



Buckingham Wine Circle

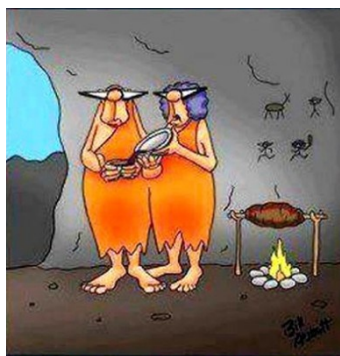
April 2021

The Wine Society

Looking back on my online account, I see I have been buying wine from the wine society since 2009. It has been an enjoyable reminiscence, reminding myself of some of those bottles - I recall the 2006 Lopez de Heredia Blanco Rioja was an eye opener of a Spanish white from a mostly 'red region' and I'll be trying to find one again after I write this... and it seems that I was buying Ste Croix du Mont almost every year until 2018 when they stopped stocking it... and I realise now that I drink far more Italian red than I thought!

Overall I must implicitly recommend the society as I seem to keep on buying from them. Comparing with some other retailers then... First, the society has a good range of wines. Other big retailers I've bought from such as BBR and Lay and Wheeler have a longer wine list, but others such as Majestic and Laithwaites a few less; all have more than I'll get through so no concerns across the board. Part of the society's mandate is variety - to find new and exciting wines and this is seen in their offer: buying from Lay and Wheeler their focus is more evidently of French wine, their list is 73% French, where the society is 50% or so. And I have found they go to efforts to highlight unexpected and interesting bottles from new places

(well, new to me). One of the things I have most enjoyed is those unexpected gems; a recent bottle I had, Somloi Hárslevelű, Kolonics 2017 from Hungary was one the most interesting, complex and



Wine Pairing in the stone age

"Simple rule of thumb; if it tries to eat us serve with red. If it runs away, serve with white"

complete wines I have had in months - yet I'd never heard of the grape before. It was the best value wine I drank in 2020 and went brilliantly with rich spicy food, the kind you're always told needs a Riesling or Gewurz - I bought a few more bottles straight away. Of course there is always a risk with unknowns, so safer bets come in the form of the wider offering of the usual suspects and which includes society branded wines, of which I usually buy at the lower price end of the 'Exhibition' category. The Society's Exhibition Moulin-a-Vent is a great

example of a serious Beaujolais cru at a keen price (£11.50), and the Fleurie as well. I would say that the society's wines are generally very good value, perhaps in part because it makes no profit, meaning none of the cost of your bottle goes into a profit margin. This means that if you can find a bottle from the society also sold elsewhere, it is usually the same price or cheaper from the society.

Not everything I have had over the years has impressed. A recent Spatburgunder was tart, hardly enjoyable, and yet cost £15. Fortunately, the process for getting your money back is very friendly - three mouse-clicks from the home-screen and a credit goes to your account, with explanation optional. I have had money back on wines that were poor, but also because I thought they were not good value. So the 'society's promise', as they call it, feels strong and perhaps comes back to the idea that you are a 'member' as much as a customer. I know that some other retailers do offer similar



Hi everyone and welcome to the latest edition of Buckingham Wine Circle's newsletter. I would like to extend a big thank you to Terry for producing such an eclectic mix of articles in such a great format with the addition of his interesting contribution. Also an equally big thank you for his brilliant article about his broad experience of buying the various wines from different sources to Richard Eckersley. I would like to join Terry in extending a warm welcome to the Wine Circle, Richard.

Finally, thank you to Ron Gleeson for his article and I am sorry to say that he, Muriel, Ernie and Linda Douglas and Molly Cockcroft have decided not to continue their membership. We wish them all well.

Ken

guarantees if a wine is not enjoyed as well as if defective (though I was once asked to return the bottle to a retailer to get my refund, which was long gone by then).

Overall, I think we are all looking for good wine at a good price and I have often found this buying from the society, though other retailers have their own strengths and I still buy plenty of wine elsewhere - eggs and baskets perhaps?

Richard

Welcome to Richard our newest member

Serbian Prokupac

Maree and I first visited Serbia in June 2011 after our elder son Andrew, whom many of our members met when we organised a trip for 28 of our members to Serbia in 2018, moved there.

