

Event 1 Committee Favourites: Thursday 5th October 2023

Tasting White Wines

1 The Society's Cava Reserva Brut 2020 Spain. The Wine Society, 12%, £9.95 (Juliet Bailey)

A Wine Society Champion for 2023. The Sumarroca family have been making wine for several generations. Production is tightly managed: they use only free-run juice (the pressed juice is sold to other bodegas) and practise sustainable farming to preserve the vineyards for future generations. The wine is complex, weighty, fresh, full of the biscuity richness you'd hope for in good Cava' and at an very attractive price.

2 Chateau Ste Michelle Columbia Valley Riesling 2020 USA. The Wine Society, 12%, £10.50 (Andrew Johnstone)

An easy-drinking wine from the Columbia Valley in Washington state, the main region in the United States for riesling. Off-dry, but still drier than many rieslings. Chateau Ste Michelle is the oldest winery in Washington. It sources riesling from both warmer and cooler parts of the Columbia Valley which provides a range of flavours and styles. The warmer sites add more tropical flavours while the cooler sites bring more apple, pear and lemon-lime notes.

3.. Casillero Del Diablo Reserva Chardonnay Chile. Asda 13.5%, £8.00 (Lucy Crouch)

The Reserva range is a collection of premium wines, made with grapes selected from Chile's best wine valleys. This wine comes from vineyards located just a few kilometres from the Pacific Ocean. Constant sea breezes moderate the temperatures and result in remarkably fresh wines. The soils in the Limarí Valley lend an elegant mineral touch to the Chardonnay, while grapes from the Casablanca Valley contribute fruit flavours, such as peaches. A crisp Chardonnay packed with tropical fruit flavours and subtle hints of vanilla. Goes well with fish and seafood, vegetables and cheese. All the grapes are produced with 100% renewable energy.

Tasting Red Wines

4 Consensus Pinot Noir - Touriga Nacional 2019 Portugal. Evington's Wines, 14.5%, £13.79 (David Luyt)

The grapes are from Quinta de Porto Franco single estate, 60km north of Lisbon, and the wine is aged for 18 months in new French oak barrels. The wine shows intense and complex red fruit aromas on the nose. The palate is full bodied with ripe cassis and summer fruit flavours complemented by dried fruit and spice notes and a hint of vanilla. The finish is dry and long.

5 Eddy Naim Mago 2018 Lebanon. Naked Wines, 14% £15.99 (Angel Price) (Tony and Helena Abbey)

The name pays homage to the ancient wine buff, Mago, who wrote some of the earliest works on viticulture. This wine is big and bold though elegant and refined. Open it now and expect an elegant fruit bomb of a red, but as it ages, the lush oakiness will break onto centre stage and enter a delicious duet with all that fruit. The wine's intense dried fruit character leads one to think of strong creamy cheeses with a bloomy rind, like camembert. The bright acidity also helps cut through the plentiful fat in these types of cheeses. Also maybe a blue cheese would pair nicely.

6 Aragonia Garnacha Selección Especial, Campo de Borja 2018 Spain. Evington's Wines 14.5% £14.75. (Julian Osborne)

The Campo de Borja region is in Aragon in Spain, immediately south of the Pyrenees, away from both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The wine has a beautiful smokey vanilla leather nose with ripe red fruits, minerality and roasted spices. Generous in the mouth: broad, harmonious and structured with good acidity for a long finish. The wine, from old vines, has spent 6 months in French and American oak.

Dinner Wines

Percheron Chenin Blanc-Viognier, Western Cape 2022 South Africa. The Wine Society, 13%, £7.50 (Nick and Margaret Robinson)

In the farthest flung corners of the Cape lie gnarly, old, national treasures – ancient vines once farmed with Percheron draft horses, both now a rare breed. Percheron Chenin Blanc-Viognier celebrates this harmonious marriage of nature. Richly aromatic on the nose with vibrant white stone fruit flavours and a pure, balance finish. This is an accessible and popular Cape White Blend with chenin's tropical and fresh stone-fruit flavour lifted by a little aromatic viognier.

