

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
June 2026 Tasting
The Wines of Slovenia and Romania
Presented by Andrew Walker of Solaris Wines

This month we welcomed Andrew Walker, Director of Solaris Wines, who presented to us for the first time. Solaris is an independent wine retailer and they are proud of that! Andrew's aim is to seek out fascinating wines and passionate producers. He has visited every vineyard on their list and knows each winemaker personally. So we were sure to hear plenty about the personalities involved. Andrew presented his choice of wines from two Eastern European countries - Slovenia and Romania. Regular members will know that the Whitewater Valley Wine Society has recently had presentations of both Slovakian and Ukrainian wines...and we've been very impressed with the wines from both countries. This evening was our opportunity to find whether the wines from Slovenia and Romania were equally as impressive and affordable.

Our first wine of the evening was a **Frelih Cvceek Od Fare 2024 Slovenia** [£16.00, 9.5%] that had an attractive rose-pink colour. This wine is a traditional blend of both red and white grapes from the Dolenjska region, with berry aromas. On the palate it was crisp and very dry; initially it had a very refreshing acidity that some members began to dislike as being too dry after a few sips! Best kept for extremely hot, heatwave days, perhaps?

Our second wine had a pale-lemon colour - a **Prince Stirbey Cramposie 2024 Romania** [£19.00, 12%] made from a rare variety of Romanian grape prized for its fresh floral notes, subtle minerality and lively acidity. It was certainly different and unlike any other white wine; it was generally acceptable to most and liked by a few.

Next came a **Prince Stirbey Feteasca Regala 2023 Romania** [£20.00, 13%] that was a pale-lemon in colour with a floral and fruity bouquet reminiscent of Muscat. Taste on the palate however was much drier by comparison with flavours of green apple and stone fruits with citrus notes. It was medium-bodied with a clean, dry and elegant finish.

Our last white wine was a **Sanctum Chardonnay 2023 Slovenia** [£21.00, 12.5%] made by the Sanctum Winery in the Podravje Region, following the Burgundian tradition. This pale gold-coloured wine was indeed French-like in aroma and taste with fresh apple, apricot and citrus notes on the nose and a palate of crisp acidity with a buttery, oaky roundness from imported French oak. It was well-liked by members who prefer French rather than New World type Chardonnay!

The first red wine of the evening continued the French link in grape and oak - a **Sanctum Pinot Noir 2022** [£26.00, 12.5%], the winery's entry-level wine. This wine had a typical bright, light-ruby, translucent colour with aromas of red berry fruit, cherry and herbal and earthy notes. The palate had flavours of cherries and plums with a bright and lively acidity, soft tannins and a long finish. It was well-liked!

We returned to Romania for the next two reds, the first of which was a **Prince Stirbey Negru Dragasani Rezerva Romania 2020** [£24.00, 15%] that had a dark and dense, dark-cherry colour. Aromas of raspberry and black fruits backed by various spices were evident on the nose whilst the palate was fruit-driven. In the mouth it was well-balanced with a silky, crisp texture and smooth tannins, helped by 12 months plus in locally sourced or French oak barrels.

The next wine had an even denser blackcurrant colour - a **Prince Stirbey Cabernet Sauvignon Rezerva Romania 2019** [15%, £26.00] that had spent at least 12 months in oak barriques. There were aromas of highly intense ripe black fruits that transferred into the mouth full of rich, deep-black-fruit flavours accompanied by spice, subtle oak and velvety tannins. This was a well-appreciated mouthful!

And to end we tasted a **Fedora Goli Berg Slovenia 2021** [£24.00, 13.5%] 34/30/25% blend of Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon/Refosco grown organically. This had a dark-cherry colour with aromas of ripe red berries with notes of spice. It had a lighter feel in the mouth than the previous wine but was still full of ripe red-berry fruits with hints of vanilla and pepper. This was a lovely wine to end our tasting - deep, fruity, full-bodied with velvety tannins!

Members present enjoyed learning about new wines from Eastern Europe and extend their grateful thanks to Andrew for his selection of wines and interesting commentary.