

## Forum Report for Wine Tasting Group January 2020

As ever our Christmas meeting (also celebrating the fourth anniversary of the group) proved a highlight despite being held over into early January. Thanks to Stella and John for their usual splendid hospitality.

As a number of the group have joined over the last couple of years, the Convenor rather unfairly repeated the 2016 and 2017 quizzes rather than searching out new festive questions – not that you would have known from the scores, particularly those of the long-term members!

The wines themselves got off to a good start. For the third month running the 25% discount at Sainsburys proved irresistible and our three whites and three reds were all sourced from there. We started with a sparkling wine, the New Zealand ‘Oyster Bay Sparkling Brut’ (12% and £9.00) which found great favour. One member’s comment was ‘who would pay £30 for a champagne rather than £9 for this delicious Chardonnay.’ The group agreed wholeheartedly. For our first still white we moved to a French (Languedoc) variety, the ‘Baron De Guers Picpoul de Pinet (13% and £7.00). This ‘nicely made, fresh mineral wine with juicy lemon character’ kept up the good work, refreshing and offering a nice finish. There was general surprise at the reasonable price for this quality of wine. A pleasingly reasonable trio of whites was completed by an Italian number, the ‘Verdicchio Dei Castelli Di Jesi 2018’ (13.5% and £6.00) which was a more complex wine than the first two. Apparently the Visigoths drank a version of this wine as they marched on Rome in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. While our group quite liked it, it was ‘less special than the other whites’.

As with the whites we started the reds with a sparkling variety, the Australian ‘Bortoli Woodfired Heathcote Sparkling Shiraz’ (strong at 13.7% and £9.00). This Shiraz-based wine was very full-bodied (too much so, according to most of us!). Its claim to be ‘soft, textural and very tempting’ was rejected by all. Quickly moving on, we continued our globe-trotting with a very nice Spanish red, a ‘CVNE Ribera Del Duero 2018’ (14% and £10.00), made 100% from the Tempranillo grape. Roger, our red wine expert, expressed approval, and the other red-drinkers agreed, although we were slightly puzzled by the label’s claim to be a ‘rustic wine with grippy hedgerow fruit’. By comparison the third red, also from Spain, was a multi-grape concoction, the ‘Priorat 2017’ (14.5% and £10.00), ‘a rich red with heady aromas of black fruits’, the strongest of the day by some way. The group complimented it for its smoothness and long finish, bookending our fine selection of wines very well; thanks to Sainsbury’s for offering the six for a total of £38.25 after 25% discount!

The next meeting will feature Lidl’s ‘Only while they Last’ selection, a genuine new year sale of wines from some interesting countries and grape varieties. This will be on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February at 3.00 pm. Further details from Tim Meacham.