



News

WSWS

WestSurreyWineSociety

June 2006

Call My Bluff

This month we have, not only some fantastic wines for you to try, but also a fun way of testing their origins, characteristics etc etc.

For our Call My Bluff evening members will be asked to form themselves into teams of six; with one team per table; there will be 8 wines to taste. Once a wine has been poured blind and while tasting is taking place three descriptions of the wine will be offered; each will be a real description, (that is to say real tasting notes for a real wine) but, of course, only one description will be TRUE, the other two being BLUFFS. Just like the TV game the correct answer will be revealed at the end of each round. Points will be awarded for identifying the TRUE description; further points will be awarded for guessing, or getting close, to the retail sale price; teams will mark themselves and keep their own score; all teams' running points total will be on display and at the end of the evening the winners' prize will be a bottle of wine each for all six team members.

The reason for all this is, of course, that we also have our AGM. But we will keep the business part as short as possible and also dovetail its items into the fun part of the evening.

By the nature of things, we cannot disclose the wines we will be trying this month. But I assure you they will be well worth your turning out to test your palates.

This newsletter has two tasting reports (you will recall that last time we were unable to bring you the April report) well here it is and many thanks to Peter.

Unfortunately Peter was unable to be at the May meeting so 'yours truly' had to stand in on that occasion.

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

19 th June	"Call my bluff" (plus AGM)
17 th July	Buying wines for a 5* hotel William Cowpe (see page 4)
12 th August NB, a Saturday	A Pink Summer Party at Hazel's
18 th September	Italy tbc
16 th October	Simon Taylor – Chile/Argentina
20 th November	tbc
18 th December	Christmas Party

April Tasting Report Languedoc Wines with Simon Evans, the Naked Grape

Though it is only a year since Simon opened the Naked Grape in Alresford, he has tasted over 4,000 wines in his quest to find interesting wines that are not available elsewhere. His aim for this tasting, he told us, was to show us how one area can produce such a hugely contrasting range of wines and to convince us “the Languedoc is the place to buy your wines” (a brave challenge!)

Maps of the wine area make a huge difference and Simon scored immediate points with his admirably clear map of Languedoc Roussillon which sprawls from southern Burgundy to the Spanish border. And even more points when he moved quickly to the first wine – Ch de la Mirande from Picpoul de Pinet, made from the local variety Picpoul which has been grown in the area for 1,000 years. Nothing amazing, but crisp and fresh and ideally suited to a fishy lunch which this area around the Bassin de Thau is renowned for and a nice taster for the wines to come.

The second white was more serious and I rated it as the nicest – the unoaked Ch de Lascaux from Pic St Loup which is almost in southern Burgundy and is made from a blend of 3 traditional south west varieties. Lower acidity thanks to malolactic fermentation (we did learn something at the wine making meeting!) with a creamy texture and a complex of flavours that ended up quite floral. Now, the Vin de Pays d’Oc has a reputation for good value wines and Simon announced the 100% Viognier from Campagne as a good example of how commercial style Languedoc wines will be in the future – in which case may Bacchus help the Languedoc because this was thin with any hint of fruit overshadowed by a bitter finish. Swiftly moving on - the Chardonnay from Les Caves de Sieur d’Arques in Limoux was grown at 450 meters above sea level and is regarded as the best Chardonnay in an area better known for its sparkling wines. This certainly had promise – hints of butteriness but still quite closed and probably needing another 4 years to show well. ‘A Mersault with a difference?’, questioned Simon.

The Pays d’Oc redeemed itself a little as a provider of commercial style wine with the

unoaked Dom de Mordoc Merlot – raspberry jam on the nose. Though some found it rather unripe, and it had been picked early, others enjoyed it as light and easy drinking with a touch of toffee in the finish. Talking of nose, the 2003 Faugeres Tradition (Syrah, Grenache, Mouvedre and Carrignon) had a pretty strange one (polite description), but get past this and there was a medium bodied wine with quite complex herb and raspberry flavours. An interesting wine and yes – some of us did like it, though a number clearly didn’t, which is what a good tasting is all about.

Next door to Faugeres is the Cassan region where Simon had found the 2002 Dom Ste Marthe Syrah. Made in a cooler year, it was certainly kinder to the olfactory senses and though lacking the spiciness of many Syrahs, impressed with its soft fruit and whiffs of tobacco. The final red was a Vin de Pays de l’Aude, the 2004 Alicante Bouchet. This was an intriguing wine because the Alicante grape was used to make fake Claret in the 1800’s and in a nice touch of Gallic logic it has been an illegal variety ever since – but you can use it to make wine with as long as you don’t use the name (don’t ask about the name of this one). Anyway, back to this wine which was my favourite of the reds. Made from 100 year old vines, hand picked and unfiltered, the colour was deep, the nose was mushrooms, the tannins ripe and the fruit dense and concentrated.

We finished with a 1984 Vieux Rivesaltes Vin Doux - sweet with some interesting flavours but insufficient acidity for balance. Very pleasant but lacking a certain ‘je ne sais quoi’. Which to me mirrored the evening. Simon proved a very amiable presenter with a nice relaxed style and we enjoyed a varied and interesting selection of wines which certainly achieved his aim of showing the huge contrasts the Languedoc offers even if it didn’t quite convince me that it was the place to buy my wines. But something seemed to be missing, and it wasn’t until afterwards while talking to others that the penny dropped – he did not seem to have visited the area and so whilst we learnt a lot about the wines, we missed the personal insights into the growers and their businesses that add that extra touch. (Going back to the start, perhaps a case of less tasting and more visiting).

