

	Welcome: Week 5: Getting to Grips with Grapes - 12 th March 2024	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
Rose	<p>Touraine A.O.P. Rose “Le Grand Ballon” by Thierry Delaunay – Loire Valley, France 2022 I always have a soft spot for Loire Valley wines and not surprisingly this wine is made from Gamay, (80%) Cabernet Franc (15%) and Malbec, in the Loire known as “Cot” (5%) grapes which are classic Loire Valley varieties. These are all red grape varieties and that lovely salmon pink colour is achieved by the grape juice having only limited contact on the skins before being run off – otherwise it would turn into a red wine.</p> <p>His 21 hectare vineyard is situated on the Cher river, 50km east of Tours, in the centre of Touraine. The vineyards have been cultivated by 5 generations with the first wines bottled in 1971. Thierry sources grapes from both his own and local growers’ vineyards and created his “Le Grand Ballon” range under the generic “Touraine” Appellation, offering sumptuous, refreshing wine at exceptional value. The balloon reference is simply to the various hot air balloons that pass over the area on Chateaux tours. The soil is stony clay with flint. Thierry is a well regarded Loire Valley producer.</p> <p>We should get redcurrants, strawberries and raspberries and spice on the nose and lively yet supple on the palate. Another great offer enabling us to keep our Rose fans happy! It even got itself a Gold Award.</p>	Gamay, Cabernet Franc, Malbec (Cot)	Waitrose, normally £10.08 but on offer at £7.32 and less a further 5% case discount so £6.95 net
White	<p>Pinot Gris – “Urmeer” Weinhaus Reh Kendermann – Rheinhessen, Germany 2022 Last week we tried a Slovenian Pinot Grigio and it proved very popular so when I saw this wine on a very good offer I just had to bring it along to the Group! Pinot Grigio is of course, Pinot Gris – or Grauburgunder as it is known in Germany although this wine is going with the more widely known, Pinot Gris, presumably to maximise its market appeal to everyday supermarket consumers!</p> <p>Rheinhessen is Germany’s largest wine region but it is a bit of a treasure trove for some well made and well priced wines from gifted growers. The slender bottle shape is an immediate giveaway that this is either a German or Alsace wine and not unusually, this wine (which should be well rounded with oatmeal notes and elegant minerality and a bright raciness) should be a good match for spicier foods - as well as fried seafood and indeed as a quaffer on its own.</p> <p>The area it comes from used to be an ancient sea (an Urmeer) so the soil will be not unlike that of Chablis, with mineral rich content, probably from all those ancient fossilised remains of various prehistoric sea creatures – as alluded to in the picture on the label – that in turn translates to a wine with great minerality. It should be fruity and elegant with zingy pear, subtle nutty notes, sharp and crispy – and a bit of spice. No oak is used and fermentation is in stainless steel so this should be a very minerally and fresh wine.</p> <p>This wine is also one of Olly Smith’s recommendations to go with any aromatic recipes with ginger and soy sauce – he describes it as “delicious, feeling like a pear spiced with a mandarin – tropical and tantalising” So maybe a good wine to go with a stirfry!</p>	Pinot Gris (or Grigio if you prefer)	Waitrose normally £8.70 but on offer at £6.86 and less a further 5% case discount so £6.52 net

	<p>The winery, Reh Kendermann is one of Germany's largest and most modern with a reputation for producing high quality, premium wines, including premium private label wines as well as branded wines. In general terms, German Wines still tend to represent excellent value for the quality on offer and this is an absolute bargain basement price for what's on offer – consumers still tend to associate German wines with those dodgy wines of the 70s and early 80s that were often sickly sweet.</p>		
White	<p>Chenin Blanc – Cederberg , South Africa – 2022 You will remember that last time we tried a Vouvray from the Loire Valley – which is a wine made from Chenin Blanc although very different to its South African cousins. Chenin Blanc is really South Africa's signature White Grape variety and has been grown there for many years. This wine is from Waitrose's premium No.1 range and made in partnership with Cederberg – the grapes are crushed with about 5-8 hours of the juice remaining in contact with the skins before being lightly pressed with two days of settling of the juice and there is 4 months fermentation in oak barrels with ageing for another 4 months on the "lees" (the yeast etc in the wine) – all designed to impart and extract all the flavours.</p> <p>The Nieuwoudt family arrived in South Africa in the early 1700s and in 1893 their descendants and present owners (5th generation) moved to Dwarsrivier which is home to the Cederberg wines and is a rugged, high altitude wine farm in the Cape Winelands – the farm extends to 5,500 hectares of which only 74 are vineyards, the rest being wilderness under conservation. David Nieuwoudt is the present owner assisted by his daughter, Emma.</p> <p>It has an interesting back story – in the 1970s, the farm was selling its grapes as "table grapes" to co operatives – but some of the grapes ripened too late to be taken there and then owner used those grapes to make wine for the Farm's workers! – the venture was so successful they had a go at red wine too.</p> <p>The climate is cool Mediterranean rather than maritime and the vineyard is the highest one in Western Cape at up 3000 feet above sea level. The area is so isolated, it has little disease and is virus free so there is no chemical intervention.</p> <p>This wine was on a very good offer and a bargain price for this quality of wine – not a typical everyday supermarket/ restaurant house wine South African Chenin Blanc!</p>	Chenin Blanc	Waitrose, normally £11.91 but on offer at £8.92 and less 5% case discount – net £8.47
Red	<p>Mencia – "Maruxa", Valdeorras, Galicia, NW Spain 2021 The UK is Spain's largest market for wine and its wines are enjoyable and consistent and like Portugal, it has a huge range of grape varieties to choose from – 600 varieties are grown in 60 main regions and we have tried a few of the native varieties such as Bobal, Monastrell and others in the past.</p> <p>Valdeorras is the warmest and most inland of Galicia's DOP's – Galicia is of course very much associated with that great, seafood friendly and on trend, white wine, Albarino. This region is named after the gold the Romans found here and it produces some succulent, fresh reds from the Mencia grape which is considered to be Spain's Cabernet Franc (the grape behind many of the Loire Valley reds such as Chinon, St Nicholas de Bourgueil etc) and it thrives here.</p>	Mencia	Waitrose normally £11.91 but on offer at £9.15 and less 5% case discount so £8.69 net