Vinedos Barrihuelo Rioja Crianza 2019 Spain. Sainsbury's, 13.5%, £8.00 – discounted to £6.00 (Nick and Margaret Robinson)

Founded in 1926, Bodegas Muriel is one of the largest family-owned and managed wineries in Rioja. The focus is on preserving the fresh characters of the fruit and enhancing these flavours with subtle vanilla character from 12 months aging in oak barrels. An elegant red with spicy bramble aromas and concentrated black fruit flavours combined with a long savoury finish. Serve with slow roast lamb or mature cheeses.

Event 2 November 2023 Presented by Erol Gaillard (Buffet & Tasting)

NOBLE GRAPES PART 1 Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot

1. Mill Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2022

100% Sauvignon Blanc Alcohol: 12.0% Wine Society - Price: £9.95

2. Cheverny, Domaine du Salvard 2022

Sauvignon Blanc 85% Chardonnay 15% Alcohol: 13.0% Wine Society -
Price: £11.95

3. Pouilly-Fumé, Domaine Seguin 2022

100% Sauvignon Blanc Alcohol: 13.0% 100% Wine Society - Price:
£17.00

4. Ignacio Recabarren Casablanca Merlot 2021

100% Merlot Alcohol: 13.0% Wine Society - Price: £17.00

5. Château de la Commanderie, Lalande-de-Pomerol 2019

75%Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cab Sauv Alcohol: 14.5%Wine Society -
Price:£17.00

6. The Liberator 'Le Merle Noir' Merlot, Paarl 2020

85% Merlot 15% Petit Verdot Alcohol: 14.5% Wine Society - Price:
£17.00

Mystery wine

60% Merlot + 40%?

Event 3: Wines for the Festive Season, November 2023

Presented by Lucy Crouch (Christmas dinner & Tasting)

Art Series 'The Kiss' Spumante – Duncan Murray Wines

£10.99

Welcome your guests this festive season with a Kiss!

Pale straw yellow in colour, with delicate orchard and citrus fruit aromas. Well balanced with a fine mousse and notes of lemon zest and green apple, culminating in a fruity, crisp finish. Serve with finger foods & dips.

Country: Italy

ABV: 11%

Louis Latour Mâcon-Lugny 2021/22 – Majestic Wines

£17.99

White Burgundy is a go-to for Chardonnay drinkers, and the Mâconnais in particular offers great value. Unlike the northern Côtes, the southern part of Burgundy doesn't have a formalised vineyard hierarchy system. So, the wines tend to be a bit more wallet-friendly. Not to mention, Lugny is one of the best regarded villages in the Mâcon, and Latour one of the most famous houses. Honeyed. Peachy. Crisp. A dream with salty finger foods perfect with your turkey or hams this festive season.

Country: France

ABV: 13.5%

Catarratto Canicatti (Agrigento, Sicily) 2022 – Duncan Murray Wines

£15.99

Catarratto is the main white variety on Sicily and has been established since before records began. It is mainly grown in the south and western parts of Sicily. The Canicatti winery has recently been rebuilt and with its new winemaker is making wines of outstanding quality. A clean fresh nose with nutty tones. A nicely balanced wine with a fullness of texture and then a deliciously zippy finish. Sicilian white wines of elegance and with very individual flavours are now becoming the norm. Colour intense, straw yellow with greenish highlights, bouquet initial impressions of evident, refined notes of apple, peach and ripe pear, followed by clear and seductive notes of acacia, broom and orange blossom flowers, minerals, almond and chamomile flowers. Taste savoury and vivid, it combines extraordinary freshness with a soft drinkability; rich, lively and enveloping, particularly persistent. Pairs well with fish, seafood, meat or vegetable dishes.

