



News

WSWS

NEXT MEETING IS ON:

Thursday 18th June
7:00pm for 7:30pm start

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

June 2009 edition

The Wines of the Seghesio Family Vineyards, Sonoma County, California
Camille Seghesio, International Marketing Director

Camille made a huge, huge impression on everyone with her charm, knowledge and intimate involvement with this very family orientated business when she first visited us about 5 years ago and we have for long eagerly awaited her return. She is now based fulltime in California and it has taken a lot of planning for her to arrange to divert via the UK to visit WSWS on her way to Vinexpo in Bordeaux at the weekend – so we need a really good attendance please. Those of you who met her last time will need no encouragement and those who did not will quickly understand!

The Seghesios are an Italian/American family and all play major roles in the business. The vineyards were established way back in 1895 by a young Italian immigrant couple, Edoardo and Angela Seghesio – well over 100 years ago, yes, but only 3 generations as they were Camille's grandparents, which says a lot for the benefits of their wines! The family now have over 400 acres of mainly old vineyards in Sonoma's Dry Creek and Alexander Valleys. Today, the family are proud to passionately produce almost exclusively estate wines, some from those same vineyards Edoardo and Angela first planted in the late 1800s.

Seghesio wines have been winning Gold medals in Decanter Awards and the International Wine Challenge for a number of years. They are best known for their Zinfandels with their hallmark ripe, juicy style, but also produce some classy Italian varieties and a limited range of whites. We will taste 2 whites – the Arneis and Pinot Grigio - a Barbara and Sangiovese (from a new vineyard planted with clones from the original 1910 planting) and of course 4 Zinfandels – Sonoma County, Old Vines (from vines over 50 years), Cortina and Home Ranch (an old Alexander vineyard planted in 1920).

This is an unmissable event – enjoy some fantastic wines and fall under Camille's charming spell. (If you still need more convincing visit www.seghesio.com)

Note: The attendance fee for guests will be £18. If a guest joins straight after their 2nd visit in the membership year, they will be reimbursed £6 - the difference between the guest and membership fees. (£3 reimbursed if they join after their first meeting).

AGM NOTIFICATION

Where: Blacknest Golf Club

When: Thursday 18th June following wine tasting (approx 9:30pm)

What: Agenda attached to newsletter together with minutes of 2008 AGM meeting

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

1 Vacancy – volunteer & see your name here!

Diary notes

Make a note of the following dates, (WSWS <u>always</u> meets on 3rd Monday of the month unless stated) mystery pre-meeting wine at 7:30 onward; meeting commences at 8pm	
NB: Day change Thursday 18th June Note – Start time is 7.30pm	<u>Wines of the Seghesio Family Vineyards, Sonoma, California</u> Camille Seghesio <u>Followed by AGM</u>
July	<u>No meeting</u>
Saturday 15th August 6.00pm – 10.00pm	<u>Summer party – Theme: South America</u> Dig out those Ponchos, bowler hats & Llamas £25 per head (£28 guests). Geoffrey & Sheila Matthews are our hosts Helpers wanted – speak to Geoffrey & Sheila
NB: Date change Monday 14th December	<u>Christmas Function</u> Will be on 2nd Monday in the month

May Meeting Report by Peter Smith

Argentina – Diversity and Tradition

Robert Bouflower, Private Sales Director, Tanners Wines

A really personable speaker who understands the wine trade and knows Argentina well plus a great selection of wines proved a real winner – so much so that everyone was asking when Robert was coming back and our Ladies have decided the summer party should have an Argentine theme (so come on all you gauchos – get your tickets for the fantastic WSWS asado in August). Not only were the wines excellent, they were very well priced – resulting in our ordering 15 cases between us!

Despite being the world's 4th biggest volume producer, Argentina's wine performance has been a bit of a curate's egg. Much of the output went for industrial alcohol and nearly all the bulk wines which were most of them found, and still do, a ready market domestically and in neighbouring Brazil. So there was not too much incentive to improve quality and as in Portugal no budget for marketing and no willingness among growers to cooperate. However in 2000 overseas investment from Germany, France, China (perhaps with an eye on future mass markets in India and China) and next door Chile started a move to quality which has continued despite the economic slump in 2002 when even doctors could earn more working in the vineyards. A number of people who 'know', including Francois Lurton several of whose wines we tasted, reckon Argentina and Portugal are the countries of the future - a view WSWS would support having now had a good look at both – and also liked what they found. Importing however remains a risky venture with high risk of pallets disappearing at railheads and docks.

