

# Whitewater Valley Wine Society

## Tasting Report: New World Cabernet & Shiraz

### Presented by Tom Ellis, First Class Products

Report by Barbara Jones

Society Secretary, Keith Cooper, first met Tom Ellis in January of this year at a tasting of New Zealand wines in London. It was immediately apparent to him that Tom is a young, lively and enthusiastic guy. He was impressed to learn that Tom had set up his own wine company whilst at university. And now, ten years later, he and his company are both doing very well. This month was time for new world red wine lovers as we focused primarily on the cabernet and shiraz varietals.

**First Class Products** was founded in 2007 by Tom Ellis whilst studying at Exeter University. The business was originally established to source and import the finest Champagne to the UK. From its humble beginnings with one small supplier, the business has grown beyond its original retail focus to become a significant national distributor supplying some of the finest hotels, restaurants and wine merchants from their distribution centre in Oxfordshire. Today, the portfolio of First Class Products offers a diverse selection from France, Italy, Spain, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. All their suppliers are passionate small producers committed to creating the highest quality wines.

Our first wine of the evening was a **Bergsis Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2012** [Breed River Valley, South Africa] [13.5%, £9.44]. This was a full-bodied elegant wine with a deep ruby colour that had deep layers of cassis and spice richness with well integrated tannins. It was well received!

It was followed by a **Berton Vineyards Head over Heels Shiraz 2016** [Barossa Valley Australia] [14.5%, £7.68]. This wine had an abundance of blackberry and plum aromas, echoed on the palate along with toasty sweet oak. It was a complex wine with hints of coffee, vanilla and caramel complementing full fruit flavours and a long and satisfying finish; excellent value for money and it is still a young wine!

Next we tasted a **Lou Miranda Shiraz Leone 2013** [South East Australia] [14.5%, £15.44] that had inky red and purple hues. The nose had aromas of liquorice and sweet tasty oak whilst the full-bodied palate had sweet blackberry and raspberry fruits and vanilla oak balanced with chocolaty tannins. It had superb length and a smooth rounded finish.

The first half of the tasting ended with a **Valle Secreto First Edition Syrah 2011** [Cachapoal Valley, Chile] [14.5%, £12.97] from a small boutique winery. The nose was reminiscent of cream and blackberry ice cream leading to a very tasty, well-balanced palate with hints of oak and a long finish.

The second half of the tasting began with a **Lou Miranda Cabernet Sauvignon Leone 2012** [Barossa Valle, Australia] [14.5%, £15.44] that had a deep red colour with purple hues. On the nose there were black fruit berry characters combined with spice and hints of oak. The palate was full of blackcurrant, plum and chocolate and the tannins were velvety adding structure and length to this sophisticated wine.

Our next wine was a **Valle Secreto First Edition Cabernet Sauvignon 2012** [Cachapoal Valley] [14.5%, £12.97] that had a brilliant and dense black cherry colour. The palate was full of fruit behind the oak – dehydrated black plum, dried figs and cassis jam.

This was followed by the only blended wine of the tasting a **Valle Secreto Private Edition 2011** [Cachapoal Valley, Chile] [14.55, £18.89] – a 34/33/33 blend of Syrah/Cabernet Sauvignon/Carmenere. This wine was full of red cherries on the nose with hints of roasted peppers and blackberry jam. The palate was a beautiful well-harmonised combination of rich black fruits and French oak – quite outstanding!

Our penultimate wine of the evening was an **Archangel Pinot Noir 2012** [Central Otago, New Zealand][13.5%, £22.25] that was darker and more full-bodied than its French equivalents. The nose had a combination of red and black fruits, violets, spice and cedar oak whilst the palate had concentrated flavours of dark plum combined with subtle hints of spice and leather. This was a medium-bodied wine with silky tannins, good persistence and length.

And as if eight excellent wines had not been enough, Tom had brought us an unexpected treat - a **Bodegas Riojanas Monte Real Tinto Reserve 2010** [14.05, £12.97]. This Tempranillo had an intense cherry-red colour with a tawny rim and powerful fruit aromas on the nose. It was well-balanced with excellent structure, smooth tannins and a long persistence finish – a wine to savour!

Thank you, Tom, for our special treat and also for introducing us to some outstanding wines from small, lesser known producers; a most successful first presentation and it won't be your last! We look forward to a return visit in the not too distant future!