

u3a ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

NOVEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group Members

The clocks went back last night, the weather has become much cooler and we certainly have an Autumnal feel. Thinking of returning from nice long walks, or just sitting by the fire, now is time for fuller bodied white wines and deep ruby reds, both that warm and give you a much needed glow in Autumn and Winter.

Grape Harvests should now be complete, so wine makers now have to plough the land adding organic fertilisers, and shortly many will start to prune the vines. Its non stop!

Odd Wine Snippets

- Grape thieves stole 2,500kg of grapes mainly Trousseau, Chardonnay and Savagnin **from the vines** of Domaine de la Loue in France's Jura region. Can you believe it!
- Final notes from the 2023 harvest. Smaller overall harvests will cut wine production in Italy and Spain by 12% and 14% respectively.
- Despite last winter's drought, Santorini famous for Assyrtiko white wines, expect a high quality vintage but a reduced harvest to 30% of the average size.
- France overall harvest is expected at 3% higher than usual.
- More than 25% of UK shoppers spend longer than 10 minutes dithering (or contemplating perhaps) which bottle of wine to buy in a supermarket....

Thinking of the Festive Season

For those not coming along to Old Chapel Cellars Tasting later in the month, I thought a few wine ideas for the Christmas & New Year festive period may be a good thing.

Sloe Gin always a good choice as a Winter Warmer. The fruit of the blackthorn should traditionally be picked after the first frost, however this year I think Sloes were ready whilst the weather was still warm and sunny! Mix with gin and a little sugar, macerate for 2 to 8 months for a really good one, and the warming fruity spirit known as Sloe Gin is made. Great neat or mixed as a long cocktail.

5 of the best Sloe Gins are Boatyard Sloe Boat Gin, Eight Lands Speyside Sloe Gin, Hepple Sloe & Hawthorn Gin, Herno Sloe Gin and Sipsmith Sloe Gin. Prices vary from £25 to 40 and I suggest you look on the internet for suppliers. Of course you can buy supermarket versions or try making your own although short of time for the 8 month maceration now.

Wines for a Festive Party

Firstly think of your guests, as they will probably be a mixed bunch in their wine knowledge and appreciation, so don't go overboard putting out your best wines! Choose mainstream wines that may suit most guests, not necessarily from supermarkets, but something that elicits "oh this is nice, what it is" rather than "what on earth is this"! Keep to one of each colour so that every guest can try each wine, and perhaps kick off the evening/event with a glass of fizz.

Don't worry about trying to match wines with the food you are providing, just find wines that will work on their own, or with a wide variety of flavours if you are serving canapes. As it will be Winter, you can lean towards more robust wines, rich unctuous whites and ruby reds.

All in all, don't take it too seriously, it is a party and should be about conversations and connections with your guests, with wines being an accompaniment.

Here are some ideas readily available from supermarkets or the Wine Society all under £16.

Lidl Montaudon Brut Champagne, France NV 12% £13.99 Lidl. Non vintage but excellent value, blend of 40% Pinot Noir, 35% Chardonnay, 25% Meunier. Perfect for a party where you want Champagne to start the evening with.

Alberto Nani, Prosecco Extra Dry, Veneto, Italy NV, £12.99 Waitrose 11% Organic and vegan, fresh with apple fruit, extra dry style works really well with aperitifs.

Piersanti Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi, Marche, Italy 2022 13.5% £7.25 Coop Creamy with touch of honey, concentration of mango grapefruit and sweet spice, a fuller bodied white.

Asda Extra Special Sancerre, Loire, France, 13% 2021 £15.50. Good value Sancerre with classic characters of flint, gooseberry and grass, good intensity acidity and a good finish. Great with goat's cheese.

The Society's Australian Cabernet Sauvignon, S Australia 2021, 13.5% £8.50 The Wine Society Incredible value for money, full bodied but fresh, blackcurrant fruit and notes of menthol and eucalyptus. A surprising level of concentration and complexity.

Morrisons Cidade Branca, Alentejo Portugal 2021 14% £8.75 Morrisons A red blend of Alicante Bouschet, Touriga Nacional and Aragones

(Tempranillo). Thyme and potpourri on the nose, with blackcurrant and blueberry notes. Ripe blackberry flavour seasoned with dark spices, and a touch of sweetness on the palate. Balanced and a long finish. Amazing value.

Wines to match a Curry

Many choose not to try and match a wine with their “curry” and prefer a beer or cider. A wine match depends on the sauce, here are three as an example. Mind you, when you make at home remember your spicing may be stronger than shop bought or takeaways.