Country: Italy

ABV: 12.5%

4. **La Nina Malbec (Mendoza, Argentina) 2022 – Duncan Murray Wines** £12.29
 Typical Argentinean Malbec with intense purple color. Full aromas of cherries and plums. It has a captivating fruity flavor characteristic of this grape. Well-balanced and complex finish. The estate of Don Cristobal consists of 200 hectares of land, located in the surroundings of Mendoza city, with 145 hectares of planted vineyards. The production methods, either the work in the vineyards or in the winery, rely on the successfully proven combination of tradition and technological innovations. Pairs with all dishes such cheese, meat etc.
Country: Argentina
ABV: 13.5%
5. **Aristocratico Appassimento Salento, Primitivo, Negroamaro, 2021 – Duncan Murray Wines** £12.49
 Enoitalia is one of the leading family-owned wineries in Italy, established in 1986 by the Pizzolo Family: Giorgio (Managing Director) and his three brothers, Augusto, Giuliano and Floriano. The main production facility is based in Calmasino near Lake Garda and boasts one of the most modern facilities in Europe. The family continue to build on their success with investment in both people and equipment, ensuring quality is always the no. 1 priority. Deep ruby-purple with an expressive nose of ripe plums and raisin. Concentrated and rich in the mouth with a velvety smooth texture, this Appassimento shows developed notes of dried fig, spice and tobacco. Ideal with rich cheeses.
Country: Italy
ABV: 14.5%
6. **Beronia Rioja Gran Reserva, Tempranillo, 2015 – Majestic Wines** £17.99
 This was aged for 28 months in oak barrels and three years in the bottle before it was released. It's been mellowing and maturing for four years since – and this gives you that classic Gran Reserva character. This wine has been transformed over time into something incredibly rich, smooth and velvety. Vanilla, Black Fruit, Cedar, Cocoa, Dried Fruit, Red Fruit, Spice. Best decanted for an hour before serving with a roast dinner. This wine has won a gold medal at the 2023 IWSC for the 2015 vintage.
Country: Spain
ABV: 14.5%

Event 4 January 17th 2024: Riesling and Shiraz
Presented by Juliet Bailey & Dai Davies (Buffet & Tasting)

	Riesling	COST
1	Maximin Grunhauser Bruderberg Riesling Qba, Carl von Schubert, Mosel 2013 9% (Evington's) On the nose - green apple, hints of raspberries, elegant citric notes, and floral tones. On the palate - ripe citrus fruits and yellow peach. The slate minerality and defined acidity give it its typical Mosel character and balance. Best drunk as an aperitif.	£18.90
2	Dr. Loosen Dry Riesling, Mosel 2021 12% (Evington's) A harmonious, beautifully balanced Riesling, made in a dry style that is extraordinarily versatile with food. This wine shines with fine fruit, wonderful slate minerality and a pronounced raciness, which are all elements of a classic Mosel vintage.	£13.55
3	Lone Birch Yakima Valley Riesling 2020 12.4 % (Wine Society) Ripe lemon and peach aromas, with just a touch of sweetness to balance the refreshing acidity. The 4 th generation of the Miller family to farm this Washington State valley is doing so ever more sustainably	£11.50
4	Jim Barry The Lodge Hill Riesling Clare Valley 2022 12.5 % (Majestic) Jim Barry purchased the land for this vineyard in 1977. The plot sits high above sea-level. Grapes get concentrated sunlight and cool nights encouraging gradual, slow ripening. The process helps retain key characteristics of Riesling – fresh acidity and plenty of citrus. At harvest time, gentle pressing preserves those natural flavours. Dry, crisp, and full of lemon, lime and grapefruit.	£11.99

Other Riesling Wines

Chateau Ste Michelle Columbia Valley Dry Riesling (Wine society, Tesco)

Pegasus Bay 'Main Divide' Riesling 2019/20, Canterbury (Majestic)

Zapallares Reserva Riesling, Casablanca Valley 2019 (Evingtons)

	Shiraz/Syrah	COST
5	L'Aube Syrah, Collines Rhodaniennes, Domaine Courbis 2019 15% (Wine Society) Based in Chateaubourg, the Courbis family are amongst the best producers in Cornas and Saint-Joseph. 2019 was another excellent Rhône vintage, heat and drought were overriding factors however, the wines have acidity and therefore freshness. From a very steep, granitic slope just outside the Saint-Joseph appellation. Deeply coloured, flavours of blackberry and olive.	£14.95
6	Aconcagua Costa Syrah, Errazuriz 2017 13.5% (Evington's) The Errázuriz winery was founded by Don Maximiano Errázuriz in 1870. He was the first person to plant French grape varieties in Aconcagua valley (90 kms north of Santiago). 2017 vintage has a bright, intense, deep ruby red colour with violet hues. The nose reveals notes of blueberry, blackcurrant, violet, lavender, clove, nutmeg, and a hint of smoke. Refreshing acidity and lighter-than-expected body make for a wonderful red wine, that matches well with pork fillet and roasted vegetables.	£17.10
7	St Hallett Butchers Cart Shiraz 2020 14.5% (Evington's) This fabulous dark, spicy Australian Shiraz is a rich and luscious wine. On the nose it has blackberry and raspberry, with liquorice and spice. On the palate it is velvety with black cherry, dark chocolate and firm tannins.	£18.30
8	Penfolds "Max's" Shiraz-Cabernet, 2019 14.5% (Majestic) This wine, from Australia's leading winery, delivers generosity of fruit from the shiraz together with solid cabernet structure. Its 70% Shiraz 30% Cabernet Sauvignon mix gives a full-bodied, elegant wine, with notes of blueberry, mulberry, mocha and almond, smooth tannins, and a silky finish.	19.99

