

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: April 2017

Presented by Chris White, Ellis Wines

Report by Barbara Jones

We extended a very warm welcome to Chris who was presenting to our Society for the first time. Ellis Wines is one of the UK's longest established wine merchants, having traded since 1822. The Ellis family are still guardians of this thriving independent business. Their highly respected portfolio extends to over 900 wines, including many award winning wines from around the world. Many of their wines are from family estates, making niche wines which are not widely available elsewhere. Chris White is Business Development Manager for Ellis and has particular responsibility for Hampshire and adjoining counties across Southern England. He's well known to regulars at several Hampshire-based restaurants as a presenter at wine dinners. As Ellis provides wines for the 'on trade' most of the wines tasted are not available in supermarkets.

Chris started the evening by informing us that we would NOT be tasting a Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc which was a relief to some present! So we began with a **Wairau River Estate Albarino, 2010 Marlborough** [13.5%, £10.30] instead. This was a pale coloured wine with hints of lime and a floral and stone fruit aromatic nose. On the palate there were ripe, sweet fruits and vibrant acidity with a long and lingering finish – the perfect summer white that was well received.

This was followed by a **Schubert Estate Sauvignon Blanc, 2015, Martinborough** [13.5%, £ 14.95] that surprised many of us in that it was not immediately recognisable as a typical New Zealand Sauvignon! Pale lemon in colour, it was full of tropical fruit aromas of pineapple and passion fruit with a mineral edge. The palate was packed with more tropical fruit, nettles, a hint of oak and a yeasty undertone. The finish was long and complex – a great food wine that will keep for about five years.

We stayed in the North Island for our third wine – an **Esk Valley Estate Chenin Blanc, 2012 Hawkes Bay** [13%, £11.28]. Pale lemon in colour, this wine had classic Chenin aromas and flavours of honey, quince, green fruit with mineral undertones. On the palate there was a hint of residual sugar to balance the strong acidity. This wine is suitable for ageing up to ten years and would be a great accompaniment to Asian foods.

We returned to the South Island for our last white of the evening – **Whitehaven Estate Riesling 2015, Marlborough** [11%, £ 10.90]. This pale coloured wine had the typical hint of petrol on the nose and some light citrus and floral notes. Medium bodied, there were more citrus and floral flavours in the mouth and some residual sweetness to balance great acidity; another Asian food wine.

Most of the second half of the evening was devoted to a comparison of three Pinot Noirs. Our first **Mt Difficulty 'Roaring Meg' Pinot Noir 2015, Central Otago** [14%, £13.10] had the typical bright and translucent colour. On the nose there were aromatic black raspberry and cherry notes with some dried herbs. Dark berry fruit flavours worked well with the supple tannins and smoky spice from delicate oak ageing. [This easy drinking and soft wine is available in Waitrose].

Next we moved on to the **Wairau River Estate 'Black Label' Pinot Noir 2014 Marlborough** [14%, £12.34], a single vineyard wine. This had a complex nose of dark fruits, leather and spice, with hints of dark chocolate. The palate was well balanced, the tannins rich with traces of great oak spice and a long and highly complex finish; probably, the best value wine of the evening!

Our final Pinot Noir was the most expensive – a **Schubert Estate 'Marion's Vineyard' Pinot Noir 2014, Martinborough** [14.5%, £22.80] and another single vineyard wine. This had a deep ruby red colour with aromas of ripe raspberry and dark cherry with earthy spice warmth. The palate was bursting with more cherry, plum and spice backed by smoke and forest floor notes leading to a long and savoury finish; a medal winner and a very highly rated Parker wine!

The tasting ended with a blended wine - an **Esk Valley Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec 2015, Hawkes Bay** [14%, £13.01]. This was a dense opaque wine, deeply coloured and perfumed. It was rich and full bodied with lots of bramble fruit, dark chocolate, coffee and savoury, meaty notes. This is a wine to enjoy with a hearty, meaty dinner and was a perfect way to end a most interesting evening.

Our grateful thanks go to Chris for his unusual selection of New Zealand wines, not available to shoppers. We enjoyed his enthusiastic and informative presentation – first presentation over, he need have no fear of future ones!