

WINE TASTING 2013

APRIL 2013: INAUGRAL MEETING OF THE WINE TASTING GROUP

We held our first meeting on 22nd April - and a very convivial evening was had by all. Eighteen of us tasted the best part of 16 bottles of wine – white, red and rose and scored them all. I must confess that towards the end of the evening, my taste buds were becoming a bit erratic.

Our favourites were a couple of New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs and an Australian blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz.

MAY 2013: AUSTRALIAN WINES

21 enthusiastic wine lovers tasted 11 Australian wines. There were clear favourites. Among the whites, we were most enthusiastic about a Rawnsley Chardonnay from New South Wales. The two highest scoring wines of the evening were reds, however: The Cover Drive Cabernet Sauvignon from Coonewarra available from Morrisons and The Black Stump Durif/Shiraz available from Laithwaites.

No.	Wine	Tasting Notes	Score
1	Telegraph Station. Semillon. SE Australia. 2012	Clear colour. Faint smell of gooseberry. Not much length. Not much taste. Watery/thin – a bit like drinking water with a bit of lemon. Dry. No finish.	4.7
2	Wolf Blass Yellow Label. Semillon. South Australia. 2012	Pale/light straw. Lychee/melon. Crisp finish. Full flavour. Hint of oak.	6.4
3	Yellow Tail. Chardonnay. SE Australia. 2012	Pale straw colour. Musty, floral smell. Citrus and peach. Would be improved if served more chilled. No finish. Quite acidic.	4.9
4	Rawnsley. Chardonnay. New South Wales. 2012	Pale straw colour. Good nose. Pineapple/grapefruit. Good length. Floral nose. Fuller flavour. Citrus/melon. Long finish	7.2*
5	Yalumba. Merlot. South Australia. 2011	Medium red colour. Plaster nose! Slightly harsh. Blackcurrant, Chemical taste. Rather leathery tannins. Short finish.	5.5
6	Rawnsley. Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot. SE Australia. 2012	Medium/Light red. Minerally nose. Leathery/cedary bouquet. Blackcurrant. Young. Easy drinking. Rather sharp. Short finish.	5.5
7	The Cover Drive. Cabernet Sauvignon. Coonewarra. 2010 Morrison's £11.45	Dark red. Slightly sweet start. Blueberry, blackcurrant and plums. Full bodied. Long finish. Well rounded tannins. Rich	7.7*
8	Hardy's. Cabernet Sauvignon. SE Australia. Tesco's on offer at £5.99	Light red colour. Mineral nose. Black berry fruit and spices. Long finish. Slightly harsh tannins. Aftertaste of nicotine?	5.0
9	Lindeman's. Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon. SE Australia. 2012	Light red colour. Blackcurrant and blackberry nose. Not as full bodied nor as fruity as 7. A nice quaffable wine.	6.6
10	The Black Stump. Durif/Shiraz. SE Australia. 2012	Deep red, inky colour. Intense bouquet. Full flavour. Sweet beginning. Blackberry. Smooth, long finish.	7.9*
11	Signal Post. Shiraz. SE Australia. 2012	Pale red. Disappointing nose. Spice and cedar? On the nose. Blackberry/pepper?/spice? Short finish. Tannins slightly harsh.	6.8

JUNE 2013: GUEST CONVENORS' CHOICE

In Paul's absence the wines were provided by guest convenors Rose Stennett and Ellen Tolmie.

