

u3a ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Dear Wine Group Members

The last newsletter of 2023 and as ever, where has this year gone? I think looking back from our Wine Group perspective, we have had a varied and interesting programme of events this past year with some new presenters as well as new members.

What has pleased me most, has been the way in which many members have put themselves forward to take over an evening: Andrew & Christine running a Wine Tasting Quiz night, great fun and prizes along the way with information and knowledge galore alongside good wines and cheeses; The Spanish evening with Vicki & Terry cooking up a storm with their delicious Paella, along with other Spanish courses made by other members, every morsel was delicious. Of course the annual Garden Party hosted by Chris & Karen, where we sat around their garden listening to the Band and eating wonderful food and wines was relaxing and a fabulous way to spend a Sunday chatting to fellow member/friends. Now we have our Christmas Evening to look forward to in a couple of weeks, and joy of joys I am not involved - 6 lady members are taking this on in total. I am not privy to what we will experience, but knowing them, it will be a memorable evening for all the right reasons. I know Sue Smith has been scouring the supermarkets for bargains in purchasing the wines. Everyone must be looking forward to this, as a RECORD 34 members are booked and paid for!!

As to tastings, we have been lucky enough to enjoy some great (and perhaps not so great on one occasion) wines and speakers who have inspired us to think outside the box as far as our wine choices are concerned and given us an overload of wine related information on evenings when we have all had a thoroughly good time. However, most of us now know "natural" wines are just not our thing!

So I hope you feel, as I do, that our Wine Group has achieved quite a lot in the past 12 months, and fingers crossed we can continue to enjoy as many lovely occasions in the coming 12 months. Thank you for being members and being as enthusiastic as I am about learning more of this fascinating and never ending world of wine!

Review of Visit to Old Chapel Cellars, for an "Evening of Wines to be served at Christmas"



We arrived to find the Chapel lit with Christmas lights and gift boxes of wines adorning shelves. Louisa and Meg met us with a glass of our choice red or white. They had spent the afternoon clearing the shop of more Christmas decorated barrels and gifts to fit our group in, which gave a cosy feeling to the shop and lovely for us to be totally surrounded by bottles.

Louisa started their Christmas theme with a good demonstration of how to hold and open a bottle of fizz without the cork hitting anyone or spilling a drop, most impressive. Then like all good special occasions, we started our "imaginary Christmas" with a glass of fizz, and she explained briefly the difference between a good Champagne, a Cremant and Prosecco/Cava. Cremant being a good choice at a reasonable price if you do not want to splash out on a good Champagne, and this one was truly delicious.



**CREMANT DE LOIRE BRUT NV, DOMAINE DE LANDREAU, FRANCE
£18.99 12%**

Chenin Blanc & Cabernet Franc aged on lees. Beautifully fine bubbles, fruity but with a creaminess makes this a rich and refreshing sparkling white wine easy to drink.

Cremant de Loire is made using the "Traditional Method" - the same method as Champagne. A great pre Christmas lunch aperitif or try with shellfish, ideal on Christmas Day.

From there onto the first white wine **MUSCADET SUR LIE SEVRE ET MAINE, BRETONNIERE, FRANCE £12.99 12% Melon de Bourgogne grape**. Muscadet a classic French white wine from the world famous wine region of the Loire Valley, light-bodied, dry white wine made from Melon de Bourgogne grapes that impart lemon, melon, green apple and pear flavours. Crisp dry and refreshing with excellent texture. Oysters and shellfish are the classic pairings but goes well with all seafood so perhaps to accompany your smoked salmon starter?

Onto the second white, **FLAMETREE CHARDONNAY, W AUSTRALIA £24.99 100% Chardonnay** wild fermented in small barrels 20% in new oak, to give the toasty characteristic. I must admit when I smelt the oak on the nose I thought oh no, an oaked Oz Chardonnay! However on trying it, my thoughts changed to oh a lovely very slightly oaky rich Chardonnay which is very good indeed. From the famous Margaret River region, this was ripe fruit,

bit of toast, creamy with a long dry finish. Would easily cope with the multitude of flavours on your Christmas lunch plate and especially with the Turkey. Would also go well with Goose or cream sauced dishes.



