



Next meeting: Monday 16th February
7:30pm start

February 2009

Jaboulet Renaissance

Top Wines from the Northern Rhone

We welcome two charming ladies to our February meeting – Anne-Hélène Delage, the Paul Jaboulet Aîné rep in the UK, and Amy Mathews from Liberty Wines. The Frey family, owners of Château Lagune, bought the Paul Jaboulet company in 2006 and immediately took drastic action to breathe new life into a well known name that had lost its way – a new vineyard manager, new winemaker, out with all the old oak and in with all new, out with 25,000 cases of bulk wine and 72,000 bottles down the drain.

We are being given a privileged opportunity to taste right across the range of the new-look wines and will be able to form our own opinion on how well the new broom is succeeding. We are going to start with a delightful Grenache Rose and then look at their entry level wines, including the classic Parallèle 45 range before moving up to the Crozes Hermitage Blanc Mule Blanche and Rouge Dom de Thalabert. And thanks to Liberty's generous pricing we are going to finish the white and red flights with a wonderful white – the award winning Hermitage Le Chevalier de Stérimberg 2005, a Marsanne/Rousanne blend, - and red – the ultra elegant Hermitage La Petite Chapelle 2005. Wines that I guess must retail at well over £30 and £40 a bottle.

Yes – I have been lucky and tasted most of them and now can't wait to try them again. **This will be one of our really memorable tastings – come and enjoy it!**

Note: due to the cost of wines being tasted, the attendance fee for guests will be £15

Diary notes

Make a note of the following dates, (WSWS always meets on 3 rd Monday of the month unless stated) mystery pre-meeting wine at 7:30 onward; meeting commences at 8pm	
16 th February 2009	<u>Jaboulet Renaissance</u> Anne-Hélène Delage, the Paul Jaboulet Aîné rep in the UK, and Amy Mathews from Liberty Wines.
16 th March 2009	<u>Fine Wines of Burgundy</u> Richard Household - Managing Director of Revelstoke Wines
20 th April 2009	<u>New and exciting developments in Portuguese Wines</u> Tasting led by Raymond Reynolds a specialist in Portuguese wines

January Meeting Report

Keith Cooper, Whitewater Valley Wine Society - Wines of South Africa

"If I could only drink wine from one country for the rest of my life, it would be South African" were Keith's opening words. A sentiment that drew several 'hear, hears' from the numerous SA fans in the room – who also agreed that the country's wine areas are the most beautiful in the world (Rippon Vineyard on the shore of Lake Wanaka in Central Otago excepted).

I knew then that this was going to be a really enjoyable evening, listening to someone who knows and loves the country and its wines. Keith is a lucky frequent visitor and on good terms with many growers – lunch at Hamilton Russell plus vertical tastings a regular feature of his visits. Good local knowledge and a relaxed, informal style is always a winner. And the wines he had brought were his personal favourites – another big plus point.

He started the tasting with a Sauvignon from Springfield – typical of their, crisp and mineral style. Springfield is in the Robertson region which features top class estates, great scenery, the two beautiful historic villages of Montagu and MacGregor and is well worth a couple of nights stop-over. It's also much less busy and commercial than the Stellenbosch.Paarl/Franschoek triangle. Which is the home of Simonsig Estate - their Chenin Blanc, the country's most widely grown variety, was named 'superquaffer' of the year by the John Platter Wine Guide (probably the best and most exhaustive national wine guide in the world) for good reason –loads of fresh fruit and you just want to go on drinking it.

The only disappointing wine was the Riesling from Klein Constantia - started well but faded with a sharp finish. This estate, south east of Cape Town, has a wine history dating back to the start of wine production in the 1600's and was famous for its stickies in the 19th century. After Phylloxera struck, the estate passed to the government but is now back in the hands of the original family. Their re-born super-sticky the Vin de Constance has achieved cult status – and it was lovely – rich but really fresh – but £25 for 50cl.

Beyerskloof Estate on the edge of Stellenbosch was founded by the 'King of Pinotage', Beyers Truter, when he left Kanonkop. The Pinotage Reserve 2006 was a big wine but with a rather smokey flavour and I thought a bit odd. But was this a good bottle because Platter really rates it? or maybe it needs a few years in bottle. No doubt though about Warwick Estate's 2005 Trilogy (Cabernet, Cab Franc and Merlot) a great example of a Bordeaux blend and good value at £12.50.

Tulbagh Mountain Vineyards' Viktoria 2005 is another 3-way blend - Syrah, Mouvedre and Cinsault. This is a new estate, typical of many set up in recent years by investors – lots of money thrown, absentee owners and lots of John Platter points. Good structure and cherry fruit flavours but still green and stinky on the finish – try it again in a few years. Tulbagh is a long way north of the classic Cape areas – a large bowl surrounded by mountains with outstanding Dutch Cape buildings. Again, well worth a long day out if you are in Cape Town.

The last red was a wonderful pinot Noir from Hamilton Russell, one of the pioneers of Pinot in South Africa. This is Burgundy purism – they make just 2 wines, Pinot and Chardonnay. Compare this with the typical SA estate Simonsig where they list over 25 wines. Notwithstanding the lunch and welcome Keith enjoys here, he was right to call this another cult wine and probably SA's top Pinot. Very elegant but with body and structure and great balance of fruit, acidity and tannins. For wine of this quality, really good value – far better than many a French at a much higher cost and very competitive with the best from New Zealand – though I think the Felton Road from our old friend Nigel Greening would give it a run for its money. Now that would be a comparison to taste!

Peter Smith

EGM update

29 members attended the EGM in January, and voted unanimously for changes in the membership fee structure.

Therefore, effective from the AGM in June (inclusive), our fee structure will be:

£20 annual fee;

£15 monthly members attendance charge

Tasting notes....

Life constantly gives us choices – some are easy, while others are more difficult and require longer periods of contemplation. But it is often the case that a well chosen course of action leads to immeasurable pleasure in the future.

So it was that in December I was given a bottle of Bordegas Riojanas Monte Real Rioja Gran Reserva 1987 by a business supplier. We have strict rules on such gifts at work. Should I keep it; put it into the Christmas raffle; or give it to a junior colleague? Oh the dilemma of it all. I ascertained the current value (£21.74) and make a charitable donation to the company nominated charity.

Kim and I drank the wine last night with a really good steak. Both wine and meat lived up to their reputation. The added bonus of course was a charity benefited, as did my health!

I'm reliably informed that a glass of red wine is good for me (a plus) but that a cabernet sauvignon would have been better. So, I'll ask my supplier friend to take this into account next Christmas.



"all men were created equal.
so you might as well go for
the one with the cash."

Who's who in the Committee?

Graham C - The money man

Peter - Events co-ordinator

Sallie - Committee Chairman

Kim & David - Editors (Executive & "still" in-training)

Geoffrey - Secretary & all things snail

Additional help:

Graham P (The web master "tekkie")