Other Shiraz wines

Two Hands Gnarly Dudes Shiraz 2022 14.4% (Majestic)

Kangarilla Road Shiraz 2020 McLaren Vale (Majestic)

On the night the favourite wines were number 1 and number 7

Event 5: Eastern Europe – 15 Feb 2024

Chosen by Julian Osborne & Erol Gaillard (Dinner & Tasting)

1. Geyerhof, Stockwerke. 2022. Austria – The Wine Society. £14.50

“Delicious, structural and juicy Austrian white, which shows refined, elegant fruit character in the 2022 vintage. Made biodynamically and with the usual generous texture and core of juicy peach, quince and zesty lime.” (TWS). The Grüner Veltliner grape used here is typically associated with flavours of pear and white pepper. 12.5% ABV.

2. Royal Tokaji, Nyulászó. 2018. Hungary – The Wine Society. £18.00

“Nyulászó is a First Growth vineyard in the village of Mád, Tokaji, where the clay-rich soils provide wines of power and breadth. It’s here where Furmint’s naturally racy acidity and orchard-fruit flavours are complemented by maturation in Hungarian oak barrels, providing a full, rich and spicy white that retains elegance and freshness.” (TWS). The wine has a nice mealiness, a good intensity and some richness; it’s pretty zingy. It really benefits from a good exposure to the air. 13.5% ABV.

3. Heumann, Kékfrankos Reserve. 2017. Hungary – The Wine Society. £14.50

From the sunny south of Hungary, this wine is named after its grape, Kékfrankos, also known as Blaufränkisch (‘blue from Franconia’, in northern Bavaria) or Lemberger/Limberger. The Heumann family have been making this wine in Villány from old vines since 1995, fermenting in steel tanks and aging in Hungarian barriques for 22 months. Jancis Robinson said in 2020: “High toned, lots of acidity and some balsamic notes. Very refreshing with light tannins. Just a bit inky but probably better value than many Austrian equivalents. Still very youthful for a four-year-old... 16/20”. It was a ‘Champion Wine’ at The Wine Society in 2023. 14.5% ABV.

4. Zlatan Otok. 2015. Croatia – Croatian Fine Wines. £22.00

The producer says: “This is a medium-body wine with recognizable fine tannins, pleasant alcohols and balanced acids. The nose is dominated by typical aromas like dark cherries, prunes and earthy notes, while the palate is full of dark berries and peppery spices. A real fresh Mediterranean treat.” This wine comes from an organic vineyard in Šibenik, on the coast just north of Split. Wines such as this made from Plavac Mali grapes in Croatia tend to be rich with a delicious fruit sweetness when young, this example has aged to a beautiful golden-red light, savoury and very tasty wine (that benefits from a nice piece of beef). 13.5%

5. Budureasca, Noble 5. 2019. Romania – Transylvanian wine. £18.95

Noble 5 is made of selected grapes from Budureasca's best plots in Dealu Mare. Blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Fetească Neagră. Vinification took place separately for each variety. For efficient extraction, the must had a classical fermentation-maceration for over 20 days. Then the wines were matured in French and Romanian oak barrels for 9 to 12 months, depending on the evolution of each until the perfect balance between structure and flavours. After this period, only the best barrels were selected to create Noble 5. It took 3 months for making the blend, during which the winemaker searched the harmony of the 5 varieties. Dark ruby in colour. The palate has an elegant structure and a fruity taste of black cherries and dried plums with fine notes of cinnamon, cloves and a minty sensation on the finish. It has an excellent potential for ageing and will reveal its true potential with time. 14.5% ABV.

