

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
March 2024 Tasting
The Wines of Southern Italy
Presented by Brian Davis, Association of Wine Educators

It's been many years since we welcomed Brian Davis to our Society, so it was great to have him back. Brian is a specialist Wine Educator who nurtured his passion for wines whilst entertaining clients in the chemical industry. He passed his WSET Diploma in 1999 and regularly runs wine tasting events across Surrey and Berkshire. He undertakes a wide range of corporate and private tastings, wine clubs, cruise lecturing, workshops and hotel staff training.

Some 25 years ago most of the grapes grown in Southern Italy and Sicily went north to make Vermouth until they realised that their indigenous grape varieties warranted their attention to make decent table wine. Now these varieties make excellent wine at sensible prices compared to the likes of Piemonte and Chianti classics. Italy has approximately 1000 grape varieties and many of these are being rediscovered and available through specialist merchants. For our tasting there were the usual suspects plus two grapes that may not be so well-known, one from Sicily and one from Puglia.

Our evening began with a '**Janare' La Guardiense Falanghina Campania 2022** [The Wine Society, 13.5%, £12.95], made using an ancient Italian grape, possibly of Greek origin, by the Benevento Cooperative. This gold coloured wine had a delicious tangy freshness with citrus fruit aromas on the nose. In the mouth it was dry and refreshing, with flavours of nectarine and tangerine. It would make a good aperitif but also had sufficient weight to work well with a creamy pasta.

It was followed by a **Surani Pietrataccia Fiano Salento Puglia 2022** [Majestic, 13%, £11.99] that had a pale yellow colour with golden hues. On the nose there was a delightful bouquet of fruity aromas with notes of apple and citrus. This complex white wine was crisp and fresh on the palate and had balanced acidity accompanied by floral flavours, with hints of honey and nuts.

A **Feudo San Gregorio Greco Di Tufo Campania 2022** [Majestic, 12.5%, £16.99] was our final white wine and is one of the region's most prestigious. The vines thrive on the region's volcanic soils giving the wine a delicious minerality. Eight months on its lees provided extra texture. Citrusy aromas with hints of almonds predominated on the nose whilst on the palate it was full of ripe fruits - fresh and elegant in the mouth.

The reds started with a **Valloné Susumaniello Salento 2020** [The Wine Society, 13.5%, £9.50] made from another ancient grape which had almost disappeared but recently reintroduced on the Valloné estate. It had a cherry red colour with aromas of red fruits. The palate continued the cherry theme with hints of black tea and spice on the finish.

Next, we tasted the main native grape of Salento in a **Paolo Leo Orfeo Negroamaro Puglia 2021** [Caviste, 14.5%, £15.95] that a rich garnet colour with crimson hues and a bold and flavourful aroma of dark cherry, ripe blackberries and blueberries with hints of liquorice, vanilla and dark chocolate. This wine was full and velvety in the mouth accompanied by enduring tannins and fresh acidity. The finish was full of black fruits and exotic spices.

We moved area for the next wine - for a **Eremo San Quirico Aglianico Del Vulture Irpinia 2018** [Campania-Vivino, 14.5% £21.50] that had a vibrant deep garnet colour suggestive of concentration and maturity. The nose was complex and elegant, full of red fruits - raspberries, cherries and red currants with notes of thyme and rosemary providing an earthy dimension. Medium to full bodied it felt full in the mouth, had well integrated tannins and well balanced acidity. Mineral undertones and hints of spice contributed to a harmonious finish.

For our penultimate wine we went south for a **Santa Tresa Frappato Sicily 2022** [Caviste, 13.5%, £12.95] that was bio-organic, and more like a Pinot Noir in colour/transparency. It had a fresh bouquet of red cherries and delicate sweet spices. The palate was smooth, had a lively acidity and a well-balanced spicy, long lasting finish - not surprisingly, locals drink it lightly chilled with grilled tuna!

And ultimately....there was a **Miopasso Nero D'Avola Appassimento Sicily 2021** [Caviste, 14%, £12.95] that was a dark red cherry colour. The nose was full of dark cherries, damsons and blackcurrants and the palate was powerful, yet approachable with silky, smooth tannins and great depth and complexity.

Our thanks go to Brian for his enlightening selection of wines, though his unconventional ordering of them for tasting proved somewhat confusing for some of us! Nonetheless, an enjoyable and interesting evening.