With a creamy curry eg Korma – Many wines can be drunk with a mild curry, a crisp white, fruity rose or a light red like a fresh fruity Grenache. A peachy Viognier works well as would an off dry Chenin Blanc (Vouvray or Montlouis).

With a Rogan Josh – The base ingredient is often not the key factor in a curry/wine pairing, however lamb in this dish, as much as the sauce, will determine the match. Any robust red that goes with braised lamb will work, like a Rioja and Ribera del Duero.

With a Katsu Curry – Aromatic whites certainly work well with a Japanese Katsu curry sauce, such as Torrentes, Riesling (my favourite) or a light Gewerztraminer would also match well.

A review of the tasting held at Ellis Wharton Wines in October, on the theme “Spain, off the Beaten Track”

A group of us arrived at Ellis Wharton by minibus, with others joining direct, to find a beautifully laid out table awaiting us, Jim and Victoria had certainly put a lot of thought and effort into the entire evening. Food was plentiful and delicious, the DaBara focaccia, the now infamous Lancashire Bomber cheese with other Spanish cheeses, cold Spanish meats, salted roasted almonds and pates meant no one left hungry!

The wines were certainly and without question, interesting varietals from some unknown and smaller regions. We looked at N W Spain known for aromatics, the Mediterranean coast which gives big flavours and elsewhere with hot climates where bush vines are planted, giving intense flavour. I know that everyone was impressed with the choice of wines tasted. Prices stated are retail price, but we were given a discount on a box of 1 each of the wines shown.



We started in Old Castille with a Verdejo grape, Amoranza Verdejo 2022, 12% £8.50.

Verdejo is Spain's Sauvignon Blanc, and this wine was quite refreshing. Steely pale-yellow colour, delicately fragrant with green apple and fennel with hints of tropical fruit. Smooth palate, fresh and dry, with a lingering finish. Absolute bargain for a good everyday glugging wine, or great on a hot Summer's day.

Onto Galicia for a Godello grape, Godello Bodegas Godeval, 2021 13.5% £17.50

A jump up in price, but you could certainly discern the difference and a wine that would keep a few years. Full nose of greengage, exotic fruit salad and tangy lemon. Lively and fresh with a slight fizz on the tongue, very accessible. Ripe and fleshy and long finish. Would match a meaty fish like turbot, monkfish, shellfish and even chicken.

For our final white, we had a Moscatel Chardonnay mix from Jumilla region, Goru El Blanco Moscatel Chardonnay 2021, 12% £13

This Goru El Blanco is a wine made from Moscatel and Chardonnay grapes (old bush vines) which are night harvested. Shiny golden yellow colour, ample ripe fruit aroma with typical floral notes of Moscatel grapes. Long and buttery in the mouth, leaves a pleasant white grapey finish. Organic artisan producer. Would complement chicken style dishes and fish.

And onto Reds....



Garnacha grapes from Terra Alta region, El Garbi, Garnacha Tinto, 2021 13.5% £18

A fresh juicy Garnacha Tinta (with 5% of Garnacha Blanca) grown sustainably in cool Terra Alta. El Garbi is the warm African wind that blows through the vineyard. Brilliant cherry in colour. Vibrant red fruit on the palate; pure and mineral, with bright acidity to balance soft tannins. Judicious ageing (seven months in used French oak) adds hints of spice. Lovely match for a plate of charcuterie, duck or tapas.

Going back to Jumilla region with a blend of Grenache, Tempranillo, Monastrel, Alaja Tinto 2020 13.5% £9

A delicious, easy drinking red. Lots of warm berry fruit, gentle spice, soft tannins and a refreshing finish. A hard climate at an average altitude of 650 meters that makes the lands rough and dry. It is here where the "Monastrel" grape finds its inspiration and reason to be, surpassing itself by showing its best version. The winegrowing and "Jumilla's" people history are defined by this landscape, representing through its label, a rough one with a defined character, yet full of unique beauty and wealth. At £9 a bargain for an easy drinking red.

Finally our last red, Graciano and Cabernet Sauvignon 50/50 from La Mancha, Viento Aliseo, Graciano Cabernet Sauvignon, 2020 13.5% £14. A biodynamic wine

Night harvested and then aged for 12 months in oak, and a beautiful deep ruby red in colour. The nose is intense with aromas of red fruits with undertones of eucalyptus. Well structured and round in the mouth with soft tannins and flavours of ripe fruits, vanilla and spice (aniseed and cloves) with a long, rich finish. Ideal with roasts, especially game such as pheasant, partridge or pigeon.