We then turned to a red, **HAWKSDRIFT PINOT NOIR, NEW ZEALAND 2017, £21.99 13.5%**. A very beautiful wine from Dillons Point nr Marlborough, put in French Oak (225 lit) for two years to give tertiary flavours (a mix of flavours coming together, the grape skin and juice together with the oak) of fresh and dried herbs and spices, full of juicy red fruits, rounded and smooth. With the depth of flavour it would not overpower white meat such as your Christmas Turkey, the acidity would cope with the bread sauce or stuffing, and would pair well with the cheese board. So a good all rounder for the day.

Having looked at wines covering pre and during Christmas lunch, we were given a curve ball in the shape of a glass of something perhaps for after dinner as a Digestiv. **LACUESTA VERMOUTH ACACIA WOOD, SPAIN, £20.99**, an aged fortified wine made from the **white Airen grape**. Lacuesta Vermouth have been making traditional vermouth in Spain since 1937. The Reserva is aged for 3 years in American oak followed by a further 7 months in new French oak barrels. Aromas of caramel and dried orange peel followed by lightly smoked notes on the nose (Some said a medicinal nose, perhaps that is the effect of the 24 herbs the grapes are macerated with). Although sweetness was prevalent on the palate, toasted sugar and absinthe can be appreciated. Soft mellow and well balanced. I think this one split the room!

We finished what had been a really fun tasting with a wonderful **EIRADOS TAWNY PORT, DUORO VALLEY, PORTUGAL £15.99**. Grapes of Mourisco Tinto, Tinta Amarela, Tinta Barroca, Tinto Cão, Tinta

Francisca. From a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the grapes are foot trodden and the thick skins impart lots of flavour to the juice. Flavours of mature fruits such as red currant and plums with raisins, caramel and sticky toffee. In the mouth a great complexity, obtained by its oak ageing Apart from the obvious match of blue cheese this tawny port could well accompany almond tart, desserts with ice cream or dried fruits.

We were given a special price on the evening of £100 for a box containing all we had tasted (minus the Vermouth) but with a very full bodied Californian Cabernet Sauvignon, usual price £27.99, An excellent box to cover the essentials of Christmas Day at the very least, which many purchased and we shall enjoy and try to remember all the pairings!

Louisa and Meg were the consummate professionals, giving us just the right amount of information (so I can reproduce here for you now) with lots of fun and humour, all the elements for a great tasting evening. We shall return next Spring for what I know will be another great evening with them.



Odd Wine Snippets

This article from The Guardian, was sent to me by member Janet Harvey, and which I found utterly fascinating...perhaps I should start diving lessons in the hope Camel Valley are stashing bottles somewhere deep on the North Coast!!

**“The rise of undersea Champagne: ‘I have never tasted such a wine in my life’ Rupert Neate, Wealth Correspondent.
Discovery of intact bottles on 1852 shipwreck sparks development of underwater ageing process**

You might think that 1,500 years after the first bottle was drunk there wasn't much more innovation left to be had in the rarefied world of champagne. You would be wrong. The next big thing in the £6bn-a-year industry is: undersea ageing.

Like so many of the world's best innovations, it began by accident. In 2010, a group of divers in Finland's Åland archipelago came across the wreck of a ship that sank in 1852 and were surprised to find 145 bottles of champagne 160ft below the surface. Even more surprisingly, the bottles were still full and tasted – in the words of a professor of food biochemistry – “incredible – I have never tasted such a wine in my life”.

All of the labels had washed off but wine detectives examined the interior surface of the corks and found branding images that enabled them to identify their origin. Many were from the Juglar Maison, which disappeared in 1829 when its vineyard was taken over by a competitor, and there were 47 bottles of Veuve Clicquot.

Two years after the discovery, 11 of the bottles were auctioned off for a total of \$156,000 at a sale in Mariehamn, in the Åland archipelago between Finland and Sweden where the Föglö shipwreck was found. One of the Veuve Clicquot bottles was the top lot, selling for €15,000. That was before the contents of the bottles had been analysed – and tasted – by experts. Now the value of the bottles has reached as high as \$190,000.