No.	Wine	Tasting Notes	Score
1	Hardy's Legacy, Australian rose, £4.49, Tesco	Fruity, strawberry taste, sweet, a bit like fruit juice, can be drunk on its own, could be a bit stronger	5.9
2	Maison des Princes, Rose d'Anjou, £4.69 Morrisons	Pale colour, more depth and flavour, quite sweet tasting, can be drunk on its own	5.8
3	Jacob's Creek, Chardonnay, 2 for £10, Tesco	Light coloured, gooseberry nose, can be drunk on its own, but better with food, a bit oaky, easy drinking, pleasant aftertaste	5.8
4	Macon Villages, Chardonnay, 2010, £6.99, Morrisons	Bouquet of honey and vanilla, smooth tasting, good on its own or with shell fish	5.9
5	Tim Adam's Semillon, Clare Valley, 2008 £9.99, Tesco	Bouquet of grapefruit, vanilla, smoky taste, improves after a few sips, best wine so far, could improve further in 1-2 years	6.8
6	Jacob's Creek, Shiraz Cabernet, SE Australia, £7.49 (2 for £10), Tesco	Blackberry bouquet, fruity taste, a very good wine, plenty of tannins, will be better still in 4-5 years	6.1
7	McWilliams Hayfield, Pinot Noir, 2010, Tesco, £8.99	Bouquet of cherries, blackberry, not too much tannin, a very nice wine, can be drunk on its own or with a meal: beef or BBQ	8.1*
8	ARA Pathway, Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand, £11.99, Morrison's	Bouquet of berries, medium bodied, smooth, smoother than the previous wine	7.3*

JULY 2013: SUMMER STUNNER

We had a very toothsome wine tasting of sparkling wines accompanied by strawberries and cream - many thanks Maggie for her help.

You will see (below) that top of the pops were the first and last wines, comprising a dry Australian and a sweet Italian wine. The champagne scored quite well, but less well than the less expensive winners and no better than the Prosecco.

The wine that divided opinion most was the cherry flavoured Lambrini which attracted the highest and lowest table scores of the evening (44 and 13).

No.	Wine	Tasting Notes	Score
1	Hardy's Crest, Pinot Noir/Chardonnay, SE Australia	Pale colour, no bouquet, quite dry, acquiring grassy and pineapple flavours as it warmed slightly, peppery finish, dry, pleasant after taste.	7.0*
2	Bella Cucina, Pinot Spumante, Italy, £6	Slightly sweeter wine, very little nose, mineral and grassy notes, slight pineapple taste as it warmed slightly.	5.7
3	Cordoniu Original, Cava, Spain	Bubbly, grassy and pineapple flavours, served slightly warmer than the two previous wines, slightly acidic after taste.	5.9
4	Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte, Brut, France, Morrison's reduced to £14.99 from £29.99	Very little bouquet, rounded (but sharp to some), slightly grapey taste, lots of very small bubbles, slightly peppery after taste.	6.8
5	Cordoniu, Vintage Rose Cava, 2010, Spain	Rather bland, faint taste of red fruits.	5.6
6	Lambrini, Cherry Flavoured Fruit Wine, UK	Bouquet a bit like medicine, bright pink colour, sweet and flavoursome, very strong cherry flavour.	5.4
7	Carte Turquoise, Baumard, Cremant du Loire, 2009, France	Demi-sec, pleasant aroma, well balanced, creamy texture, slight tang of citrus, gooseberry notes, long (but taste didn't linger for some), fruity finish – brought back from a wine tasting holiday in France.	6.3
8	Lambrini Original, Slightly Sparkling Perry, UK	Rather chemical smell, taste of pears, slightly chemical after taste.	4.5
9	Plaza Central Prosecco, Brut, Treviso, Italy	Grapey bouquet, tastes of pears and peaches.	6.8
10	Asti, Sweet Sparkling Wine, Asda	Grapey/elderflower bouquet, fruity, very sweet dessert wine, would go well with a dry cheese or a pudding, a straightforward uncomplicated wine.	7.8*

AUGUST 2013: LUSITANIAN EXPLORER

We did not really care for the vino verdes, except for wine number 5. Red wine number 10 scored the highest of the evening by some margin. We gave it 110 points overall and the next highest was 81!