6. Mystery Wine!

Legendary Dracula 555 Feteasca Neagra 2016/Romania, Transylvanian wine 14.5% £19.95

The anniversary of 555 years since the city of Bucharest was first mentioned in a written document that was signed by Vlad the Impaler, the Romanian king who later became known as Dracula.

Fetească Neagră (or Black Maiden in English) is an old native variety that originates from Moldova and Muntenia and is capable of producing some great wines of deep colour although the vine needs constant care. The later the grapes are picked the better the results and a constant trimming programme to arrest the vigour produce excellent results. Fetească Neagră is a bramble fruited red with hints of soft cherry. It can vary greatly depending on terroir and oak influence, some can be earthy while others can boast flavours of cappuccino and vanilla.

Intense red colour with a unique character of dry plums, wild berries and a bouquet of spice, with hints of vanilla from ageing in Romanian oak. Velvety texture and well balanced with rounded tannins, silky on the palate; with a long, smooth finish.

DINNER WINES

Totem, Château Vartely, Moldova 2022 – The Wine Society. £7.25

“A delightful rarity from Moldova. Light, crisp and dry white wine with aromas of rose petal and orange blossom. Similar to muscat on the nose but with a more crisp and precise palate. A hidden gem!” (TWS). Made from the Viorica grape, this wine is both light and intense, it has a lovely thread of sweet fruit running through it. It is a great hit with members of The Wine Society, who rank it at 4.9 out of 5 stars; it’s excellent value for money.

Domeniile Cuza, Moldova 2021 – Transylvanian wine. £10.00

Domeniile Cuza hand harvest Rara Neagra and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes from their clay soil vineyards in the Valul lui Traian wine region of Moldova an area with good humidity tempered by breezes coming in from the Black Sea and cool winds from the Prut River and its southern lakes. After slow pressing and fermentation, maturation occurs in different vessels before final assembly.

Ruby-red in colour, this wine shows intense aromas of berries, plums and black Intense aromas of berries, plums and black cherries, with slight hints of skin and sweet spices. The taste is dry, with firm and velvety tannins that balance the fresh acidity. The medium-long finish allows lingering fruitiness. 13% ABV.

Event 6: New Zealand Wines 21 March 2024

Chosen by Andrew Johnstone (Dinner & Tasting)

Tasting Wines

1. Prophet's Rock Riesling, Central Otago, 2021, 12.5%, £21.00 Wine Society

Wine Society: "A modern icon, this wine has become known as one of the great Rieslings of New Zealand. Highly ageworthy, this is a crisp but textured [wine], with citrus and peach notes and a long complex finish. Winemaker Paul Pujol's time at Kuentz-Bas in Alsace gave him wonderful insight into the joys of the Riesling grape and it's really paid off here."

Bonus ordering suggestion: Some of you may remember trying the Prophet's Rock Pinot Gris here about eighteen months ago... the 2021 vintage is just as nice as the 2020 (also from the Wine Society)!

2. Saint Clair 'Pioneer Block' Albariño, Marlborough, 2022, 12.5%, £16.99 Mix Six Price Majestic

Majestic: "[This] Albariño comes from Lower Dashwood in the Awatere Valley, where a maritime climate, flat terrain and gravel soils create favourable conditions for the Iberian grape to gradually reach peak ripeness. Aromas of apple blossom and mandarin mingle with hints of lemon, lime and white pepper. Try it with ceviche or sashimi."

3. Anna's Way Viognier, Marlborough, 2022, 13.5%, £10.99 Mix Six Price Majestic

Majestic: "Marlborough has long been famed for excellent Sauvignon Blanc. But pioneering winemaker Louis Vavasour, who grew up on Marlborough vineyards, has discovered that the long sunshine hours also create the perfect conditions for complex, fruity Viognier. Expect flavours of ripe apricot, papaya and allspice, with a gentle stroke of acidity. Try this with roast pork and apple sauce."

Bonus ordering suggestion: Had it been in stock before this week, I certainly would have presented the Grove Mill Chardonnay. The Sauvignon Blanc (which was a table wine at a recent tasting) is also well worth a taste.

