

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: February 2019

New World Wine Gems

Presented by Jim King & Keith Cooper

Report by Barbara Jones

Our Society's intrepid duo took to the stage again this month, presenting their selection of wine gems. For the first time, Jim and Keith decided to present wines sourced entirely from the new world. Jim had been preparing for this tasting for months, building on his vast knowledge of new world wines, gained through visits to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa; he came up with four of the best, sourced from his favourite suppliers. Keith chose to feature wines that he had tasted in the last few months and had some gems lined up for us from his favourite wine regions – predictably South Africa and New Zealand but also the USA.

Jim started our evening 'blind' with a most unusual white wine made from a well-known Italian red grape – Sangiovesi. This was pale in colour, fruity on the nose and most quaffable – La Selva Organic Sangiovese Bianco [12.5%, £10.99] and a most pleasant accompaniment to the AGM business.

The tasting then began in earnest with a **USA [California] Peltier Sauvignon Blanc 2017 [13.5%, £6.75]** from Keith. This aromatic wine, pale gold in colour was well balanced with some grassy notes, passionfruit, melon and a touch of minerality. It was full bodied with a refreshing finish and great value for the price!

Jim followed with a **South Africa [Coastal Region] Fledge Vagabond 2016 [13%, £15.95]**. The blended wine made of five grape varieties – Steen, Chardonnay, Viognier, Verdelho and Grenache Blanc had a pale gold colour and was leggy on the glass. In the mouth it was creamy, full bodied with flavours of peach and citrus – an elegant and classy wine!

Keith kept us in South Africa for our final white wine - a **South Africa [Stellenbosch] Rustenburg Chardonnay 2017 served from a magnum [13.5%, £26.00]**. This had the typical golden colour of Chardonnay with butter and vanilla on the nose. Barrel fermented, it had

good acidity and flavour concentrations of apricot, coconut and orange peel. This was a well-balanced wine that will last another 8 years or so.

For our first red wine of the evening Keith returned to a favourite of his – a **New Zealand [Marlborough] Greywacke Pinot Noir 2015 [13.5%, £29.95]** produced by Kevin Judd, previously of Cloudy Bay fame. This had a denser colour than its French equivalents and punched more flavour notes too – soft sweet figs, poached pear and quince combined with mulling spices. It had power, length and a crispy off-dry finish!

Jim followed with a **South Africa [Stellenbosch] Grangehurst Red Barrel Blend 2009 [14.5%, £11.99]** of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, with a little Mourvedre. Vinified from hand-picked premium grapes and kept separate until the final blending stage after time in stainless steel tanks and French oak barrels, this was a big, powerful and full flavoured wine, heavy with black fruits but smooth, well integrated and easy to drink.

We stayed with Jim for the next wine – an **Argentina [Mendoza] Benegas Lynch Estate cabernet Franc 2015 [14%, £17.99]** that had a dense blackcurrant colour and big ripe fruits on the nose that followed on to the palate. This grape likes the drier and more consistent climate of Argentina compared with the Loire so the wine is fuller bodied, more powerful, rich but not jammy, very smooth and well balance. Gorgeous!

We returned to the USA for Keith's final wine – a **USA [California] Pedroncelli Sonoma Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 [14.5%, £12.50]** from the Russian River Valley. This dark cherry coloured wine was full of black fruits on the nose with hints of cassis, clove and anise. The tannins were big but well integrated and on the palate the wine was silky smooth with a touch of acidity. This wine will keep for 10-15 years and was excellent value for the price.

Jim ended our evening with an **Australia [Barossa] Colonial Estate John Speke GSM 2006 [15.5%, £19.95]**. This typical Chateauneuf blend of Grenache/Shiraz/Mourvedre 50/30/20% from old vines had a deep blackcurrant colour, and a floral and spicy nose. It was rich, full-bodied, well balanced and velvety smooth - a great end to a great tasting!

Our grateful thanks go to our 'dynamic duo' for the arduous work that goes into the selection of wines for this tasting. Their respective

knowledge and enthusiasm for both the wines and their regions of origin are clearly evident. Members unable to be present missed a feast of delightful and interesting gems from the New World.