

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
October 2024 Tasting
The Wines of New Zealand
Presented by Fliss Syrad

This was predicted to be another great evening for our Society as we welcomed Fliss Syrad, who was presenting to us for the first time. Fliss had a successful career in corporate strategy, before moving into the wine business in 2012. She holds the prestigious WSET Diploma, and last year was awarded the Vintners Cup for coming top of all Diploma students worldwide. She has considerable experience of conducting wine tastings with groups of all sizes and backgrounds and loves conveying her passion and knowledge in an informal and entertaining way. Fliss has recently spent a lot of time in New Zealand, so that placed her well to present some top wines of New Zealand to us this evening.

Our tasting started unusually with a supermarket wine - a **Tesco Finest Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2023** [12.5%, £9.50] to set a 'base line' for the wines to follow. Fliss informed us that 70% of the wines produced in the country are of the Sauvignon Blanc grape and could herald problems for the country as wine consumption worldwide falls and people's taste change should they find the wines from this grape too acidic. Hence, our starting point with the first bottle and yes, most members agreed that this wine was veering that way.

Our second wine sought to show that those specially made by individual small producers display different characteristics. This was a **Greywacke Wild Ferment Sauvignon Blanc 2015 Marlborough** [14%, £33.00] and the difference between the two wines was clearly evident. Fermented using wild yeast, this limey-lemon coloured wine, fermented in oak barrels had aromas of brioche and tropical fruit with hints of herbs. On the palate it was rich and textural with a fresh acidity. It is only released when considered ready - hence the difference in price!

Our next wine was a **Framingham F-Series Riesling 2022 Marlborough** [13%, £27.50]. Pale yellow in colour vinified using grapes from some of the areas oldest vineyards, had aromas of citrus, peach and honeysuckle and a hint of petrol. On the palate there were flavours of lime zest, green apple, a subtle minerality and crisp acidity - this was a complex and elegant wine.

The last white wine was a **Wine Society Exhibition Kumeu Chardonnay 2022 Auckland** [13%, £18.50] that had a pale lemon colour and was fruit-dominant on the palate with restrained oak and a hint of minerality. It was reminiscent of wines from Burgundy and better priced? All the white wines were served cold and improved flavour-wise in the glass.

The red wines started with a **Matahiwi Pinot Noir 2021 Wairarapa** [13.5%, £14.00] from a vineyard north east of Wellington. This wine had a bright red-cherry colour and the expected translucency associated with this grape. Aromas of red berries were evident with a hint of earthiness. The palate was full of berry fruits, noticeably cherry, with some chocolate and spice. Another wine reminiscent of Burgundy and at an attractive price - it was well received!

We travelled south to Central Otago, South Island for the next wine - a **Wild Earth Pinot Noir 2021 Central Otago** [13.5%, £30.00] that was perhaps a little deeper in colour than the previous wine. It was again smooth, fruit-forward with fine tannins and certainly had promise of improvement with time - till 2030?

The next red wine was a bit of a surprise - a **Siegfried Zweigelt 2021 Nelson** [13.5%, £22.00] made from a grape associated with Austria. But the winemakers name tells the tale! This wine had a deep cherry-red colour with some other pinot noir characteristics. It was another berry fruit-forward wine with silky tannins and a hint of earthiness that would improve with time.

Our last two wines were Syrah - one from both islands. The first was a **Trinity Hill Gimblet Gravels Syrah 2020 Hawkes Bay** [13.0%, £26.00] that had a dense blackcurrant red colour and aromas of liquorice, black pepper and herbs. The palate was full of berry fruits with hints of black pepper, spice and vanilla.

We ended our tasting with a **Terrace Edge Syrah 2019, North Canterbury** [13.5%, £28.00]. This organic wine had aromas of cedar and smoke and was bursting with dark fruit on the palate, noticeably cherry and plum accompanied by black pepper and aromatic spice - a rich and expressive red wine with which to end our evening!

Members' grateful thanks go to Fliss for an interesting and informative tasting that must have widened the knowledge of most present of the grapes now being grown in New Zealand. Her love of the country and its wines was clearly evident.