

Havant U3A Wine Appreciation Group

4th Lockdown Newsletter 8th May 2020

Hello everyone, I do hope that you're all well and managing through this lockdown period.

News

Instead of members news this week here is a few jokes to (hopefully) raise a smile!

The secret of enjoying a good bottle of wine:

1. Open the bottle to allow it to breathe.
2. If it doesn't look like it's breathing, give it mouth-to-mouth.

A friend of mine cooks by making up a recipe and adding a German white wine. It's an odd hock approach to cooking.

I'm a wine enthusiast. The more wine I drink, the more enthusiastic I get.

I went to a wine bar called 'The Light Brigade' recently. They certainly knew how to charge.

Every box of raisins is a tragic tale of grapes that could have been wine.

Study

The study topic to today is Portugal.

This is a very well known country and I'm sure everyone knows some of their wines, but the vast range of styles that they produce is perhaps less well known. We all know Port, Madeira, Mateus Rose and Vinho Verde but there are many different wines produced in the country. Additionally there have in recent years been significant improvements in the quality of wine making which give us fresher, lighter and cleaner wines than was previously produced. Additionally they are more inclined to promote their local grapes by showing them on the label.

Here's an [overview](#) of the wines of Portugal and the various and varied wine regions it has. From Vinho Verde in the north to Alentejo towards the south the regions are very varied and exciting and with over 250 native grape varieties they have the grapes to make wines that are different to other countries.

My personal experience is that Vinho Verde can be beautiful, fresh and zingy; Douro reds can be rich with bramble fruits, spice and chocolate; Douro whites can have aromas of melon and passionfruit with balancing acidity; Lisboa reds having plum blackberry and vanilla flavours and Dao red can be a bramble, plum and herb melange; Alentejo reds can have flavours of ripe red fruit and pudding spice. (yes, yes, I copied tasting notes from the retailers...but I have tried those wines!). Additionally, whilst on holiday in Portugal a few years back we had some truly excellent wines and were very impressed with the range of wines and the quality served in bars and restaurants for exceptionally good prices.

Here's a selection of videos which you may like to view. I could not find a single video which described all the various regions so instead I've included some that may whet your appetites and make you want to try some wines from Portugal.

This is a quite old series of interviews with some experts in the wine trade who tell us what they like about [Portugese wines](#). It may be old but their message is certainly still true.

These is few short videos which the trade body Wines Of Portugal produced in response to the Lockdown talking about specific wines, which may not be available in the UK but their regional message still applies:

This is about a [Vinho Verde](#) by Avelada. A good substitute for this wine would be the [Waitrose Azevedo Vinho Verde](#)

This is about an [Alentejo red wine](#), not sure what brand it is but this is probably a simliar wine from [Majestic Ramos Reserva](#)

This is about a wine from the [Dao region](#) where the wines can be drunk young but are also capable of ageing.

This is a slightly longer video about '[Talha wines](#)' which are wines made in traditional clay amphorae.

You might have noticed that there's nothing yet about Port wine. Here's a few links if you want to know more about Port:

The first is from [Winefolly](#) which is a good information site and it gives a very good overview.

The second is more detailed as a two-part video. Its a bit dry (unlike most port!) but covers a huge amount of detail

[Part 1](#) covering terroir, grapes and vinification

[Part 2](#) covering classification, ageing and port styles

Finally, here's a [quiz](#) about all Portuguese wines

Members Reports

Roger Green has been kind enough to share both an interesting vineyard story and a wine recommendation:

Your mention of Zinfandel [Geoff had shared a 'Lockdown Wine' recommendation in the last Newsletter] brought to mind a visit to a small Californian Vineyard where we sampled some decent stuff. The proprietor told the story of producing some zin. which they deemed undrinkable so wasn't bottled. A year later a barrel was discovered lurking in the inner recesses of the shed. they intended to pour it down the drain but some brave soul tried it and found it to be sublime! Generally I find much Californian Zin unimpressive and overpriced while some Primitivo can be very drinkable at a reasonable price.

We have just shared a bottle of Australian Dark Corner Durif Shiraz, part of a mixed case of Big Reds from Laithwaites and also available from the Sunday Times Wine Club. It went down very well with very evident berry fruit on nose and palate. There's an initial slight sweetness (dare I say that?) from the fruit but well controlled tannins making it very drinkable with or without food. Delicious! £9.99 in case quantities.

This Combination of [Durif \[also know as Petite Sirah in some countries\]](#) and Shiraz is also

employed in Black Stump which is a huge seller for Laithwaites. I generally buy from Laithwaites and find their descriptions pretty accurate although some of the sales blurbs are a bit fanciful.

Members, please keep the information coming, don't be shy !
Your special wine stories
Your precious bottles in your 'cellar'
Your wine recommendations

Lottery Win Wines

This is one of an occasional series about the world's greatest (and most expensive) wines. Ones which probably are only something we could only consider buying after a very big lottery win and even then might balk at the price !

The most expensive wine in the world is and has been for a long time a red Burgundy wine from the [Domaine de la Romanee-Conti](#) (know as DRC for short). The wine is named [Romanee Conti](#) after the domaine and the vineyard.

What is it?

The wine is produced from 100% pinot noir from the 1.8 hectare Romenee Conti vineyard. It is it's own Burgundy Grand Cru. This is a wine produced in very small quantities - around 3,500 bottles per year - and it's price is a reflection of both it's quality and it's rarity (by comparison Chateau Lafitte Rothschild in Bordeaux produces 15,000 to 25,000 *cases* of first growth wine annually). The wine is matured in barrel for some years after the vintage and the 2016 is, I think, the most recently bottled. It is very long-lived with drinking windows measured in decades; the 2004 is recommended as good drinking until 2050!

What does it taste like?

Here's one tasting note of the 2008:

Beautifully complex, with sweet red cherry/berry fruits and some nice ethereal green notes. There nice tension between the fruit sweetness and the green, spicy, savoury notes. The palate is concentrated with sweet, expressive fruit and some sterner savoury notes. Lovely red cherry and berry fruit, as well as good acidity. Fresh and lively with delicate yet firm spicy structure. Structured and profound, this needs time. 97/100

Here's another of the 2012 whilst it was still in barrel:

Incredible perfumed sweetness, plus ivy-clad stone-walls on a dewy dawn. I found this immediately more seductive, almost surprisingly so, than the Tâche. Under the fresh berries on the palate was spicy compote fruit, Turkish delight and soy notes. Very harmonious, knowing and dangerously enjoyable now. Continuing this year's theme, quite clearly The Marquise de Merteuil of the cast. (19.5)

How much?

Not a straightforward question since it sells for different prices depending on the vintage, but the average is around \$20,000 per bottle!

You could slum it and go for the 2004 at just \$13,500 per bottle maybe buy the superb 2016 at around \$18,000 or perhaps splash out on the recently auctioned 1945 at around \$558,000 for the bottle!

You'll enjoy your own £15 "very special occasion" wine even more now, won't you !!

Cheers, Nick Haward
hawardn@googlemail.com