

# Whitewater Valley Wine Society

**Tasting Report: July 2017**

## **The wines of Portugal**

**Presented by Sarah Ahmed, "The Wine Detective"**

Report by Barbara Jones

This month we were especially privileged to be able to welcome Sarah Ahmed, aka The Wine Detective. Sarah has visited us once before, back in 2010, and many of our members have great memories of her presentation to us. Sarah is a lawyer-turned-wine-writer who started her wine career in 2000. Today, Sarah is a world renowned, award winning freelance wine writer, blogger, educator and judge. In huge demand as a judge and speaker at home and abroad, she is delighted to be counted among Decanter Magazine's "experts par excellence" in her capacity as Regional Chair, Portugal at the Decanter World Wine Awards. Readers of Decanter magazine will be very familiar with her regular contributions as judge and writer. Luckily our July tasting slot matched with a rare gap in her diary, so we quickly booked her in for a return visit!

Sarah's presentation started with some background information about the diversity of Portugal for wine production aka its varied geography, its wide variety of indigenous grapes and its tradition of blending in wine making. She went on to explain that production there is dynamic too – combining new methods and practices with traditional wine making. She had chosen four white and four red wines for us to taste.

Our first white was a **Quinta das Maias Branco 2015** [DO Dao] [13%, £11.95] a blend of predominantly Malvasia with some Encruzado, Cercial and Barcelo. This was a pale gold colour with a ripe yellow fruit nose. On the palate there were hints of greengage and apple and lovely richness; it had loads of character and freshness for a young wine and would be excellent with tapas.

Our second white was a **Beyra Quartz Branco 2015** [Beira Interior DOC] [13%, £14.00] and another blended wine, this time 50/50% Siria and Fonte Cal. Again pale gold in colour, this had a fuller, slightly buttery nose with hints of flinty aromatics. It was full of citrus characteristic on the palate with excellent balance of dry white fruits and acidity. More full bodied and luscious than the first wine it would be a good accompaniment with fish.

Our next wine was a **Quinta do Soalheiro Primeiras Vinhas Alvarinho 2015** [Vinho Verde DOC] [13%, £24.00] that was slightly more golden in colour and produced from wines planted in the 1970s. On the nose, there were subtle hints of fennel and a trace of oak. This was an elegant, full

flavoured wine that developed in the glass. It was a favourite – full bodied, fresh and complex – ideal as an aperitif, or with seafood, fish or poultry.

The final white was a **Casal Figueira Antonio Ancient Vines 2015** [Lisboa VR][11.5%, £23.00] made entirely of the Vital grape. Again a pale gold colour there was initial sweetness on the nose that then became citrusy with mineral and slightly floral notes. The palate was full of pear and white orchard fruits with excellent acidity; it was fresh, clean and well-balanced.

The reds were all a delight! We started with a **Niepoort Rotulo 2015** [Dao DOC] [12.5%, £15.95] a blend of Touriga Nacional, Jean and Alfrocheiro. This had a medium concentrated ruby colour with an elegant aroma of black fruits, spices, a hint of black pepper, some balsamic and floral notes. On the palate there was a good balance of fruit and acidity, mineral notes and a fresh elegant finish.

This was followed by a **Luis Pato Vinhas Velhas Tinto 2012** [VR Beira Atlantico] [12.5%, £25.00] made from 100% Baga. This had a dense black cherry colour and initially there was a hint of mustiness on the nose that soon disappeared. On the palate there was a wonderful surprise – spicy wood notes of cedar with vanilla, peppercorns and crushed blackberries and elegant tannins; ideal with gamey dishes.

The penultimate wine was a **Herdade Sao Miguel ART.TERRA Amphora 2015** [Alentejano VR] [13.5%, £19.95], a blend of Aragonez, Trincadeira and Moreto and surprisingly fermented in stainless steel vats. There were subtle aromas of berries, mint and orange zest evident on the nose and by comparison the palate was powerful, full of ripe vine fruits and lovely soft tannins with a long berry finish.

The evening ended with a **Niepoort Redoma Tinto 2013** [Douro DOC] [13.5%, £38.00] a blend of Tinta Amarela, Tinta Roriz and Touriga Franca that had a dense blackcurrant colour and a nose full of fresh red fruits, spicy notes and a slight floral perfume. This was a complex wine with a compact structure and very expressive tannins. These were accompanied by a delicate, fresh acidity on the palate and a long mineral and elegant finish!

This was an excellent tasting and a night to remember! Thank you, Sarah!