



NEXT MEETING IS ON:
Monday 19th October
7:30pm for 8:00pm start

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

October 2009 edition

Italian wines – unsung heroes

James Connolly began his career working in the restaurant and hospitality business, becoming part of the management team of a small luxury hotel group in London. He carried his commitment to excellence in customer service into the wine trade in the mid 1990's where he has specialised in both operational control and sales development. In 1999 James was invited to be a member of the Champagne Academy and remains passionate about the region and its wines. In 2004, having spent nearly a decade with La Reserve, one of London's most prominent Wine Merchants, James and colleagues established Imbibros which now includes The Rickyard, a retail warehouse in Godalming, and also a boutique shop in the Lion & Lamb Yard, Farnham.

The Imbibros philosophy is quite simple: to source wines because they demonstrate the character and independence that we demand - Wines which deliver quality and individuality regardless of price. Terrific everyday wines, New World icons, established classics - all have a place at Imbibros.

The white wines will include a Fiano, a Polena, a Lugana and San Vincenzo from Veneto and Sicily and the reds - a Primitivo, a Baglio, a Fatagione and a Birillo from Puglia, Maremma and Sicily. 10% discount on the retail price of the Italian wines ordered post tasting.

Note: The attendance fee for guests is £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).

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	
Monday 19th October	"Italian wines - unsung heroes" James Connolly, Director of Imbibros Wine Merchants.
Monday 16th November	"A Wine Maker's View". Talk on winemaking with Andrew Gordon (using Grand Mayne Wines)
NB: Date change Monday 14th December	<u>Christmas Function</u> Format and menu to be announced in a separate News Shot
Monday 18th January 2010	French wines – Oaked v unoaked David Howarth

September Meeting - Wines of Chile - Chris Horridge

Having welcomed speakers from far and wide over the past year or so – New Zealand, California, France, Shropshire and Northampton to name a few – we were delighted to find an excellent new speaker from our own doorstep in Farnham. How Chris has managed to escape our notice we are not really sure, but he will not escape again!

Though all the wines were from Concha Y Toro – with whom Chris has had a long association, this did not limit the breadth of the tasting as they have vineyards in all the main wine regions of Chile and allow their managers/winemakers a huge amount of autonomy to do their own thing. Concha was founded in 1880 but only grew into the major company it now is over the last 20 years. Most people probably associate Concha with value-for-money well made wines in the £4 - £8 bracket – in fact they range upwards to over £40 a bottle, and though the wines we tasted did not go quite that high Chris had chosen to show us some of their more unusual ones rather than those we are used to seeing on supermarket shelves. All the wines had also been made from hand-harvested grapes, which was quite a surprise for a company the size of Concha where one expects efficiency and cost to rule.

The opening wine, the sparkling Casillero del Diablo, was perhaps rather more interesting for the region it came from. The Limari Valley is a new development in desert lands in the north of Chile where a combination of a huge diurnal temperature range and heavy sea fogs provides ideal conditions. A lot of investment is taking place here and none of the vineyards are older than 11 years. Anyway, this wine, made by the transfer rather than the traditional method, was clean and crisp but not memorable. However the Maycas Reserva Sauv Blanc from the same region was much more to our liking – dry and minerally (only 1.7 gm sugar) with long lasting gooseberry and elderflower flavours. From the newest wine region we moved to the oldest – the Maipo Valley, and tasted the Amelia Chardonnay. This is Concha's top Chardonnay – low yields, cold maceration and heavy use of new oak. We split 50/50 on whether the oak was overdone – if you liked it you loved the golden colour and rich flavours, if you didn't then the smokiness and butterscotch were a bit too much. As a complete contrast later in the evening the Late Harvest Sauv Blanc with its balance of crispness and sweetness brought loud mutters of "lovely" from around the room.

We started the reds in great anticipation as the wonderful nose of the 20 Barrels Pinot Noir Cono Sur 2006, also from Maipo, promised a treat, but once in the mouth it didn't deliver – easy drinking but with a slightly jammy flavour. This was despite really tiny yields, cold maceration etc and it coming from an exclusively Pinot only cellar using 100% new French oak. How often the most expensive wine disappoints - as one of our more reserved members said – give me 2 bottles at half the price anytime! But let's not forget what a difficult grape the PN is, both in the vineyard and the cellar – "like a difficult teenager" said Chris. Things looked up with the Marques de Casa Concha Cab Sauv 2005 - which was half the price! This was a classy Cab, well balanced with lots blackberry fruit. And continued to improve as we tasted the Carmenera, the grape Chile has made its own. The Terrunyo 2005, which also had small amounts of Cab Sauv and Franc, has been scored a high 93 by Robert Parker or rather his tasters – a great dark colour, weighty with big soft tannins and of course the ubiquitous chocolate in the background. Then something 'especial' for the last red – the 2006 Maycas Reserva Especial Syrah from the desert in Limari and a wine Concha rate as their most long lived. The first sip was surprising – softer than expected and a hint of sweetness - but then loads of fruit.

Another of Chris's hidden talents is that he is also an experienced wine judge and has been judging at the International Wine & Spirit Competition since 1977 and he ended the evening with some insights into this rarefied world where the leather throated Australian judges get through 200 wines a day. Chris – a mere 100 a day, but I am sure far more critically.

Peter Smith

Tasting notes....

Last year we celebrated 20 years of WSWS (and a jolly good time was had by all I hear you say).

WSWS can only exist if its members take turns to sit on the committee and thereby keep the society alive – for members to take the time and trouble to find out what is going on in the local wine world, and research potential speakers who could come to the monthly meeting and give us a different perspective on some well known (or unusual) wine growing area.

Over time, the Committee changes, with members who have been on the Committee for some time stepping down, and fresh faces taking the plunge – they quickly find out that in truth, it's not difficult but does take a little time and effort. The greater the number who help out, the smaller the workload each member takes upon their shoulders.

The Committee has been running with a vacancy for nearly a year, and with 3 long serving committee members in place. It's time other members stepped up to the plate and helped out.

Without new Committee members, your wine club will fade away as those on the committee retire, and nobody else fills the gaps.

What a shame.

David

Thought for the month



by Cartoonist George Aldridge

Who's who in the Committee?

Graham C - The money man

Sallie - Committee Chair

Geoffrey - Secretary & all things snail

Peter - Events co-ordinator

Kim & David - Editors

1 (or more) Vacancies - go on, fill this gap!