

# u3a ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

## DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group Member

Firstly, and very sadly, I have to tell you that member Malcolm Harper has passed away. He and his wife Ann, joined our Group in the very early days in 2019 and have been very loyal members since. Malcolm, having worked for St Austell Brewery, was very interested in wines and often told me he always enjoyed coming to the Wine Group. It was good to see him at our last meeting at the Arts Centre in October. He will be sadly missed, but I do hope that we may still see Ann at our meetings. Our thoughts at this time are with Ann and the family.

December, the month of Christmas is almost here! Time to celebrate another year passing, enjoy the festive events with friends and family and be grateful for all we have.

## **Wine News**

### **Beaujolais Nouveau Day**

By the way, today (when I wrote this) is Beaujolais Nouveau Day and is celebrated every year on the **third Thursday of November**, the exact moment when the year's newest Beaujolais Nouveau is legally allowed to be released. By French law, not a single bottle can be sold before 12:01 a.m. on that day – one of the traditions that has turned the event into a global spectacle.

### **From marketing idea to global phenomenon**

What began as a mid-century marketing idea to highlight the Beaujolais region's fresh, youthful wine has since grown into an international celebration. The excitement originally came from the famous "race to Paris," where winemakers competed to deliver the first bottles of Beaujolais Nouveau to the capital. That competitive spirit still echoes today, as producers and regions around the world mark the release with festivities, countdowns, and even modern-day races.

### **A worldwide toast to the new vintage**

Every third Thursday in November, wine bars, restaurants, and retailers across the globe simultaneously uncork the same wine – millions of bottles all opened within hours of each other. The young wine, made from freshly harvested Gamay grapes and known for its bright, fruit-forward character, becomes the centre of parties. Imagine millions of people in Paris, Tokyo, New York, and

everywhere in between, all raising a glass of the same wine to celebrate the completion of the year's harvest.

In the United States, the date often aligns with Thanksgiving preparations, making Beaujolais Nouveau a popular pick for holiday tables thanks to its freshness and food-friendly profile. The once-classic proclamation, "Le Beaujolais nouveau est arrivé!" has evolved into the modern, celebratory, "It's Beaujolais Nouveau time."

So when the third Thursday of November arrives, join the worldwide toast – raise a glass of this year's freshest, most festive red wine and celebrate the new harvest.

## **The original wine race to Paris**

Beaujolais is a small, picturesque region tucked into the greater Burgundy area of France, famous for its rolling hills and, of course, its wine. For centuries, the wine made here was a simple, local affair not really enjoyed anywhere else.

## **The marketing spark that changed everything**

That all changed in 1951, thanks to some brilliant marketing. They needed to figure out how to make the Beaujolais wine harvest more profitable and the wine more widely recognized. Winemakers decided to cut the restrictions on when French law said they could release their newest vintage, scheduling it for the middle of November. They dubbed the wine *Beaujolais Nouveau* – the "New Beaujolais" – and conjured up a thrilling annual race to see who could deliver the first bottles of the vintage to the markets of Paris. These races quickly became a tradition, with teams, drivers, and

various transportation methods competing to be the first to bring Beaujolais Nouveau to Paris and beyond.

## **A tradition that caught fire across France**

This new wine and race was a smashing hit. The media loved it. By the 1970s, the release of Beaujolais Nouveau was a full-blown national event. The popularity of Beaujolais Nouveau wine and Beaujolais Nouveau Day has since expanded across the globe, with similar competitions taking place in neighbouring European countries, North America, and Asia, turning the event into a worldwide phenomenon. One of the most famous of these was the Beaujolais Run, a quirky, unofficial race from France to the UK that captured the playful and spirited essence of the celebration.

Today, millions of people celebrate by popping a bottle of Beaujolais Nouveau every late November.

