



News

WSWS

WestSurrey Wine Society

November 2005

Chilean wines

Once more we welcome back an old friend, Rob MacCulloch, who will be introducing some fascinating wines from the Errazuriz Estate in Chile.

Rob works at Hatch Mansfield and he was last with us in February of 2004 when he took us through some outstanding New Zealand wines.

Chile is another of his favourite areas and we can expect a really good evening's wine talk, drinking and appreciation.



This month's wines are all from the Errazuriz Estate:

- Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2005
- Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 2004
- Wild Ferment Chardonnay 2002
- Max Reserva Merlot 2003
- Estate Carmenere 2003
- La Cumbre Shiraz 2003
- "The Blend" 2003
- Organic Cabernet Sauvignon 2003
- Don Maximiano Founders Reserve 2000
- Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc 2004

Some dates for your diary

21 st November	Chilean wines are introduced by Rob MacCulloch
19 th December	Christmas Party at Blacknest
20 th March '06	Philip Tuck MW to talk about wine making
24 th April '06 NB 4 th Monday of month	Simon Evans, Languedoc wines

October Tasting Report

Wines of the Loire with Neil Sommerfelt MW

We always look forward to Neil's presentations with much anticipation and it was good to welcome him back for his fifth visit, though, as he pointed out, it was his first to us at Blacknest which he rated as a huge improvement. Neil has extensive experience of the wine trade and it was interesting to catch up with where he is now – which is as the Buying Director for Laytons Wine Merchants which includes the London based Jeroboam shops. Previous posts have included Waitrose - where his boss was our last month's speaker - and Safeways .

Neil is clearly much more at home in the specialist trade where he is able to focus on small family-run vineyards where he can build a personal relationship. He is also aware that companies like Laytons help sustain these vineyards for the future because they are less price driven and short-termist than the supermarkets – enabling the families to develop their businesses and their wines. It is a sobering thought that supermarket special offers account for 80% of all wine sold in the UK . (So if you are concerned about small vineyard sustainability, and, one could argue, ultimately the diversity and singularity of wines, you know what not to buy!)

It was perhaps no coincidence that he chose to present Loire wines to us, for his first job in the wine industry was to spend 3 months with a wine family in Muscadet. The wines he presented illustrated the wide diversity of the Loire which allied to his depth of knowledge of the wines, the region, the growers – and of course the trade – made for a most enjoyable evening. It is no exaggeration to say that few speakers are as much in tune with their wines as Neil is.

Neil introduced the wines by describing the Loire as “nature on a plate or in a glass”, with the wines reflecting the region's fertility and richness of its natural products. His first four wines were all different takes on unwooded Sauvignon Blanc from 2004, and an interesting illustration of what different

growers can make with the same grape.

We started with a Cheverny Blanc Dom de Salvard, a crisp very modern style of wine that everybody liked – grassy nose and clean, gooseberry flavours with the 15% of Chardonnay adding a touch of creaminess. We also really liked the Pouilly-Fumé Dom de Riaux – 100% Sauvignon, very fresh and long flavoured and surprisingly pungent for a Pouilly-Fumé partly due to the flinty soils. The Sancerre Dom Serge Laloue, again 100% SB, comes from high chalk-content soils and though fuller bodied lacked the intensity of the first two wines and disappointed some of us. The final Sauvignon was a Menetou-Salon from Clos des Blanchais. A Clos, explained Neil, is a small, single vineyard that must be enclosed by walls on at least 3 sides. This is the estate's top wine and showed better balance and flavour than the Sancerre.

After a richness of Sauvignon we moved on to two Chenin Blancs – a variety beloved by South Africaphiles but very different in the Loire, and a distinct contrast to the Sauvignons. The 2001 Savennières Clos du Papillon (more walls) was honeyed to eye and nose with more weight and a mellow acidity, a wine that in Neil's view still needs more time to fully develop. The final white was the only one that had been oaked – a 2002 Vouvrey Sec Dom de la Haute – and a most unusual wine too – nutty on the nose and almonds in the mouth with an off-dry start and sharp finish.

Loire reds tend to the lighter, leaner style due to the climate which limits ripening and so the varieties available, and the red wines are generally regarded as not in the same league as the whites – hence of course the preponderance of whites at the tasting (Hazel – where were you!). However, of the three reds we tasted,

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two were from the excessively hot 2003 which gave us a chance to see how the wines performed in Barossa Valley conditions. The unoaked Chinon Cuvee Terroir Dom Charles, 100% Cab Franc, was a bit of a surprise - stinky and tannic and someone described it as like "chewing the grape pips". The Sancerre Rouge Dom Serge Laloue, 100% Pinot Noir and matured in barrel, had appreciated the hot conditions much more – a really deep colour, rich nose and full of spicy ripe fruit. The third red, a 2002 Menatou-Salon Les Cris Dom Henry Pelle, also PN and oaked, was a more typical Pinot – gentle and smooth with a long finish but lacking the oomph of the 2003. Whether or not Loire reds are to your taste, they are expensive compared to similar quality from say the S Rhone, Rioja or the S Hemisphere.

Neil finished the tasting with a treat for the sticky lovers among us – a 2003 Coteaux du Layon Clos de Ste Catherine. With help from the heat, this 100% Chenin Blanc was impressively rich and sweet with enough acidity to ensure a clean finish. In Neil's opinion, a wine to keep for up to 50 years – if you like your grandchildren that much!

Another fascinating evening from Neil, and be assured not his last with us.

Peter

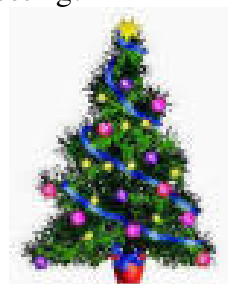
Loire Wines

Peter informs me that he hasn't enough orders from last month's Loire tasting to make it worthwhile, so he will not be progressing the order unless it grows significantly.

Christmas Party

Details of the menu and booking form are given on the next page. For catering purposes we have to let Blacknest know how many of you are coming, at least a week before the event. So if you want to come you must let David know by **10th December**. Please return the booking form with your choice of dishes, together with your cheque.

Alternatively, (and a better idea all round), hand him your completed form at next Monday's meeting!



All contributions and suggestions for the newsletter are very welcome. Please send them to Graham. Last date for copy for the next edition is Monday, 5th December 2005.