Philippe Jeandet, a professor of food biochemistry at the University of Reims, in the heart of France's champagne region, was given small samples from three of the bottles to conduct “chemical and sensory analysis” of the wine. His report, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal, said that “after 170 years of deep-sea ageing in close-to-perfect conditions, these sleeping Champagne bottles awoke to tell us a chapter of the story of winemaking”.

A series of “expert tasters” initially described the wines “using terms such as ‘animal notes’, ‘wet hair’, ‘reduction’ and sometimes ‘cheesy’”, the report said. But after allowing the wine to sit in the glass and oxygenate, it released more pleasant aromas, described as “spicy”, “smoky” and “leathery”. Dominique Demarville, the then chef de caves at Veuve Clicquot, tasted the champagne three times, detecting ripe fruits, truffles and honey, and declared it to be among the world's best champagnes.

Jeandet was allowed to taste “just one droplet squirted from a microsyringe”. His verdict, as reported in Smithsonian Magazine: “I have never tasted such a wine in my life. The aroma stayed in my mouth for three or four hours after tasting it.”

Veuve Clicquot, which is part of the LVMH luxury goods conglomerate of the French billionaire Bernard Arnault, was so taken with the rediscovery of its wine that it is attempting to recreate the same conditions by sinking dozens of bottles in the same spot in the Åland archipelago. Some of the bottles will be left there for 40 years. The champagne house thinks the deep sea could be the perfect environment to “rest” champagne, which is traditionally left to mature in a network of *crayères* (old chalk cellars) under Reims. “With its low salinity (20 times lower than that of the Atlantic Ocean) and its constant temperature of 4°C, the Baltic Sea offers an optimal ageing environment,” Veuve said. The taste is all in the bubbles, apparently. “Whereas no bubbles were observed upon pouring, a slight tingling effect was felt upon tasting,” the scientific paper said of the ancient champagne.

Jean-Marc Gallot, the chief executive of Veuve Clicquot, said: “This extraordinary project dedicated to the art of ageing reflects the spirit of innovation and audacity that has always characterised Maison Veuve Clicquot. We like to push the boundaries, just as Madame Clicquot did in her time.”

It’s not just Veuve experimenting with deep sea champagne. Lucy Edwards, a champagne expert and founder of the industry magazine Champagne Everyday, said undersea storage “is the fastest growing development area in champagne, with most of the big producers and even small houses trying it”. While Veuve is dropping bottles in the Baltic, Edwards said most of the undersea storage industry was off the coast of Brittany.

Demand has grown so rapidly that a French offshore exploration company that previously worked on projects for the oil and gas industry has launched a new division, Amphoris, dedicated to undersea wine storage. It says on its website: “Our job consists [of] providing a reliable and secure service for the immersion of bottles on sites that have been carefully chosen for their unique characteristics thus offering the best conditions to run a perfect underwater cellar: full darkness, constant temperature, total safety.”

Producers worried about their expensive wine being stolen by divers are reassured that its “underwater sites are located at depths beyond limits of human free diving”.

Edwards said: “You need pristine conditions to age the best champagne. They thought that was in the tunnels under Reims, but now they think undersea is even more pristine. There you have total darkness, a cooler constant

temperature, and most importantly, under water the pressure is closer to that inside the bottle – which makes the best bubbles.

“A lot of people think it is just a marketing gimmick, but I have to say I have tried some and there is a difference, however slight.”

Well I never....thank you Janet for such a find.

Another article, this time from **Decanter Magazine** on the subject of “**red wine headaches**”.

A particular phenolic compound found naturally in red wines could lie at the root of a mechanism that triggers headaches, said researchers writing in the journal **Scientific Reports** and including scientists from the University of California Davis (UC Davis).

Headaches of all kinds affect around 16% of the world’s population daily, and alcohol is known to cause headaches ‘when consumed in large quantities’, said the study. Yet, for some people, overdoing it at a celebration or party isn’t the only pitfall. One or two small glasses of red wine can lead to a headache within 30 minutes to three hours among some drinkers, said the study, citing previous research in 2008.

