

	<p>Welcome: Week 6 2022/2023</p> <p>Carry on Wine Tasting!</p>	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
Rose	<p>Chiaretto di Bardolino D.O.C. 2021 Tommasi – Veneto, North East Italy You have likely heard of the Italian Red Wine, Bardolino and this is its Pink Version! – it is known as “Chiaretto” (which unsurprisingly in this case means “pale” in Italian). In the rest of Italy, rose wines are known as “Rosato” but Rose wines made near Lake Garda, like this one, are called by the name “Chiaretto”.</p> <p>It has been produced since 1896 at least but for most of its history it was a much darker pink and rarely seen outside of Italy. In 2014 the Lake Garda wine makers experimented with French rose techniques to produce a much lighter wine with longer shelf life. It is now one of Italy’s most popular Rose styles with 10 million bottles a year produced in Bardolino.</p> <p>There are three types of Chiaretto wines, Bardolino (which we are trying), Lugana and Valtenesi (the latter two use different grapes to those used in Bardolino wines - Gropello, Marzemino, Sangiovese and Barbera). Something a little bit different and something I happened to spot at the Co Op – it was on an offer which meant we could bring along a quality £10 plus bottle within our budget.</p> <p>The grapes in our selection are the same used in Bardolino red wines, Corvina 60%, Rondinella 30% and Molinara 10% - and they come from the Tenuta Fossa Granara vineyard in the Bardolino Classico region to the west of Verona and close to Lake Garda and this forms a part of the wider Veneto region. Wine “Anoraks” amongst you may recognise that those grape varieties of Bardolino are the same as those used for Valpolicella wines including Amarone – this is again perhaps unsurprising as those are also red wines from the Veneto region. Bardolino red wines are light wines and in fact it is the Chiaretto pink wines of Bardolino that are regarded as the better wines of this region.</p> <p>The vines are Guyot trained (which is common in cooler climates and takes great skill as the vines’ prior growth must be cut back manually to correctly select a single cane or two for next season’s production) on mixed soils of glacial origin from the glacier that carved out the Lake.</p> <p>In this case, the grape juice only spends 6 hours in contact with the grape skins during the maceration process in stainless steel vats and the limited skin contact results in this incredibly pale pink colour – remember that all grape juice is clear – including that from red grapes – it is only when the juice sits on the red grape skins during the winemaking process that it picks up its red colour – if left on the skins for longer we would have Bardolino red wine – but by removing the juice early on in the process we just get a taint of the red colour in the juice and the resulting wine is pink or rose – the longer the skin contact, the deeper pink the wine becomes.</p>	Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara	Co Op – normally £10.50 but £8.50 on offer and less a further 10% staff discount so £7.65 net.(x 5)

	<p>We should get wild flowers, citrus and red berries on the nose with refreshing yet delicate citrus on the palate with some green apple and a tangy vein and often a mineral, salty flavour like sea air that makes it very enjoyable to quaff – ideal with a classic Italian “Caprese” (beefsteak tomato slices, mozzarella and basil leaves layered like the colours of the Italian flag and drizzled with olive oil!), melon with parma ham, salad, pizza, soft cheese and hard cheese like manchego – and fish – so a star to accompany our buffet table. Tommasi have a very sustainable approach to their agricultural processes and winemaking and is regarded as one of the top producers of Valpolicella.</p>		
White	<p>Viognier Sauvignon Pays D’Oc Paul Mas 2021 This is yet another wine by our friend, the highly regarded and award winning Jean Claude Mas who brought us that outstanding Clairette recently which everyone thought was great – this is a blend of two, more well-known grape varieties – excellent with tapas, goats cheese or on its own as a quaffer – so spot on for a Wine Discovery evening – but equally fine for fish, chicken dishes etc. Unusually for a relatively inexpensive white wine it can be aged for 5 years. It has length on the palate so you can taste it for a while after swallowing it which is the sign of a quality wine.</p> <p>The Jean Claude Mas story is an interesting one – he grew up on a wine “farm” as he calls it – at that time Languedoc wine was produced in bulk and blended with even cheaper Algerian wine to produce ultra cheap plonk sold in litre bottles aimed at French workers to drink everyday – almost as an alternative to tap water! – he was ultimately one of those instrumental in changing the image and perception of the Languedoc - having gained an MBA and worked in various industries he found himself involved in the wine business and realised his early knowledge of working with his father in the vineyards had given him a good knowledge of viticulture without realising it!</p> <p>His mantra is old world wine – new world attitude and he believes you have to be in control of every step – viticulture, wine making, ageing, bottling and the marketing – he owns 850 hectares and gets grapes from another 1500 – he regards each of his estates as having its very own identity and is very keen to see Languedoc wines selling based on the individual terroirs involved rather than emphasis on grape variety and wants to promote wines being sold based on their individual terroirs (more in line with the rest of France).</p>	Viognier Sauvignon Blanc	<p>Waitrose £8.25 but less 25% on all wines offer so £6.19 (4 bottles) + 1 x £6.40 (special offer)</p>
