



News

WSWS

WestSurreyWineSociety

April 2006

Languedoc wines by Simon Evans

Welcome to Simon Evans, this month's presenter.

Simon is co-director of The Naked Grape wine merchants in Alresford. The shop has 2 key aims; only to stock wines that they had pre-tasted and had specifically chosen, and to avoid brand names and wines available in High Street shops/supermarkets. This has led The Naked Grape to taste over 4,000 wines in the last 15 months, and to find some of the most individual wines from around the world.

Simon is a Judge at the International Wine Challenge and starts teaching at his Wine School in early May 2006. We look forward to a very interesting evening with very interesting wines.

The wines this month are :

Whites

- *Chateau de la Mirande Picpoul di Pinet 2004
- *Chateau de Lascaux Blanc, Pic St Loup
- *La Campagne Viognier Vin de Pays d'Oc 2004
- *Les Caves de Sieur d'Arques Chardonnay Limoux 2002

Reds

- *Domaine de Mordoc Merlot Vin de Pays d'Oc 2004
- *Faugeres Tradition 2003
- *Domaine Sainte Marthe Syrah Vin de Pays de Cassan 2002
- *Alicante Bouchet 2004

Dessert Wine

- *Vieux Rivesaltes Vin Doux Naturel 1984

Make a note of the following dates, (normally 3rd Monday of the month at 8pm)

24th April (4th Monday)	Languedoc wines by Simon Evans, The Naked Grape
15th May	What's new and different in Australia by Angela Reddin
19th June	"Call my bluff" (plus AGM)
17th July	Buying wines for a 5* hotel William Cowpe, retired Managing Director from The Goring
12th August NB, a Saturday	Summer Party at Hazel's
18th September	Italy tbc
16th October	Simon Taylor, (Stone, Vine & Sun) – Chile/Argentina
20th November	tbc
18th December	Christmas Party

March Tasting Report
Wine Making with Philip Tuck MW and Stephen Skelton MW

Now what should you call two Masters of Wine in one evening – a Magnum, Jeroboam or brace perhaps (answers on a postcard to the Ed might or might not gain you a bottle of something). More seriously, this was a unique occasion for WSWS and it showed in another excellent attendance with a welcome number of new faces who all enjoyed a seriously entertaining evening with lots of humour and repartee, not a little parrying between MWs and a liberal sprinkling of knowledge.

Philip, Wine Director at Hatch Mansfield, and Stephen, who has a fine wine business and made wines in the UK for 20 years, had selected 2 wines from 4 varieties to show us. Each pairing compared Old and New World and the different wine making techniques which in a nutshell are that the former make wines to accompany food and the latter wines that are just as good without food. At the end of the evening on a show of hands the New proved more popular than the Old – just.

Entertaining though the presentation undoubtedly was, it did have a curate's egg element as the speakers did not keep to their brief and anyone who had come to learn about wine making in the way we had learnt about viticulture from Nigel Greening will have felt disappointed. (But perhaps they had credited us with greater knowledge than I suspect most of us have and had decided to focus on the finer points.) Indeed, the talk started in vineyard as we heard about the many variables of soil, weather, pests etc that greatly affect the winemaker's raw materials – the grapes. The actual process of winemaking was summed up in a couple of succinct sentences, but we did get lots of information dotted in about aspects of the process as the wines were presented. However rather than trying the impossible of presenting this in an orderly manner lets move swiftly to the wines and pick up some of these as we go.

We started classically with 2 Rieslings – the 2003 Anton Bauer from Austria and the 2004 Villa Maria Reserve from NZ. The former was pleasantly soft and dry but with little varietal character and the latter more floral, fuller bodied and sharper finishing. The aim of this comparison was to look at the differences of acidity levels – pH - and residual sugar. High acidity wines need to be balanced with higher sugars which results in more floral flavours. Both components also affect the fermentation process, however neither my chemistry nor tasting notes are good enough to go further.

The second white pairing compared Chardonnays from France – a 2004 Bernard Defraix Chablis (unoaked), and Chile – a 2004 Errazuriz Reserva (oak fermented and aged). Unfortunately the Chablis was not a good example – dry and dusty with no discernible flavour. The wine was fermented on the lees which we were told “marries the wine and yeast” and miniscule residual sugar which produced the extreme dryness. The Errazuriz, though dry had lots more fruit thanks to its lower acidity and higher sugar.

A few words on malolactic fermentation – converting hard edged acids into softer ones – led to a long discussion on how much the flavour of a wine was affected by the soil. The view of our MWs is that soil has no affect on flavour which is entirely the product of the making techniques - and any claims to the contrary are the result of the marketeers and ‘the back label’ writers. Great wines, they opined, make themselves, and “the less mucking about the better’. Predictably the questions moved to the merits of organic wine and another debunking – “organic wines do not taste better” and in fact have higher chemical levels than non-organic wines as the winemaker has to add high levels of sulphur to counteract the effects of diseases and insect pests.

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And so to the reds. Again a classic start with a pair of Pinot Noirs – a 2003 Te Mania reserve from NZ and 2004 Louis Jadot Corton Pougets Grand Cru from Burgundy. The NZ was very true to the variety, intense fruit but clean and simple and stood up well to its French partner. The latter was more complex but also more tannic with slightly vegetative flavours. But we weren't here for the wines but their lessons. NZ has become one of the top wine making countries due to its expertise in working with clones and high tech wine making, and Burgundy is special because its marginal climate slows grape development and ensures high acidity and it is made with minimum intervention – fermented for over 6 months (which amazes New World makers) with natural yeasts and no temperature control. Discussion then turned to oak – from wood chips in muslin bags to expensive barrels – and its affect on fermentation and ageing but then lost its way as the last wines were poured.

The final wines were Shiraz – the 2004 Le Roc des Domain Anges from Roussillon and the 2004 Grant Burge Miamba from Barossa in Australia. Neither were particularly true to the variety The Roussillon, one of the new great wine making areas in France, had some fruit but not enough, at least not yet, to balance the tannins and had been made to age. The Australian was much more intense, had loads of sweet fruit and a much softer texture due to prolonged ripening and had been made to drink early. So, the same grape but different objectives producing different wines. Which brought us to the drinkabilty factor – for the MW's, purity of flavour, in glass development and not too high an alcohol, the hallmarks of a good Burgundy. But for those of us who like floral flavours, or softness or rich fruit or -- they are all personal. Which is just as well otherwise all wines would taste the same –

which may be the holy grail of supermarkets but is fortunately not one shared by WSWS members.

So, a most intriguing evening – a blend (a rather important word not mentioned by anyone on the night) of the hugely entertaining, a touch frustrating and overall most enjoyable.

Peter Smith

Want to be given a free bottle of wine?

Easy, just introduce a new member and once they are signed up, the bottle is yours. Now that's an offer you can't turn down!

Anyone considering going on a Wine Tour might like to contact Martin Smith. He has a booklet on the Arblaster and Clarke tours.

Please note that the April meeting will be situated in the Bar at Blacknest as our usual room has been pre-booked by another club.

All contributions and suggestions for the newsletter are very welcome. Please send them to Graham. Last date for copy for the next edition is Tuesday 2nd May 2006