

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
January 2023 Tasting
The Wines of Chateau Ste. Michelle, USA
Presented by Craig Mitchell, Regional Export Director

We started 2023 with what promised to be an excellent tasting as we headed to Washington State, the second largest wine producing state in the USA. Our presenter was Craig Mitchell, who is Regional Export Director for Chateau Ste. Michelle winery. The winery is the oldest in Washington State, initially named Ste. Michelle Vintners, but changed its name to Chateau Ste. Michelle in 1976 following the building of a French style chateau in Woodinville, just outside Seattle. The winery aims to build on old world winemaking traditions with new world innovation. There are two state-of-the-art wineries, one for red and one for white. The tasting predominantly featured wines from the Chateau Ste Michelle portfolio, plus a couple of joint ventures with other renowned producers. Prices quoted below include a generous discount of between 20-40% for Society Members.

Our evening began with a brief history of the wine company and how a chateau was built to enhance its image. Then came the first of three Rieslings all a very pale lemon in colour. Our first was a **Chateau Ste. Michelle Columbia Valley Riesling, 2020** [12%, £9.76] of medium dry style preferred by American wine drinkers. Harvested at the peak of ripeness, this flavourful wine had hints of peach, honey and crisp apple and snappy acidity.

Our second wine was a **Chateau Ste. Michelle Dry Riesling, 2021** [13%, £9.76] and yes, it was drier than the first but for UK drinkers still slightly off-dry. It was crisp and fresh with fresh peach notes and an elegant finish.

Our final Riesling was in a league of its own – an **Eroica Riesling, 2019** [12%, £20.40] that was again slightly off-dry with hints of lime and tangerine on the palate and a touch of honey on the finish. Harvested at night to protect the berries that are sent direct to the winery for processing, then fermented for three weeks raises the quality level of this wine ensuring that it will age well and acquire more complexity over time. It was our Presenter's favourite.

After a short break we compared two Syrahs. Our first was a **Chateau Ste. Michelle Columbia Valley Syrah, 2019** [13.5%, £11.20] that had a dark black cherry red colour. Aged for 15 months in a combination of new and old French and American oak barrels, this wine had flavours of damson, plum and vanilla with hints of black pepper. It was succulent with supple tannins and had superb balance.

In comparison next came a **Tenet The Pundit Syrah, 2019** [14.5%, £18.40] that had a little Mourvedre and Viognier in the blend [2/1%] and 14 months spent in French and American oak barrels. This wine is the result of a unique collaboration between Chateau Ste Michelle and Rhone Valley's Michel Gassier through consulting oenologist Phillipe Cambie providing French finesse and balance and American attitude! It had juicy damson and purple plum fruit, savoury undertones and a long finish.

Then, we moved on to the Cabernet Sauvignons for which the area is renowned. Our first was a **Chateau Ste. Michelle Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, 2019** [13.5%, £11.20] that was a blend of 82/8/7/2/1% Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah/Merlot/Malbec/other varietals, with 12 months spent in new French and American oak barrels. There were flavours of blackcurrant, raspberries and plum, silky tannins and lots of complexity and structure – totally inviting!

The penultimate wine was a **Chateau Ste. Michelle Cold Creek Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, 2018** [15%, £20.00] vinified from 100% pure Cabernet Sauvignon berries from Cold Creek Vineyard, one of the oldest and most acclaimed vineyards of the region. It had concentrated black cherry and black plum flavours, smooth tannins and a dark chocolate finish.

The evening ended with a **Col Solaire Cabernet Sauvignon, 2015** [14.5%, £57.00], the result of another collaboration – this time with Marchesi Antinori from Tuscany, bringing together two unique viticulture and wine-making cultures. Here there were black cherry, berry, and dark chocolate flavours fused with smooth notes of vanilla and spice. Rich and balanced on the palate with a lingering finish of cocoa, black fruit and anise....totally sublime! What a way to end a wonderful wine tasting!

Our immense gratitude to Craig for his interesting selection for the Society's introduction to the wines of Chateau Ste Michelle and to Keith for securing the booking! A truly memorable evening!