White	<p>Grenache Blanc – Rustenberg – Stellenbosch, South Africa 2021 Rustenberg is a venerable family wine estate. This is a slightly unusual choice of grape variety for South Africa – it is the white version of Grenache and is widely used in Spain and France – apparently this is their first vintage of Grenache Blanc and is completely exclusive to Waitrose – should have aromas of orchard and citrus fruit. The back label makes no mention of oak ageing although they do seem to have another cuvee which has been aged in oak – it has been aged on its lees (the wine “juice” has been left in contact with the grape skins etc to impart extra flavour and complexity).</p> <p>It is noticeable from my studies of the wine shelves that South Africa is increasingly emulating wines from the South West of France and we are seeing much more use of traditional varieties like Marsanne, Grenache Blanc in blends reminiscent of the Languedoc as well as their trademark Chenin Blancs, and other better known “international” varieties like Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay.</p>	Grenache Blanc	<p>Waitrose £9.16 but £6.87 on 25% off all wines offerx 4 and 1 x £9.16</p>

	<p>The Grenache Blanc vines were planted in the early 2000's and the estate has the only plantings of this varietal in this part of Stellenbosch – it is naturally late ripening and high yielding and is planted in a small block high on mountain slope to expose fruity to cooler temperatures ensuring good acidity (which means the wine should be very food friendly and able to refresh the palate).</p> <p>Rustenberg was bought in 1941 by Peter and Pamela Barlow and they restored its old buildings and created dams and renovated the winery and introduced an award winning herd of Jersey cows. Their son Simon and his wife have run it since 1987 and reinvigorated the property as SA emerged from Apartheid isolation on the world stage. He built new wineries, imported new varieties of grape and replanted the vineyards and their son Murray has a Masters in Oenology from Adelaide in Australia and brings a renewed passion and modern outlook to the business and has been named Young Winemaker of the year twice – it is a true family affair.</p>		
Red	<p>“Caiado” by Adega Mayor, VR Alentejano, Portugal 2020 No visit to the wine shelves of St Martins Co Op Grand Marche would be complete without me picking up a few bottles of a Portuguese red wine – as I have said in the past, I assume their wine buyer/manager must have a Portuguese connection as they stock a disproportionate number of great Portuguese red wines for a small provincial Co Op and you would need some inside knowledge to assemble such an impressive line up! Many of these come from the Alentejo region of central Portugal which produces some high-quality red wines and we have tried a number in the past. “Alentejano” is a preferred “VR” designation to sell the wines under for many of the top estates in this region as it has a more liberal set of rules and regulations. The trademark and USP of Portuguese red wines is the use of indigenous grape varieties rather than “international’ varieties and as is often the case, the label doesn’t give any clue as to which feature but a bit of delving on the internet suggests that they are Castelao, Aragonez, Trincadeira, Alicante Bouschet which, although obscure sounding, are fairly typical of blends from this region.</p> <p>Aragonez is in fact the Portuguese name for Tempranillo, the grape of Rioja but the others are all truly Portuguese! The winemakers are Rui Reguinga, Carlos Rodrigues and Bruno Pinto. The fermentation is in stainless steel with time in the bottle – we should get a very big fruit hit with ripe plums and spice with soft palate, fresh and soft tannins, good acidity giving a balanced wine that is silky and jammy. The wine has won awards in the past. Good with light pasta and with barbecues and cheese and charcuterie so again a good partner for our buffet table. Harvesting is done by hand. The name “Caiado” (pronounced cayer – doe) derives from the tradition of whitewashing houses in the Alentejo – this was a brand new offering at the Co Op – in fact they had to go off and try to find out its price!</p>	Castelao, Trincadeira, Aragonez, Alicante Bouschet	Co Op £7.75 but less 20% on staff double discount day net £6.20 a bottle x 4 + 1 x £4.50 !!(it was unpriced so got it cheap!