	<p>This wine is produced by the highly respected “Cune” winery whose Rioja is well known and we have tried and the grapes come from terraced vineyards and are produced at their Virgen del Galir winery. The grapes are hand picked and aged in oak for 6 months to enhance depth and complexity. Maruxa means “Maria” in Spanish and is the Galician dialect variant of the name. She was the winery founder’s mother apparently!</p> <p>Waitrose tell us we will get an explosion of aromas on the nose followed by intense fresh red fruit flavour with mineral and earthy tones – possibly a bit like a Portuguese Douro red - there are some mixed reviews on line although some very positive ones, some saying it will be liked by Pinot Noir fans with more aromas turned right up! and also that it would be a great BBQ wine so keep in mind for the Summer! Mencia is becoming very popular in Spain with rich black fruit notes, fresh acidity and soft tannins and will work well to go with any chorizo based dishes with the acidity will cut through the oil and spice from the sausages. Again, it was another wine that was on a great offer at Waitrose although certainly no bargain basement wine.</p>		
Red	<p>Zinfandel –“American Gothic” (based on what is has now become known as the American Gothic House, Eldon, Iowa” – Lodi, California USA 2021 I have often seen this very eye catching bottle on the shelves at Waitrose but on this visit it was on an offer and I thought it would be fun to compare and contrast this to our Italian Primitivo – Zinfandel being the same grape as Primitivo!</p> <p>This bottle will of course immediately appeal to our Group’s own artist in residence, Sue McGregor, who will, I am sure, recognise this iconic artwork by Grant Wood! – I am sure you all want to know a bit more about the picture and to enable you to impress your friends if you do buy a bottle, here is your Art Lesson! - Whilst you would assume the pair to be a “genuine”, early 20th Century rural American husband and wife, they were in fact modelled by the artist’s 32 year old sister, Nan and his Dentist, 62 year old Byron McKeeby!</p> <p>The artist thought of them as being a Father and his Daughter and fancied them as being the kind of people who would live in such a house. It was intended to be a reassuring positive image of rural American values at the beginning of the Great Depression but the ambiguous nature of the painting, with details such as prominent Gothic window, pitchfork etc means that is open to many interpretations e.g. that it may be a satirical comment on Midwesterners out of touch with the modernizing world etc.</p> <p>Lodi is a world class wine region and indeed Californian wine at the top end competes easily on the stratospheric prices and quality of the very best Burgundy wines. Lodi is in the Central Valley wine region of California, east of San Francisco Bay and is particularly known for its Old Vine Zinfandel. It has a Mediterranean climate. We should get blackberry and raspberry aromas and maybe a bit of sweet tobacco – the sweetness and juicy-ness of the Lodi grapes with the sourness of the tannin should create a unique flavour.</p>	Zinfandel (aka Primitivo)	Waitrose normally £9.16 but on offer at £8.24 and less a further 5% case discount so £7.83 net

	Let us hope we are left with a more favourable expression than our Gothic Couple! Of course we may have some reservations about Zinfandel because it produced some very sickly sweet pink wines in the not so distant past but this should be quality red wine, with an art lesson to boot.		
Red	<p>Primitivo di Manduria DOC 2021 “Pazzia” – Puglia, Salento peninsula, Italy Manduria, in Puglia in the Salento peninsula (which forms the heel of Italy’s “boot”) is the spiritual home of the Primitivo grape (also known elsewhere as Zinfandel and we are trying an example this week from Lodi, California!) and it produces full bodied wines – far more full bodied than a Chianti or even Barolo – this is very much a top end and an award-winning example – this is a few notches above the typical supermarket examples of Primitivo.</p> <p>We have tried this wine before but it would have been a year or two back and we have a lot of new students who have joined since then! Manduria is a city located in the province of Taranto where the Primitivo wines are considered to be a notch above all other IGT Primitivo wines, with more elegance and structure, hence the ability to append “di Manduria” to the grape variety on the label and forming a DOC in its own right, distinguishing it from other Primitivo wines.</p> <p>This is, of course, the usual way for the Italians to distinguish what they consider to be their “better” wines - being classified with the name of the Grape used to make it, followed by the region they come from – so we get “Barbera d’Asti – wine made from Barbera Grapes from the Asti region, Montepulciano d’Abruzzo – wines made from the Montepulciano grape grown in the Abruzzo – you get the picture! The (theoretically) more basic wines will just carry the grape variety name – so, “Negroamaro”, “Primitivo” etc. The very top Italian Wines (typically those classified DOCG) will just be named after the region they come from! – So, Barolo for example.</p> <p>“Pazzia” means “madness” in Italian and alludes to the producers endeavouring to produce a great wine from a few remaining, unloved, low yielding vineyards that had been spared being replanted and nurturing the vines back to their former glory. It may well benefit even more from decanting – to open the wine up and appreciate at its best. This is something to go with indulgent rich dishes.</p> <p>This is a bit of a treat for our Italian red wine fans and a useful offer at Waitrose enable us to rediscover this super red.</p>	Primitivo (aka Zinfandel)	Waitrose normally £11.91 but on offer at £9.15 and less 5% case discount so net at £8.69