



Next meeting: Monday 18th May
7:30pm warm-up glass for 8.00pm start

May 2009

A new look at Argentina!- diversity and tradition

Speaker – Robert Bouflower, Private Sales Director, Tanners Wine Merchants

For our May meeting we are very pleased to welcome back Robert whom many of you will remember as an excellent and very personable speaker with an extensive knowledge of the industry. Prior to joining the 167 year old Shrewsbury-based importer and retailer Tanners, he was CEO of Spanish specialists Laymont & Shaw before they fell into the hands of the big boys. When asked about the move, he commented that he was looking forward to getting back to working with 'wines', rather than managing supermarket accounts.

Of Tanners, Robert has commented: "We are a good general wine merchant. I think we try to do things properly and have managed to get ourselves into a position of strength. We're outside London but we're not the country cousin. The company has more flexibility with the wines it stocks because it does not act as an agent for any particular producer". Robert continued "We believe all our staff should be interested and knowledgeable in the wines they are selling. The supermarkets have done such a good job of getting people switched on to wine, but we're saying you get the question and answer session here too."

Argentina is the 5th biggest wine producer but their wines remain seriously under-marketed in the UK – just as we heard last month that Portugal's are and probably for similar reasons. Robert will bring us up to date with developments in the wine industry based on his visits to the country.

Robert has chosen an extensive selection of **9** wines (yes – an extra bonus again this month) to illustrate the diversity of wines that are now available from Argentina. He will show us one of their sparkling wines, 2 whites – a Viognier and Pinot Gris, and 6 reds. The reds include Pinot Noir, Syrah, Cabernet, a 3-way blend and of course no Argentine tasting would be complete without Malbec. So 2 great Malbecs from Lurton, including a really super one to end the evening.

As most of you will have guessed, Robert is rarely in this area – so please come along and take advantage of an excellent speaker and evening.

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).

Who's who in the Committee?

Graham C - The money man

Sallie - Committee Chairman

Geoffrey - Secretary & all things snail

Empty space – put your name here!

Peter - Events co-ordinator

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

Additional help:

Graham P (The web master "tekkie")

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	
18th May	<u>A new look at Argentina !</u> Robert Bouflower, Tanners of Shrewsbury
NB: Day change Thursday 18th June Note – Start time is 7.15pm	<u>AGM Followed by:</u> <u>Wines of the Seghesio Family Vineyards, Sonoma, California</u> Camille Seghesio
July	<u>No meeting</u>
Saturday 15th August 6.00pm – 10.00pm	<u>Summer party</u> £25 per head. 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

April Meeting Report by Peter Smith

A Fresh look at Portugal – Paul Reynolds

Any concerns that Sallie may have had with a last minute change of speaker were quickly forgotten when Paul, stepping in at short notice for his brother who had an unexpected family commitment, told us that he owns a quinta in the Douro Valley and was an experienced wine maker. Great – it's rare we get someone who is steeped in both the growing and making of wine – and we were not disappointed as he wove lots of information into his presentation – far more than can be reproduced here. As with many Brits in the Portuguese wine trade, Paul was born in Portugal and now splits his time between his Quinta de Macedos and the UK – not a bad life-style by any standard!

If anyone was harbouring concerns that we would be tasting VINO Verde and Mateus Rose these were quickly washed away with the impressive selection of 9 – yes 9 – real quality wines. Yes, it was a good evening and as someone commented at the end “it's rare to find I like all the wines we tasted”. The overall quality clearly surprised many members who wondered why they were not more generally available. Paul admitted that the Portuguese lag way behind other countries on marketing for many reasons including the lack of a cohesive national organisation and insufficient funding.

Paul explained that Portuguese wines have come a long way in the last 10 years with huge improvements in wine making techniques and optimal use of local varieties and a change from traditional chestnut barrels to oak. This he said is particularly true of the whites, and based on the samples we tasted nobody could disagree. All the whites were 2007 vintage and were remarkably fresh with excellent fruit/acid balance that was not overdone at either end. We started with a crisp easy drinker – the Arinto from Vale da Murta near Lisbon, followed by the fuller creamier, Luis Pato Vinhas Velhas, a blend of 4 varieties, from the Bairrada – great with grilled sardines said Paul.

