

April Meeting Notes

Wines of New Zealand

In the absence of the Chairman, Gerald Hackemer, committee member Tim Thackeray introduced the presenter, Deborah Zbinden, at the April meeting on Monday 10th April 2017. Deborah is the daughter-in-law of Society members Freddy and Lydia Zbinden. Freddy explained that Deborah is the founder of Wine Confidence, a new wine school, based in Epsom and has over 15 year's experience in the wine industry, including Marketing Manager of Accolade Wines. Her aim is to 'help wine drinkers of all levels of knowledge and interest squeeze more enjoyment out of every drop'. Deborah presented 'Wines of New Zealand: The Family of Twelve' with six white and six red wines, made with a diverse mix of grape varieties, covering every major New Zealand wine region.

The 'Family of Twelve' was founded in 2005 as a fraternity of twelve prestigious artisanal wineries, including such names as Felton Road, Alta Rangi, Neudorf, Pegasus Bay and Villa Maria. Contrasting personalities, different wine regions and styles make up the 'family' and they celebrate these differences.

The first white wine was one of a pair of sauvignon blanc wines, Lawson's Dry Hills, Sauvignon Blanc, 2015, Marlborough. Alcohol By Volume (ABV) 13% and price £12.50 a bottle. The other member of the pair was Nautilus Sauvignon Blanc 2014, Marlborough. ABV 13% and £11.50 a bottle. Both wines attracted favourable comments from members, the first, 'sweet apples, gooseberry taste, good fruity wine that develops in the mouth'. The second was preferred and had 'layers of taste' and notable 'elegance'.

The second pair were chardonnays, Kumeu River Estate Chardonnay 2014 (Auckland) ABV 13%, £19.91 a bottle, together with, Neudorf Chardonnay 2014, Nelson. ABV 14% and £19.50 a bottle. Comments were made on the high prices of these wines but apparently this is expected and reflects the high quality. Deborah is not in the business of selling wines, only promoting them to interested wine lovers. Member's comments showed mixed appreciation, 'pleasant, refreshing, not complex, unremarkable' for the first: 'layered, good after-taste' but to one member 'a strange, possible oak' flavour.

The fifth wine was an un-paired Milton Riverpoint Viognier 2014, Gisborne, ABV 14.50% and £13.75 a bottle. Members at the same table as the writer did not like this wine at all. Comments included 'don't like it', no after-taste, sweet and flat, even 'nasty' was one considered comment.

Viognier, from the Rhone, usually tastes of apricot and provokes a love/hate response. Apparently 'organic' methods are used in the production of this wine, based on the phases of the moon so Deborah said, to general amusement.

The final white wine was Pegasus Bay Bel Canto Riesling. 2014. Waipara Valley ABV 14.50% and £15.75 a bottle. Oh Dear! not liked. Member quotes include 'very disappointing, flat, stale' and no-one was happy with this.

Members then tasted two pairs of Pinot Noir, a Syrah and a Cabernet Sauvignon.

The Pinot Noirs were:-Ata Rangi Crimson Pinot Noir, 2014, Martinborough. ABV 14%, £19.92 a bottle. and Felton Road, Pinot Noir Bannockburn, 2014 Otago. ABV 14% and £28.33 a bottle! Members really enjoyed these wines, particularly the Fellon Road, comments were 'floral, dried herbs, delicious, fruity'.

The next pair of Pinots were, Fromm La Strada Pinot Noir, 2014, Marlborough, ABV 13% and £17.50 a bottle, paired with, Palliser Estate Pinot Noir 2014 Marlborough, ABV 14%, £14.08. The 'Fromm' was favourite for the evening. 'Easy-drinking and lovely.'

The final wines were Craggy Range Syrah 2013 Gimblett Gravels, Hawkes Bay, ABV 13% and Villa Maria Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot 2012 Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, ABV 14% and £16.63 a bottle. Members really liked the elegant Syrah and commented on the 'nose' of the last wine 'fantastic, complex, a real winner'.

Deborah was thanked for a most interesting evening and excellent paper work, she presented her wines with real enthusiasm and was knowledgeable and forthcoming in answering members' questions. Good Luck to her in her future with Wine Confidence and congratulations to Freddy and Lydia on their talented daughter-in-law.