4. Grove Mill Pinot Noir, Marlborough, 2022, 13.5%, £12.95 Wine Society

Wine Society: "Stylistically a nod to Europe but with the polish and consistency that sets New Zealand apart. This pinot has juicy black-cherry and raspberry flavours, excellent tannin structure and a twist of spice on the finish."

5. Te Mata Estate Syrah, Hawke's Bay, 2021, 13%, £15.99 Mix Six Price Majestic

Majestic: "Te Mata is the oldest winery in New Zealand, but that doesn't mean they rest on their prestige. They continue to set a standard in new technique and classic flavour. Case in point: this delicious wine. Strong with a long and powerful finish, it's full of red-fruit, vanilla and allspice flavours. Sublime with grilled beef."

6. Craggy Range 'Te Kahu', Hawke's Bay, 2020, 14%, £23.99 Mix Six Price Majestic

Majestic: "Gimblett Gravels is one of New Zealand's premier wine-growing regions. Te Kahu means "the cloak" and takes its name from the cloak of mist that covers the hills around the winery. Discover notes of cassis, black olive, dried tobacco and hints of roasted hazelnut. It's a perfect example of the premium Bordeaux blends New Zealand is capable of, so drink this to elevate your Sunday roast lamb." (69% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot, 4% Malbec)

Table Wines

Stoneburn Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, 2023, 12%, £9.95 Wine Society

Wine Society: "Made for us by family winery Hunter's, this is attractive and elegant on the nose, with sappy gooseberry and citrus notes and a smooth, refreshing palate. A favourite of so many members for years now, this is a perfect representation of how good inexpensive Marlborough Sauvignon can be."

Oyster Bay Merlot, Hawke's Bay, 2021, 14%, £11.50 Sainsbury's (currently on offer 25% off six bottles)

From the producer: "Aged in French oak barriques to impart complexity, the heroes in our Oyster Bay Merlot are always freshness of ripe fruit, spice and soft tannins on the palate. Bright cherry aromas and rich plum with subtle spice and a soft lingering texture."

Event 7: South Africa Thursday 18th April 2024

Presented by Oliver March of Evington's (Dinner & Tasting)

Tasting Wines

Raka Sauvignon Blanc, Western Cape, South Africa 2022 (13% Vol) - All grapes were sorted before being crushed directly into the press where skin contact was allowed for 8 hours. Pure yeast cultures were inoculated in the juice after pressing in order to optimize the fermentation process at around 16 degrees Celsius. Extended lees contact was allowed after fermentation and the wine was allowed to naturally clarify under gravity prior to filtering and bottling. Aromas of grapefruit, citrus and a touch of gooseberries - these characteristics follow through to the palate and are complemented by mineral tones and a crisp finish.

Bellingham Bernard Series Old Vine Chenin Blanc, Stellenbosch, South Africa 2021 (13.5% Vol) - The grapes for this distinctive Old Vine Chenin Blanc were hand-picked from characterful and genuinely unique old bush vines specifically blended from Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Paarl and Darling. It features vibrant tropical fruit flavours with hints of honey and oak spice on the finish.

Constantia Glen Two Sauvignon - Semillon, Constantia, South Africa 2020 (14% Vol) - A classy example of this blend with sauvignon giving freshness, semillon giving body and the oak ageing pulling the two together. Pungent and exuberant notes of grapefruit, oak and tropical fruit flavours with a well-integrated minerality make a great wine. One of 8 wineries in Constantia, near Cape Town – an area with a rich viticultural history which is widely considered one of the country's finest for producing premium wine.

Raka Quinary, Western Cape, South Africa 2020 (14% Vol) - 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 10% Malbec and 4% Petit Verdot. All grapes were hand-picked in small lug boxes pre-cooled to 5°C and sorted twice before a pure yeast culture was inoculated. The juice was pumped over the skins 3-5 times per day for 5 days. Once fermentation was complete, the wine was drained of the primary lees and transferred to a resting tank. Malolactic fermentation and a brief settling period preceded the wine to a combination of 225 litre barrels of French oak (25% first fill, the rest second third and fourth fill.) The wine spent between 12- 14 months in barrel before bottling.