Red	<p>Old Vine Grenache – Bethany Wines, Barossa, South Australia 2021 We tend to associate the Barossa wine region with potent full on Shiraz wines but Grenache (amongst other varieties) has been grown there for many years and many producers are “chasing fresher, lighter styles but with richness never far away” and this should be the case here according to the back label which says it is light on its feet but has weight and depth with ripe cherries, raspberry and hint of spice with a smooth finish and aromas of strawberry and dark cherry.</p>	Grenache	Co Op £11.00 but less 20% on Staff double discount day net £8.80 a bottle x 4 and 1 x £9.90

	<p>Great with lamb, so keep in mind as we look forward to Spring and also spot on for tapas and antipasto – so a great match for our buffet table. Something a bit different to a Spanish offering if you want to get a selection of bites and snacks from M&S or Waitrose to make up a Friday Tapas night – as it known at Casa Winter!</p> <p>The Bethany vineyards have some of the oldest vines in Barossa. The Schrapel family came from Silesia in 1844 and were some of the earliest settlers in the area, getting to Bethany by ox cart and the first vineyard was established with cuttings from Europe in 1852. Johann Schrapel had a reputation as a wine maker but it seems for 4 generations the family only grew grapes, presumably for others to make wines from - and it was only as recently as 1981 that the fifth generation established Bethany Wines to produce their own wines.</p> <p>In the early 1980's the Australian Government were encouraging growers to rip out old Shiraz and Grenache vines as there seemed to be an oversupply and decreasing demand but the family realised they had an undervalued but irreplaceable resource in their old vine vineyards and gradually their reputation grew- they are now a vibrant family company and Tania Schrapel (6th Generation, as alluded to on the front label) continues the business sharing the passion for the vineyards and crafting fine wines, working alongside her father Geoff and Uncle Robert.</p> <p>The climate is Mediterranean and the soil clay. Breezes fan the vineyards in the summer and gives a slower longer ripening period to get good sugar and acid in the grapes without over ripening. The vines are hand pruned and fruit hand picked and vines are spaced wide apart. The vineyards face west giving increased rain catchment. Their focus is on old vine Shiraz and Grenache. Each parcel of their vineyards is handled separately from crushing to fermentation with maturation in French and American oak barrels.</p> <p>They produce some top end wines and this is no bargain basement wine but we were helped to remain in budget by a double staff discount day at the Co Op, so, again, thanks to Karen's Mum, the unsung hero of the Wine Discovery Group! This should be a very good quality wine for the money with much attention to detail going into its production and a family, rather than multinational company, behind the "brand"!</p>		
Red	<p>Musardises A.O.P. "Domaine Les Grandes Costes" Jean-Christophe Granier 2020 – Languedoc – Domaine Les Grandes Costes is the vineyard of an artisan and independent vigneron and this wine is based upon the grape Cinsault which gives fruity, fresh and delicate wine. It is in the village of Vacquieres a few kilometres from Pic Saint Loup, which wine is also produced by the domaine and is one of the top wines of the Languedoc.</p> <p>The stony soil promotes a perfect ripening of the grapes which make great wines that are racy, subtle and aromatic. Until the mid 60s the wines from the Estate were sold to make bulk, cheap table wine. Jean Christophe Granier who had worked in Paris decided to go back to his roots and transform the family vineyard to make a business out of his passion for wine to make top quality wines and he bought land and vineyards and breathed a new life into the Domaine. The wine has won many awards and some have said it gives a Chateaneuf du Pape a run for its money – no bargain basement wine, although considerably more affordable than a Chateaneuf du Pape! The Languedoc is of course one of our favourite hunting grounds as it gives us some top quality and well-made wines of interest by passionate winemakers – this would almost certainly be a Grand Cru contender, if the Languedoc had such classifications! A double discount day persuaded me we could just about squeeze this into the budget!</p>	Cinsault, Grenache, Syrah	Co Op -£11.50 but less 20% on staff double discount day net £9.20 a bottle x 4 and 1 x £10.35