

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
September 2023 Tasting
Spy Valley Wines, New Zealand
Presented by Tony Cloke

This month, we welcomed back Tony Cloke, who last presented to our Society six years ago. Based in the UK, Tony is European Sales Manager for Spy Valley Wines. He started out as Brand Manager several years ago when he worked for Bibendum Wine, their UK market partner. Spy Valley Wines is one of the most highly regarded wineries in the Marlborough region of New Zealand. Spy Valley can trace its history back to the 1990s when Bryan and Jan Johnson established their 320 acre vineyard on land considered too hard, too dry and too infertile for wine. But their passion won through and the family-run estate flourished. Today, they export seven varietals to 35 countries across the world. A key advantage of having an evening dedicated to one wine estate is that we were able to taste several of the varietals produced on the estate.

Our first white wine of the evening was a **Satellite Spy Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2022** [12.5%, £10.00] the vineyard's 'entry level' wine. 98% of the grapes used come from the vineyard and the remaining 2% from a neighbour's. It was a very pale yellow in colour and had a delicate nose of citrus and lime. On the palate it was youthful, juicy and fresh. The style is drier and more restrained compared with other fruit-bursting types from the area.

Our second wine was a **Spy Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2022** [12.5%, £13.00] made with grapes from the vineyard's best. Again, very pale in colour with citrus and floral notes on the nose, this was a more intense and fuller-bodied wine with fruit and minerality intermingled and fresh mouth-watering acidity. This wine will last for about 5 years whereas the first must be consumed young.

Our third will last even longer - a **Spy Valley E Block Sauvignon Blanc 2021** [13.5%, £15.00] that was again pale but with a floral and peachy nose. On the palate flavours of passion fruit and lime intermingled with layers of salty minerality, ending with superb well-balanced acidity. The second and third wines were preferred.

We then moved on to two other white varietals; our first was a **Spy Valley Riesling 2016** [13.5%, £14.00] that was a brighter yellow colour with hints of honeysuckle and lime on the nose that had the typical petrol dimension of this grape. As an older wine it was fuller and richer in the mouth with a dry and persistent finish.

Our white wines ended with a **Spy Valley Pinot Gris 2020** [14%, £15.00] made from late-picked grapes. Pale in colour with pear and ginger aromas this wine was off-dry with hints of oak and would be excellent with the right food accompaniment.

Many looked forward to the reds - all of the same grape variety - Pinot Noir. Our first was an 'entry level' **Satellite Spy Valley Pinot Noir 2020** [13%, £16.00] the increase in price reflecting the difficulties of production encountered with this grape. It had the typical translucent, pale cherry-red colour associated with the grape and might have tasted better slightly chilled? It did not impress!

We looked forward to better and got it with a **Spy Valley Pinot Noir 2020** [13.5%, £20.00] that had a darker colour and some opaqueness. The nose had interesting hints of black cherries, plums and spice that were replicated on the palate with notes of vanilla oak. This was a finely-balanced wine with a long finish.

Our final tasting wine was a **Spy Valley Envoy Pinot Noir 2016** [12.5%, £25.00] similar in colour to the previous wine. It had aromas of plum and herbs on the nose and hints of chocolate on the palate accompanied by well balanced red fruit and medium tannins. It was generally well received.

Then we had a surprise - an extra wine to taste! This was a well-aged **Envoy Sauvignon Blanc 2015** just to experience a wine of this vintage. Some considered it disappointing and were not impressed but others liked it enough to order some. There's wine tasting for you!

Members would like to extend their gratitude to Tony for his interesting and lively presentation of Spy Valley Wines. The selection certainly got members talking, to be brought to order on many occasions!