No.	Wine	Tasting Notes	Score
1	Quinta de la Espiga Branco, Lisboa, 2012	Light straw colour, hint of gooseberry and rhubarb bouquet, similar flavours, plus a little apple, slightly acidic or sharp aftertaste, could accompany white meat.	5.0
2	The Wine Society's Vinho Verde, 2012	Pale straw colour, very slightly sparkling, citrus aroma, taste of green apples/citrus, little aftertaste.	5.0
5	Adega de Pegoes Colheita Seleccionada, Setubal, 2012	Paler gold, a slightly fusty nose (hint of gooseberry), slightly sweet first taste followed by buttery, creamy mid taste, followed by a lingering dry finish. Subtle flavours of gooseberry and grass. The highest score of 4 Portuguese whites in the tasting. Good value for money.	6.0
6	Caves de Pegoes Dry Muscat, 2012	Pale straw colour, grapes and elderflower scent, slightly floral flavour, slight sherry, lingering aftertaste.	6.0
7	Cortello, 2012	Purple colour, rather stale nose, young and rather unsophisticated taste, hints of red fruit, peppery notes, short finish, overall 'neither nowt nor summat'. To drink with food perhaps a barbeque.	5.0
9	Porta Velha, Tras-os-Montes, 2010	Dark and purple, dark skinned fruit nose, hint of blueberries, smooth and bitter with vanilla aftertaste, plentiful tannins, robust but without a lot of depth.	6.0
10	Preto Branco Reserva, Barraida, 2008	Dark plum colour, christmas pudding and fruit nose, full bodied, bitter damson first taste, mid taste: vanilla and a soft and long finish, a hint of port in the aftertaste, full bodied, the best of the 4 Portuguese reds in the tasting.	8.5*
11	Bairrida Reserva, 2011	Bright red raspberry colour, a slightly sharp first taste with berry overtones, hint of liquorice, the middle is sour/acidic with strong tannins - earthy, short finish – disappointing.	6.5

SEPTEMBER 2013: SAUVIGNON BLANC & CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Our favourite Sauvignon Blanc was the Matua from New Zealand that we liked far more than any of the others and which is a pretty reasonable £6.59. Our favourite red was The Cover Drive, a 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon from Australia. Our next favourite was the Barefoot Cab Sav from California which beat many of the more highly priced reds and at £6.99 is a little more than half the cost of The Cover Drive.

No.	Wine	Tasting Notes	Score
1	Luis Felipe Edwards, Private Cellar, Sauvignon Blanc, Chile Valle Central, 2012, £4.99	Light, very pale colour, citrus notes to faint bouquet, medium dry, fresh tasting, possibly good with fish or salads, medium length, slightly acidic after taste, overall rather bland.	6.1
2	Ara Pathway, Sauvignon Blanc, Single Estate Marlborough, New Zealand, 2012, £6.59	Very green pale. Aromatic, apple bouquet, tangerine/citrus notes, light bodied, long vanilla finish.	5.8
3	Touraine, Calvet, Val de Loire, Sauvignon Blanc, 2012, £7.99	Pale colour, pleasant citrus and elderflower bouquet, mellow taste, hint of rhubarb, grapefruit undertones, neither sweet nor sour, lingers on the palate, pleasant aftertaste (acidic for some).	6.6
4	Casillero del Diablo, Sauvignon Blanc, Chile, 2012, £5.99	Very pale, green/yellow colour. Lots of flavour, hints of apple, peaches, rhubarb and gooseberries, slight oakiness, would be good with chicken or fish, short finish.	6.3
5	Matua, Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand, Marlborough, 2012, £6.59	Straw coloured. Powerful, fruity bouquet, some elderflower, grape taste, hint of grapefruit, would be good with chicken or fish. Sharp edges. Sits high on the palate.	7.6*
6	Les Paroisses, Pouilly Fume, 2010, £7.48	Pale, delicate floral bouquet, Hint of Muscat taste. Could be drunk on its own or with white meat or fish. Short finish. Unpleasant aftertaste for some.	6.7
7	The Cover Drive, Cabernet Sauvignon, South Australia, 2008, 14.5%, £11.49	Deep bouquet and taste of blackcurrants and blackberry, hint of whisky, sweet aftertaste, complex, well-structured wine, medium tannins, tasted even better after being in the glass for a while, compared to some others that faded away.	8.1*
8	Casillero del Diablo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chile Valle Central, 2012, 13.5%, £7.99	Dark deep red/purple colour, fruity, plum taste, dry lingering taste. Others found the bouquet poor and the taste rather thin.	6.7
9	Barefoot, Cabernet Sauvignon, California, 2012?, 13%, £6.99	Ripe and full bodied, pleasant taste, could accompany beef.	7.9*
10	Wolf Blass, Yellow Label, Cabernet Sauvignon, South Australia, 2011, 13.5%, £9.99	Peppery and full bodied, blackcurrant/chocolate nose, smooth tannins.	7.5*
11	High Tide, Cabernet Sauvignon, Isla Negra Chile, 2012, 13%, £5.49	Light colour, cherry bouquet, chocolate notes, some found the aftertaste poor.	6.9
12	William Morrison Specially Selected, Cabernet Sauvignon, Australia, Limestone Coast, 14%, £7.49	Poor bouquet, dull and sharp taste, harsh tannins, the wine seemed to be too young to drink now, disappointing.	5.4

