

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: April 2019

Azores (Portugal) & North West Spain

Presented by Nik Darlington of Red Squirrel Wines

Report by Keith Cooper

This month we welcomed Nik Darlington of Red Squirrel Wines, who was presenting to our Society for the first time. It was another first for our Society as we tasted wines from Portugal's Azores Islands, which are situated in the North Atlantic Ocean. Nik also included a few wines from the Portuguese mainland and North West Spain. Most of our members had not previously tasted wines from the Azores, so it was a real treat. The wines are made in small quantities by boutique winemakers and the prices reflected that!

Our evening started with a wine from Galicia in Spain, **Adegas Tollodouro Blanquito 2017 [£17.00]**. This was made with several indigenous grape varieties, predominantly albarino. The humid and relatively cool climate showed through with pineapple and banana, with violets on the palate.

We then moved on to taste five wines produced by the Azores Wine Company. This is the oldest established wine producer on the islands, set in a UNESCO world heritage region, whose history of winemaking dates back to the 19th century. Our first of the five was **Arinto dos Acores 2017 [£39.00]**. The arinto grape produced a wine of clear gold colour, aromatic nose, very dry with lemony overtones. Our next wine was **Verdelho O Original 2016 [£35.00]**. Whilst this is a grape with which most of us were familiar, this particular clone of the grape is unique to the Azores. Bright green lemon, the wine was dry and fruity, with some saltiness reflecting its proximity to the Atlantic. Just when we thought the wines couldn't get any more expensive, we tasted **Terrantez do Pico 2017 [£71.00]**. This is a very rare wine, with only 803 bottles produced. The grapes had been revived by winemaker Antonio, having been almost extinct. The wine was greeny lemon, fresh, slightly oily and the saltiness was again present.

Our first red wine was **Tinto Vulcanico 2016 [£27.00]**, made from a blend of at least nine varietals. Deep ruby in colour, cherries and olives on the nose, with a jammy, complex palate. Our final Azores wine was **Isabella a Priobida 2016 [£30.00]**, a red wine which the regulations do not technically allow and made with a prohibited grape - but no-one seems to be concerned! Nik admitted that this was an unusual wine and he wasn't surprised at the mixed feedback. It was complex, with bananas and toffee.

Our penultimate wine took us to the Algarve, **Morgado do Quintao Clarete 2017 [£25.00]**. Made from the tinta negra mole grape, this had a dark ruby colour and had a rich, Christmas cake taste.

We moved to the Arribes region of Spain for our final wine, **Arribes de Vettonia Tinto Joven 2017 [£13.00]**. This was another chewy and complex wine, but it slipped down easily to finish our evening.

The Society's grateful thanks are extended to Nik for a very interesting tasting of wines which few of us had tasted before. His knowledge of the Azores and its vineyards was clearly evident and his enthusiasm for these wines clearly showed through.