The Douro is a challenging area because of the fierce heat and very steep slopes – production costs are high. The vines grow on crumbly schist soils that the roots can penetrate to find moisture deep down. Growers like Dirk Niepoort have learnt to work with the heat at maturation, for example preventing malo-lactic fermentation to preserve acidity, and his Redoma Branco had great fruit and an elegant crisp finish – and as my table agreed at £17 would put a Burgundy at twice the price to shame. The final white was a Quinta dos Roques made from Encuzado, a variety unique to the Dao region, powerful flavours and very long.

The 'extra' wine was a Dao rose from Quinta da Giesta. Based on Touriga Nacional, this was no pretty but wishy-washy pink but a fruity, well structured wine with hints of tannin. Rare that I compliment a rose, but this was good. And a useful lead-in to the first red, a 2007, from the same variety – another from the Quinta da Murta in the Ribatejo region. Well this wine did cause debate! Strong cherry flavours and whiffs of compost, thick and tannic. No – it was not tainted but it was made with natural yeasts which some growers prefer, but can be a risk. Paul explained that most growers play safe and inoculate with cultured yeasts which knock out the natural ones. This also allows quicker fermentation and cleaner flavours and is definitely recommended for white wines.

The other 3 reds had more age – 2004, and all good. The Casa de Saima from Bairrada was 100% Baga – a tricky variety that often over-yields. 24 months in oak had produced an intense cedary nose, powerful fruit flavours and a soft richness, There is only one biodynamic vineyard in Portugal – Casa de Mouraz in the Dao. Its Tinto is a four-way blend and tank fermented using natural yeasts. The result was a fresher wine than the Saima, more tannic with a complex of flavours.

The last and undoubtedly the best red was the Pinga de Torto from Paul's Quinta de Macedos in the Douro. Paul uses very traditional methods – both in the vineyard where he preserves the hundreds of years old terrace walls, and in the cellar where the grapes are all foot-trodden with the stalks on and fermentation is in open vats with natural yeasts then 15 months French oak. The result is stunning – intense fruit yet delicate. What he did not tell us but his website does is that this is his entry level wine – so just imagine the others!

All the wines we tasted showed the treasures that Portugal keeps hidden away – a great shame in some ways, but, but – if they go really commercial would there still be space for wines like Niepoort's Redoma or Paul's Pinga, or would the recipe men and price point ladies from the supermarkets move in? Food for thought!

<p>Tasting notes....</p> <p>An editors job is full of contrasts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Making sure there is a consistent message, while at the same time ensuring something different and refreshing; ❖ Being provocative at times, but retaining a sense of balance; ❖ Accepting contributions, but making sure we stay focussed and in the prescribed number of pages; <p>Peter Smith will be missing some meetings in the near future, so now's the time for a budding reporter to step up to the plate and show what they can do!</p> <p>Speak to Peter Smith, David (trainee), or Kim (exec).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Thought for the month</p> <p>"Sometimes when I reflect back on all the wine I drink I feel ashamed.</p> <p>Then I look into the glass and think about the workers in the vineyards and all of their hopes and dreams... If I didn't drink this wine, they might be out of work and their dreams would be shattered.</p> <p>Then I say to myself, "It is better that I drink this wine and let their dreams come true than be selfish and worry about my liver."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">~ Jack Handy ~</p>
--	---

Farnham Wine Festival

This takes place on May 16th 2009 from 7:30pm to 11.00pm at Farnham Maltings, Bridge Square, Farnham. With over 100 wines to taste from all the major wine producing countries, together with food and live entertainment, this looks to be a really good evening out. The wine merchants are offering a 10% discount for wines ordered on the night. Tickets, priced at £20 (includes food and complimentary £5 of wine tokens) are available from Steve Green (01252 790035) or Brian Davis (01252 615014). If you are interested, you will need to apply quickly as they selling out quickly.

Although WSWS is not officially part of this event, we are hoping to be allowed to advertise the club and gain extra members. So, if you do attend, talk to others and promote WSWS.