Ellis Wharton did an excellent job of showing us some wonderful wines from Spain in such a relaxed but professional manner. The setting allowed us all to wander around after the tasting, finding some unusual gifts, or bottles to try and savour in the winter months to come. Both Victoria and Jim could not be more helpful, whether looking for a £10 glugging wine or an £80 bottle of something for a gift. A really enjoyable and fun evening, and judging by the **supermarket trolley full of boxes** that were loaded onto our minibus, many thought the same!! I would urge you all to visit this shop, which from now will feature many Christmas food and drink gifts. Only 5 minutes from Fraddon, and with Da Bara next door, a good morning or afternoon trip! (No I am not on commission, just pleased to have a knowledgeable and friendly wine shop who will advise).



A final reminder of the last event for 2023 to book for if you haven't yet booked your place...

6 lovely ladies (Santa's little helpers) have taken over this evening in total, from planning, organising the food, buying wines and even arranging some surprises for us all. For this I am very grateful as this is just what our u3a group should be about, members volunteering to run an evening. So, to you 6 ladies a HUGE thank you.

As we cannot have early access, the doors to the Assembly room will not be open before 6.45pm to allow set up of the room, to start at 7pm. Please bring your plates of food, 1 per person, ready presented as there will not be time or facilities to plate there, thank you.

December 15th Wine Group Christmas evening - Arts Centre. £14pp (ref WGDEC)

NOTE TIMING: 7pm to 9.45pm - taxis at 10.00pm to enable everyone to help tidy up please

Here is a message to us all....

“Hello members

We merry band are putting together an Evening of Christmas delights for this year’s Wine Appreciation group Christmas Event. We will be having a theme of **Wines from Europe**.

The usual smorgasbord of finger food always goes down well, and upon booking, a list of food items will be sent to you for you to pick a favourite food to make and bring along. We expect over 25 members, so please make enough to ensure **everyone** can have a taster of your food, and bring 1 plate per person.

There will be some Christmas entertainment and a few fun things for your enjoyment. Please, if you so wish, wear something Christmassy, a jumper, earrings, antlers, hat or flashing brooch, anything you like.

We very much hope you can join us on the 15th to celebrate Christmas with wines (this is not a tasting) great food and fun. See you at 7pm on the night”

Santa’s Little Helpers (Sue Smith, Sue Osbrink, Elaine Nelson, Karen Scott and Lucinda Davidson)

Please email Sue as below confirming your payment,. Last date to book 20th November so that the group can purchase wines at advantageous prices, so need to know their total budget. susanosbrink@gmail.com

PAYMENTS TO THE WINE GROUP ACCOUNT PAY INTO ACCOUNT NO 23132587 SORT CODE 20-30-47 “Wine Community” (Barclays bank). Include the reference number given for each event, with the xxxx being your membership number(s)

Currently plans in the pipeline for 2024 are:

- A “Call my Bluff type” evening organised by 3 of our members Mick & Jenny Skipp and Shirley Sallis, hopefully March meeting. They have also kindly offered to do the food for this evening.
- Another evening from Carol Avery covering Volcanic Wines, a new unusual but interesting topic, scheduled for April.
- I have been in discussion with “Cornish Wine Tasting” about coming to present tasting, topic to be finalised, but they will present premium wines. First quarter of the year.

- A possible tasting at the new wine shop in Fowey called Johns, as and when they get the space sorted. Watch this space.
- A return visit from Wadebridge Wines, a visit to Ellis Wharton and Old Chapel Cellars.
- A trip to (please let me know your preference, majority will choose) Polgoon Vineyard, Penzance or Knightor Winery (and possible lunch)

I hope to put together a draft programme of events for most of next year, by the end of this year. It is fantastic that members are volunteering to take charge of an event, this is what the u3a is about, and it is so encouraging.

We need some volunteers please to take charge of food on one evening each at the Arts Centre. You will be given a budget to purchase cheeses, biscuits, bread and grapes. You will take home the previous month tablecloths (to wash if necessary), bread baskets, cheese platters and knives, to bring to the meeting and layout the food. It will only need a few to offer to do one month and we will have the months at the Arts Centre covered. Thank you.

Well I think that is all for this month, I look forward to seeing those members attending Old Chapel Cellars either on the bus, timings as per last month, or at the venue if making your own way there. For others, I hope to see you at our Christmas event, to celebrate another lovely year of our u3a Wine Group where certainly friends have been made.

Regards Amanda