

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
December 2025 Tasting
'A Raid on the Chair's Cellar'
Presented by Keith Cooper

At this month's tasting we celebrated Christmas early! And we did that in style by raiding the Chair's Cellar again! Yes, Keith had dug deep into his cellar to bring us some superb wines, which certainly got us in the mood for the upcoming Christmas celebrations. Following a bubbly and a couple of classy whites, the main focus was on the reds. Those of you that know Keith's tastes well would expect a mature Bordeaux, along with some of his favourites from Portugal, Australia and Argentina. There was also a top red from California. And to finish the evening he served an aged vintage port. Foodwise, there was the usual bread and cheese, supplemented with some other delicious festive nibbles. Most of the wines listed below are available from The Wine Society or Caviste.

The tasting started with the Welcome wine - a **Simonsig Kaapse Vonkel Cap Classique Brut 2023 Stellenbosch South Africa** [12%, £16.95] a traditional-method, champagne-blend sparkling wine that has won numerous awards for different vintages. The nose and flavours were similar, with white peach/apple/pear and hints of citrus evident in this light golden-hued wine. It was elegant, crisp and dry, with fine and persistent bubbles and a lovely acidity. A promising start...

The first white wine was a **Niepoort Bairrada Quinta da Baixo 2020 Bairrada Portugal** [12%, £13.00], a four indigenous-grape blend. This pale coloured wine aged in cement tanks had strong citric aromas with peaches and white flower notes. The palate had a silky texture, bright citrus acidity, and flavours of orchard fruits with hints of fresh herbs. Freshness was persistent with a long clean finish.

The last white was a very pale coloured **Rusden Christian Chenin Blanc 2024 Barossa Australia** [13%, £23.00] that had everything...complexity, balance and ageing potential. The fresh citrus and fruit notes of guava, pear and spice on the nose were evident also on the textural palate from ageing on the lees and barrel fermentation. It had excellent acidity and a clean finish. So far...so good. what comes next??

The reds started with an **Alma Fria Pinot Noir Plural 2023 Coast Sonoma USA** [13%, £44.00], a 'cool-climate' red from four vineyards [hence plural]. This wine had a darker colour than its French equivalent with aromas of raspberry and cherry accompanied by citrus and forest notes. These aromas were also replicated on the palate where they were precisely balanced with acidity levels and supported by gentle tannins. Elegant and completely captivating!

Next, not unexpectedly, came a **Chateau Cissac Médoc 2014 Bordeaux France** [13%, £23.00] that was even darker in colour than the previous wine - a dark ruby red. This was a 75/20/5% blend of Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot/Petit Verdot with cassis and graphite aromas; it was medium-bodied with some oak being evident. On the palate it was dry with fairly strong acidity and strong tannins. 'A good honest Médoc, par excellence' [MW].

We then went south for our next red - a **Mateus Nicolas de Almeida 'Mater-Dome' 2007 Douro Portugal** [13.5%, £25.00] that had a dense dark cherry-red colour. It had a lovely fresh and sweet-fruited nose with a touch of biscuit savouriness. On the palate it was silky, had mellow tannins and good acidity - another well-balanced wine.

A return across the world brought us a **Rusden Driftsand Grenache Syrah Mourvèdre 2022 Barossa Australia** [14.2%, £22.00] - a Rhône-style blend. Minimal intervention in growing and subtle oak gave us a dark-cherry-red wine with red fruit aromas and floral lavender notes with some pepper spice. It was yet another perfectly balanced wine!

The last red was a **Kaiken Disobedience by Francis Mallmann 2020 Mendoza Argentina** [14.5%, £28.50]. This Bordeaux grape blend had a very dark and dense almost black cherry colour echoed by similar aromas with hints of spice and chocolate. On the palate it was full and smooth and absolutely delightful!

And to end this wonderful tasting there was a **Warre 2011 Douro Portugal** [20%, £50.0] vinified from indigenous grapes. This Vintage Port was rich and full in the mouth with sweet blackberry notes; it had a touch of minerality with a velvety finish - a fitting conclusion to our Christmas tasting!

A rapturous and spontaneous applause by Society Members present was proof of the success of the evening. Immense thanks to Keith for sharing some of his favourite wines. As one member was heard to mutter... 'this man knows his wines'!