

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
April 2024 Tasting
The Wines of Georgia
Presented by Richard and Eka of Taste of Georgia

This month we were delighted to welcome Richard and Eka, who together run Taste of Georgia. We valued the chance to be able to explore this Eastern European region and its wines which are the product of 8000 years of unbroken wine-making heritage. Nevertheless, it's a region which may well be unfamiliar to some of our members. So it was a great opportunity to come along and taste some wines from their portfolio. Taste of Georgia is now in its sixth year and continues to expand its range in line with the growing interest in the both the wines of Georgia and in Georgia itself as an award-winning tourist destination. As well as showing wines, they set out to improve awareness of Georgia, its culture and customs. Prices quoted for the wines below were at a discount for Members.

So it was with great anticipation that Members approached their first wine of the evening, introduced by Yorkshire-born Richard and supported by Georgia-born Eka. This was a **Wine Man Tsinandali Kakheti East Georgia 2020** [13%, £12.60], a very dry white wine made from a blend of two indigenous grape varieties - Rkatsiteli and Mtsvane [85/15%]. This light straw-coloured wine with a light citrusy nose had distinctive citrus and freshly roasted tobacco notes on the palate - a pleasant easy drinking wine.

It was followed by a 100% Mtsvane in a **Shumi Kakhuri Mtsvane Kakheti East Georgia 2020** [13.5%, £12.60] that was slightly off-dry. This wine had a greenish-straw tinge with floral aromas. On the palate there were notes of fresh apple, pear and citrus with light mineral undertones - another pleasant white with slightly more body than the first. The next two white wines had spent time with skins/pips and vine stalk contact so had an amber hue and should not be over-chilled to serve.

Our first was a blend of 30/70% Georgian grapes in a **Baia's Tsitska, Tsolikauri Imereti West Georgia 2022** [13.5%, £20.70]. This light amber-hued wine had notes of wild pear, green apple, hazelnuts and apricot. It had medium to high acidity and light tannins on the palate with a touch of honey on the finish.

Its partner was a **Shumi Iberiuli Khikhvi Kakheti East Georgia 2020** [14%, £19.80] that had a more pronounced amber hue. There were aromas of white cherry, peach and ripe pears on the nose and on the palate this mildly tannic wine was well balanced with a lingering honeyed finish. These two wines had been made in traditional clay vats - Qvervi, kept 'submerged' in cellar floors - ideal temperature control. These vats are expensive to make hence the increased price. Many members found these wines quite acceptable and pleasant; some did not!

After a short break we were introduced to Georgia's red wines. Our first was a **Wine Man Saperavi Kakheti East Georgia 2020** [12%, £12.60]. Saperavi is a grape of Georgian origins with dark red skins and flesh giving it a dark pomegranate seeds colour. The wine had a strongly developed, complex bouquet and on the palate there were flavours of black cherry, cassis, some pepper and hints of dark chocolate and vanilla. It was most acceptable!

As was the next red wine - a **Shumi Mukuzani Kakheti East Georgia 2021** [13%, £13.50] again from 100% Saperavi, with a similar dark ruby colour and characterised with black and red cherry notes, echoing the previous wine. It had a long aftertaste and a pleasant astringency. Another very acceptable red!

Our next wine was biodynamic - a **Shumi Iberiuli Biodynamic Saperavi Kakheti East Georgia 2018** [13%, £23.40] that had the same dark ruby colour with carnation and tobacco aromas. On the palate there were red and blackberry flavours, a silky structure on a full body and pronounced tannins that needed time to soften; wine that would develop nicely with keeping.

Our last wine was an unusual semi-sweet red - a **Shumi Kindzmarauli Kakheti East Georgia 2020** [11% £??]. Late picked Saperavi grapes have naturally developed semi-sweet notes giving this wine

a taste of ripe fruits - ripe cherries, strawberries, dried figs and cassis. It is not a wine for laying down though, so drink young as an accompaniment to char-grilled, caramelised food, especially pork! A fascinating end to a most interesting tasting!

Members' grateful thanks go to Richard and Eka for their journey to us from East Dulwich where they have their Georgian Restaurant and Wine Shop - Kartuli. We enjoyed their informative and well-illustrated presentation of things Georgian related to wine making and history.