



Newsletter

WSWS

Our next event is held on:

Monday 18th October
7:30pm for 8:00pm start

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

October 2010 edition

Cool climate –v- Classic Australia – Sarah Ahmed

Our speaker on 18 October will be Sarah Ahmed, an independent wine writer, competition judge, and excellent communicator, having been short-listed for the International Wine and Spirit Competition's Wine Communicator of the Year in both 2009 and 2010.

For the October meeting, Sarah is being sponsored by Wine Australia, an agency of the Australian Government, and has chosen an impressive selection of interesting and relatively expensive wines from producers who we suspect will not be well known to our members.

Diary notes

Make a note of the following dates, (WSWS meets on 3rd Monday of the month unless stated)

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| Monday October 18th | "Cool climate-v-Classic Australia" Sarah Ahmed |
| Monday November 15th | "What is quality in wine?" Richard Bampfield MW; Chairman of The Association of Wine Educators |
| Monday December 13 th (Note – second Monday) | Christmas party ! Details to follow in the November newsletter |
| Monday January 17 th 2011 | Rhone wines Alun Griffiths (Berry Brothers & Rudd) |

Who's who in the Committee?

Graham - The money man

Sallie - Committee Chair

Geoffrey - Secretary & all things snail

Peter - Events co-ordinator

Geoff Rose (new committee member!)

Great Value Bin End Offer

We have a few bottles left over from the summer party of Chateau de Coulaïne Cabernet Franc from Chinon. Members all rated this highly at Neil Sommerfeld's presentation of aromatic wines a couple of years ago and Neil rates 2009 as the best for several years.

Listed at £10.75, WSWS are selling it at £9.75.

Orders please to Graham Cook

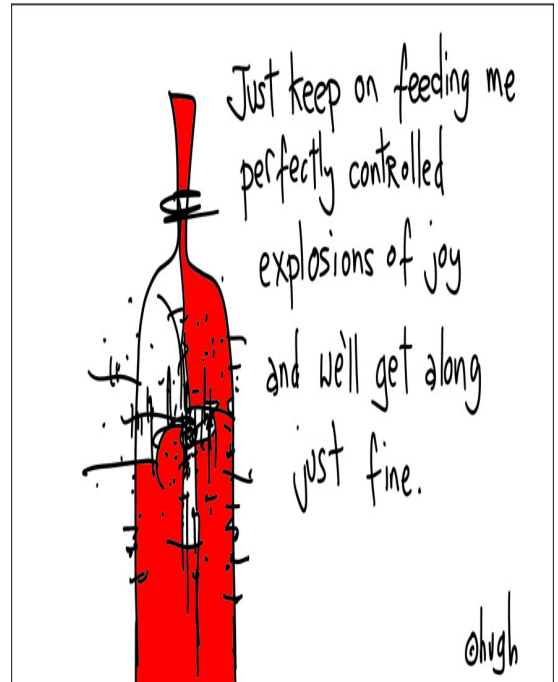
Tasting Notes

Following an invitation from Philip Evins (Chairman of Winchester Wine Appreciation Society), Kim and I recently attended a meeting of the "Chaîne des Rôtisseurs" held at Pennyhill Park, Bagshot. With wine supplied by Pernod Ricard UK, and a 6 course tasting menu, we were in for a great evening, and were not disappointed in either respect.

Chaîne can trace its roots back to 1248, and brings together both professional and non-professional members worldwide, who appreciate and share a mutual interest in cuisine, wine and fine dining linked by a wonderful camaraderie.

The surprising thing for us was not so much the company or good food, but the quality of wines being delivered by what used to be a "spirits" company. How times have changed.

David



Christmas party !

Monday 13th December is the date for our annual Christmas party. Details are currently being finalised, and Sallie will be looking for indicative numbers at the October meeting. So brush of those calendars, clear the date in your diaries, and be ready to support the WSWS Christmas Party.

