

Forum Wine Report for July 2024. Tim Meacham

For the last eight years July has seen our annual sparkling wine session. As ever this was hosted by Stella and John although for 2024 the far-from-great summer weather meant that we stayed indoors throughout, not that that dampened our spirits. We maintained one of our traditions ('no Prosecco or Cava'), but thanks to Aldi not our largely price-based tradition ('no champagne')!

We kicked off with a couple of interesting starters, both of which were reasonable but not particularly inspiring. I had high hopes for the **Italian Friuli Ribolla Gialla Brut** (12% and £9.99 down from £13.99 from Majestic), especially as the Ribolla grape dates back to Roman times and was backed by a Denominazione Di Origine Controllata guarantee. Its claim to present 'a full-flavoured fruity sparkling wine with bright acidity' was questioned, with 'weak and watery' the general opinion. We should perhaps have noticed the label's other claim ('the next best thing to Prosecco')! Nor was our second sparkler, the French **Silver Moki Sauvignon Blanc 2022** (12% and £8.75 from Sainsburys) any better received: it may have been 'Shimmering like a diamond in the sea' (label), but to us it lacked body and any real finish.

Things quickly improved as we returned to Majestic for their trademark Spanish **Guv'nor Sparkling Wine** (12% and £7.49 down from £9.99) which has long been a group favourite. Its simple label may suggest a modest wine, but as with the other 'Guv'nor' varieties this is deceptive. Its claim to combine flavour and oomph by 'breaking away from restrictive regional rules' is more than fair. The wine tingles on the tongue, the bubbles linger and so does the aftertaste. All were smiling as we then brought out ex-member Guy's recommendation from that original 2018 session, a **Cremant De Loire Rose** (12.5% and £11.50 from Sainsburys). This again found favour and can be recommended for its deep fizz and mineral flavours, but general opinion was that the Guv'nor was better.

There were still two to go. Again I believed I had found something special in Majestic's **Bouvet Saphir Saumur Brut 2021**

(12.5% and £14.99 down from £16.99), claiming to be 'really classy fizz .. the savvy drinker's first choice alternative to Champagne', but, despite

the obvious quality, the extra dryness here was not appreciated by a number of the group. This was even more so when I introduced our final bottle, Aldi's **Charles Du Roy Champagne** (12% and a mere £11.99!): 'I don't really like Champagne'; 'can't we have something a bit sweeter?'. So in a 'game of three thirds' it was the middle third that won the day. We would recommend the Guv'nor and any Cremant de Loire (but if you are facing a family wedding and are feeling a bit stretched, I would put in a good word for the - to me at least - very drinkable Aldi Champagne at a bargain 11.99 per bottle). Ah well, food for thought ahead of next summer's fizzy choices!

In August we are visiting the Yorkshire Heart vineyard near Knaresborough; a report will follow!