

WHITEWATER VALEY WINE SOCIETY
June 2024 Tasting
Beaujolais / Burgundy Comparison
Presented by Dan Farrell-Wright, Owner, Wickhams Wine

This month we welcomed back Dan Farrell-Wright, who last presented to us a few years back. Dan is a Director of Wickhams online wine merchant. He set up Wickhams late in 2020, specifically to sell the kind of wines he likes to drink himself and to provide excellent service to wine consumers across the UK. Within the first year the company was shortlisted in the 'Newcomer of the Year' and 'England & Wales Specialist' categories at the Decanter Retail Awards. And more recently it took first place in the International Wine Challenge Awards 'Specialist Merchant of the Year, England' category. On this second visit to our Society Dan presented a selection of wines from Beaujolais and Burgundy, giving members an opportunity to compare wines from these two famous French wine regions.

Our French tasting evening started with a **Famille Gueguen AOC Crémant de Bourgogne Blanc de Noir NV** [12%, £26.50], the starter wine to sip whilst people gathered. This was a serious rival to Champagne from the area just south of that famous region but it also heralded a secondary theme to our tasting - a focus on Pinot Noir - the Blanc de Noir being 100% of this wine. But then, we discovered that the next three wines were unoaked Chardonnay! Dan went on to inform us that with the help of DNA, the widely grown Chardonnay grape was derived from two grapes - Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc and originated in Croatia. It is thought that it was brought to France by the Romans; new information to many present?

Our first 100% Chardonnay was a **Famille Gueguen 'Côtes Salinas' AOC Bourgogne Blanche 2022** [12%, £19.50] that had a pale gold colour and aged in stainless steel vats to retain its fruitiness. With aromas of white flowers and citrus and notes of white stone fruit and almonds this wine had a definite mineral element on the palate accompanied by honey and reflecting its terroir of Jurassic limestone.

The second Chardonnay a **Clos du Vieux Bourg Beaujolais Blanc AOC Beaujolais 2020** [12.5%, £18.50], had a deeper gold colour with a saline nose with hints of white flesh fruits and citrus. On the palate it had a fuller and rounder feel than the previous wine and was preferred by some Members. Its terroir was a mix of Kimmeridge Clay and limestone.

Our final Chardonnay was a **Famille Descombe 'Pierre-Dorées' Blanc AOC Beaujolais 2022** [12.5%, £19.50] its name reflecting the bedrock of golden limestone; it was paler in colour, with a nose of white flowers and orchard fruits. As a result of part vinification in concrete eggs this palate of green apple and citrus fruits had a luscious textured feel. This proved to be the favourite.

And finally we got to taste a red wine - a **Domaine bel Avenir 'Les Capitans' AOC Julienas 2020** [13%, £17.50] but it was Gamay - and again DNA analysis has shown that this grape was also derived from Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc, making it a sibling of Chardonnay? Though light-bodied it had a dark berry colour and a markedly floral nose. The floral aspect continued onto the palate where it was accompanied by strong tannins attributed to the underlying granitic soil.

Then, at last a Pinot Noir from Burgundy - a **Nuiton Beaunoy AOC Bourgogne Pinot Noir 2022** [12%, £22.50] that had the cherry-red colour and transparency associated with this grape. There was a bouquet of dark cherry and currants on the nose, and in the mouth an excellent balance of berry fruit and spice with earthy undertones.

We tasted the next wine 'blind' and had to guess what it might be, not very successfully! It turned out to be a **Domaine du Mont Joly La Polite Beaujolais-Village 2018** [14.5%, £19.99] made from 48 year-old grapes, 100% Gamay. It had a purple tinged colour with glints of violet and a nose full of strawberries, with hints of peony and violets. The palate had strong berry flavours and a touch of minerality integrated with soft tannins - interesting!

Our penultimate wine was a Gamay, a **Clos du Vieux Bourg 'Cinque Terres' AOC Morgon 2020** [14%, £18.50] that had a dense blackcurrant colour with rich aromas of cherries, plums and kirsch with hints of spice. This youthful Cru wine had a palate of dried flowers and juicy tannins reflecting perhaps its terroir of granite, schists and iron oxide soils?

And there was a 100% Pinot Noir to complete our evening - a **Domaine du Priore 'Les Gollardes AOC Savigny les Beaune 2021** [13%, £34.50]. This cherry-red coloured wine had the expected translucency and a perfumed nose that led to a complex palate of fruits and mineral elements with soft ripe tannins. It was smooth, well balanced and an excellent end to our evening.

Our grateful thanks go to Dan for a thought-provoking, informative tasting of good quality French wines.