OCTOBER 2013: SOUTH AFRICAN WINES

The scores all contained quite wide variations, although the total scores are quite similar. I guess that the message there is that if you taste a wine you really like, make a note of it. The top white was a blended wine which most people seemed to like for its complexity. The second favourite white was the Wine Society's own Chenin Blanc. The top red was the well-priced blend of Touriga Nacional and Shiraz, followed fairly closely by the (even less expensive) Wolftrap.

No.	Wine	Tasting Notes	Score
1	The Wine Society's Chenin Blanc, Stellenbosch, 13%, 2013, £6.75	Very pale straw colour, peachy, slightly insipid bouquet, peachy/kiwi fruit taste with caramel/toffee notes, reasonable finish, easy to drink disliked by some group members.	7.0*
2	Franschhoek Vineyards Semillon, Franschhoek, 2012, 14%, £7.50	Straw colour, distinctive grapefruit/green apple bouquet, tastes of grapefruit and spicy vanilla. Improved in the glass – slightly 'catty' straight from the bottle. Taste lingered for a long time. Easy drinking with or without food.	6.7
3	A Fistful of Schist Reserve Chenin Blanc, Coastal 2013, 13.5%, £5.95	Very pale yellow colour, faint but fruity bouquet of hedgerow and spring, gooseberry taste, hint of honey, lemons, elderflower, quite high acidity.	6.7
4	Kaap Plass Sauvignon Blanc, Western Cape, 2013, 12.5%, £5.50	Very pale straw colour, gooseberry and apple taste and smell, hint of elderflower, very smooth, high acidity, long finish, easy to drink, not as fruity as New Zealand sauvignon blancs, slightly metallic.	6.9
5	The Liberator Special Edition, 'The Lone Ranger', Piekenierskloof, 2012, 13.5%, £8.95	Very pale straw colour, delicate floral aroma – gooseberry and orange blossom, refreshing complex tastes, easy to drink, not too dry, lingers on the tongue, could drink with white meat or fish.	7.2*
6	Robertson Winery Chardonnay, 2013, 13%, £5.50	Light straw colour, pleasant smell – hint of polish and lemon/lime aromas dessert fruit tastes, sweet long finish, attracted a wide range of scores, too young and too lemony for some.	5.6
7	The Wolftrap, Western Cape, 2012, 14.5%, £6.95	Purple colour, black berry and floral aromas, hints of blackberry, black currant and vanilla, leather sofas, hint of sweetness, pepper, spice and tannins on the finish, will be better still in a couple of years.	7.8*
8	The Liberator Special Edition "Baroque 'n' Roll", Stellenbosch, 2009, 14.5%, £8.95	Rich ruby colour, hint of damson and blackcurrant bouquet, black berry and fruits of the forest predominant in taste but with notes of chocolate, plum, sandalwood and mace, fabulous intense peppery finish, strong smooth tannins.	6.9
9	Villera Down to Earth Touriga Nacional-Shiraz, Stellenbosch, 2011, 14%, £7.50	Purple colour, slightly disappointing bouquet – hint of leather, fruity taste, touch of port, bramble and smoky notes, some complexity, subtle, long finish, will improve further in time.	8.0*
10	Bon Cap, The Perfect Blend, Robertson, 2009, 14.5%, £9.95	Deep tawny red colour, fruity bouquet, cherry and blackcurrant taste, complex, spicy, rich and hearty with a long finish.	7.0
11	Percheron Old Vine Cinsault, Western Cape, 2012, 14.5%, £5.75	Cherry coloured, little bouquet, acidic taste, 'made the mouth pucker', wine could do with more ageing, not well balanced.	6.3
12	Douglas Green, Shiraz-Viognier, Western Cape, 2012, 14%, £5.75	Cherry colour, black berry fruits on nose and taste, notes of cedar, spice and pepper, high tannins, well balanced.	7.3*

