

West Leicestershire u3a

Wine Appreciation Group meeting – Wednesday 22 November 2023



A day of celebration – Sue, Pat and Roger all celebrated their birthdays together with mention of the American 'Thanksgiving,' (not sure why).

The birthdays were marked with celebratory comestibles – cake, unusual cheese, even more unusual crisps, flags etc.

Our theme this week was 'South American wines'. As always some liberties were taken with the definition – is California in South America, or just southern America? Even more tenuous was South Africa which at least is on the Tropic of Capricorn.

Argentina seemed to us a good start, what with the beef being a major export. Your reporter obtained an Argentinian Malbec which is "Intense and Rich, bursting with flavours of raspberry and plum, the perfect partner with BBQ steak or spicy sausage". The rest of the label compounded the purple prose – bold palate, fresh plum and raspberry, aromas of black cherry, velvety soft.... well, you get the picture.

Now, contrary to widespread misinformation, relatively few of the bottles brought by our group for evaluation actually get finished, so we get to take home the residue to finish at home. This was something of a shame as ours was borderline undrinkable! With a strong spicy sausage – perhaps, add it to gravy, not really, drink it, hardly! The only real use we found was to steep raisins in it to add to a dessert! One really should not judge a wine by its label. It was vegan though!

Fortunately most of the other wines sampled were much better. The Californian Zinfandel was 'light, smooth, easy drinking'. The South African Chenin Blanc was deemed 'light and fruity'. An Argentinian Malbec 'Inverted Flamingo High Altitude' – where do they get these descriptions – was actually lovely – smooth and produced above 1000m.

A Camino de Suenos Icono blend entitled 'Long and Winding Road' – a blend of pretty well every grape produced in SA – was actually sublime – again, we should not judge by the label. That said the prize for the prettiest label went to a Chilean Carmenere which did go down well.

Still on the South American theme we sampled a Chilli Cheese.....

Comedy cheese of the night was a Wensleydale with Cranberries, Orange and Cointreau. *Other cheeses were available.*

Other offerings included lentil crisps for the clean living amongst us (most were left over for return to the donor) as well as Pigs in Blanket crisps – who knew? Salt and Vinegar

crisps had to be Chardonnay and Sea Salt while cheese and onion crisps were 'Hand-cooked Mature Cheddar and Onion'.

People wonder why we hanker for 'the good old days', remember the little blue bags of salt in Smith's crisps, (and why they were discontinued)?

Our meetings are developing as a social and conversational event, with the wines taking a reduced presence, so scoring can be a fraught process with members unwilling to break off their discussions. This does make it difficult for your reporter to gather the more scurrilous subjects to tell you about, although I did overhear 'Ethics in Local Government' – apparently there is an effort to impose some! Christmas lights turn on – does it? The plethora of TV offerings, we would need 25-hour days to take full advantage! However, many others were unheard for the reasons given. We did all raise a glass to our friends unable to attend these events.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 21st December 7.30pm at Paul and Sue's house. I can't remember what the theme is, but festive wear is a given.

We will bring and share, I will email all nearer the time to remind those who signed up and have forgotten what they agreed to!

John Dexter Nov23