

Drymen Wine Club

February 2009

We had to forego a January meeting as there was no agreement on dates or venues and, probably, a few New Year hangovers to overcome. February, as always, was the time for lovers which made the venue, Lindsay's bachelor pad, a rather contrary choice. Lindsay clearly thought otherwise and had the place overwhelmed with pink and romantic velvet red, hearts and flowers in every nook and cranny, and in deference to a Turkish brothel, strewn with feather boas and loveheart cushions. Oh, and how could I forget the sandalwood incense!

The opening had to be pink champagne – what else! Gretchen supplied a champagne with a remarkable flavour and colour, with hints of strawberries, raspberries and cherries. Laurent Perrier Rose Brut comes in a quite distinctively shaped bottle. I would have stayed with this forever until I discovered the expense of my tastes. At nearly £42 a bottle, was it worth it? Another few glasses and I'll consider the question.

Lindsay (you are such a hairdresser) wanted to supply the second wine. The expression "chav girl" meant nothing to me before drinking the red liquid in the wine glass but forever will be associated with Red Lambrini. All we needed now was Barry White on the stereo and some handbags to dance around. I spoke too soon. Lindsay hit the remote and a deep mellifluous voice boomed from the speakers.

There had to be a conspiracy afoot as Sally produced bottles of Mateus Rose. For most of us, it had been some years since we last sipped the pink summer-berry wine from Portugal. This however was the Tempranillo from Valencia, a slightly more modern and sophisticated wine with youth appeal. Jamie, who had spent the evening intensely studying Lindsay's outfit, which amounted to little more than a pink fluffy bikini and a shocking chiffon wrap, admitted that he had never tasted Mateus. He thought it was "refreshing", although I wasn't sure if he was referring to the wine or the hostess.

Lindsay's varied career has included a spell in catering and she had spent the day in the kitchen. Given the choice of wines so far, I could honestly say I was here for the food. And what food! I had never tasted (or heard of!) oyster mushroom pancakes. And her heart-shaped chocolates made with raw chocolate and cacao butter were dreamy. And good for you, I'm told.

My heartfelt thanks to Bill for saving some of our taste buds with a green grapey wine with a peppery finish. At £6.49 from Tesco's Finest range, The Austrian Gruner Veltliner is probably one of the least expensive, good Austrian wines I've tasted in a long time.

Sticking with the big stores, Consuela, who is addicted to M&S, brought us a green smoked Chablis with elegantly compartmentalised jellied fruit flavours.

Just under £9, La Cave des Vignerons a Chablis made me feel like we were upping the stakes at last.

And indeed we were. Vince (I had no idea you were so romantic!) had planned ahead and ordered over the internet from TheDrinkShop.com, Black Mozart Chocolate Liqueur. If you've never had this, and you like dark bitter chocolate, buy and imbibe. This is not some Baileys-style crème liqueur. This a blend of dark chocolate and bourbon vanilla which lingers long after the last sip.

From simple beginnings the evening improved dramatically and we drifted off through the starlit village and made our way home. Except Jamie, who was last seen filling two glasses with liquid chocolate. No doubt he wanted Lindsay's recipe for mushroom pancakes.