



Newsletter

WSWS

Our next event is held on:

Monday 13th December
7:30pm for 8:00pm start

West Surrey Wine Society
<http://www.westsurreywinesociety.org.uk>

December 2010 edition

CHRISTMAS PARTY TIME !!

Monday 13th December is the date for our annual Christmas party, which will be held again at Blacknest Golf Club. The closing date for those wishing to attend was 1st December, so if you've not booked, then it's too late.

Wines chosen by the Committee are (naturally) all high quality and of course compliment the menu. The quiz is being reinstated this year as the committee appreciate that members missed showing off their wine knowledge / skills / memory last year! So dust off those meeting newsletters; Go back through the fantastic reports by Peter, Geoffrey and others; And hone those wine skills to perfection.

Diary notes

Make a note of the following dates, (WSWS meets on 3rd Monday of the month unless stated)

Monday December 13th (Note – second Monday)	Christmas party at Blacknest Golf Club
Monday January 17th 2011	Rhone wines Alun Griffiths (Berry Brothers & Rudd)
Monday February 2011	Details to be confirmed
Monday March 21st 2011	The diversity of Spanish Wines. Mike Ritchie MW (business development manager for Moreno Wines)

Who's who in the Committee?

Sallie - Committee Chair

Graham - The money man

Geoffrey - Secretary & all things snail

Peter - Events co-ordinator

Geoff Rose

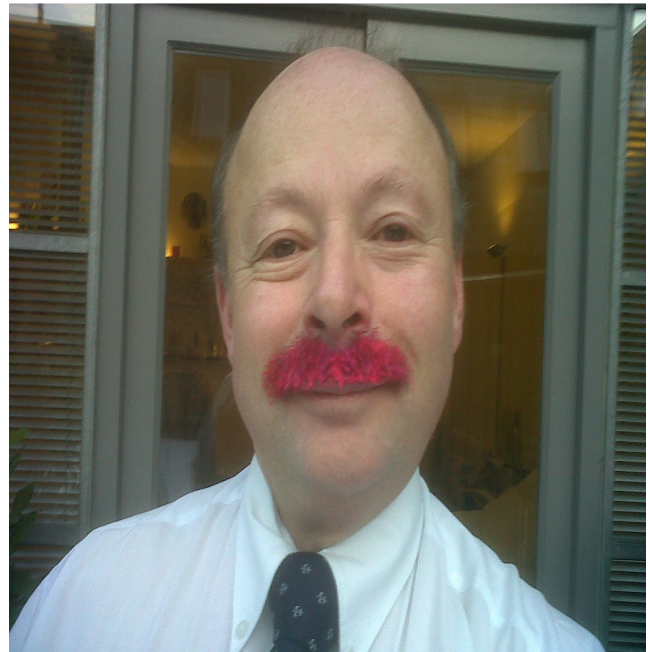
Tasting Notes

December is the time for giving, so here goes!

Firstly, let's give our thanks to Geoffrey for stepping into the breach and providing a tasting report on November. His account of the evening made me wish I had not been trapped in London, and instead had escaped to Blacknest. Well done Geoffrey.

May I give my thanks also to those members who sponsored me for my (pink) moustache growing efforts. Over £700 was raised for this worthy cause, and money continues to flood (ok, trickle) in. It's not too late!

David



November tasting report - What is quality in wine ?

Geoffrey Matthews

Richard Bampfield is a Wine Educator of great distinction and experience. He is a Master of Wine from 1990 and, at present, is Chairman of the Association of Wine Educators and European Champagne Ambassador. He is a Cambridge graduate in French and has put this knowledge to good use in the wine trade. There is much information about Richard on the internet, putting his name into 'google' brings up masses of detail. He has a pleasant open manner and wears his learning and distinction lightly. His purpose was to present arguments around the theme "What is Quality in Wine?"

Richard explained the difference between Intrinsic and Extrinsic values and used four pairs of wines to explore various aspects of our perception of quality. Intrinsic quality relates to what is in the bottle, the taste and smell of the wine. These values are subjective but there are characteristics of wine that are generally accepted as providing quality which will emerge from our comparisons. Extrinsic quality relates to exterior factors, everything but the actual product (i.e. labels; brand; packaging; and image). Who has not been influenced by a lovely label, the beautiful packaging of some champagnes, the feel of a heavy, medallioned bottle of Rhone wine, the (rare) pleasure of slowly opening and decanting an expensive Port, or something similar. These extrinsic properties provide 'quality' without tasting the actual wine.

