

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
December 2024 Tasting
A Raid on the Chair's Cellar
Presented by Keith Cooper

Tonight we celebrated Christmas early! And we did that in style by raiding the Chair's Cellar! Yes, Keith dug deep into his cellar to bring us some superb wines, which certainly got us in the mood for the upcoming Christmas celebrations. Following a bubbly and a couple of classy whites, the main focus was on the reds. Those members that know Keith's tastes well were right to expect a mature Bordeaux, along with some of his favourites from Italy, South Africa and Chile. There was also a top red from California. And he finished the evening off by serving a 25-year-old vintage port. Food-wise we also enjoyed some additional Christmas treats - sausage rolls with cranberries!

Our special event started with a starter wine as folks arrived, a **Wine Society's Alfred Gratien Brut NV Champagne France** [£33.81, 12.5%] that had been fermented in small oak casks, followed by generous bottle ageing. This usual three grape blend had pear fruit, spice and yeasty aromas. It was bone dry on the palate, with a good base of acidity and minerality balanced by an elegant silky sparkle, with a clean and lingering finish.

Our first white wine was a **Domaine Coché-Bizouard Bourgogne Chardonnay 2017 Burgundy France** [£19.00, 13%] that had a lemony gold colour, with a slightly perfumed nose. Barrel fermented, there was subtle oak accompanied by crisp and mineral elements on the palate leading to good intensity and length.

We travelled south for our next wine - for a **Quinta da Fonte Souto Aristotle 2022 Alentejo Portugal** [£18.50, 13.5%], the estate's signature white, that had a light, golden-straw colour. The nose was loaded with flint, citrus and peach-stone fruit, while the palate was full of cream and vanilla. This fresh and elegant wine marked the end of the white wines. What an excellent start to our evening!

Then came the reds! We returned to France for the first - a **Chateau La Tour de By 2014 Médoc France** [£26.75, 13.5%] that was a 60/40% blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. This dense black cherry coloured red had a fruity, blackcurrant nose with a hint of menthol, while the palate was super fruity; full of dried plums and cherries, with a touch of cedar spice. This classic left-bank, medium-bodied wine was especially easy drinking.

During a short break some Members were tempted to a 'fun-taster' - a **Chateau Musar Blanc 2010 Bekaa Valley Lebanon** [£46.50, 13%], a truly unique and rare white from the region. This bright lemon-coloured wine had a nose of thyme, pine resin and lemongrass. In the mouth there was an oily character with flavours of thyme and a zingy lemon acidity on the finish. 'Weird' and 'not everyone's cup of tea' were comments heard!

Our return to the reds took us west for a **Capella Sant' Andrea Donna Flavia Ciliegioio 2017 Tuscany Italy** [N/A in UK, 13.5%] from an organic estate in the San Gimignano area of Tuscany. Despite its light colour, this Chianti

Ciliegiolo had strong cherry aromas and good body, with hints of plums on the palate. It was well received.

We travelled far for the next New World wines. Our first was a **Vina Perez Cruz La Higuera Block 2020 Maipo Valley Chile** [£21.99, 13.5%] from a single vineyard. This Cabernet Sauvignon blend had a dark black-cherry colour and black fruit aromas. These also dominated the palate, accompanied by vanilla spice, a hint of mint and silky tannins.

We crossed the South Atlantic for the next wine, to one of Keith's favourite locations, for a **Rust en Vrede Estate Syrah 2021 Stellenbosch South Africa** [£28.35, 14.5%] that had a deep, ruby colour and a nose of blackberry, plums and smoked meats. On the palate, this premium wine had complex flavours of ripe cherries, blackcurrants and earthy spice. Tannins were grippy, there was fresh acidity and a lingering fruity finish....

We journeyed northwest for our final red - for a **Ridge Pagani Ranch Zinfandel 2019 California USA** [£43.00, 14.55], another favourite, from the Sonoma Valley that was a blend of 90/6/4% Zinfandel/Syrah/Alicante Bouchet. The fog caused by the cool California Current leads to later ripening resulting in fresher natural acidity, helping to produce complex classy and elegant wines. This wine had a nose of rich plums and blueberries and in the mouth it was medium-full bodied with flavours of black fruits and dark chocolate - a wonderful, supple-textured wine with a long finish to end our evening of sharing some of Keith's favourite red wines!

And then we had more tipple.....a **Quarries Harris Vintage 2000 Douro Portugal** [£54.00, 20%] that was a blend of 60/40 Obaideh/Merwah grapes. This dense purple-coloured, fortified wine had sweet aromas of liquorice, blackberries, raspberries and cassis fruit. Medium bodied, it was elegant with soft and smooth tannins.....

The rapturous applause conveyed Members' level of enjoyment of this tasting of wines from some of the world's best vineyards. Heartfelt thanks to Keith for a brilliant idea and its resolution!