**King George Chapter of the American Wine Society**



**February, 2012**

**General Discussion:**

Old News: None

New news:

If you haven’t already done so; please turn in your dues to our local chapter Treasurer (Kathleen Kuker) as well as to the National Society. The application for renewal in to the National Society is located on the website.

Everyone will need SEVEN (7) glasses for the next meeting.

Brian Jones created a historical spread sheet of the types of tastings and wines presented at the meetings. This can be an extremely useful tool when planning a presentation. It has been uploaded to the website.

**Presentation:**

*A Tour of the Loire Valley One Glass at a Time*

Brian Jones presented wines of the Loire valley in a very unique way. The group was taken on a <virtual> tasting tour of the Loire Valley beginning with Muscadet, traveling north through Saumur, Bourgueil, Vouvray, Sancerre, ending in Pouilly Fume.

General Notes About The Wines:

The tour began along the Atlantic Ocean travelling north. The Loire region is the largest producing region of France. An enormous amount is created; white being the dominant variety. The wine making styles change in each region and along the course of the river, according to the grape varieties. The greatest similarity is that in each region the wines are consistent in acidity, and are rarely fermented or aged in oak. There is a huge variation in climate and soil.

The Loire is divided into three main sections: The upper Loire is the east section; a more continental climate with hot, short summers. The terroir is typically limestone, sand and chalky soil. Varietals typical to this region are Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir.

The middle Loire enjoys a climate that is milder with moderate rainfall. “The typical varietals are Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc.

The western Loire is fifty miles from the Atlantic and is the home of Muscadet. They enjoy cooler climate and the soil is sandy or granite. The region contains an average of 30, 900 acres with tens of millions of bottles produced annually.

The Wines:

1. 2009 Chateau de la Ragotiere Muscadet Sevre et Maine, Old Vine Sur Lie

Muscadet grape is Melon de Bourgogne

100% Melon de Bourgogne

Western Loire, near Nantes.

* Very popular in the 80’s; had a style very much like Chablis, appealing to those that found “Chablis” too heavy.
* Produced in four appellations around the city of Nantes, in the West of the Loire Valley.
* Dry wine; pair with oysters, shellfish, salty seafood, white meat or soft cheeses.
* Chateau La Ragotiere was built by the noble Lore de la Ragotiere, family in the fourteenth century. The age of the vineyard is 40 – 60 years.
* 1500 cases produced.
* Soil: Silico-argillaceous on late mica schist (sand and rocks).
* The wine was produced using a Pneumatic press and very severe racking before fermentation. It was aged on fine lees for 8 months, then bottled after cold precipitation
* The nose is mineral-dominated, floral and fruity. The finish is mineral.

1. *2009 Saumur Champigny, Domaine des Varinelles*

100% Cabernet Franc

Region of Saumur, 7 apellation controllee

* Soil is chalky with limestone, 9900 acres, producing 20 million bottles.
* Reds in this region are typically aged 2 – 8 years, cellared in chalk soil caves.
* Saumur-Champigny produces a vibrant, fresh, mineral-stony Cab Franc. It is lighter, known for summer drinking.
* Pairs well with anything earthy; mushrooms, goat cheese, etc.
* Domaine des Varinelles vines are 35 – 60 years old.
* The wine was produced by 18 days of low temp maceration, pumping over every two days, aged in tanks, no fining, slight filtration.

1. 2009 Domaine de la Butte Bourgueil “Pied de la Butte” *(Who wouldn’t buy a wine named after someones butt?* : )

Bourgueil region

* “La Pied de la Butte” – pain in the butt? No – The foot of the hill, aka foothill.
* Different sediment left behind as Loire receded a million years ago. Haut de la Butte means upper slope. Pied de la Butte means foothill or lower slope.
* The region is farmed without pesticides and insecticides, including the organic ones. Harvest is done entirely by hand and produced with natural yeast.
* Pied de la Butte sees six months in steel vats before bottling, whereas the Haut de la Butte goes in to a mix of barrels aged between one and three year.
* *Humor:* The cork in the bottle has a statement on it, “Mise en bouteille”; it means literally “Put in bottle”! Ha!
* *\*\*Note: The group noticed that the nose changed dramatically as it sat in the glass (It opened up!).*

1. *2009 Domaine Pichot Coteau de la Biche Vouvray (No, doesn’t translate to “House of the bitch” ”Hill of the Doe”*

*Chenin Blanc*

Vouvray region. Produces an enormous quantity and a large variation in quality.

* Chenin Blanc in this region has flourished since the ninth century in its Central Loire.
* Vineyards are on the slopes and plateau above the small town, are ancient; 5th century.
* The soil is clay limestone chalk, 4900 acres and production of 13 million bottles annually in this region.
* The Chenin Blanc should have notes of almond, straw and quince.
* It is very weather dependent, can mature for many years.
* 1947 Huet Le Haut Lieu Moelleux runs $820
* Pairs well with Normandy cow cheese, goat cheese, chicken, veal, white sauces, asian food, seafood, etc.
* Pichot’s family is one of the oldest in Vouvray, dating back to 1739
* Coteau de la Biche is Pichot’s Vouvray domaine for dry ‘sec’ wine. Legend is that a doe once took refuge in the cellars of this domaine.
* The vineyard is planted in entirely with Chenin Blanc, vines aging from 20 to 55 years, growing on south facing hillsides, clay soil.
* Hand harvested and fermented in wooden barrels.

1. *2008 Le Chene Marchand Sancere Domaine Merlin-Cherrier*

Moving East, Sancerre region

* This region is the more famous region for white wines of France
* Terroir is rocky limestone or clay limestone, area of production around 5400 acres.
* Sauvignon Blanc is the primary varietal grown in this region.
* The Le Chene Marchand Sauvignon Blanc, 12 months on lees, native yeast, light filtration, without cold stabilization.
* The soil on this vineyard is a very stony compact chalk.
* The vineyard produces approximately 550 cases a year, with natural yeast.

1. 2008 Domain des Berthiers Pouilly Fume

Pouilly Fume region; opposite bank of the Loire from Sancerre.

* Two varietals grown in this region, Pouilly; pure Suvignon Blanc which accounts for over 95%, and a less common vinifera, Chasselas – once a significant varietal, now more of an oddity due to Phylloxera.
* Terroir is stoney-limestone or clay-limestone, covering 2100 acres, producing 6 million bottles.
* Domain des Berthiers is a 26 acre vineyard with hillsides facing S southwest.
* The Pouilly is 100 % Sauvignon Blanc from 20-30 year old vines grown in flint and limestone soil
* The wine was low-temp fermented for 3 – 4 weeks in stainless tanks. No malolactic fermentation, maturation on fine lees.

Cheers Brian for an awesome trip through the Loire Valley! Once again the group was given a great opportunity to stretch the palates, and gain some knowledge of the area in which the wines came from.

Cheers!

**Favorites and prices of the presentation:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Wine** | **White** | **Red** | **Favorite Overall** | **Price** | **Purchased** |
| #1 | 12 |  | 4 | $14 |  |
| #2 |  | 19 | 16 | $15 |  |
| #3 |  | 8 | 6 | $17 |  |
| #4 | 13 |  | 9 | $16 |  |
| #5 | 5 |  | 1 | $30 |  |
| #6 | 4 |  | 1 | $21 |  |