

u3a ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group Member

Firstly, Happy New Year to you all and I hope 2026 will be great and that you enjoy good health. I would like to welcome the new members who have joined our group in the past two months, but have not yet been able to attend any events, and who I hope to meet in person soon.

I also hope you enjoyed the festive period in whatever way you celebrated it, and drank some good wines. I would love to hear from you as to any wine highlights you had.

For our part, we had a Christmas in two sections, firstly with family the weekend prior where we enjoyed a few days of traditional Christmas fare, and I can assure you that our children are very wine savvy and cannot be fobbed off with cheap wine! However, this gives us pleasure that we can all enjoy some nice tipples together (although the grandchildren stick to their squash, water or smoothies)!

We then enjoyed a quiet Christmas just the two of us, when we had a delicious Beef Wellington. We both had chosen a variety of wines from the garage (our not so posh wine store) to have over the festive period including the days in-between. It was interesting

picking wines to match certain foods, and I have to say we don't always go by the book, and have different favourites so on some occasions some of us chose to drink white and some red for a particular dish. Glad to say all were very much enjoyed.

Here are a few of our favourites from this year. Unfortunately as we were so busy, and Chris's enthusiasm to get rid of bottles, there was no time to photograph the wines before they went out for recycling. But I did manage to find a few, or we had further stock I could photo.

Long Barn Pinot Noir (100%), California (Napa Valley) available from Ellis Wharton. A favourite of Chris who has presented this in the past.



Chablis Premier Cru, Chardonnay, France (bought back from France) Readily available from most supermarkets or wine suppliers.

A beautiful St Emilion Grand Cru from Bordeaux (bought back from France).

Brunello di Montalcino 2019, Tuscany Italy. (one of Chris' special birthday gifts) but available from good suppliers. Amazing!

With a pear and chocolate Panetonne we loved a **Monbazillac, France**, and with the Christmas pud a wonderful **Andrew Quady Essensia Orange Muscat Australia**



With appetisers or as an aperitif, a **Chapel Down Brut Sparkling wine** and **Trevibban Mill Black Ewe** a sparkling rose, and I have to say both went well NYD with smoked salmon and scrambled egg breakfast. Time now for plenty of water and I will say in my defence, that I was very restrained and only enjoyed a small glass of each!!



If after the festive excess, you are thinking of dry January, then here is an interesting piece by **Jane Macquitty of The Times**. After having tried many zero wines I have yet to find something really palatable so fingers crossed:

“Not all zero-alcohol wine is expensive, sweet and dreadful. Having tasted more than 50 bottles and cans of de-alcoholised wine on behalf of those of you doing dry January, I’m amazed just how drinkable a fair few are. Admittedly, those that crashed and burned

at this tasting were the worst I tasted last year, nauseatingly sweet horrors — and, yes, I am talking about Kylie's no-alcohol wine. Thankfully, standards are rising, though don't go looking for the same nose, depth of flavour, middle-palate pizzazz and buzz that you get from a standard wine, as you won't find it. Still, if you're off the booze for whatever reason, there are enough halfway decent bottles here to keep you going.

Zero-alcohol star buys



2025 Tilimuqui Fairtrade Sparkling Zero, Argentina, 0 per cent, Co-op, £4 down from £5 Hats off to the La Riojana co-op, producers of this elegant, ripe, citrusy, unoaked, lemon zest fizz.

Festillant Cuvée Blanche Sans Alcool France, 0.5 per cent, thewinesociety.com, £4.50 Back in stock, Festillant's delicate, grapey, apple orchard fruit gives you lots of Gallic charm, sans alcohol.

2023 Zeno Viura, Spain, 0.3 per cent, Waitrose, £10.25 Zeno's grape variety and vintage-dated wines do work. Try this palatable white peach-scented Viura.

024 Zeno Tempranillo-Cabernet, Spain, 0.3 per cent, Waitrose, £10.25 The best of the fuller zero reds is Zeno's dark, fruity, herby, two-grape red, with a beguiling floral note.



Divin Grande Reserve Sauvignon Blanc, France, 0.5 per cent, Marks & Spencer, £12 Heavy bottle but within is a decent enough sauvignon with a musky scent and a gentle, grapey, lemony spin.