According to wine experts, this year 2025 has produced wines of rare balance and elegance. It is a vintage to buy both for current drinking and to lay down for the future. The top wines from 2025 will stand the test of time, but there is also enough hedonistic fruit to ensure immediate pleasure.

Beaujolais' top producers are today turning out age-worthy gems that are well worth discovering at prices that make even the top wines an affordable splurge.

*Many years ago I, along with a group of friends, did the infamous Beaujolais Run over to France to grab a case or two of the wine, to bring back to the UK to enjoy and celebrate. Good old Dover to Calais days!!*

## **South West Wine Producers take 3 Trophies**

This week has also seen plenty of gongs dished out to South West wineries. At the WineGB West Awards, Cornwall's **Trevibban Mill** stole the show by scooping three trophies: Best Sparkling Rosé – for its Pinot Noir cuvée, Best Alternative Wine – for its skin-contact wine Orion, and Best Producer in the South West. Well done Trevibban!

## **Review of visit to Ellis Wharton, November 7 2025 “WINES FOR CHRISTMAS”**

Stepping off the minibus to see the showroom decorated for our visit to Ellis Wharton is always a pleasing sight, and this time our group was joined by 10 members of the Newquay u3a Group.

Jim led members through a typical Christmas meal suggesting wines to accompany, starting with a fizz, followed by 2 whites and 2 reds and finishing with a dessert wine. There was focaccia courtesy of DaBara bakery, crisps, crackers, cheeses chutney and cold meats to accompany. Small pieces of Christmas cake accompanied the dessert wine.



Wine 1.

**LA SCARPETTA PROSECCO SPUMANTE, VENICE £9.95 10.5%**

Glera grape. Pale light yellow colour, delicate and complex bouquet with fruity notes reminiscent of peach and green apple, there are also good secondary notes of acacia and lilac. Fresh and light on the palate with balanced acidity.

**Ideal as an aperitif**, it is a perfect accompaniment to hors-d'oeuvres and delicate first courses.

Wine 2

**DON PLACERO RIOJA BLANCO 2021 £9.95 12%**

Super clean and refined flavour, this wine shows how Tempranillo Blanco, Verdejo and Viura grapes blend so well together. This young white Rioja is a bright greenish straw yellow colour. The nose has a strong fruit bouquet with intense citrus and apple aromas. Smooth on the palate and dry in style, with fresh and fruity flavours of lemon, green apple and white peach. The lingering freshness is in harmony between acidity and fruit and leaves a lasting impression in the mouth.

**Jim's recommendation to accompany smoked salmon or similar starter.**



### Wine 3

#### **CHATEAU CRES RICARDS, ESPRIT DE CRES RICARDS, MARSANNE ROUSSANNE, S OF FRANCE, 2022 £12.25 13%**

This Estate was created in 1960, at the place known as Crès Ricards, in the village of Ceyras. In 2010 Jean- Claude Mas acquired the 27 ha (69 acres) belonging to the Châteaux, extending the estate to 42 ha in 2013. He was fascinated by the fantastic terroir of the Terrasses du Larzac, which produces silky wines with intense flavours. At the foot of the Mont Baudile, this vineyard offers a unique geography, with its red earth, shale and pebbles. Yields are low, strict grape selection and carbonic maceration produce generous wines.

The wine appears lemon and clear, with a mix of stone fruit, accompanied with expressive passion fruit and somewhat floral on the nose. The palate is full of apricot and passionfruit, white flowers and honeysuckle, finishing fresh and long with underlying vanilla

**This wine has enough body to easily accompany Turkey or similar on Christmas Day.**



Wine 4

**DON PLACERO RIOJA CRIANZA 2018 £13 14%**

Grape Tempranillo & Tinta Roriz.

This Rioja Crianza displays enticing aromas of morello cherry and subtle vanilla. The palate is smooth and velvety thanks to 12 month's maturation in a mixture of French and American oak followed by further ageing in bottle before release.

