

Forum Wine Report August 2023

For a change we looked eastwards to taste a few wines from outlying European countries trying to break in on the France/Germany/Italy monopoly. Our six wines were all supplied by Majestic in Darlington: the responses of the group were mixed!

For our furthest-flung example we headed for Georgia. We tasted their **Tbilvino Quevris Rkatsiteli Wine 2021**: (12.5% and costing £11.99). This example of the home favourite Rkatsiteli, claiming to combine 'rich Apricot flavours, alongside notes of beeswax and walnuts' was appreciated by two members but rejected by a majority ('not very nice'; 'what is that?' are typical responses), so we moved quickly to Romania. Here the undated **Incanta Chardonnay Vin Varietal** (again 12.5% but £7.99) found much more favour ('that's more like it!'); the label claimed this was 'incredibly fruity' and the consensus was that 'fruity' was right. Despite a feeling that the finish tailed off a little, this was perhaps the discovery of the day. The less said about Hungary's **Royal Tokaji Dry Furmint 2021** (13% and £10.99) the better (although Phil liked its off-beat dry Furmint flavour!) but our final white was again a success. Slovenia's **Krasno Pinot Bianco 2021 (13.5% and £8.99)** confirmed that as with the Incanta above, lowish prices do not mean lack of quality. This Pinot Bianco from the Brda region was very drinkable and could give neighbouring Italy a run for her money.

We finished with two reds: the **Solomonar Reserve** (14% and £8.99) boasted Romania's homegrown Feteasca Neagra grape, but even with the backing of the more traditional Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot grapes this lacked distinction and was seen as second best to the cheaper and more basic Slovenian Merlot, our **Colliano Estate Bottled Merlot 2021** (13.5% and £11.99). Again from Brda, the fruity bouquet suggested ripe cherries and raspberries and was the unanimous choice of our red experts. This was an interesting session but did not perhaps suggest that our 'Big 4' European producers have much to fear yet from these relative newcomers. We will continue to monitor the situation.

For our September meeting we will be visiting the Ryedale Vineyard in Yorkshire, which should be different!

Tim Meacham.