



News

# WSWS

## WestSurreyWineSociety

<http://westsurreywinesociety.org.uk/>

### International Grape Varieties

May 2007

By David Dickinson

This month we welcome to **David Dickinson** who is to give us a comparative tasting of three classic grape varieties.

David is a real enthusiast and his talk is anticipated with great interest.

David started work as an accountant in a Building Society but spent most of his working life with IBM at Havant.

#### **This month's wines:**

He felt there must be better things in life than Liebfraumilch and now spends far too much money on top quality wines ( which are primarily drunk by friends!)

David plans to present three samples each of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir - to demonstrate how they vary in style around the world.

He is the principal Wine Tutor at South Downs College, he is on the Committee of the Wine Society Dining Club of London and of "PIGS" (which meets at South Downs College).

A slightly different presentational technique from usual will add a "zing" to the evening!

<b>Make a note of the following dates, (normally 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at 8pm)</b>	
<b>21<sup>st</sup> May 2007</b>	David Dickinson, International Wine Challenge Judge International Grape Varieties
<b>18<sup>th</sup> June 2007</b>	By popular demand, Call My Bluff returns for a second time, interspersed with the AGM
<b>18<sup>th</sup> August 2007 (Saturday)</b>	Party, with a Spanish flavour
<b>17<sup>th</sup> September</b>	Ian MacDonald – What's new and exciting from France
<b>17<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Christmas Party

**April Tasting Report**  
**Unusual Wines of the World**  
**Jonathan Rogers and Jerome Solaia,**  
**Harrods**

Browsing the net, Wikipedia describes Harrods as “a department store on the Brompton Road ----- that caters to upmarket customers”. Well Mr Al Fayed might view the first part as a bit of an understatement, but I am sure WSWS members will be happy with the latter! Jonathan and Jerome ( a music hall touch here!) were agreeably down to earth and gave a really interesting presentation mixing a good knowledge of the trade and the wine areas. Both are involved in wine education at Harrods and regularly present tastings and dinners. Harrods feature a different wine producing country each month and the dinners cum tastings Jonathan told us about sounded good value and whetted several peoples’ appetites.

The mention of Harrods arouses a whole range of images (apart from manic sales): – big –yes, grand – yes, posh – probably. But if members had been expecting grand and posh wines then they would have been disappointed. The two J’s have a mission – to show that despite the trend for more and more wines to taste the same regardless of where they come from, individuality is fighting back and it’s getting easier to find wines with distinctive character at affordable prices (though I have a bit of quibble on this point) from the normal conventional producing regions.

The first 2 whites were from Argentina – an interesting choice as despite being in the first division of wine production in volume terms, its wines are still relatively unknown externally. So there is plenty of room for growers to experiment with lots of different varieties and a huge home market to consume them. We started with a Cristobel Verdelho from the Mendoza. The scented nose was immediately striking and oaky finish took over which was initially too bitter for some palates, though it did soften in the glass. The Fleur de Torrontes

came from a high altitude vineyard at 1,000m increasingly a feature of quality Argentine wines and something to look for on the ubiquitous back labels. This is Argentina’s only indigenous variety and proved popular – unoaked, the grapefruity nose came through in the taste and the fresh clean finish made it a good choice for summer days.

The third white came from south west France where growers do not have the same pressures to conform that their colleagues in the classic areas suffer, hence the varieties on the label of the 2005 Dom Pelhaut Gros Manseng/Chardonnay. The wine was dry with a lovely honey flavour and very moreish. Though picked late it was certainly not a dessert wine – more in the style of a Gewurztraminer perhaps.

Fascination with Harrods brought a flow of questions - who buys the wines, who are the big customers. Well, they have just 2 wine buyers and the biggest purchasers of the annual £4m a year sales are – no, not the Americans or Japanese – but the Russians and closing fast the Chinese. John predicted that China will soon be in number one spot. How the old order changes!

Nothing unusual about the first red, the Errazuruz Pinot Noir Wild Ferment 2005 from Chile, except that it had been made with wild yeasts. Certainly an interesting wine – powerful but soft and a bit jammy but with an almost burnt flavoured finish that again several of us disliked, though again this softened in the glass. The 2 J’s were clearly not convinced by natural yeasts, telling us they caused unstable fermentations and often necessitated high use of sulphites to stabilise the wine – “a lot of risk for no benefit” said Jerome.

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The second red was unusual – it came from Morocco. Unusual because we rarely see them in the UK, though vines were introduced by the Romans. Modern viticulture was helped by the most recent occupiers, the French. The wine – the Kahina Syrah Grenache 2003 – looked older than its years but was very drinkable – what I call a warm and chewy wine with fruit and ripe tannins and vanillary overtones. However the £12.50 price reflected the boutique nature of the winery and the entirely hand process rather than the wine. Back to Chile for the Augustino Malbec 2004 – a Malbec not from Argentina? – certainly unusual! Or was it a Malbec? - deep colour, soft and full of fruit but with an atypical minty flavour. It did come from a remote valley in the cold south so maybe it was an unusual Malbec, however the Chileans do have a history of confusing their varieties. Again, not cheap at nearly £14.

For the final red, classic France, but the 2004 Tour Vielle Colliure was from the free-thinking south west from French Catalonia near the Pyrenees. Made from 75% Grenache Noir and 25% Carrignan, this was a big powerful wine, lots of alcohol and tannin with strong chocolate and tobacco flavours but still young and stalky. Regrettably even pricier.

The finale was the Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc from Chile – not a surprise as most members are very familiar with it – but it is a favourite with many of us and so was much appreciated.

A very worthwhile evening. The Harrods lid lifted a tiny bit though there were no stories of the boss, and the wines were interesting, enjoyable and some very unusual. It was good to hear the move away from sameness confirmed but it's a shame that the unusual too often brings a high price tag.

*Peter Smith*

### **And next month:-**

we have a welcome return of the very successful “Call My Bluff”, which, you may remember, we ran with last year's AGM.

The format was really popular and we have had so many requests to repeat it that it would have been churlish of us not to have gone along with your wishes.

Details next month, but each wine presented will be given three different descriptions, two spoofs and the genuine one. Working in teams, we have to choose which is true and which false.

Good wines and good fun, don't miss it.

Talking of the AGM, two of us stand down from the Committee next month so will need replacing. As I am one of them, the Newsletter will require a new editor, starting in July, but I'm happy to continue running the website, if that is the Society's wish.

Why not use the website to send me any suggestions ( or volunteers) for new Committee members – or even ideas for topics to include in future meetings? It's your Society so let's hear what **you** would like.

*Graham*