

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
January 2025 Tasting
The Wines of Swartland, South Africa
Presented by Richard Addison

To start our new year tastings, we welcomed Richard Addison. He's a specialist in wines from the Swartland Region of South Africa. Specifically, he's Sales Manager for the Riebeek Valley Wine Company and also a Sales Representative for Wine Fusion. Swartland is a wine region about 30 miles north of Cape Town. It's a relatively young wine producing region which has risen in popularity in the last 10 to 15 years, though grapes were part of the farming economy much earlier. Originally known as a wheat growing region it now specialises in making rich, fruit-driven wines from Shiraz, Chenin Blanc and Pinotage. Not surprisingly the area is now attracting many upcoming winemakers who make world-class wines that have put this region on the map.

Our first white wine of the tasting was a **Valde Grenache Blanc 2023** [12.5%, £16.95] from bush style vines that predominate in the area because of the hot dry summers and minimal winter rains. This was a pale yellow coloured wine with fruity, citrus aromas. Stone fruit and hints of soft spice /subtle oak gave this wine an off-dry feel in the mouth and with a long finish it was a promising start!

We had a comparative tasting of the next two white wines: a **Middle Post Old Vine Chenin Blanc 2023** [13%, £15.95] grown on the plains and a **Kasteelberg Old Vine Chenin Blanc 2023** [13%, £22.95] grown on the valley sides at 300m. The first had a pale lemon colour, stone fruit aromas echoed by crisp pear and juicy peach on the palate. It was mid-weight with a fresh and fruity feel. The second is the vineyard's 'flagship' wine so not unexpectedly it had a more intense colour and was more intensely aromatic, with aromas of citrus blossom, stone fruits and hints of lemon zest. On the palate there was a more complex, rich texture, excellent balance and weight with a lingering, fuller finish. It will now be difficult to go back to less expensive Chenins!

Our red wines started with a **Hutton Ridge Shiraz 2024** [14%, £10.95], the 'house style' signature red that had a red-cherry colour and a fruity cherry-like nose. This un-oaked wine was full of juicy fruit, ripe red berries and a touch of white pepper on the palate. It was a medium weight, easy-drinking wine with soft tannins and a smooth finish....another promising start!

It was followed by a 50/50% blend of two grapes, a **Kline Kasteelberg Grenache Noir Mourvèdre 2022** that was lighter in colour similar to Pinot Noir. The grapes are vinified separately and blended prior to bottling with no oak. Aromas of ripe red cherries and raspberry are followed through on an elegant fruit-driven palate. [Recommended as an ideal barbeque wine!]

Another comparative tasting followed of two red blends - a **Middle Post Swartland Old Vine Blend 2024** [13%, £15.95] and a **Two Towns Grenache Shiraz Mourvèdre 2021** [13.5%, £16.95]. Both wines also have some Cinsault but the latter also has 4% Malbec. The former had a dark red black cherry colour, similar type aromas and a rich fruity punch in the mouth, though there was a slight sharpness on the finish. The latter had a similar colour with hints of pepper on the nose. The palate was silky with fine tannins and there was more smoothness, weight and length on the palate, provided by the Malbec. Interesting!

Our expectations were growing fast....The penultimate wine was a **Raar Petit Sirah 2023 [served in a magnum]** [13.5%, £22.95] from some rare grapes as the name suggests and only 4x300L barrels were produced. This dark black-cherry coloured wine was full bodied with complex, silky tannins and succulent bright plum and berry fruit - a lovely, opulent wine! And to complete our evening there was a **Kasteelberg Syrah 2023** [14%, £19.55] with grapes from a single vineyard, hand selected from foothills of the Kasteelberg Mountain. Vinified with minimal intervention and wild yeast added for fermentation the wine was then aged in old French oak barrels for 9 months and finally for 12 months in bottle before release. Not surprisingly, this dark black-cherry coloured wine had aromas of blackberry and liquorice with hints of spice on the nose leading to a palate with blackcurrant and

spices predominating. Beautifully made and a delight with which to end our introduction to Swartland Wines!

Members present wish to extend their most grateful appreciation to Richard for his selection of wines for this tasting. There was an excellent balance of background detail to inform our understanding of this region and its surprisingly good wines. Many thanks, Richard!