Fortunately Tanners got our wine safely delivered and the 9 Robert had brought provided a good selection of styles and prices. We cleaned our palates with a crisp, lemony bottle-fermented sparkling, the Pampas Brut made under Conch Y Toro's guidance before we started the first white. (Conch Y Toro are very involved in vineyard management and wine making in Argentina – much to the benefit of the wines, said Robert). Well this first white, the Alto Pampas Viognier 2008 from Mendoza proved the hit of the evening and the orders just keep coming in – not surprising as it costs

just over a fiver. Smooth texture, rich citrusy flavour and a long crisp finish. The Mendoza Pinot Gris was the first wine from French flying wine maker Francois Lurton. Quite a rich wine, the nose was full of honey with rich supple flavours.

Both wines were grown at around 1,000 meters and showed the benefits of altitude which is one of the 2 key factors in quality production, the other being water. Vineyards are only successful where they are grown over underground aquifers fed by the Andes snow melt – as some new investors have found to their cost. New investors are now buying huge tracts of land – spreads of to 70 kms! Most estates, old and new, are large and small boutique producers struggle to sell their wines.

The first red was an unoaked Alto Pampas 2008 Pinot Noir –fresh, fruity, drink me now and just over a fiver. The 2008 Trivento Syrah (which Robert regards as the most interesting variety in the world) from Mendoza was plummy and smoky and again very drinkable at about the same price. This really was a value for money selection! Norton is one the old names of Argentina and their Finca La Colonia Cabernet was classic juicy, chewy Cab – no pretensions, but at a quid more perhaps stranded a bit between the cheaper quaffers and the more robust and complex Carrascal 2005 at £7.65. This wine is a blend of Merlot, Cab and Malbec and is made by Weinert an even more traditional producer. “Weinert produces wine like nobody else” using huge 30 year old oak vats. 20 years ago he was the country’s top producer and even now holds his own with the best as the Carrascal’s cherry flavours and soft tannins showed.

Some countries have made some varieties their own – South Africa and Pinotage, California (well it is the world’s 8th largest economy) and Zinfandel as we will see next month. With Argentina it is Malbec where its wines are unrecognisable from its native France. Both Malbecs we tasted did have a French input – from one Monsieur Lurton. The 2007 Reserva from Bodega Lurton showed the variety’s potential for soft juicy fruit and long finishing. It drinks well now and develops in the glass but is quite a step in price at £11.65. With the final wine we jumped to over £20 for the 2004 and the about to arrive 2006 will be priced at £26. But it was pretty good – the 2004 La Piedra Negra Malbec Gran Reserva, Lurton’s top wine from low yielding 50 year old vines given low irrigation to provide stress and make them work. Concentrated and complex with layers of flavours and more structure and less juiciness than the previous wine, Lurton reckons it will peak in 2014.

Well we hope Robert will return long before then to give us another look at this fascinating country and great value wines so maybe we will be able to see how the wine does develop – that is if Robert has not drunk the few remaining bottles.

<p>Tasting notes....</p> <p>Having used the newsletter for some months to advertise the May Farnham Wine Festival, Kim & I, (together with a number of other WSWS members) went along.</p> <p>True to the pre event publicity, there were 8 merchants, each offering a wide range of wines for tasting and while the food was not the evenings strong point, the 100 plus wines most certainly were. Interesting also were the merchants, passionate about their wines, and they genuinely wanted to know the punters views on the wines offered.</p> <p>It was refreshing also to see less well known wines on offer, and many at very reasonable prices.</p>	<p>Thought for the month</p> <p>Have you ever heard of Buffalo Theory as justifying wine appreciation? It goes like this:</p> <p>A buffalo herd only moves as fast as the slowest buffalo. And when the herd is hunted, the slowest and weakest ones at the back are killed first This natural selection is good for the herd as a whole, because the general speed and health of the whole group keeps improving by the regular killing of the weakest members.</p> <p>In much the same way, the human brain can only operate as fast as the slowest brain cells. Excessive intake of wine, as we know, kills brain cells. But naturally, it attacks the slowest and weakest brain cells first. In this way, regular consumption of wine eliminates the weaker brain cells, making the brain a faster and more efficient machine. That's why you always feel better after a few glasses of wine.</p>
---	--