

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: The wines of Argentina, November 2016

Presented by Duncan Ross of Berkmann Wine Cellars

Report by Barbara Jones

This month we welcomed Duncan Ross of Berkmann Wine Cellars, one of the UK's leading wine agents and wholesalers, for his first visit to our Society. Argentina is the largest wine producer in South America and the fifth largest in the world and strongly associated with the Malbec grape. Berkmann Wine Cellars is a UK based independent wine agent and wholesaler. The company was founded in 1964 in order to supply Joseph Berkmann's group of restaurants. In 1982, the restaurants were sold, following which the wine business expanded significantly to become one of the UK's market leaders. Berkmann is a family owned company, which specialises in working with suppliers who are also family owned.

Fifty one members and guests eagerly awaited the start of the evening and were not disappointed by their experience! The tasting started with two white wines – the first a Finca la Colonia Torrontes, Norton 2016 [13%, £7.88 - wholesale price + VAT]. Pale lemon in colour with a wonderfully aromatic nose without hint of oak, this wine was fresh, rich and elegant and complemented by a long, harmonious finish. Our second white, a Finca Perdriel Sauvignon Blanc, Norton 2016 [12%, £11.49] was even lighter in colour and was more akin to the Loire than New Zealand in style. Blended from two/three pickings at different ripening times this 100% pure sauvignon had powerful citrusy aromas with a hint of melon. With a little oak for focus, subtle minerality and good acidity, this was a well-balanced wine that would be excellent with fish dishes.

Our first red wine of the evening was a Passo Doble, Masi Tupungato 2014 [14%, £10.55], a ripasso – constructed wine of semi-dried Corvino grapes [emulating the Veneto Amarone] blended with Malbec, resulted in a dark cherry red wine with hints of violet aromas. On the palate there were prunes and liquorice combined with spice and cherries; it was a powerful wine with a long finish! And just before the break we tasted the only pure Malbec of the evening – a Finca Decero Malbec 2014 [14.5%, £10.78]. This wine had an intense blackcurrant colour and after twelve months in French oak the tannins were smooth. On the palate this was pure, fresh and savoury with good acidity and length; a wine that will last around ten years. The next wine was 100% Cabernet Sauvignon – Finca Decero Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 [14.5%, £10.78] from the Ramolinas Valley. This wine was full of ripe red fruits with cassis notes. It was spicy with grippy tannins, vibrant and concentrated with a long finish. And then came a rare experience – a wine made of 100% Petit Verdot! This Finca Decero Petit Verdot 2012 [14.5%, £16.60] dense blackcurrant in colour, was full of plum and blueberry aromas. It had a spicy complexity

balanced by fresh acidity – not surprisingly winning the Best Wine of Mendoza Award in 2015. The remaining red wines of the tasting were blends – the first a Norton Privado 2013 [14.5%, £16.16] again had that dense blackcurrant colour. Blended from a third each of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec this wine was full of red berry flavours with hints of smoke and spice and a touch of coffee. It was rich and generous with superb concentration. And to end, the best wine of the evening – a Finca Decero Amano 2013 [14.5%, £29.20] and the winery's flagship. The blend this time was different being Malbec/Cabernet Sauvignon/Petit Verdot/Tannat – in 62/28/4/2% proportions. This totally opaque wine resonated of red fruits and violets. It had good structure and elegance complemented by firm tannins and textural complexity. What a way to end a superb evening of tasting excellent wines!

Our grateful thanks go to Duncan for his energetic and enthusiastic presentation and for his careful selection of wines to inform and impress us. There is no doubt he will be invited to return to our Society.