



Wine Discovery Group – Christmas Choice!

Yes, your local U3A has its own Wine Discovery Group which meets fortnightly over a very social, convivial buffet produced and provided by members with the objective of sampling wines in the way they are enjoyed at their best – with good friends and good food – the objective of the Group is to take members out of their wine “comfort zone” to showcase wines they may not have come across before or would not normally put in their supermarket trolley and at the same time learn a little more about them, the grapes, country and production methods involved.

At this time of year there are endless articles in magazines and papers seeking to address the burning issue of “what is the best wine to go with the Turkey at Christmas?” I am reluctant to appear to be yet another “Wise Man” telling you all what wine to match up with “the bird” but will let you into the secrets of what the Wine Discovery Group will be sampling this year as possible pairings!

To get the party started, a Cava Reserva (Spain) (such as Co – Op’s Irrestible range version with the black label) is a very credible option to Champagne – unlike Prosecco (sorry Prosecco fans!) it is made in an almost identical way to Champagne and if you go for a Reserva version (worth the small premium over basic Cava) this will have similar ageing in similar conditions to a Non Vintage Champagne – but all at a fraction of the price – around £7.00– yet still with those distinctive biscuity, toasty notes of Champagne – serve nice and chilled – the price means everyone can have a generous glass or two without blowing the budget....

For Red Wine fans the accepted wisdom for a red to go with the Turkey is a “Pinot Noir” - a decent Burgundy red (which will be 100% Pinot Noir grapes) will be expensive and probably its finer points will not be appreciated what with all the buzz of pulling crackers, dropping the potatoes on the floor, and the competition to see who can eat the most Brussels’ Sprouts.

So, we will be trying a Johann Wolf Pinot Noir from Pfalz region in Germany. German Pinot Noir is “on trend” at the moment, is high quality and incredible value for money, £8.39 at Waitrose but if you can get a combination of their Money Off Vouchers and a Wine offer this can come down to as little as £5.34 which we paid and which is staggering value for money. New Zealand Pinot Noir is great but this is going up in price too.

For White Wine enthusiasts, again the accepted wisdom is generally to select a White Burgundy (100% Chardonnay grapes) but again, these come at a cost, so it is worth looking for alternatives –Rustenberg (Stellenbosch, South Africa) does a classy Chardonnay with orange peel, marzipan and citrus flavours (what better for Christmas ?) at £12.50 at Waitrose but again with offers the Group got this at £8.50 – and the Co Op has a great

Laneway Chardonnay (Australia) with a bit of oaky vanilla but also a refreshing minerality for under £9.00 which the Group tried earlier this year – ideal for the Turkey or a baked salmon.

For Boxing Day, a fruity, light Beaujolais Villages is always a good choice - or – this year, our Group is trying a Cotes du Rhone Villages “Seguret” which is one of the Villages permitted to append its own name to the otherwise generic “Villages” designation. This will be perfect with the cold cuts and left overs and is £8.39 at Waitrose, although offers brought it to us at around £5.50.

The temptation at Christmas is to “push the boat out” on all fronts but for the Wine, the holy grail is really to find a wine that is affordable, a crowd pleaser and yet has enough interest to keep any wine buffs amongst your guests satisfied (and let them know you have put a bit of thought into the wine choice) – those great bottles of Gevrey Chambertin or Nuits St Georges or Vintage Champagne that you have spotted are probably best kept for a quiet evening with a few friends when you can really appreciate their finer points !