We have had many happy visits to Serbia since then and have enjoyed tasting a range of the many wines produced there. During more recent visits, we have tried a variety of wines produced from the Prokupac (pronounced Prokupats) grape which is exclusive to Serbia. Because of its high sugar levels, the grape is often used in the production of quality brandies. Several wine makers discovered that, when the grape is macerated for a short time, it displayed refined and elegant red fruits aromas in rosé wines. After many years of experimentation, several experienced wine makers turned the grape into an age-worthy red wine with layers of complexity.

To the outside world the grape and wines produced from it remain a mystery. However, there are many signs that the grape has been extensively grown in Serbia for over 500 years. Prokupac's spiritual home is in the Župa Valley in the Trip Morave region of South Serbia. More recently, producers throughout the country are catching on to its quality and are planting swathes of the Prokupac 'Goblet' bush.

Many Prokupac wines are likely to have some international grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot or Syrah in small quantities blended into them to round out the flavours of their wines. We have

sampled a number of varieties of Prokupac wines, mainly Despotika, Ivanović and my personal favourite, Alexandrović.

Despotika Prokupac is 86% Prokupac and 14% Pinot Noir with an ABV of 13.5%. It is a light ruby coloured wine with an oak, dried



fruit and black cherry taste. It is produced in the Mid-West region of Serbia near Smederevo and I would rate it as 3 out of 5.



The Ivanović Prokupac is a blend of 85% Prokupac, 7.5% Merlot and 7.5% Cabernet Sauvignon with an ABV of 14%. It is dark purple in colour with a red plum, cherry and slightly peppery taste. I would rate it as 3.5 out of 5.

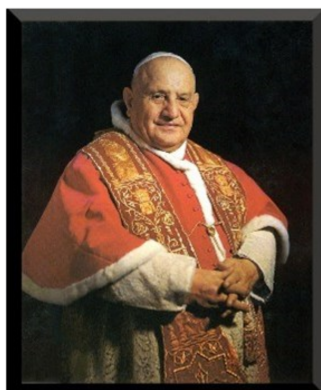
My personal favourite is the Alexandrović Prokupac to which I would give a 4.5 out of 5 rating. This wine is produced in the beautiful and historic region of Topola in Central Serbia. Our 2018 Wine Circle visitors may remember it with the wonderful church and catacombs in which were laid to rest many of the Serbian Royalty. The wine has an intense, ripe sweet and sour cherry aroma complemented with cloves, cinnamon and vanilla. It tastes of black cherries and blackcurrants accompanied by soft, silky tannins. It has an ABV of 14.5%.

Unfortunately, I have yet to identify a source from which to buy Serbian wines in the UK. The only way to purchase them is to visit Serbia so any volunteers to organise a trip with some help from us??

Ken

The Enclave des Papes

On August 7th, 1316 the church at Avignon, where the popes had taken up residence, elected as their new pope a man named Jacques Duéze who took the papal name of John XXII. This was one of those compromises that they had made from time to time by choosing an old boy who wasn't expected to last long so that the



Pope John XXII

preferred successor would reach a suitable age to become pope. Jacques was sickly and very ill and must have been quite surprised to be called to the highest office but, when



he arrived, he took an immediate liking to the most popular wine in the region which came from the village of Valréas. Straight away his health began to improve and, being a shrewd old codger, he bought the seigniorial rights to Valréas - thus securing a regular supply of his favourite tippie. He soon added the lands of Visan, Grillon and Richerenches which

surround Valréas to extend his possession. Thus was created the Enclave des Papes, a papal territory within the Rhône-Alpes region of France but, to this day, classified as part of Provence and shown as such on the departmental maps of the country.

The wines are predominantly red from a blend of Grenache and Syrah with a small amount of Mourvedre or Cinsault. Some excellent rosés are also made from the younger grape vines. All the wines can still carry the Papal crest granted at the time although many choose not to.

