

## February Forum 2026 Wine Report.

We met at our house for our first wine meeting of 2026, tasting a group of French wines currently on sale at Lidl. Instead of our regular multi-choice wine quiz we made use of the “Big Sip Game” kindly donated by a fellow u3a member. This proved to be great fun, if a little more daunting than most of my quizzes!

Following mixed experiences with this particular wine recently we gave a second chance to Lidl’s **Cremant de Loire Brut** (£8.99 and 12%) which very much redeemed itself after a less than satisfactory tasting last year. This time all the creamy fizz was present and, even without the smoked salmon recommended as an accompaniment, approval was unanimous. Our first still wine continued the good start. Our **Ventoux Blanc 2024**, a Viognier-based number from Vaucluse (£5.99 and 13%), fully earned its review as “Lidl’s best sub-£7 French white”, marrying a citrusy bouquet with an appealing mineral finish; “bl\*\*dy marvellous”, to quote a succinct second review. By contrast, the expected star performer, a **Chablis 2023** (£14.95 and 12.5%) disappointed rather with its lack of finish. Again the review got it right: “Not as much depth as some Chablis I have tried.” The Ventoux wine certainly appealed more despite the price difference.

We moved on to try a **Cotes de Provence Rose 2023** (£8.99 and 13%), a light-coloured blend of Cinsault, Shiraz, Grenache and Mourvedre grapes which got a more mixed reception. One review curiously spoke of it as “Guava, Passion Fruit, Peach & Apricot, Honey, Gooseberry and Grass on the nose; not particularly memorable.” While accepting the main judgement here, most of us failed to detect the mouth-watering flavours suggested. That left the two reds, both of which helped improve the situation: our Grenache-based blend, the **Cotes du Rhone 2022** (£5.29 and 13%) was a snip at the price, medium-bodied and with a pleasant long finish, but the absolute pick of the pair was the **Cuvee de Brieu 2024** (£8.49 and 13.5% from the Pays D’Oc in SW France), a Syrah-based product which really lived up to its promise of being “rounded and very smooth, with just a touch of tannin”. Even the anti-red brigade acknowledged that this was a very good wine: perhaps the bargain of the day.

On the whole Lidl continues to supply good wines at very acceptable prices. It was a shame about the Chablis.

Tim Meacham.