

## Drymen Wine Club

December 2008

Christmas comes but once a year and it is one of our blow-out nights when we raid the coffers and the cellars for the most memorable meeting of the year. The wines can be red, white or tartan and don't even have to be wines!

Eric tantalised our taste buds with a glass of Taittinger Prestige Rose. Not just a pink champagne, you can taste the red berry from the pinot noir. I would happily have stayed on that all night but there were treats ahead.

We changed the running order, due to the champers, and had the whites next. Sally, who lives in the next (proper) village and brings a completely different class of gossip to the party, gave us a thrilling, almost bubbly, lemon zesty, gin-and-tonic wine to pep us up. The Pelorus from Cloudy Bay Vineyards in NZ at £16 a bottle put a sparkle in everyone's eyes. This helped to disguise our astonishment as she related the tale of Santa's antics after the school's Christmas party. One contented teacher was happy with the present she got!

As a good accompaniment to turkey, Julia offered her very serious and seriously expensive Alban Vineyards Viognier. It burst with peaches, apricots and mandarins. We drank this in reverent silence and let the alcohol seep into our bones. Having the turkey dinner at this point would have made a lot of sense. It was the sort of wine for a good book, a log fire and solitude.

Enough thought. It was time for food. I am no Gordon Ramsay – my language is way too monochrome – so it was a selection of finger nibbles courtesy of Delia Smith and M&S, with neither a turkey nor a cranberry in sight. I admit to being more than a little fond of Delia's truffle torte and was disappointed to watch it all disappear.

Back to the wines ...

Any wine with a deep plum colour, dark cherry and chocolate tastes and a vanilla follow-through, reminds me of Christmas. Alistair had opened the Chateau Talbot Grand Cru before the snacks to give it time to breathe. Clearly he had taken guidance from his favourite wine shop, Woodwinters in Bridge of Allan, just fifty yards from his office. At £30 a bottle you don't want to be gulping it down ... yes you do. Alistair bought two cases for himself as, if you can resist, it keeps forever.

With no collaboration at all, this was followed with a Chateauneuf-du-Pape. More cherries and raspberries and a hint of spice, La Roquete is a full-bodied wine with a long finish and, at £15 a bottle, not bank breaking.

Martin is our in-house solicitor. Poor Martin is a regular. I say "poor" as he is regularly bombarded with legal questions which, I'm sure, he would rather not face. He takes it in good fettle ... rather like the evening's final wine. Made from cabernet sauvignon and brandy, this port-like fortified wine is infused

with an assortment of spices. William Ross Liqueur is based on an old family Christmas cake recipe. Christmas pudding in a glass!

And so we brought the pre-Christmas evening to a close. Those in need of sobering up stayed for coffee which, in itself, is worth a mention. Café Maraba Bourbon is a success story from Rwanda. Google the story; buy it from Sainsbury's.