Wednesday's Domaine, Sanguine, Spain, 0 per cent, wednesdaysdomaine.com, £14.99 With a dab of black cherry and ginger, this lighter, spritzy red is more Beaujolais-like than Bordeaux.

Jukes 8 The Sparkling Rosé, England, 0% jukescordialities.com, £18 The most user-friendly of the Jukes fizz, with a spark of spice and restrained rhubarb, pomegranate and cherry fruit.”

Well there's a decent selection of recommended wines to perhaps try this month? Do let me know if you try and like one.

Thanks to Carol Avery who sent me a list, there are some Internationally accepted dates in February relating to wine.

1st February Intl Furmint Day – a wine we have tasted on a couple of occasions –

Furmint is a white Hungarian wine grape variety that is most noted widely grown in the Tokaj wine region where it is known as being the principal grape in the famous Tokaji dessert wines, but it can also be made into dry wines. It features high acidity and can exhibit

flavours of citrus, green apple, and stone fruits, making it versatile for various food pairings. It is grown in the tiny Hungarian wine region of Somló. Furmint plays a similar role in the Slovakian wine region of Tokaj. It is also grown in Austria where it is known as Mosler. If you haven't tried this wine I strongly urge you to, widely available.

16th February Intl Syrah Day. – I am sure you all know Syrah also known as Shiraz, a dark-skinned grape variety grown throughout the world and used primarily to produce red wine. In 1999, Syrah was found to be the offspring of two obscure grapes from south eastern France, Dureza and Mondeuse Blanche. Syrah should not be confused with Petite Sirah, a cross of Syrah with Peloursin dating from 1880. The style and flavour profile of wines made from Syrah are influenced by the climate where the grapes are grown.

Two reasons to go out and find a bottle of Furmint and Syrah on the appropriate days to see what the fuss is about.

2026 Wine Appreciation meetings

I can now tell you about our first meetings in 2026 which you can start to book now. For new members, at our in-house tastings whether we have volunteer members or wine speakers, we provide food, bought and presented by volunteers, usually consisting bread, crisps, cheeses and grapes. If you have any dietary requirements please let me know. I suggest you bring a bottle of water, and use taxis as we often taste upwards of 5 tasting size portions. Bring a tasting glass or two each, (the official ISO tasting glass is available on Amazon) or bring one or preferably two small wine glass(es).

The way to book is to email susan.osbrink@gmail.com who will confirm spaces are available, then pay online with the reference quoted using your membership number(s) followed by WGxxxx as shown on each meeting information section, and confirm to Sue you have paid. The cost of the evening includes the room fee

charged by the Arts Centre, currently £1 per person but rising in April.

February 6th (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. We will taste 6 wines.

Arts Centre 6.30pm arrival for 6.45 start, finish at 9.30pm for clearing up, taxis at 10pm please. **Cost pp £16** (subsidised by the Wine Group) which includes the room fee, the food, and of course all the wines. Maximum numbers 30. Pay by January 23rd, reference xxxxWGFEB26.

Thanks to Judith for offering to do 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 From the Marche, the Adriatic coast of Italy

Mike Edwards – a Red from Cahors, France

In tribute to his friend and ours, Malcolm Harper who was to present with Mike, Mike will present Malcolm's favourite red wine from Cahors in his honour.

Carol Avery – a medium bodied Red Wine

Carol will present a 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.

This will be an interesting 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 hope.

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 for trips, please state your preference to Sue Osbrink, for departure/drop off point. Penrice School or the Arts Centre.

March 20th – food volunteer please

Arts Centre 6.30pm for 6.45 start, finish at 9.30pm for clearing up, taxis at 10 please. **Cost pp £25** which includes the room fee, the food, and of course all the wines. Maximum numbers 30. Pay by February 25th, reference xxxxWGMAR26.

Sebastien from Wadebridge Wines returns again by popular request, giving us his extensive knowledge, oozing that French charm and passion for his wines and who has given us memorable tastings in the past. Topic tbc.

Information on further months will follow in subsequent newsletters.

Kind regards

Amanda