You will find very good wine merchants and co-operatives in the towns but the best way to taste them is to follow the narrow winding roads of the region where you will often see little signs saying 'Caves des Vins' leading you to individual vineyards. They love seeing visitors and sharing a glass of two.

Anyway, enough of rambling on about wine - let's get back to our

story. What happened to poor old Pope John XXII?

Well he thrived on his Valréas wines and lived on for 18 years - outliving the young man they had hoped to elect. He engaged in a long conflict with the Holy Roman Emperor - actually the biggest misnomer in history as it was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire - as well as having major disagreements with the Spiritual Franciscans who preached the absolute poverty of the clergy. Old John Paul wasn't having any of that having acquired some of the world's finest palaces as well as a lovely region turning out his favourite wines.

Now, of course, there is no reason to suppose that drinking these wines will increase anyone's life by 18 years - after all, there is the possibility of divine intervention. On the other hand you never know and, if that isn't a good enough reason to drink the red wines of the Enclave des Papes, then you could just enjoy the lovely taste.

Ron

Seeing Red—But Is It Wine?

We probably all immediately think of wine as an alcoholic beverage made with the fermented juice of grapes.

Buckingham Wine Circle, so I understand from the history, started off as a home winemakers' group. I still have several demijohns of the stuff made before 1976 and not touched since. So, technically, anything which contains sugar is capable of being used for making wine. Very few of the wines produced were very palatable. However, it did give one an

"A meal without wine is called breakfast"

appreciation of the "real thing."

If wine was a food item the label would include information about its contents - such as sugar, salt, calories etc.

Alcoholic beverages are not classified as nutritious, so they must be non-fattening and calorie free!? In fact, 175ml of dry white wine has on average 160 calories, while a glass of red has around 180 calories. There are also nutrients in wine from the grape skins. These

include fluoride (prevents tooth decay), manganese (antioxidant beneficial to brain, liver and nervous system), potassium (helps your heart), iron, vitamins B2 and B6, and, Phosphorus (strengthens bones, regulates hormones, and aids in digestion). Red wines generally contain more minerals and antioxidants than white wines.

Clearly a glass (or two) might keep the doctor away.

Terry



CHAFOR WINE ESTATE



Traditionally it is down the pub for a “pie and a pint.” So to kickstart the Circle after the long break we are visiting Chafor for a “paella and

glass.” There is plenty of space, so whatever the current COVID rules might be, there is ample opportunity for socialising with distance.

The Chafor Wine Estate is Buckingham’s very own vineyard. It produces an exciting range of award-winning wines from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Bacchus and Madeleine Angevine grape varieties, including still and sparkling white, and, still rose. Vines were first planted on the 23-acre estate in 2003.

Quoting from an article by Robin Goldsmith ‘With a bedrock of Jurassic limestone/Oxford clay, they found all the top terroirs of France expressed there - the sand and gravel of Bordeaux, flint of the Loire, chalk of Champagne and limestone of Burgundy’.

WADDESDON WINE CELLARS

The five brothers from a Jewish family in Frankfurt, symbolised by the five arrows on the coat of arms, became Europe’s leading bankers.

It was Baron Ferdinand (1839-1898), who built Waddesdon, he was born in Paris and raised in Frankfurt and Vienna moving to England in 1860. He became MP for Aylesbury in 1885. His youngest sister, Alice (1847-1922), who never married, inherited the estate. James de Rothschild (1878-1957) inherited from Alice. After WW2 the estate was left to the National Trust. He had married Dorothy and it was she who chaired the committee that managed the

house. At her death in 1988, Jacob, Lord Rothschild (b. 1936) took on the role and it is now the Rothschild Foundation which manages

Waddesdon on behalf of the National Trust.



WADDESDON

In 1855, for the Paris Universal Exposition, the best Bordeaux wines were chosen from the region.

These were then divided into five crus. In first place was the wine from Château Lafite. The vineyard was a ‘must have’ for Baron James de Rothschild (1792-1868) as he wanted serve the finest wine. So the Rothschild association with wine began, and, has now expanded to owning vineyards worldwide.



your contribution would be welcome so please email it to terry.wagstaff@live.co.uk

by 25th May for the June issue