

	Welcome: Week 4: Another Wine Bites the Dust ! 20 th February 2024	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
White	<p>Sauvignon Blanc & Pinot Grigio – Puklavac & Friends 2022 Jeruzalem Hills North Eastern Slovenia Slovenia is a beautiful, green, forested country with high environmental standards – you will notice this wine is made from handpicked grapes – this is to be expected, as the steep slopes and spectacular terraced vineyards dictate hand labour, rather than mechanisation but the result of this is good quality wines - although that does mean production costs are high – with that in mind this is an absolute steal at its net price of £6.78. We should get an aromatic wine of passion fruit, citrus and apple with some pepperiness. Other tasting notes are gooseberry, dash of lemon and a bit of pineapple and very fresh.</p> <p>Martin Puklavac was the driving force behind the original wine cellars in the 1930's although recently the wine region was in the hands of a cooperative until the family became owners again in 2009 and breathed new life into the now state of the art Winery. Together with the other growers from the cooperative and blessed with a great climate and geology for vines to flourish, they strive to make great wines. The winemakers are Mitja and Rok. Mitja was born in the region and although a young man, he has worked in vineyards around the world including New Zealand. Rok was raised in Southern Slovenia and worked in a boutique winery as well as others across the Country.</p> <p>Slovenia borders Italy on Italy's North East border and has a coastline on the Adriatic Sea so no surprises we find Pinot Grigio in this blend. Puklavac vineyards are at the same altitude as Burgundy and latitude comparable to New Zealand and the terraces ensure the grapes get a great deal of sunshine. Their wines have won numerous awards including Decanter, Mundus Vini, IWSC – this one has a Decanter Bronze award which is always a good sign.</p> <p>Not a bargain at its normal shelf price but definitely worth a punt at £6.78, it is something a little different to bring along!</p>	<p>Sauvignon Blanc</p> <p>Pinot Grigio</p>	<p>Waitrose normally £8.98 but on offer at £7.14 and less 5% case discount so £6.78</p>
White	<p>Torrontes 2023 – Bodega Norton, Mendoza, Argentina As its name may hint at, this vineyard, at the foot of the Andes, was founded by a British Railway Engineer, Edmund J P Norton 130 years ago. Torrontes gives wine with a very aromatic, floral character so should appeal to Viognier fans – at a great price.</p> <p>Torrontes is probably Argentina's "signature" white grape (Malbec being its red of course!) and a bit of a USP for Argentina. Norton is now led by winemaker David Bonomi who is one of South Americas Top 10 Winemakers (Decanter Magazine). This wine is good example of the "Wine Discovery" ethos in action – I thought I would take advantage of the offer to bring along something that most of us would probably not think to put in our trolleys! – the Group has tried an example in the past but that was a few years ago and we have many new faces since then – I recall its fruity, aromatic style proved popular and it may be something worth keeping in mind if you like Asian food – be that Thai or a quality Chinese takeaway from China Red - but can't quite bring yourself to go full throttle Gewurtztraminer which is the experts usual recommendation for spicy Asian fare!</p>	<p>Torrontes</p>	<p>Waitrose – normally £8.25 but £6.40 on offer and £6.08 after case discount.</p>

White	<p>Vouvray A.C. – “Spring” Vincent and Tania Careme, 2021 Loire Valley, France – We have tried several Vouvray’s in the past (including this example – which at the time was very well received, but again, a lot of new faces since then and an attractive offer at Waitrose persuaded me to revisit this very enjoyable wine which would normally now be a bit out of budget).</p> <p>It can often be a “<i>demi sec</i>” wine which is its “classic style”– that is somewhere between sweet and dry – quite a shock if you plug a mouthful expecting a typical Loire Valley dry-ish white like a Sancerre ! – in our example, the winemaker is making a drier (and more consumer orientated) “<i>sec</i>” style – if my memory is correct it was perhaps more “<i>off dry</i>” or what the French call “<i>sec tendre</i>” – so not quite dry – but certainly not a semi sweet either – we should have good stony minerality and zesty freshness with some green apple and white peach– probably more in tune with what the typical 2020’s consumer would expect and demand from a white wine ! This wine will, if my recollection is correct, pair beautifully with some runny cheeses or goats cheese especially as nibbles alongside a chilled glass to indulge in as an aperitif. That possible hint of sweetness may also suggest a pairing with mild Asian food too.</p> <p>If you do buy a bottle of Vouvray, especially in a French Supermarket do try and check the label to see if it tells you if it is Sec or Demi Sec to know what style you will be getting – in this case there is only the word Sec (dry) in very small print on the back label</p> <p>“Sec tendre” is an “unofficial” but increasing popular style for Vouvray and not surprisingly, with that hint of underlying residual sweetness, lends itself nicely to being a great aperitif – In any event the Sec tendre style will mean the wine will happily accompany and complement a meal as well as being a glass of wine that could be enjoyed for its own sake.