

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
June 2023 Tasting
Wines of the Rhone Valley
Presented by Heather Dougherty

This month we welcomed Heather Dougherty, presenting to us for the first time. Heather is a qualified and experienced wine educator, based locally in Surrey. Following a ten year stint in the travel technology business, where wine appreciation was strictly recreational, Heather began studying for the WSET Diploma in Wine & Spirits and realised her future career lay in wine. Studies complete, she set up **Red White & Rosé** in 2006, specialising in running fun, informative wine events. She arranges tastings for corporate clients, wine societies, private groups, business networking organisations as well as for the wine trade. Heather is one of only three Certified Rhône educators in the UK; so a very good reason for us to ask her to present wines from that region for our Society. The Rhône is a region popular with many of our members, so a fun and lively evening was anticipated!

Our first wine of the evening was a **Les Dauphins Côtés du Rhône Blanc 2020** [13.5%, £7.50] a blend of Grenache Blanc and Viognier that was a pale gold colour and had aromas of crisp white fruit, flowers and vanilla. On the palate it was light, clean, crisp and fresh - a pleasant easy drinking wine.

It was followed by another blend of Grenache Blanc and Viognier but also with Roussanne, Clairette and Bourboulenc - a **Chapoutier Côtés du Rhône Blanc 'Belleruche' 2020** [14%, £10.99]. This bright yellow wine with a golden hue had an intense nose and expressive notes of apricot, and floral aromas. The palate had more complexity than the first wine and a pleasant roundness matched with freshness - a clean, medium bodied and elegant wine!

Then we moved to a pink wine with strawberry aromas - a **Domaine du Mourchon Rosé 'Soubois' Côtés du Rhône 2021** [13%, £13.95] that was Syrah based, left on its lees for 8 months and raised in oak barrels that left a faint hint of oak. This wine was full flavoured and creamy and made to accompany food.

We looked forward to the first red wine of the tasting - an entry level **Les Espiers Côtés du Rhône 2020** [13.5%, £14.75], a blend of Grenache/Mourvedre/Syrah 60/20/20% coming from large cement tanks. This cherry red wine was aromatic and perfumed - hints of stewed fruit and 'farmyard' elements [from the Mourvedre]. There was appealing freshness, good structure with spice and liquorice notes, giving lots to 'chew' on!

We moved domaine and level for the next wine for a **Domaine Galuval 'Le Coq Volant' Côtes du Rhône Villages 2020** [14%, £15.00] made from Grenache and Syrah grapes grown on marbled clay spoils in the Gayere Valley. This deep red wine with purple hues was skin macerated for three weeks before short barrel ageing to enhance aromas. It was a full bodied and smooth red that was definitely 'moreish', bursting with ripe berry flavours both on the nose and the palate, with hints of spices; it had long length and silky tannins.

Next we moved up another level to taste a **Le Clan des Loups Côtés du Rhône Villages Saint-Gervais 2021** [14.5%, £16.00] that had a ruby red colour and aromas of candied red fruit. This blend of Syrah/Grenache/Mourvedre and Carignan was fresh, yet powerful on the palate with good length and silky tannins. It was well appreciated!

The penultimate wine of the evening was the only one from the Northern Rhône area and a 'top' level 'cru' wine - **The Society's Exhibition Crozes-Hermitage 2021** [13.5%, £14.50] that was a deep black cherry colour made from Syrah without oak influence. This had delicious blackberry and damson fruit flavours resulting in sensational taste, at a very competitive price tag!

Our evening ended with a **Domaine Amadieu Cairanne Vieilles Vignes 2020** [14.5%, £18.95] from a village where consistent excellence has recently promoted it to 'cru' level. The vineyard is both organically and bio-dynamically certified and this wine, a blend of 50% Grenache grapes from 50 year-old vines with 20/20/10% Syrah/Mourvedre/Carignan resulted in a well structured, elegant and rounded wine. The palate was full of black fruit flavours, black pepper and spice; a wine of quality that will last up to 7-8 years and a most pleasant way to end a most informative tasting.

The Society's thanks are extended to Heather for her carefully chosen selection of Rhône wines to inform members of the range, quality and hierarchy of wine production in the region. This was a most enjoyable tasting and presentation. Members present should now be better informed regarding what to look out for in the supermarket!