Peter

May Report

The title of this month's talk was "What's new and different in Australia" or "Oz Wines" or words to that effect. In fact it didn't matter as we were treated to a *tour de force* by Angela Reddin of Oz Wines who covered 9 wines, 9 varieties and 9 areas.

Angela made an instant hit by getting the first wine poured almost before she had uttered the first sentence. But as teacher, she started by asking that simple question, 'How do you taste wines?' Well we all thought we knew - but after looking, swirling and sniffing we were instructed to taste for a full 20 seconds while occasionally sucking in air and without drinking or spitting. 'Why this long period?' - it is necessary to liberate the volatile components which are detected in the retronasal area between mouth and nose hence to the olfactory bulb then to a memory file in the brain. Some of the naughty boys and girls in the class had their wrists slapped when they gave the wrong answers (while Teacher's pet was awarded a Gold Star) but it got the point across and we all noted how the flavour of this first wine, **Inghams Skilly Ridge Riesling 2005** from Clare Valley, really did enhance and develop over that time. The wine was a pale, slightly green colour (indicating youth), a slight kerosine nose, which develops quickly in Oz wines, and lime/toast flavours. The temperature was perhaps a bit too low, another reason to hold it in the mouth for more than a millisecond. A general point, rieslings are difficult to make in order that the acid and sugar levels are right - and in Australia their character is quite different from the classic wines of Germany. Nonetheless we all rated this a super find even at £10.99.

Rapidly jumping from Southern to Western Oz, we tried the **Sandalford Verdelho 2004** (Margaret River).

Verdelho is the variety that is used to make Madeiras and the Australians recognised its potential. It was light straw colour, silky, clean and a fruity nose and tasted of delicious sweet fruit (pears?) with some acid. The balance was right and the flavours went on and on (for at least 20 secs!). A very popular wine, £9.99.

Thence to Hunter Valley (New South Wales) for the **Brokenwood ILR Semillon 1999**, £16.50. Semillon is iconic and unique in this area, the wines start with oily flavours which become toasty. This was big in the mouth with lots of length. We thought robust food would be required with this (one naughty girl even suggested Paté, but Teacher frowned, this wasn't a French Sauterne). Though 1999, it was still tasting young, but hurry, it must be drunk before 2009.

Next the **Hastwell & Lightfoot Viognier 2004** from the McLaren Vale SA. This variety with its strong perfumes is becoming increasingly popular worldwide, not least in Australia. There was a richness to the palate with green sappy undertones and a lot of length. On the nose, honeysuckle. It wasn't as popular as some but many liked it, including the speaker, "stunning" she said. £11.99.

The first red was rather young (purple colour), some oak on the nose, chocolate(?) almost medicinal. This was the **Inghams Skinny Ridge Tempranillo 2004** from Clare Valley. There was acidity on the palette (again youth) lots of spiky flavours but not complex. A rather expensive £12.99.

(Cont. next page)

Fat'n Skinny Shiraz/Grenache 2005 (McLaren Vale) was next. Purple, and lots of ripe fruits, raspberries, we were told. This was the 6th wine and the pupils in the back row were getting bolder, 'the fruit was hidden by strong spice flavours' they maintained. Despite this difference, this was considered 'Good Value' at £7.99 and given the thumbs up all round.

We next tried a **Cabernet Franc 2002 (Hastwell & Lightfoot)**. This proved to be perhaps the most popular wine of the evening, a rich colour, intense minty nose and fantastic rich, intense red fruits (cranberry?) to taste. The length went on and on, well beyond the regulation 20 seconds, 'stunning'. A snip at £11.99.

Surely after that everything was going to be an anticlimax? Well, yes and no. The next was a **Primo Estate Moda Amarone 1999**, in magnums, from Adelaide Plains/McLaren Vale. Angela tried it and declared it was not good enough, so opened a second magnum! At £47.99 this must have hurt, but the first was somewhat oxidised and decidedly flat to taste. Yes we did try it (as an educational experience you understand) but the 'good' wine in comparison was indeed fantastic. This is a Cab.Sauv./Merlot mix, rich fruity nose and complex flavours from one of the best wine makers in the region, Joseph Grilli, a serious wine. An interesting experience as some of us felt that in a restaurant (and without the benefit of the comparison) we might have accepted the oxidised bottle and quietly grumbled that it wasn't worth the money.

The 9th and last wine, **Hazyblur Late Picked Shiraz 2003** was deep maroon, chocolaty to nose and palette and very sweet. Young, dark and sticky, we were

all lost for words. At £15.99 for a half bottle, a bit expensive, but that's to be expected when one remembers that the grapes are left on the vines to shrivel to raisins before being picked. There is not much juice to be extracted but what there is, is highly concentrated and results in this delightful wine.

Angela provided excellent tasting notes for all the wines (as well as all the others Oz Wines sell). A super evening with a most entertaining and informative speaker and yours truly for one is delighted he didn't miss this talk.

And next month:-

Another first for the Society, we are very pleased to welcome our first speaker from a 5 star hotel.

William Cowpe who until he retired recently was the Managing Director at The Goring in Beeston Place, just behind Buckingham Palace, is coming to talk on 'Grape varieties from France'.

Extremely well known in hotel circles (and a Farnham resident), William's knowledge and love of fine wines suggests we can expect a really memorable evening!



William (on the right) with George Goring and Michael Portillo.

Details of the wines next month but put the date in your diary as you will probably have the most prestigious wine to be tried at WSWs this year.