</p> <p>To some extent, Vouvray’s style (ranging from Sweet to dry(ish)) was historically the result of the influence of the unusual weather in this region which varies enormously here as it the exact place where Atlantic influenced weather meets Continental weather patterns ! – Vouvray is just to the east of Tours – so the ripeness and health of the grape also has great variation year on year – some years producing a dry wine, sometimes benefitting from so called “noble rot” (sounds unappealing but this is exactly what sweet wine makers are hoping for! - the skins of the grapes get botrytis which degrades their skins allowing the effect of sunlight on the grape to be magnified creating higher sugar levels in the grape and in turn a sweeter wine – and the producers often pick grapes in several pickings or “<i>tries</i>” depending on the style of wine they are trying to achieve – and pick based on the stage or condition the grape has reached at that point in time. The Vouvray style with its underlying suggestion of sweetness, like a Gewurtztraminer, lends itself to Asian foods and likewise, will probably appeal to Viognier fans – and any new Torrontes fans we find tonight!</p> <p>This will be a very stylish, good quality almost “boutique” wine. Vincent Careme is the son of arable farmers – his grandfather taught him how to make wine and he got the bug and went to the Lycee Viticole d’Amboise to study viticulture and with no family vineyard to take on he worked in Sancerre, Champagne, Alsace, Thailand and South Africa where he met his future wife, Tania – in 1999 they returned to the Loire and the couple set up their own estate with 5 hectares of vines. Hugh Johnson of “World Atlas of Wine” fame rates Careme as one of the best of the best of Vouvray’s producers.</p> <p>Chenin Blanc is very much a grape we associate with South Africa where it was the traditional white variety and known there as Steen and is really South Africa’s “signature” white grape - but its spiritual home is the Loire Valley and it is not widely grown elsewhere in France – or even elsewhere in the Loire for that matter where Sauvignon Blanc tends to dominate white wines (Pouilly Fume, Sancerre Touraine etc).</p> <p>The grape variety now produces very good quality wines in South Africa although very different in style to this Loire example (we may try a quality “Bushvine” Chenin Blanc by of contrast in coming weeks although I doubt you will find that subtle hint of sweetness you get in Loire Valley examples).</p>	Chenin Blanc	<p>Waitrose normally £14.66 but on offer at £11.90 and less 5% case discount so £11.31 net</p>
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Red	<p>Chateau Oumsiyat Mijana 2019 – Bekaa Valley, Mount Lebanon, Lebanon. Lebanese wine is generally very highly regarded – the Lebanese wine we probably see the most of in shops here in Guernsey is “Chateau Musar” (and its second label, “Hochar”) – they are top wines with very unique style and have many fans (including our Wine Discovery Group’s very own, Peter Davies) but they are priced well beyond our humble budget.</p> <p>It was therefore a pleasing surprise to find that Waitrose stock a more affordable offering, to give us a feel for Lebanon’s famed wines. Back in the 50’s and 60’s Beirut was a sophisticated city, its name synonymous with the rich and famous of the day on a par with Monte Carlo and St Tropez and the country was very heavily French influenced, particularly its wine making industry, as a result of the 28 year “French Mandate” from 1918 to 1946 – the French effectively created modern Lebanon in 1920 by creating a state which they called Le Grand Lebanon from a number of former Ottoman Empire territories.</p> <p>The French influence means Lebanese wines, including this one, can be “Rhône” (Carignan, Cinsault, Grenache) and/or “Bordeaux” (Cabernet Sauvignon) blends - so called “heritage” varieties – as well as made from a number of native varieties.</p> <p>Jancis Robinson writing in the FT put this wine in the top six of best value wines from Waitrose. The Guardian’s columnist conceded this was no “Musar” but points out it is a quarter of the price – they say very quaffable and unsurprisingly, great with Middle Eastern food – think grilled lamb. As Middle Eastern food is very wine friendly you can pair it equally well with a Cotes Du Rhône red or even a Reserva Rioja if you can’t find a bottle of Lebanese wine! – the Guardian also put it in their 20 best wines for the Summer, again suggesting pairing it with bbq lamb. The Telegraph says it is an “excellent red, juicy and warming, redolent of figs and berries – fantastic value” – so some great reviews from the experts.</p> <p>The Chateau has been run by the Bou Sleiman family for four generations with a modern winery and wines that are a fusion of old and new world. The grapes are grown in a 78 hectare vineyard at 1000 metres elevation producing fresh wines in ancient terroir with a Mediterranean feel. This wine is one of a number from their range.</p>	Rhône/Bordeaux “heritage” varieties in this case Cinsault, Carignan, Syrah, and Cabernet Sauvignon	Waitrose £8.70 but less 5% case discount so £8.27 to the Group
