

# Whitewater Valley Wine Society

**Tasting Report: September 2016**

## **The wines of Chile**

**Presented by Neil Courtier, Grape Sense**

Report by Barbara Jones

This month we welcomed back Neil Courtier, whose presentation of Bordeaux wines we very much enjoyed a few years back. Neil is a wine educator and writer. He runs his own wine education company, Grape Sense and he's also a member of The Association of Wine Educators. With a background in luxury hotels, restaurants and wine education, his passion for wine is combined with his experience and qualifications, including the Wine and Spirit Education Trust Diploma, and the Certificate in Education for Lecturers. Neil believes that the subject of wine should be approachable, enjoyable, informative and fun! He is a regular speaker and presenter on the wine tasting circuit, which includes delivering sessions to wine societies and at food & drink shows, such as the London International Wine & Spirit Trade Fair, the BBC Good Food Show, etc. He also judges regularly for the International Wine & Spirit Competition. With its 2,610 mile long coastline running along South America's western seaboard, Chile has a fantastic diversity of climate and geography. The two greatest influences on Chile's climate are the huge mass of the Pacific Ocean to the west and the spectacular mountain range of the Andes which runs as a boundary down the entire eastern side of the country. Recent years have seen the development of new vineyard areas, 'pushing the boundaries' in all directions - north, south, west (coastal) and east (altitude). Members and guests were fortunate to taste some of Chile's newer wines!

The evening's tasting started with three white wines. Our first was Errazuriz Aconcagua Costa Sauvignon Blanc 2014 Aconcagua [13%, £12.95 - Direct Wines] a single vineyard wine from north of Santiago that was pale lemon in colour. Grown 12km from the Pacific Coast on land that experiences fog at night from the coastal cool current that slows down ripening and where the grapes are hand-picked in early morning to preserve texture, this was an unusual Sauvignon without grassy elements but nicely vibrant and aromatic. Our second wine was Cono Sur Riesling Reserva Especial 2016 Bio Bio [13%, £9.00 - Tesco] and another pale lemon coloured wine but this time from the cooler south of the country. This had a subtle nose with a hint of honey and was without the usual petrol aromas of a typical Riesling; more Spatlese/halbtrocken in style and just off dry. Whilst approachable now this wine has ageing potential of 10-15 years and is a versatile food wine. Our final white wine was De Martino Colinas del Itata - Old Vine field blend 2015 Itata [13%, £10.00 M and S exc]. This wine is a blend of 50/50 Muscat and Acrinto both from

vines over a hundred years old, planted by the Spanish. Again pale lemon in colour this wine had a rather closed nose but in the mouth was full of the flavour of a golden delicious apple with a pronounced mineral bite from the granite and quartz soil.

The first red of the evening was a Vina Leyda – Las Brisas- Single Vineyard – Pinot Noir 2014 [14%, £13.50-Great Western Wines] grown on shaded south west slopes open to ocean breezes. This had an almost translucent cherry red colour with black cherry, spice and vegetable notes and a smoky edged nose. On the palate it was full of soft fruit with gentle and velvety soft tannins. It was followed by a Vina Falernia –Syrah-Reserva 2012 Elqui [14.5%, £13.50 – Great Western Wines]. Grown at altitude close to the Atacama Desert and with irrigation this was deep red in colour with a slightly closed nose of fruity elements. In the mouth it was full of New World ripeness with gamey elements and tapenade, full bodied with silky ripe tannins and good structure. Next we tasted Carmen – Carmenere – Gran Reserva 2012 Apalta [14%, £10.95/£13.95-Hard to Find Wines/Eton Vintners]. Grown on terraces on a granitic soil at high altitude this wine was a deep black currant red and almost opaque. Its fruity nose was reminiscent of damson, liquorice, soya and dark chocolate with hints of green pepper. It was well balanced with good acidity and length. The Lacaze-Private Collection-Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 Central Valley [13%, £9.99/£15.99 –Naked Wines/Majestic] is also grown at altitude from low yielding vines. This was a dense red in colour with blackcurrant, mint and eucalyptus notes. With 5% Cabernet Franc in the blend acidity is improved contributing to a well-balanced fruit laden wine with good length and finish. Our final wine of the evening was Laberinto – Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot 2010 Maule [14%, £21.50- Great Western Wines], a 60/40 blend from vines grown on soils of volcanic ash, clay and granite at an altitude of 600m. It had a deep blackcurrant red colour and was slightly Bordeaux-like in style with plums and chocolate in the mouth and medium/strong tannins. A wonderful way to end an evening discovering what's new in Chile!

Our grateful thanks are extended to Neil for his interesting selection of wines, his detailed knowledge of the wine-making process and the geographical location of the vineyards.