No specific chemical culprit or mechanism has previously been identified, although several wine components have been linked to wine headaches, said the study. Authors also noted that phenolics and high phenolic foods have not been linked to headaches. Yet they found that a flavanol named quercetin, which is present in varying quantities in red wines, may interfere with the body’s ability to metabolise alcohol.

Quercetin is considered a healthy antioxidant found in a range of fruits and vegetables, including grapes, and has been linked to a number of potential benefits. However, researchers said it’s the combination with alcohol that may cause an issue. ‘When it gets in your bloodstream, your body converts it to a different form called quercetin glucuronide,’ said wine chemist and study co-author Andrew Waterhouse, professor emeritus with the UC Davis Department of Viticulture and Enology. ‘In that form, it blocks the metabolism of alcohol,’ he said in an article published by UC Davis on the research. This can lead to a build-up of a toxin known as acetaldehyde, which may cause headaches and nausea, said lead study author Apramita Devi, postdoctoral researcher in the UC Davis viticulture department.

A pre-existing migraine or another headache condition may exacerbate the problem, said Morris Levin, professor of neurology and director of the Headache Center at the University of California, San Francisco. Researchers said they still needed to test their hypothesis in a clinical trial, and added that there are still many unknowns about the causes of red wine headaches – and why they affect some people more than others. ‘We think we are finally on the right track toward explaining this millennia-old mystery,’ said Levin. ‘The next step is to test it scientifically on people who develop these headaches, so stay tuned.’

Christmas Event December 15th

Arts Centre. Arrive 6.45pm but not before, for 7pm start.

Taxis at 10.pm to enable everyone to help tidy up please

And remember to bring your platter of Christmas food **ready plated**, ready to be served. 34 members attending.

Arts Centre Update

Some of you have mentioned to me on more than one occasion, the state of “uncleanliness” of the Assembly Room on arrival for our meetings.

Unfortunately we cannot police the people who use the room before us who leave a dirty floor. In addition the chairs are covered in hairs and not pleasant at all. At the last Group Leaders’ meeting I officially complained to both the Committee and to Jonathan as the division of responsibility in these matters was rather blurred. I also raised the more urgent matter of the toilet door sticking and the lock inadequate. I am glad to report that since Lucinda spoke to Jonathan with our complaint, and Chris Timmins getting his toolbox out, the toilet matter is fixed. Now we need Jonathan to find a cleaner who can keep the toilet area stocked with essentials, clean the floor and Hoover the chairs!! Fingers crossed, and I hope for further updates on this situation but meanwhile thank both Lucinda on behalf of the Committee and Chris Timmins for their prompt and helpful assistance.

Important to Note please:

On the subject of the Arts Centre, I am updating the Risk Assessment for our wine group. It is essential (and really goes without saying but I shall put it down again) – for your own safety.

- That everyone is careful when walking with, or simply holding a glass of wine. Firstly, we do not wish to have to be clearing up broken glass, and secondly we do not want the hazard of slipping on wine. (I know as long term members you drink everything in the glass and have no intention of spilling anything, but accidents do happen!) So please just be aware of the potential risks.
- Secondly should anyone have any **serious food allergies**, please make it known to myself and anyone planning food, to avoid any unpleasant emergency situations. Generally as you know we have biscuits, cheeses and grapes which could well contain **gluten, dairy soya and potentially eggs**, but should we visit other sites and you have a strong allergy please do let us know in advance so we can take appropriate action.

2024 for the Wine Group

I have spent the past few weeks and months contacting potential new presenters as well as our old favourites. Some were far too expensive or demanding, but I have managed to draft out a programme, which you can see at the end of this newsletter.

Some tastings do not have costs yet which I am waiting for - however with the cost of wine duty and other elements increased now, we do have to acknowledge slight increases in our tastings and food costs. As much as possible I am trying to give a mix of visits out, with some tastings at the Arts Centre and some members' events to give a broad spread of costs, hopefully to give everyone something they can afford to attend. Luckily the room fees at the Arts Centre have not increased, but we have had to increase the cost of food per person by £1 to £3pp which is included in the fee you pay, still great value for the spread of cheeses, grapes, biscuits and bread we have.