The first pair of wines that we compared illustrated Richard's theme very well. We started with two sparkling wines, a champagne - Nicolas Feuillate Brut (non vintage) and a Cremant de Bourgoyne Brut from Maison Albert Bichot (also non vintage). To help us focus, he had a tasting glass of each wine poured for us anonymously. We had to say which was which, and why. There was no problem in picking out the champagne which had a deeper gold colour, a fuller, more characteristically biscuity taste - the wine shouted 'better quality' than the Cremant.

Richard explained that there is a place for light Cremant wines, they are pleasant, less bubbly and some people may prefer the style. However, champagne has a higher quality due to ageing, balance and finesse. Champagne like this is mouth-watering and simply makes one want to drink more. As part of Richard's fascination with champagne he explained an extrinsic feature of

the labelling that reveals whether the producer has bought-in the grapes or produces his own grapes e.g. CM for Co-operative Manipulant, NM for Negociant Manipulant (a dealer), RM for Recoltant Manipulant- own harvest grapes, MA for Marque d'Achetent (buyer's own brand). These labelling features do indicate quality. For Christmas he recommends his favourites, Louis Roederer and Pol Roger and also Ruinart and Billecart-Salmon. He believes that a high quality N.V. champagne can be better than a poor vintage wine, so the designation 'vintage' is not necessarily better than N.V.

The next two wines we compared were a Premium Sauvignon Blanc 2008 AC Bordeaux, Yvon Mau. and a Mersault 2007, Domaine du Pavillon. Again there was a clear winner. The extra quality provided by the taste and bouquet of the Mersault was immediately obvious to us all. There was a price difference too - the Sauvignon Blanc retails at about £6-8, the Mersault more like £25. Richard explained that the SB was a good example with a grassy/elder flower character but the aromas were linear. There was a straight flavour without complexity, it was not racey and was a bit dull. The Mersault showed its' quality by immediately revealing a nutty, complex, character. This wine was not linear but varied in character showing development in the glass and it had a lingering after-taste. Richard discussed how qualities such as richness and intensity of flavour emerged and also good balance and a texture that was just right. These differences in intrinsic qualities were very evident in this pair of wines.

The third pair of wines were Chapel Down, English Rose 2009 contrasted with a Beaune, Clos de l'Ermitage 2007, Maison Albert Bichot. Distinguishing between the two wines was not a problem - one was pink and the other a lovely deep ruby colour. The English Rose was fresh and crisp with some good mouth-feel. Richard is intrigued by English wines. Apparently English producers love rose wines but, he asked, 'What does a high quality rose taste like? What criteria could one use for a judgement? The answer was 'we don't really know'. Richard writes rose wine bottle back-labels and finds he runs out of words after saying 'semi-sweet, soft fruits, raspberries / strawberries' and there is simply nothing more to be said. There is no complexity, no depth, concentration or finesse. Rose has very limited intrinsic quality. There may be extrinsic values that actually make it very popular, it is very easy to identify and drink without real discrimination. The Beaune is another story, a single vineyard in the favoured middle of the slope where the best high-class wines are found. This wine is of perfumed elegance, the tannins are firm and balanced. The high intrinsic quality is evident.

The fourth, and final, pair was a Ch. Fourcas-Horten 2005 AC Listrac from Bordeaux, compared with a Brown Brothers Shiraz 2007 from Victoria, Australia. The quality was really with the Listrac. Richard found that the Shiraz was charmless and lacking in flavour. He said that the strong flavour was 'in your face' and hit the front of the palate, however he found a good after-taste and a characteristic taste of pepper.

As Richard explained, 'quality comes in different styles', in a way this summed up his thesis. Quality has intrinsic and extrinsic components, the style can be different and the quality components are really unique to each wine. It is not really possible, in his view, to give a defining number to wines that tells you all you need to know about its' quality. Richard demonstrated very well his answer to the question, 'What is quality in wine?' To him quality is a summation of characteristics unique to each wine. Where there is finesse, balance, depth and concentration of flavour, there is the beginning of quality. Quality is provided by length of taste, by complexity of flavour rather than only a linear dimension, and also by freshness.

Richard gave us a very entertaining and thought-provoking evening.