September Meeting Report

Small, Independent Wine Estates of Bordeaux

Tony Hill (Bordeaux and Beyond)

Peter Smith

We have had a number of not very memorable, even forgettable, presentations by private importers of small French growers so had no great expectations of this one – how wrong we were! Tony Hill was a real revelation – out-going, amusing with a touch of flamboyance and some memorable one-liners. He only imports wines he likes from growers he likes or has a connection with and only sells to private clients - so not a compromising character but by all appearances successful. (Though the expressions on the faces of

the French when they hear his pronunciation of their language must be a picture! Fortunately he has a French-speaking partner). What he provides are well made, interesting wines with big names on their labels at affordable prices – an appealing formula for WSWS who bought 13 cases on the night – not far short of the record for the Argentine meeting.

This was definitely a night for red wine lovers who happen to be the WSWS majority. The token white was a clean tasting reasonably fruity Semillon/Sauvignon blend, the Vin Passion Blanc from Ch des Trelles on the eastern borders of Bordeaux – “a fine wine oasis in a desert of co-op plonks” – made by a couple who work for Pontet Canet. Pleasant, but rapidly forgotten as the dry strawberry jam flavours of the rose, the Clairette from Ch de Fontenille, proved much more to our taste. Clairette, as Tony reminded us, was the original wine exported to England and the origin of our word Claret, and more significantly the origin of Lloyds underwriters who started by covering the wine shipments to England.

Tony's growers include some real characters – some at least as interesting as their wines. The first red, the Ch. les Cabannes 2007 from St Emillion, is made by an ex-hippy from Toronto who started his vineyard in 1997. He is aiming for a New World style but without the high alcohol to appeal to the US market – remembering the comments on US wine drinkers at our June meeting they should like its easy drinking but not very characterful style. The Ch.-de-Gue 2008 from Lalande-de-Pomerol was also made to be New World style (how many Bordelaise must be turning in their G/graves!) but had the advantage of much older vines, cold fermentation based on Californian experience (is nothing sacred in France any more?) to draw out the fruit and a dedicated rugby fan for a wine maker (all is forgiven). This was a much more concentrated wine though some people found the tannins too harsh. These two wines cost £10.00, but as soon as the word Margaux appears on the label of the the Ch. des Graviers from Margaux – wham! - £18 for not much extra except the name. This was the first of some Cru Artisan wines which was a new term for many of us – in fact it just means that the vineyard is entirely family owned and worked and is not a quality mark. In fact the quality was pretty good and everyone liked it.

The owner of Ch. Micalet from Haut Medoc is so disinterested in money he sets the price in the year the wine is made and never changes it. So the 2001 was just £11 and was the star of the evening. In Tony's words, this was “a real old fashioned Claret” (I don't think he was suggesting it had some Algerian wine in it, but ----) made in very traditional ways, kept for 12 months on barrels made on the farm and then not released for up to 7 years – Cru Artisan seemed very apt. And hand picked by Gipsy families – so presumably Sarkozy and Carla will now have to pick them next year! The 2001 was drinking really well and was rated a lovely wine. We also tasted the 2002 which was sharper and lacked the ripe fruit of 2001. (Nicholas sell the rubbish year 2007 for £17.50 and it sells in restaurants for £49.)

But they got even odder! The owner of Ch. Behere in Pauillac is the” Basil Fawly of the French wine industry” – why?, because he refused to supply the wine to Tony even though he had paid for it because he did not live in the area. Fortunately he was persuaded to release the wine to the perfidious Englishman and we found that his 2007 was an exception to that year - very drinkable with lots of fruit and chocolate. Awkward though the grower may be, some of his land adjoins Ch. Lafitte and so must share the same terroir, n'est ce pas?

The Sarget de Gruaud Larosse 2004 is the second label from the more conventional St Julien chateau, Gruaud Larosse. This is a a 'super-second' chateau so a serious player hence it is still 18 quid but was very fresh and vibrant. Like many big chateaux, it produces a second label in years when production exceeds their allotted hectoliterage or they are not too happy with some of the quality. Second labels can offer really good value as they are often not far off the quality of the main label but at a much lower price.

Altogether a rather amazing evening and certainly not what we had anticipated at all. Tony's French may be Churchillian and his choice of growers masochistic but he can certainly pick his wines.