

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY

July 2024 Tasting

Wines of Argentina

Presented by Duncan Ross of Berkmann Wine Cellars

This month we were delighted to welcome Duncan Ross, who is Sales Account Manager at Berkmann Wine Cellars. Berkmann is the UK's largest family owned and family run wine importer. They've been trading since 1964 and specialise in independent producers. Duncan presented wines from Argentina, the largest wine producer in South America and the fifth largest in the world. Key wineries represented were Pulenta Estate and Bodega Norton. We started with two whites, then went on to taste six reds. And whilst you'd expect Malbec to feature, Duncan also included a Pinot Noir, a Cabernet Sauvignon and some red blends, the latter becoming increasingly popular with Argentine winemakers. The tasting took place against a backdrop of much excitement from the pub next door as England took on the Netherlands in Euro 24 punctuated by much cheering and groaning. A competition to predict the correct winning score was held and Nesta Downey won the bottle of wine prize!

Duncan began his presentation by giving us an insight into Argentina as a wine producing region and above all, the influence the Andes has on the climate; the rain shadow effect of the Andes, together with over 1000 metres altitude of the Mendoza region, creates the perfect environment for viticulture.

The first wine of the tasting was **Finca La Colonia Coleccion Gruner Veltliner 2023** [12.5%, £12.70] from Bodega Norton. This winery was established in 1895 by an Englishman from Devon. The grape is not common in Argentina and is more usually associated with Austria. This easy drinking wine was pale yellow in colour and had flavours of white peach, watermelon with a long, fruity finish.

We then tasted our second white which was a **Pulenta Estate XIV Pinot Gris 2022** [12.50%, £13.80] from the Agrelo region of Medoza. It was pale yellow and had an intense bouquet of white flowers and tropical fruits with a finely balanced blend of acidity and fruitiness - suitable as an aperitif as well as accompanying light dishes and seafood.

The first of the reds was **Altura Pinot Noir Bodega Norton 2023** [13%, £18.31]. This is a high altitude wine from 15 year old vines grown at 1600 metres in the UCO Valley. Pale red in colour with delicate flavours of cherries, raspberries and spice, it had well rounded tannins and a long finish and was recommended to be drunk within 3 to 5 years.

We then moved on to Duncan's personal favourite having been his choice at his wedding 20 years ago. **Paso Doble Tierra Soleado Masi Tupungato 2022** [14%, £13.85]. The Masi family invented the appassimento method in the Veneto region of Italy in the 18th century; 84 % Malbec with the remaining 16% of Corvina which had been added after drying. The result of this blend which had its first vintage in 2002, was a rich and full bodied wine bursting with flavours of fruits of the forest, enhanced by cinnamon and vanilla with hints of spice and cooked cherries. This wine was very well received by the members and recognized as a unique wine because of the methodology. A perfect accompaniment to lamb, steak and rich stews!

The next wine was a more traditional offering - a 100% Malbec wine - **Finca La Colonia Coleccion 2023** [13.5%, £12.70] from Norton that was a more typical offering from Argentina which produces 75% of the world's production of Malbec wine. The grapes come from the 4th/5th generation of vines and spend 12 months in used barrels, producing a wine

with a good balance between oak and fruit. This was a rich and full bodied wine with notes of black fruit, vanilla, chocolate and spice.

Moving on from Malbec, our next wine was a Cabernet Sauvignon from **Pulenta Estate III 2020** [14.5%, £19.99]. This 100% Cabernet Sauvignon wine exhibited rich flavours of blackcurrant, spice and green pepper. It was a well balanced, elegant wine with soft tannins and will cellar for up to 10 years.

Another wine from the Norton family was the **Norton Privada Family Blend 2021** [15.0%, £20.44]. This wine is a blend of 40% Malbec, 30% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. It was a big powerful wine with a deep ruby colour and flavours of black cherries, plums, tobacco and spices. It had well-balanced tannins and would be an ideal accompaniment to red meat, stews and hard cheeses.

Our final wine was the **Pulenta Estate Gran Cabernet Franc 2020** [14.0%, £35.88]. This is a top wine from the Pulenta Estate produced from high altitude vines. It had a dark red colour with intense aromas of blackcurrant, blackberry, cedar, vanilla and tobacco, helped by spending 18 months in new French oak. On the palate there were flavours of ripe fruit and oak with powerful tannins and would go well with red meats and hard cheeses.

Our thanks must go to Duncan for a stimulating presentation of a wide range of wines from this region. Members expecting mostly Malbec enjoyed different grape varieties produced by some unique production methods.