

# Whitewater Valley Wine Society

**Tasting Report: July 2015**

## **The wines of Spain**

**Presented by Gareth Maxwell, Ellis of Richmond**

Report by Barbara Jones

Gareth Maxwell first presented to our Society in 2011 and there were immediate calls for us to invite him back again. Well, it's taken four years for us to get a slot in his busy diary. But he's back, this time presenting a tasting of wines from Spain, one of his favourite wine regions. Gareth has been an Account Manager with Ellis of Richmond for 7 years, having previously come from a background in the hospitality business. He has been awarded the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) diploma and has his eye on becoming a Master of Wines.

Our evening of tasting Spanish wines started and ended with a sherry – **Mira La Mar Manzanilla, Jerez** [15%, £5.94 – half bottle]. A lovely pale straw colour, this wine has a pronounced nose of almonds with hints of white peach and distinctive aromas of flor. In between we tasted eight wines of which three were white. Our first was a **Viento Aliseo Viognier Dominio de Punctum 2014, La Mancha** [13%, £8.10]. Pale gold in colour, this Viognier is highly aromatic with perfumed, floral aromas on the nose. The palate is full of white blossom, magnolia and peach flavours that balance perfectly with a refreshing, citric acidity. Next came two indigenous grapes – the first a **'Verdejo' Monte Blanco Ramon Bilbao 2014, Rueda** [13.5%, £8.70] that was fresh, light, aromatic and dry. It has a bright straw yellow colour with greenish hues with delicate aromas of tropical fruit and hints of fennel and aniseed; a soft mouth feel with citrus and mineral notes leads to a lingering finish on the palate. The second was a **Rias Baixas Albarino Condes de Albarai 2013, Galicia** [12%, £10.92] believed to be a distant relative of the Riesling grape. Not unlike a Chablis in style it has a lively freshness and dry minerality with a creamy finish and apparently is very fashionable in Madrid's Tapas Bars!

Our first red was well liked and a good value wine – a **Castillo De La Pena Syrah Monastrell, Jumilla 2013** [14%, £7.14]. A 70/30% blend of Syrah/Mourvedre; this wine is a deep ruby in colour with a pronounced nose of ripe black fruits. The palate is soft and velvety with hints of mocha, vanilla and blackberries and finishes long and refined. This was followed by a **Viento Aliseo Graciano Cabernet Sauvignon Dominio de Punctum 2011, La Mancha** [13.5, £10.20]. A 50/50 blend of Graciano and Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine is a beautiful deep red in colour and the nose is intense with aromas of red fruits with undertones of eucalyptus. Well-structured and round in the mouth with soft tannins and flavours of ripe fruits, vanilla and spice this wine is harmonious on

the palate with a long, rich finish. Our next three wines were from Rioja, the first being an **Edicion Limitada Ramon Bilbao 2011, Rioja** [14%, £10.38] – an exceptional and unusual Rioja which is made from 40 year-old Tempranillo vines grown in some of the region's best vineyards. The wine displays an intense dark garnet colour with aromas of fresh red berry, plum and cherry followed by subtle oak and smoked notes on the palate, with well-structured tannins and a long finish. The second was a **Gran Reserva Ramon Bilbao 2006, Rioja** [14%, £15.00] harvested from old vines from vineyards around Hero and aged for 30 months in American oak casks, followed by a further 36 months ageing in the cellar. It is deep ruby red in colour with exotic spice and bonfire aromas on the nose, followed by stewed black fruits, tobacco, dark chocolate and spices on the palate. It is full bodied and well-structured with chewy tannins and a long finish. Our final red was a **Special Cuvee 'Mirto' Ramon Bilbao 2009, Rioja** [14%, £29.94] that has a bright, very opaque pomegranate colour with purple hues. The nose is full of black cherries, smoked wood, tobacco, toast and vanilla. In the mouth it is soft and elegant but yet powerful with multiple layers that reflect the integration between the Tempranillo fruit and the subtleness of oak ageing giving it incredible length; somewhat disappointing now but has promise!

And to end with, we returned to a sherry – **Mira La Mar Pedro Ximenez NV, Jerez** [16%, £16.20]. This has a deep brown colour with an intense nose of molasses, dates and prunes. The palate is full and sweet with flavours of treacle, raisins, candied peel and figs - a 'sweet treat' to end an evening of well selected wines presented with humour and conviction. Thank you, Gareth!