**Enjoy with game, roast beef (alternative to Turkey) or a selection of cheeses.**

Wine 5

**DOMAINE ASTRUC, d'a CARIGNAN VIELLE VIGNES, SOUTH OF FRANCE, 2021 £13.25 13.5%**

Grape Carignan

The Carignan vineyards of Domaine Astruc are located at the foot of the Pyrenees and this makes these vineyards a lot cooler than

the rest of the Languedoc region, producing wines that offer refinement and elegance. The Carignan grapes come from very old vines (hence the Vieilles Vignes classification or old vines). The yield of the vines is very low. The Carignan grapes are fermented in stainless steel tanks at a controlled temperature. The wine then matures in American oak (70%, a mix of new, one and two year old barrels) and French oak (30%, one and two years old) for six months. This wine is deep purple in colour with a ruby red hue and has aromas of cocoa, black currants followed by impressions of strawberries and toast. Full, rich in taste with soft tannins and a long finish. Excellent to serve with various types of red meat, game and cheeses.

Acquired in 2002 by Jean-Claude Mas, the château is situated at the foot of the Pyrenean Mountain range, between 200 and 300 metres above sea level in the Limoux region (120 km from the coast). According to the history books, the world's first ever sparkling wines were made in Limoux, in 1544.

Domaine Astruc comprises 80 hectares in AOP Limoux (coastal zone) AOP Malepère and IGP Pays d'Oc, of which 25 hectares are certified organic and 55 are farmed sustainably (certified by Terra Vitis). The Malras site is home to the main wine cellar and bottling line. It benefits from a significant amount of rain in winter as well as cold winds which extend the ripening season.

The harvest is carried out both by hand and by machine.

Wine 6

**INDOMITA, NOSTROS LATE HARVEST, CHILE, £9.50 2023 12%**

Grape - Gewurztraminer and Sauvignon Blanc

A 50/50 blend of Gewürztraminer and Sauvignon Blanc grapes from Indómita's vineyards in the Casablanca Valley (and from which their Reserva-level dry wines are made) are hand harvested to create this unique sweet wine.

Upon arrival at the winery, grapes are immediately pressed without destemming, followed by astatic settling for 96 hours. Fermentation

starts with the use of selected yeasts and usually takes 30 days, resulting in a delicately sweet wine with approx 85g/l residual sugar.

A beautifully golden colour, reminiscent of honey characterises this delicately sweet wine. Aromas of white peach, white tea leaves and lychee fill the nose, whilst the palate is clean, bright with a candied lemon peel acidity giving elegance.

**Beautiful chilled as an aperitif, or serve with mature cheese, blue, brie, camembert and Roquefort, but also with fruit based desserts. EWW served this with rich Christmas Cake which complemented the wine and vice versa.**



Members of both our Wine group and the Newquay u3a enjoyed the evening and made some purchases before leaving.

*Ellis Wharton have since informed me, that “due to increasing overheads and staff costs, with effect January 2026 the cost of a*

*private tasting such as we have enjoyed in the past, will rise to £45 per head." This is a 50% increase, and I have expressed my surprise at this amount.*

*I have many questions I have asked EWW but will not receive a reply until the New Year as they are coming into their very busy season. There is perhaps an alternative where Jim comes to the Arts Centre to present the wines, **for a fee**, to us and we provide the food. It would be a real shame if our trips there were to end, we have been visiting them for many years now and often twice a year, and have always enjoyed the whole trip out. However, if as a group we feel this is far too expensive (combined with the minibus cost), we will have to look at the alternative. I would be grateful to have your comments on this as to whether you would still find the evening of value and book. (Don't reply about the amount of increase!!).*

### **While I remember it for those members attending our Christmas event a few points to note -**

1 Please remember to book taxis if you are not staying overnight at the hotel and I suggest you do this as soon as possible as taxis will be very busy over this period.

