

Havant U3A Wine Appreciation Group

3rd Lockdown Newsletter 1st May 2020



A very warm greeting to all members of our wonderful wine appreciation group and I trust you are well and finding a silver lining amongst the current restrictions.

Members News

Margaret Hardy has been in QA because of a heart problem which caused her to fall and break her arm. She has had a cardiac pacemaker fitted which appears successful. She has been discharged into the care of the Beechwood House Nursing Home, Rowlands Castle.

The Worthington survival plan!

Initially it was to go to bed and not get up until it was all over but after a few days I was hungry, thirsty and smelly and the room service had turned sour. The enforced change was a little drastic, I got up and started to work through all those unfinished jobs on the understanding that the evening started early with a G&T followed by an episode of something or other via Netflix accompanied by a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc and a few nuts! Somehow, in spite of my inconsiderate behaviour, a delicious dinner appears regularly and on the occasions it includes red meat I dust off a bottle of red from my rapidly diminishing stock. However, a surprisingly good Primitivo was delivered by an angel, who understands my weakness, with replacements added to Val's Asda order. How good is that?

What do you call the 1st May?

An ancient festival of spring, International Workers Day or День Победы? **Also know to oenophiles as International Sauvignon Blanc Day.** If you are quick you can watch an hour long documentary called 'Vintage' produced by Villa Maria to celebrate this. My understanding is that it is free of charge and available by clicking onto the following link: [Vintage by Villa Maria](#) (remember to hold the control key down while you click) until Monday the 4th May. Also available via Amazon Prime, presumably for longer? Film duration 1 hour 8 minutes.



Study Topic

What is your perfect glass of SB? Val always insists on a bottle from NZ but why? Is it different to the same grape variety from France or Chile for example? Yes of course it is but although you can taste and sometimes smell the difference can you quantify it? Is this difference the result of vinification or viticulture or something else?

NZ's SBs are numerous but Cloudy Bay, Villa Maria and Brancott Estate are firmly engraved in my memory.

Cloudy Bay because my first wine teacher introduced me to it and many other splendid things (I think her name was Mrs Robinson) but now I only drink it when someone else is buying. Villa Maria and Brancott Estate are less than half the price (of Cloudy Bay) and almost as good. The source of much debate between with Pat A and myself as to which is best. What is distinctive about SBs from the Loire Valley like Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé and the less expensive ones from Touraine and the budget ones from Languedoc-Roussillon?

Carol Y's Special Bottle

My special bottle came back from an excursion in March 2006 with an Astronomy group to watch a total solar eclipse in the Libyan desert. Not from Libya itself unfortunately but our stopping point on Santorini, one of my favourite ever places. We visited a winery called Antoniou, named for the owner, and tasted a Santorini speciality called 'Vinsanto'. This just means 'wine from Santorini', and this name is allowed by the EU, distinguishing it from the Italian wine grown in Tuscany known as 'Vin Santo' whose separated name derives from 'Holy Wine' ,possibly from use in Holy Communion or being harvested in Holy Week.



The Italian wine has a longer drying and aging process, and a varying sherry like dryness, or it may be sweet. The Vinsanto grapes are grown in the harsh volcanic soil of Santorini and protected from the strong winds by being trained into widely-spaced basket forms on the ground. The vine stocks are old, perhaps a century or more. The grape varieties used are at least 51% Assyrtico, a low yielding high quality and Phylloxera resistant grape, with a naturally high level of sugar and acidity, balanced with Athiri, a low acidity, low alcohol grape of ancient Greek origin, and Aidani, also of lower sugar and acidity. After harvest the grapes are air dried for 1 to 2 weeks, followed by a long, slow fermentation and barrel aging for at least 2 years. The result is a golden, amber coloured liquid with a complex taste of dried fruits and raisins with sweet spice and aromas of apricots and orange blossom. It is sweet and usually sipped as a dessert wine, and is required to be a minimum of 9% alcohol. My bottle is 12.5%.

It also came with a small velvet bag for the cork!

I opened this bottle in lockdown after 14 years, but Vinsanto is a wine that can age! It certainly reminds me of my adventurous holiday and the lovely sunsets of Santorini.



Carol Young



Recommended Viewing.

Many thanks to Mary C for 'Tips garddio yn ystod y lockdown' from the Welsh Whisperer, click the following link or paste into your browser: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=546441449643566>
As always remember to hold down the control key (ctrl) when clicking onto a link in a Word document.

The Primitivo

I return to the aforementioned Primitivo, my Lockdown tippie!

Masso Antico Primitivo from Salento, Italy via Asda at £9.00. Their website identifies the grape variety as Zinfandel with intense red colour and complex bouquet, characterized by fine aromas that go from mature fruit to spicy notes.

I did like the warm round fruit flavours, arguably a little sweeter than I would have liked, and I missed the spice which would have increased my enjoyment. Very smooth, wonderful mouth feel and very low tannins, good enough to drink on its own. Similar to some Rhone wines with their Grenache content.



While they are genetically the same grape, both clones of the Croatian grape Crljenak, the main difference between Primitivo and Zinfandel is to be found in the eventual style of both of these wines. With terroir and winemaking style affecting the finished product.

Primitivo comes from the 'heel' of Italy in a region called Puglia. There the grapes ripen under the hot Italian sun and create a wine that is well structured, hearty, rich with blackberry, violet and pepper notes.

Zinfandel however is distinctively Californian. Most Californian winemakers allow Zinfandel to ripen with generally high sugar levels, and a higher alcohol content which reduces acid and tannin to make the wine very smooth and sweet.

And so to Quiz (I bet you thought I had forgotten)

Because of the Sauvignon Blanc connection I have chosen an interactive one about NZ from the Decanter website, click onto this link: [NZ Quiz](#) and test your knowledge. For the record I got 8 out of 10.

So the NZ one was easy and you are full of confidence? Now try the one about Northern Italian grapes and wine (especially for the Judith & Roger G). Click onto: [N Italy Quiz](#).

What did you score?

As always hold the control key down whilst clicking when, like here, the link is in a Word document.



Feedback is always welcome, in fact needed to inspire the team of writers, Nick, Steve and myself.

Geoff Worthington