Bellingham Bernard Series Bush Vine Pinotage, Stellenbosch, South Africa 2020 (14% Vol) - The grapes used to make this Pinotage come from a 24-year-old single block of dry-land bush vines, where the vines grow in weathered granite soils with small yields. The best bunches were individually selected in the vineyard followed by second berry selection and sorting at the cellar. Fermented in open French oak barrels with daily punch downs. After malolactic fermentation in barrels, 50% of the wine was matured in new French oak and 50% in second fill barrels for a period of 12 months.

Jordan The Long Fuse Cabernet Sauvignon, Stellenbosch, South Africa 2020 (13.5% Vol) - Progressive techniques such as overhead fermenters, pump-overs, and gravity flow allow for the extraction of fully developed flavours and soft ripe tannins without compensating the tension and elegance captured from the various cabernet slopes. Here especially, the climate plays a significant role to allow great fruit expression and classic essences of cedar, brambles, and toasted tobacco. Fermented in overhead retort-shaped, stainless-steel fermenters. Pump-overs were done three times daily during fermentation. Selected tanks received extended maceration on the skins after fermentation. The use of gravity and gentle pressing ensures full-flavoured wines with soft, balanced tannins. The wine was racked into barrels where it underwent malolactic fermentation. After further racking it spent 18 months in new and used French oak barrels, before being lightly filtered prior to bottling.

Table Wines

Oude Kaap Reserve Shiraz, Western Cape, South Africa 2022 (14% Vol) - An excellent 'entry level' Shiraz which shows blackberries, pepper and spice set against modest oak and soft, ripe tannins. A good balance of acidity and fruit leads to a pleasant finish.

Boschendal 'The Pavillion' Chenin Blanc, Stellenbosch, South Africa 2022 (12.5% Vol) - This Chenin Blanc offers exotic tropical fruit aromas on the nose. A fruity yet dry wine with delicious citrus and mango flavours on the palate, which culminates in a fresh sharp finish.

Event 8: Wines of the Loire Valley 16th May 2024

Selected by Tim Hobbs (Buffet & Tasting)

Wines from the Val de Loire are usually moderately priced and excellent value for money, making the Loire a very appealing and approachable *appellation* for an early summer tasting. I hope that you will all enjoy this selection, both this evening and throughout the summer.

WHITE WINES

1 Crémant de Loire, Langlois-Chateau Classique brut, NV Majestic, £16.99

Crémant de Loire is made from the region's most-planted white grape, Chenin Blanc, using the same traditional method as champagne. The 130-year old family firm Langlois-Chateau has been owned since the 1970s by Bollinger, and their Classique Brut is aged for a minimum of 24 months, creating a delicious complexity. Aromas of quince, peach and grapefruit lead to a long, fresh finish. (12.5%)

2 Touraine Olivier Dubois, Cuvée Prestige, 2022 Majestic, £9.99

Tours lies roughly in the centre of the wine-producing area of the Loire Valley, and the greater Touraine region includes three renowned red-wine *appellations* (Chinon, Bourgueil, and St Nicolas de Bourgueil), which we will taste later. It also produces a host of zesty sauvignon blanc whites, the best of which offer extremely good value. The back label tells us to expect a refreshing wine with 'crisp flavours of lime, gooseberry and green apples', while a review in *Decanter* magazine states 'This is exactly what Touraine Sauvignon should be: refreshing, zesty, aromatic – and all for under a tenner. The palate is unpretentious with grassy and gooseberry characters and enough depth to leave you wanting more. The perfect wine to have on standby in your fridge.' (12.5%)

3 Menetou-Salon Morogues, Domaine Pellé, 2022 Wine Society, £16.00

The rapidly-expanding *appellation* of Menetou-Salon lies some 30 miles west of Sancerre in the centre of France. Its sauvignon blanc shares its better-known neighbour's concentration of flavour, but not its inflated prices. The Wine Society praise the Pellé family's wines as 'always understated and beautifully made', and describe a Loire sauvignon blanc like this with a local goat's cheese as a delight, and one of the best food and wine pairings that they can recommend. (13%)