2 We are in the **ACORN SUITE**. Taxis can drop you right outside Reception (to the very left of the building). Go into Reception, straight ahead up the stairs or use the lift, which then arrives right outside the Acorn Suite to your right.

3 Once you have a glass of Prosecco on arrival (which the wine group has paid for), please go to the bar and either order and pay for your drinks for the evening, or if you pre-ordered, pay for your bottles then **BEFORE THE MEAL** starts. This will save delays.

4 There will be a raffle with £150 worth of alcohol related prizes so please bring some cash. Sue Osbrink will be selling tickets whilst we all enjoy a glass of fizz.

5 There will be a quiz- probably after the meal- which Sue Smith is organising, the theme for which will be **Wine & Christmas** and there will be a prize(s) for the winning team (teams of 2 or 3 which Sue has arranged).

### **Next year, 2026 Wine Programme**

I am attaching a separate document of our **draft programme** of events for next year which I hope you find interesting and varied. I haven't as yet put a visit to a vineyard in as I want to see how many of you would like to do that and if so which one. I think because of the cost of a minibus, this probably prohibits further afield but we could visit a local one, or even a distillery such as Tarquins or Colwith, let me have your feedback. We currently have May free and the date does not necessarily have to be a Friday. Many prices and topics are yet to be confirmed by the supplier, or person running the event, but will be done a month or so prior to enable booking.

Huge thanks to those members who have, and often again, put themselves forward to run an evening for our group. It is very much appreciated by all.

Meanwhile I can now tell you about our first meeting in 2026 which you can start to book for.

**February 6<sup>th</sup> (earlier date due to Pantomime at the Arts Centre)**  
**A Members' Tasting of "Unusual Wines"** the wines can be an unusual grape, region, country or somewhere we haven't had a wine from before or for a long time .

**Arts Centre** 6.30pm for 6.45 start, finish at 9.30pm taxis at 10 please. **Cost pp £16** which includes the room fee, the food, and of course all the wines. Maximum numbers 30

## **VOLUNTEER NEEDED PLEASE TO BUY AND BRING THE FOOD**

Our wonderful volunteers and their wines are

### **Ann Bennett - 2 Canadian White Wines, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc**

There are two main Canadian wine regions, in the east of Canada, Ontario, near the Niagara Peninsula and west in British Columbia, the Okanagan Valley. Our two wines in February are from the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia.

I spend a lot of time in British Columbia and I'm very proud to introduce Canadian wines to you. I'm sure this is an area you haven't considered as a wine producing country or region. I hope you enjoy the two wines we've chosen, a Riesling and a Sauvignon Blanc.

### **Janet Harvey – Rose 13%**

From the Marche, the Adriatic coast of Italy

### **Carol Avery – a medium bodied Red Wine**

Carol will present a medium to full bodied red wine which has a very unusual method of production which involves ropes and (appropriately for her with a husband owning Ocean Sports) kayaks!

### **Karen Scott & Lucinda Davison – A Puglian Red wine**

Karen's holiday to Puglia in October with the u3a gave her a taste for an indigenous grape variety which she and Lucinda will present.

### **Another Red tbc or dessert wine tbc**

This will be an exciting tasting evening, with some more expensive than usual wines included in the mix, which the wine group are in a position to subsidise on this occasion. A good start to 2026 I feel.

Booking is open now. 30 spaces maximum.

**ALL PAYMENTS TO THE WINE GROUP ACCOUNT PAY INTO  
ACCOUNT NO 23132587 (Barclays) SORT CODE 20-30-47 (U3a  
St Austell)**

On occasions when we use a minibus please state your preference to Sue Osbrink, for departure/drop off point. Penrice School or the Arts Centre.

Well members, that is it for another year. I may do a very brief note just before Christmas, time depending, but for those not coming to our Christmas event I would like to thank you for your continued support, and wish you and your families a very happy festive season and a healthy 2026.

Kind regards,

**Amanda**

Draft Programme for 2026 attached as a separate document for you to print and keep