

Forum Wine Report for October 2022

In October we met at Roger Stanyon's house where, as a bonus, Roger presented a small exhibition of his grandfather's paintings. Thank you Roger for this lovely display. We then settled to the business of the day, blind tastings of six wines, three from Germany and three from Austria. The results were very interesting. We started with a pair of Rieslings, a **Pfalz Sturmwolken Riesling 2021** (11% from Sainsburys costing £7.50) from Germany, then a **Niederosterreich Riesling 2021** (12.5% also from Sainsburys costing £9.50) from Austria. After some discussion the Austrian wine was chosen unanimously as the better. The Pfalz surprised those who expected a bland, sweet wine by having more depth and less sweetness, but lacked the longer finish of the Niederosterreich which also had mineral undertones which added to the experience. One nil to Austria.

Moving on, we compared a second pair of white wines: from Germany came a **Weibburgunder 2021** (12.5% from M&S costing £9.50), based on the Pinot Blanc grape which belied its price tag by its sheer blandness ('Is that it?' was one comment). By contrast the Austrian **Niederosterreich Gruner Veltliner Dry** (12.5% from Lidl at only £5.99) received a thumbs up. Based on the most popular Austrian grape, the Gruner Veltliner, with its flavours of green pepper and lime, was an absolute steal, reminding the group of a top-notch Sauvignon Blanc. One up for Lidl and an unassailable lead for Austria over its more prolific neighbour.

Roger was quite impressed by both our reds, the German **Rheinhessen Pinot Noir 2021** (12% from Sainsburys at £7.00) surprising us with its lightness - 'a charming, medium-bodied wine that has a delightful fruitiness with balanced acidity and low tannins' as the label put it; it was, however, again put in the shade by its Austrian equivalent, the **Zweighelt 2019** (13% also from Sainsburys and a mere £6.00) featuring the lesser-known Zweighelt grape, now Austria's most-planted red grape. Smooth and full-bodied this would go well with a roast dinner and represented fantastic value at this price. So the contest ended 3-0 and gave food for thought. The disgrace of the 'antifreeze' years has clearly driven the Austrians to prioritise quality and there are some absolute bargain wines out there.

The November meeting will take place at Stella and John's on Tuesday 18th October, but as I mentioned last month, membership of the group is currently at its maximum. Anyone wishing to be placed on the waiting list should contact me at simontimothymeacham@gmail.com.

Tim Meacham (Convenor).