I really wanted to get a visit to a winery in again this year. However, my third and final attempt to encourage Camel Valley to put on a tasting with some light food met a resounding NO! Their loss. I spoke to Knightor, who not only have put up their tour and tasting cost but now charge a room hire fee of £400+ hundred pounds to use the barn for half a day! There may be a possibility of a Winemaker's Dinner with them, but I am not holding my breath

yet. Should something transpire which is better value, I will use one of our "Members Tasting" dates, but meanwhile I think the programme is looking pretty interesting.

It would be nice to see a few members stand up and present one wine each on our "Members Evenings", more detail will be put in newsletters prior to the date but meanwhile, if you have a favourite wine or later in the year a wine you love to drink in the Summer, start looking up a bit of research and offer to let the rest of us know about it! We also need 3 volunteers please to take charge of food on one evening each at the Arts Centre (only 3 evenings). You will be given a budget to purchase cheeses, biscuits, bread and grapes. Thank you!

Finally, I look forward to seeing a record number of members attending our Christmas event, to celebrate another lovely year of our u3a Wine Group where certainly friends have been made and much wine has been tasted.

It just remains for me to wish each and every one of you a very Happy and Healthy Festive Season.

Here's to 2024 and our u3a Wine Group,

Cheers! Amanda.



DRAFT WINE APRECIATION PROGRAMME 2024



DATE	EVENT	COST & INFO
February 9 date to be confirmed	Visit to Johns Wines of Fowey (new wine, spirits shop, offering wine tastings.) Subject tbc	Fowey £tbc pp to include light food (Minibus transport, cost tbc)
March 15	“Call my Bluff” with wine tasting by members Jenny & Mick Scott & Shirley Sallis	Arts Centre, arrive 6.30pm for 6.45pm start. £tba pp inc room fee wines food & fun!
April 12	Carol Avery presents “Volcanic Wines”, Pentewan Sailing Club arrival 6.45pm for 7pm start. Finish by 9.30pm but taxis for 9.45pm. Carol is back again by popular request and will once again lead us on a wonderful wine trip	£tbc pp including food tbc Suggest taxi share Bring your own tasting glasses
May 16 Thursday	Visit to Old Chapel Cellars, Truro “Looking at Grape Varietals” 5 or 6 wines to taste, presented by Louisa Fitzpatrick – a very popular and well informed presenter and great location for our members. A	£30 pp tasting to include cheese & nibbles

	chance to browse and purchase afterwards.	(Minibus transport, cost tbc)
Sunday, June 23 from midday	Summer Garden Party chez Karen & Chris Scott, St Austell Everyone brings their own wines plus a platter of food to share and enjoy in this delightful local garden. Thank you again, Karen & Chris!	No cost just bring your own wines, glasses and platter of food to share
July 12th Friday	Visit to Ellis Wharton Wines “Mediterranean Wines” (without France and Spain) A lovely time is always had at EWW with Jim presenting this intriguing topic...I’m thinking a couple of Islands perhaps??	£30 pp for tasting to include food. Arrive 6.30pm depart 9.30pm (Minibus transport cost tbc)
August 16	Members’ Tasting – 5 members to present a Summer drinking wine of their choice £15 or under. We will taste a fizz, a white, a rose, a red and perhaps a dessert.	Arts Centre 6.45pm start. £17 includes room fee and food
September 20	Wadebridge Wines Sebastien will present a selection of wines to us, bringing some to buy on the evening Topic tbc	Arts Centre 6.45pm start 9.30pm finish £ tbc inc room fee and food
October 18	Derek (Del) Crookes from Kernowine “Not so usual wines from South America” A second visit from Del, who wants to show us a selection of wines from S America we may not know.	Arts Centre 6.30pm arrival for 6.45pm start. £26pp to include wines, food and room hire

November 15	<p>Members' Favourites for Christmas 5 or 6 members to choose a favourite wine they would serve sometime over Christmas to include a fizz, white wine, red wine, dessert wine and port</p>	<p>Arts Centre 6.30pm arrival for 6.45pm start. £tbc pp to include room fee and food</p>
December 20	<p>Christmas Event, Arts Centre To be discussed....perhaps something different?</p>	<p>£tbc pp to include room fee and wines</p>