

**WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY**  
**November 2023 Tasting**  
**Wines of the Loire**  
**Presented by Alun Griffiths MW**

It is with enormous pleasure that we welcomed back Master of Wine Alun Griffiths to present our November tasting. Alun is a great friend of our Society and needed no introduction to many of our members. We know that his evenings with us are always informative, interesting and fun. For the benefit of our newer members and Focus Readers, who may not know Alun, he has been a Master of Wine since 1991. For many years, he was Wine Director at Berry Bros & Rudd and more recently he was based in Hong Kong. Alun is now once again UK based and is non-Executive Chairman of Thorman Hunt, a family-run specialist wine shipper, sourcing premium artisanal wine for the finest restaurants, hotels and trade professionals in London and the UK. This role gives him access to their extensive portfolio of wines and tonight he has chosen to present wines from the Loire Valley, building upon a recent visit to the region. Alun also lectures on wine and has been a panel judge at the International Wine Challenge and the Decanter Wine Awards Competition. He's also a regular member of the Decanter Magazine tasting panel. Prices quoted below, except for the first wine, are as offered to our members on the night; retail prices will be higher.

A full-house eagerly awaited Alun's selection of wines, the first of which was a **Muscadet de Sevre-et-Maine Sur Lié Domaine de Ratelle 2021** [12%, £8.25]. This pale lemon-coloured wine from the western Loire, was bone-dry and without any oak influence. Subtle on the nose and on the palate, it was light and refreshing with a steely slightly saline grip - an excellent accompaniment to shellfish and white fish dishes.

Our second white wine was a **Savennières La Croix Picot Domaine Fournier Longchamps 2018** [13.5%, £23.05] a dry Chenin Blanc grown on schist, clay and slate soils. This wine is aged for 12 months in oak barrels and spends another 6 months on fine lees in large oak vats. Pale gold in colour with aromas of pear, yellow plum and a hint of citrus, on the palate this biodynamic wine had a minerally and steely grip and long length - a most enjoyable grand-cru-level wine!

Our third wine was another Chenin Blanc experience from the village of Vouvray - a **Vouvray Clos de Rougemont Domaine Vigneau-Chevreau 2022** [13.5%, £18.23]. Again pale gold in colour, with aromas of quince, almond and pineapple and a touch of residual sugar that gave it a distinct off-dry taste, this organic wine had a tropical richness and complexity on the palate that demonstrated the versatility of the grape.

Our final dry white wine was a **Sancerre Domaine Arnaud & Stephanie Dezat 2022** [13%, £18.13] that was pale lemon in colour and surprisingly fruity on the palate for a Sauvignon Blanc that gave it a tiny hint of sweetness for the grape. Controlled fermentation in stainless steel tank and two months on fine lees results in a crisp, fresh wine with an excellent fruit/acidity balance with the underlying limestone soils contributing definite minerality in the mouth. Overall a most interesting white wine tasting experience!

And then came the reds served slightly cool at about 18C - Alun made it clear that he considers drinking temperature important. Our first was a **Chinon La Cuisine de me Mère Domaine Grosbois** [12.5%, £15.23] from a central Loire location. This cherry red Cabernet Franc is vinified in oak and concrete and considered an entry-level wine. It was a fresh, light bodied wine, still young but approachable with lots of bright red fruit and herbaceous notes and perhaps a hint of pepper.

Next came a **Saumur Champigny-sur-Marne Vieilles Vignes Chateau de Villeneuve 2021** [12.5%, £19.33] - a more mature Cabernet Franc with good dark cherry red colour from oak tank ageing. This wine comes from old vines grown on clay/limestone soils and was a blend from three vineyards. It had a concentrated fruity flavour, smoky spices, velvety tannins and a weighty structure that will support ageing.

The reds ended with a **Sancerre Rouge Domaine Firmin Dezat 2022** [12.55, £18.53] made from 25 year-old vines. This Pinot Noir had a characteristic cherry red colour and translucency, a delicate bouquet, and a good backbone of minerality. Overall it was in Alun's words 'clean, balanced but not profound'!

For the last wine we returned to Chenin Blanc for a sweet white wine - a **Coteaux de l'Aubance les Trois Schistes Doamine Montgilet 2018** 50cl [10%, £19.12] blended from wine from three parcels of land south of Angers. This wine had an amber-gold colour with notes of honey and citrus on the nose. The palate was full of marmalade flavours and apricot and an amazing balance of sweetness and acidity..finesse, elegance and freshness - absolutely gorgeous!

Members present wish to thank Alun for a most enjoyable and interesting tasting of Loire wines, especially perhaps the experience of the versatility of the Chenin Blanc grape. Each one of us must have learnt something new about wines of the Loire region from his considerable knowledge and experience as an MW!