Red	<p>Escarpment Pinot Noir – Martinborough, North Island, New Zealand 2021 Burgundy Pinot Noir is expensive and the accepted wisdom is that an alternative, if you want great quality, is generally to look towards New Zealand. Martinborough is a village in Wairarapa on the foot of North Island and is renowned for its Pinot Noir – although prices for quality NZ Pinot Noir are by no means cheap either! – this was on a terrific offer as normally £18.33 but down to £11.90 bringing it just about into budget and a stunning bargain for what’s on offer!</p> <p>Escarpment is owned by the Australian Torbreck wine group – the vineyard is alluvial loam over gravel for the geologists amongst you (Mary). Escarpment produce some absolute top end single vineyard offerings of Pinot Noir with focus on Terroir – at what Matthew Jukes describes as Grand Cru Level of which he has tasted only a very few in his 40 years in wine. These Single Vineyard wines are however serious and expensive wines and the “Noir” cuvee is the approachable, drinking now option. The 2021 harvest was small but very high quality – the grapes were tiny but the result was intense concentration – here is what Matthew Jukes says of this wine-</p>		Waitrose normally £18.33 but on offer at £11.90 and less 5% case discount at £11.31 net

	<p>“Noir is the forward-drinking cuvee at Escarpment but it is not a simple glugger but a more technically challenging drink than you might expect. An expressive Pinot Noir nose leaps from the glass, and the palate and finish are textbook with plush, black cherry fruit and spicy, green highlights that add a touch of drama and pizzazz. This is a keenly priced wine that over delivers by a mile drinking now until 2025”. Marked at 17.5 out of 20.</p> <p>The winery was established 35 years ago and the winemaker is Tim Bourne supported by Rowan Hoskins. The winery is on Te Muna Road and Te Muna means a secret or special place in Maori which seems appropriate – the area is steeped in Maori legend – it is said that Kupe, the great Polynesian voyager who discovered the region left his three canoes “Nga Waka” in Maori on top of the Aorangi Mountain ranges giving the landmark which overlooks their vineyards the “Nga Waka – o-Kupe” which resemble upturned canoes – who says Wine Discovery is only about learning about wine!</p>		
Red	<p>Rioja D.O.C. Reserva 2018 – Vina Lorea – Cune (CVNE) Winery Waitrose No.1 Range - Spain It feels like ages since we brought along a Rioja! Rioja gives us plenty to talk about and I happened to notice there were a few examples on offer at Waitrose, however, finally opted for this example for several reasons.</p> <p>When we think Rioja, we think automatically of the Tempranillo grape that is synonymous with the region however Tempranillo, Graciano and Mazuelo grapes (amongst many others, including Garnacha and some grape varieties that are obscure in the extreme – for example “Cojon de Gato” – which translates as “Cat’s Testicles”! owing to the appearance of the bunch of grapes on the vine!!) are legally permitted in a Rioja – we have tried a single varietal Graciano based Rioja in the past but this is one as is a blend of three varieties which will give it a bit of a twist to other Riojas you may have tried- it is also crafted by one of the great Rioja wineries known as Cune (pronounced Coo-Nee) founded 1879 which derives from the initials CVNE.</p> <p>Rioja has historically obsessed about time spent ageing in barrels and bottles as the way of differentiating the quality of its red wines –bottles of Rioja can be described as Reserva, Gran Reserva, Crianza, Sin Crianza (no oak ageing) etc – in the case of Rioja (although not necessarily other Spanish Wines where such terms as Gran Reserva can be used to make a wine seem far more impressive than it really is!) these are legally defined terms indicating the (minimum) legally defined times the wine has spent in oak barrels and bottle. This is a Reserva so it must have spent (a minimum of) one year in oak barrels and two years in bottle. However, that is a pretty blunt tool for the consumer to use to determine what quality they might expect from the wine or why one might be better than another so the Rioja Wine Commission has encouraged producers and the grading system to focus more on terroir, single vineyard sites, micro climate of the vineyard and the wider use of grape varieties (Tempranillo tends to be the easiest to grow so hence the focus)</p> <p>That obsession with oak ageing is largely down to the influence of French winemakers who came down here when the phylloxera bug decimated French vineyards.</p> <p>Rioja is the name of the region the wine comes from being named after the Rio (river) Oja that runs through it. The vineyards here are in the Rioja Alavesa sub region and Tempranillo is likely the main variety at around 85% of the blend – we hope to find ripe dark cherry, plum and spice aromas with some strawberry, creamy vanilla and maybe a splash a mint – no wonder it goes great with a joint of roast lamb! Rioja is of course synonymous with Spain and probably its most famous red wine.</p>	Tempranillo, Graciano, Mazuelo	Waitrose normally £12.83 but £10.07 on offer and net £9.57 after 5% case discount.

