

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: January 2018

Presented by Richard Bampfield, Master of Wine

Report by Barbara Jones

There are only a small number of Masters of Wine in the world, so it is always a privilege to be able to welcome one of their ranks to present to us at the Whitewater Valley Wine Society. Undoubtedly the highest recognition in the wine world, their members have all passed a rigorous examination and collectively strive to promote wine education throughout the globe. So it was with the greatest of pleasure that we welcomed Richard Bampfield MW, to present to us this month. Richard is consultant to Lidl's wine buying team and shares his vast experience with them. He has a huge influence on the wines which appear on their shelves, including their award winning Cellar Collection range.

Richard Bampfield graduated in French from Cambridge in 1981 and immediately decided the wine trade was where he could put the language to best use. He managed retail wine shops in the North West of England for JW Lees Brewers for 7 years, then spent a year getting his hands dirty in vineyards around the world, also working in wine cellars in California and Australia. Having passed the Master of Wine Exam in 1990, he joined the Australian producer, Brown Brothers, and managed their European operations until 1999. He left them to set up his own company, specialising in public relations and offering wine talks, tours and courses. Richard is a past Chairman of the Association of Wine Educators and was the European Champagne Ambassador 2009.

Our tasting began with a **Champagne Comte de Senneval Brut** [12.5%, £10.99] that was a pale gold colour and blended from the usual three champagne grapes. It had a fine bouquet and had elegant and complex flavours. Slightly off-dry this was an easy drinking quaffable bubbly at an affordable price.

The next wine was an **Albarino Abellio 2016 Rias Baixas, Spain** [12.5%, £5.99] that was a pale lemon colour. Full of fresh peach and red apple flavours, this was a juicy and attractive wine with a dry finish.

The following wine, unlike the first two from Lidl's Core Range, was a special promotion for the Christmas period – a **Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore 2016, Italy** [13.5%, £6.99]. Light gold in colour with herby [fennel?] characters on the nose this un-oaked wine was fresh and well-balanced, and according to our Presenter 'mouth-watering and stunning'.

The last white wine is a recent addition to the Core Range – a **'Winemakers' Chardonnay 2016, Coonawarra, South Australia** [12.5%, £5.79] Pale lemon in colour with aromas of citrus, red apple,

tropical fruit and smoky spice and green melon, pineapple flavours with mineral tones and woody notes, this was a fresh tasting Chardonnay without being over-oaked; lower in alcohol, too!

Our first red wine was a **Montepulciano d'Abruzzo 2016, Italy** [13%, £3.99] that had a deep plummy red colour. Fruity on the nose and with delicate morello-cherry fruit on the palate this was a very pleasant and easy drinking wine. Lightly chilled, we were informed it is even better!

It was followed by a **St. Emilion Grand Cru 2015, Bordeaux** [13%, £10.99] deep red in colour and full of plummy fruit, characteristic of Merlot [80%] this was soft and rounded with subtle oak and very acceptable at the price!

For our third red we returned to Australia – '**Winemakers' Shiraz 2016, Barossa, South Australia** [14%, £5.99] for a dense black-cherry coloured wine that was full of ripe black fruits and hints of pepper and spice. On the palate it was warm and full-bodied.

Our next wine was tasted 'blind' and we had to guess what it was – some got further than others with this, which turned out to be a **Baturrica Tarragona Gran Reserva, Spain**, a refreshing change from Rioja and only £4.99!

We ended the evening with a dessert wine – **Tokaji Aszu Grand Tokaji, Hungary** [9%, £13.99/50cl] that was golden in colour. There was intense sweetness on the nose with hints of tinned peaches; not as rich and full as more expensive equivalents, a pared down version perhaps, but still enjoyable!

Our grateful thanks go to Richard for an interesting and enlightening evening about Lidl's wine philosophy and practice. No doubt more of us will be popping in to a store for one of tonight's wines or a promotion!