13	The Coop, Fairtrade Shiraz, Western Cape, 2012, 14%, £5.99	Slightly chemical aroma, dark purple colour, mineral bouquet, black berry fruits, improves in the glass and will benefit from ageing in the bottle.	6.7
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NOVEMBER 2013: Italian explorer: Unfamiliar grapes from Italy

23 of us tasted 7 Italian wines made from unique Italian grape varieties. Our favourite red was the Salento Trezanti. Our favourite white was the Verdiccio. both these wines are often on offer at less than £6. One table really liked the Prosecco, but others scored it the lowest score of the evening.

No.	Wine	Tasting Notes	Score
1	Verdiccio del Nostro Meglio, 2012, 12.5% (Grape: Verdiccio) £5.99	Pale straw colour, faint aroma of elderflower and wet grass after a storm smell. Nice balanced taste of citrus, kiwi fruit, grape and apple. The wine softened further after warming slightly in the glass. Would go well with fish. A pleasant unchallenging wine. Good value on price reduction.	7.0*
2	Planeto Alastro, 2012, 12.5%, (Grape: Grecanico with some Fiano) £12.99	Limey yellow/mid straw colour; aromatic, pleasant bouquet of grapefruit, melon. Taste: young pineapple, mixed fruit; little finish, slightly sour taste.	5.6
3	Stemmari Grillo, 2011, 13% (Grape: Grillo) £9.99	Mid straw colour, rather unpleasant catty smell, which wore off. Thereafter a floral bouquet. Sweeter than the other white wines; complex slightly earthy taste with notes of apricot and white fruits, peppery finish. Ideal with chicken or fish. Should be decanted and served at near room temperature to taste its best.	6.6
4	Martini Prosecco, 11.5% (Grape: Glera) £6.99 reduced from £9.99	Light straw colour, very slight bouquet which quickly evaporates. Disappointing: a bit like slightly alcoholic and citrus infused lemonade. A sherbert taste with a quick rush of bubbles which quickly wore off. Poor value even at a reduced price. If you like Prosecco, don't buy this wine!	6.0
5	Salento Trezanti, 2011 12.5%, (Grape: Negroamaro) £5.29	Inky black damson/plum/black cherry colour. Bouquet: intense aroma, black cherry and berry, good, strong and aromatic. Medium bodied. Taste: black cherry, caramel, mineral notes. Low tannins. Smooth, rich and quaffable. Not a particularly sophisticated taste, but a pleasant one. Could accompany steak, venison or lamb. Good value on price reduction.	7.5*
6	Contea di Castiglione Barbaresco, 2009, 14%, (Grape: Nebbiolo) £7.99	Tawny colour, Smell: cherry, black fruits, leather notes. Taste: Slightly woody but with hints of christmas pudding, liquorice, rhubarb, oak and spices. Medium bodied. A dry finish with quite sharp tannins. Would be better with food. Deserves to be decanted before serving and might benefit from further ageing.	4.3
7	Brunello di Montalcino, 2005/6, 13.5% (Grape: Sangiovese) £14.99	Dark tawny colour. Prunes, spices and Christmas pudding bouquet. Medium bodied. Well structured and rounded taste. Lingering on the palate. Smooth tannins. Ideal with game pie, venison.	6.7

DECEMBER 2013

In December we had a special Christmas celebration 'sock' blind tasting. Perhaps the best thing that could be said of the results is that we all have some scope for improvement! Still, as they say, lots of practice over the next year should improve our palates no end....and this sort of learning is rather enjoyable. One of the big surprises of the evening was a wine made from grapes grown near Colchester that tasted uncannily like a rather good Bordeaux.