

Around the World in Two Grapes

February 22nd 2020

by Ormond Smith

With a “doff of the cap” to Jules Verne, the first 2020 Tasting of the Goustevin effected a similar “voyage”, but in vinicultural terms, tasting only two grape varieties but with three examples of each from different parts of the wine growing world. The Loch Ness Country House Hotel on the outskirts of the city on Saturday February 22nd proved to be an excellent venue for the Tasting and although support for the evening was unfortunately slightly reduced in numbers due to last minute circumstances beyond the control of the members concerned, over 20 oenophiles and guests took their places for what turned out to be an innovative and most interesting Tasting.

After a welcoming flute of Riesling Sekt Brut “Zeltinger Himmelreich” from our good friend and winemaker Leo Kappes in the Mosel, Connetable Nicol welcomed all and outlined the format of the evening as well as updating news of the next event - to be held in Inverness’ Botanic Gardens in May (details on the Goustevin website <https://goustevinscotland.com>). The organisation



Introduction to the Tasting
by the Connetable

of the Tasting was done by members of the new Events Committee and Nicol handed over “the reins”, or should that be “passed the vine branch” to Caroline Duncan who outlined the format for the Tasting which involved the comparison of three Riesling wines, thereafter and with the meal, three examples of Grenache. Caroline continued with her preamble on the Riesling grape and then after the “pourers” Christina and Kate had dispensed the first example, Caroline gave a brief discourse on the **2018 Exquisite Collection Clare Valley Riesling** from Clare Valley, around 100 kms north of Adelaide in South Australia. A very pale green in the glass, the nose exhibits hints of citrus, characteristic limes and grapefruit and the palate softens to subtle tangerines with good minerality – a very dry wine with good acidity and a sustained long mouth-watering finish. Retaining some of the Clare Valley in one glass, the second Riesling was dispensed, a **2017 Meyer-Fonné Reserve** from Katzenthal in Alsace, just west of Colmar in the foothills of the Vosges mountains, the discourse being effectively delivered by Dick Beach. A pale yellow in the glass, the citric nose gave light hints of petroleum, a dry wine with good balance and medium acidity, the fruity finish was not overly long but most pleasant. It compared well against the Clare Valley, displaying the elegance



The selection of wines for the
Tasting

associated with Alsace Rieslings. Moving on, as they say, we awaited the third and final variation of the Riesling grape, a **2017 Kung Fu Girl Riesling** from Quincy in Washington State in the extreme north-west of the US, just east of Seattle, with the discourse given by the writer. Again a light yellow in the glass, the aromas combined apricots and white peaches with just a hint of honeysuckle while the off dry palate exhibited light floral tones coupled with citric blossom and lime. A well balanced wine with a satisfyingly long finish. Before the prices were revealed, a “straw poll” on preferences among the members resulted in a surprisingly marked lack of support for both the Clare Valley and Meyer-Fonné wines, the preference being for the slightly off dry Kung Fu Girl from Washington State. On the pricing front, the Clare Valley came in at £6.99, and both

the Meyer-Fonné and Kung Fu Girl at £16. As an aside, the unusual name of the Washington State Riesling emanated from “renegade”* winemaker Charles Smith enjoying a Chinese takeaway whilst watching a somewhat notorious martial arts film.....a “eureka” moment occurred and he went on to produce a “killer wine” to accompany Asian food and it’s been “kickin’ ass” ever since! * In the west of the US, a “renegade” winemaker is one who makes good wines for the satisfaction of making good wines and not pandering to market trends and tastes.

Glasses were drained, rinsed and readied for part two of the evening, the comparison of three examples of the Grenache grape. Caroline gave a brief history of the Grenache** (the most widely planted grape in the world!) in its different guises (Garnacha in Spain) after the pourers busily dispensed the two opening examples into the glasses. The first was a **2018 Morala Riverland Old Vine Grenache** from South Australia (north-east of Adelaide), bright and very light red in the glass, the vibrant aromatic nose giving out aromas of wild strawberries, spice and even, as it described, “crunchy cranberries”. The palate



A bit of serious discussion and nosing in hand

confirmed the nose and even hinted at Turkish Delight – a refreshing although “heady” wine with good layers of fruit but a somewhat short finish. By comparison, the **2012 Marin Old Vine Garnacha** from Bodegas Ignacio in Spain’s Aragon region, south-west of the region’s capital Zaragoza was a deep dense ruby red in the glass, the nose and taste exhibiting the richness and density only available from old low yielding vines. Dark berry fruits balanced with spice and herbal notes and good oakiness gave this well balanced wine a rich lingering aftertaste. Both wines, in their own ways were slightly austere being tasted on their own and required food to fully bring out their qualities and they certainly complemented the boeuf bourguignon style main dish which was served, a most satisfying dish indeed.

With the “debris” cleared and the cheese course served, the Connetable gave a discourse on the final Grenache example of the Tasting, a **2017 Maury** from Domaine Fontanel in Roussillon in the south of France near Perpignan. This Vin Doux Naturel wine, almost 100% Grenache, has its fermentation arrested prematurely by the light addition of spirit, a similar process to Port but with less spirit, giving a lightly fortified wine displaying sweetness which “married” well with the cheese board, particularly the blue cheese. An intense ruby colour in the glass, the aromas are of ripe black cherries, cocoa with a tinge of toastiness and just that hint of Port in the background. The palate was rich, well rounded with a delicate sweetness and a long lingering aftertaste.....a perfect accompaniment to the cheeses and a most delightful way to round off the evening!



The well presented cheese plate.....tasty and excellent with the Maury!

With these red wines in practical terms being food wines, a “straw poll” of preferences was really based on their ability to compliment the dishes and while both the Morala Riverland and the Marin found favour, both coming in at £10, it was undoubtedly the Maury which “got the nod” and at £22.99, probably fair value for such an exquisite wine.

A most convivial evening in an excellent venue with good organisation, interesting and enjoyable wines, not to mention the very agreeable cuisine and service.....another successful Goustevin Scotland tasting!

** The Grenache grape, or Garnacha in Spain is thought to have originated in Aragon in north-east Spain and spread to other areas, e.g., Roussillon and Sardinia, as the Crown of Aragon expanded its territories, although in Sardinia, where the grape is called Cannonau, it is claimed that it was here that the vine originated and then spread outwards when the island was under Aragon rule. It is also known under numerous different synonyms across the globe!