valley, most of it in the Condrieu appellation on the right bank of the northern Rhône. But the terraces there are so steep and difficult to maintain that these 57 acres were all that remained of an officially allowed total for the appellation of 500 acres. By 2011, however, Condrieu plantings had risen to 400 acres and the variety was known and often grown virtually throughout the world of wine – chiefly because of its extraordinary combination of perfume and body. Viognier could truly be said to be the hedonist's white grape variety, even if it is often the vintner's headache – and the drinker's headache too, come to that – for it has to be left on the vine for a very long time before its characteristic heady aroma fully develops. This has variously been described as reminiscent of apricots, May blossom, honeysuckle, ripe peaches and musk. It is certainly distinctive, and is in the fruit and flower spectrum rather than the mineral or animal one. Some producers of inexpensive varietal Viognier seem to think that if they include a portion of Muscat with over-produced Viognier fruit, then this will suffice. They are wrong. Other cheap Viogniers, especially but not exclusively basic Pays d'Oc wines, have such strangely cosmetic aromas, more reminiscent of air freshener than anything that grows in the ground! The best Viognier has this heady characteristic scent that one feels envelops the glass and drinker in a cloud, together with real density and ideally, a dry finish.

The only other all-Viognier appellation in the world is just south of Condrieu, the single-property Château-Grillet, set in a potentially magnificent amphitheatre of vineyard. For years it seemed blithely unaffected by rising standards everywhere else but has now been taken in hand by the team that runs Bordeaux first growth Château Latour.

In marked contrast to the 1980s, Viognier is now planted widely all over southern France and can often be found in blended whites.”

Forthcoming events:

February 10th 2023 : Kelly Andre, The Bimbling Barrel, 6.45pm Arts Centre, Unusual wines

now on February 10th and not 17th. 5 Unusual wines plus cheeses bread and biscuits. Pay and book now, **closing date January 15th**. Ref xxxxWGFEB23.

Ann Ford together with Ann Smith have kindly volunteered to buy and prepare the food for this event. Volunteers still needed for other months please, it's just a case of buying the food and presenting on the night. I will give you a budget in relation to the number attending. If you can help for one month only please let me know, many thanks.

March 17th 2023: Derek Crookes Kernowine, Falmouth, "Wines of New Zealand". 6.45pm Arts Centre

5 wines with usual cheeses, £24pp **Pay by Feb 20** ref xxxxWGMAR23 Kernowine a shop, bar and wine school based in Falmouth who "guarantee you'll be able to discover new flavours and broaden your "vinous" experience. Education is vitally important in the world of wine, and we want people to be confident about buying wine wherever they are. You'll always get friendly, instructive advice".

PLEASE NOTE THAT FOR ANY PAYMENTS TO THE WINE GROUP ACCOUNT PAY INTO ACCOUNT NO 23132587 SORT CODE 20-30-47 "Wine Community" (Barclays bank)

Housekeeping

Thanks to all those who have sent me their up-to-date Emergency Contact details, (and where applicable any vital medication the paramedics would need to be aware of) which is purely for YOUR benefit should an emergency situation arise and where we need to urgently contact someone. Having information in your phone or handbag is not ideal, and with most phones having a form of security process to open when time is of the essence, is also not a great idea. I will securely bring this information to every meeting, and I would again urge you to wear your lanyards with this information written on the reverse. Better to be safe than sorry.

That's all for now, hopefully see many of you in February.

Regards Amanda