4 Coteaux du Giennois, Domaine de Villargeau, 2022 Wine Society, £11.50

The small Coteaux du Giennois *appellation* extends from the northern border of Pouilly-Fumé over just 202 hectares on the right bank of the Loire, south-east of Orléans. Its sauvignon blancs share the purity, flintiness and crisp mineral finish of its neighbours in Pouilly-Fumé and Sancerre, at half the price. Delicious as an apéritif or with grilled trout and the local goat's cheese. (13.5%)

5 Sancerre, Domaine Jean-Paul Balland, 2022 Evington's Wines, £24.65

Sancerre, and its neighbour Pouilly-Fumé, are the two easternmost *appellations* of the Loire Valley. Jean-Pierre Balland's vines occupy 24 hectares to the west of Sancerre, in the village of Bué, which Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson reckon to be the finest in the *appellation*. Domaine Balland's website points to 'a honeyed sweetness' on the nose, whilst Evington's describe 'fruity aromatic scents of white peach, citrus fruits, and shades of white flowers'. On the palate, Evington's detect 'an elegant minerality, and rich and delicate acidity', whilst the Domaine add in 'refreshing notes of fresh almond'. (14%)

RED WINES

6 Chinon, The Society's Chinon, 2022 Wine Society, £9.95

Made specifically for The Wine Society by Maison Bougrier, this deeply coloured cabernet franc has aromas and flavours of red and black fruits, a pleasant medium length on the palate, and a clean, juicy finish. It captures the fresh 'brasserie' style of contemporary cabernet franc, and will pair well with classic bistro-style foods like rotisserie chicken, rosemary-scented lamb cutlets, or good charcuterie and cheese. The Society recommends chilling it slightly to enjoy it at its best. (13%)

7 Saumur-Champigny, Clos des Cordeliers, Cuvée Tradition, 2021 Wine Society, £12.95

The town of Saumur, a short distance downstream from Chinon and Bourgeuil, is traditionally the centre of the Loire Valley's production of sparkling wine, including the Crémant de Loire with which we began this evening's tasting. But its still red wines, particularly those from the small enclave of Saumur-Champigny, are a deliciously refreshing expression of the cabernet franc grape. This particular example has a pleasing aroma of wild raspberry, ripe cherry, white pepper, and dried violets. (12.5%)

8 Saint-Nicolas-de-Bourgeuil, Laurent Mabileau, 2022 Majestic, £13.99

Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson suggest that, in outstandingly ripe years (2022 was a good example), the red wine produced in Chinon and Bourgeuil has the substance and structure to mature for a decade, and that 'for its quality it is absurdly undervalued'. Laurent Mabileau have been producing wines since 1985 in the right-bank *appellation* of Saint-Nicolas-de-Bourgeuil, across the river from Chinon. Majestic's tasting note suggests that, with notes of raspberry and wild strawberries, and silky tannins, this would be a great pairing for cured meats, grilled meats, or cheese. (13%)

And finally ...

A Wine Society note on food pairings and recent Loire vintages:

For **white wines**, "2021 was a lighter, fresher vintage than its immediate predecessors, producing a more classic style, albeit with greater purity than vintages of old. Look to 2019, 2020 and 2022 for riper styles with more generous fruit ... which makes them ... better suited to prepared fish dishes than to the iodine freshness of shellfish and crustaceans".

For **red wines**, "Loire cabernet francs are a great match for autumnal flavours, especially mushrooms and root vegetables, as well as lamb, cold beef, even meatier fish; pinot noir can be a good option for fish too, as well as game birds, poultry and fungi".

Event 9: Beaujolais Wines 20th June 2024

**Presented by Dan Farrell-Wright of Wickhams Wine Merchants
(Dinner & Tasting)**

Tasting wines

Domaine bel Avenir, "La Perle Blanche" Beaujolais Blanc 2022

Famille Descombe, "Pierre Dorées" Beaujolais Blanc 2022

Domaine bel Avenir, "Les Capitans" Juliéna 2020

Domaine les Fournelles, Côte de Brouilly 2022

Clos du Vieux Bourg, "Croix Penet" Régnié 2021

Domaine de Mont Joly, "La Pointe" Beaujolais-Villages 2018

Dinner wines

Clos du Vieux Bourg, Beaujolais Blanc 2020

Clos du Vieux Bourg, "Cinque Terres" Morgon 2020