

Drymen Wine Club

December 2009

We had to brave the Arctic chill and temperatures of -8°C for our pre-Christmas tasting. We were at the Symons on Lottery Lane which, being a private road and not serviced by the Council, would have been impassable if Walter had not arranged for a liberal spreading of grit and salt. His tarmac driveway glistened under the near half-moon and reflected the flames of the torches along its edge. Margaret ushered us in to the open fire where huge sections of tree trunk crackled and shifted in the intense heat.

Tonight's theme was wines to accompany a traditional Christmas dinner. Jennifer, our latest recruit and willing volunteer for the opening drink, produced the obligatory festive bubbly. Champagnes are expensive this year so I put a limit of £25 per bottle. This proved to be no stumbling block to Jennifer who gave us a methode traditional brut from Argentina. Not quite a Dom Perignon, more like a Spanish Cava, but drier. The surprise was that it was only £8.75 from Woodwinters.

Paul could tell us that, while most of the construction industry stands down for a two week break, the Olympic contract he is overseeing has got behind schedule and he will be returning to London between Christmas and New Year. This is highly weather dependent as there is not much they can do when the temperature drops below 4°C. As we are looking forward to a white Christmas, Sally may get her wish and have a husband at home. Paul had been to Oddbins for a wine to accompany the fish course. A gold, French chardonnay with more than a hint of pineapple, melon and apricot, this was packed with flavour and had a beautifully creamy finish. Saint Veran Verget sells at £16 per bottle.

Margaret had classical Christmas music playing in the background and it was a touch serious and heavy for a party so we asked Sylv to demonstrate her skills on Walter's baby grand. So, although Sylv had chosen the wine, it fell to John to pour it. The Seresin Gewurztraminer was undoubtedly a lovely wine. It is hand-made, organic and bio-dynamic. It is a delicate wine with hints of orange and vanilla and a spicy finish. I'm not sure it would work with turkey. Anyway, at £14.25 per bottle from Woodwinters, it is one to consider if you are having a chicken korma.

Margaret, by her own admission, had raided Delia's old and new Christmas books to festoon the table with festive fayre but with not a turkey or cranberry in sight. She had excelled with a sticky toffee plum pudding which we held over for the closing wine.

Conversation inevitably turned to the subject of gritting and salting the roads. Walter of course has no sympathy as he has to do his own and drives one of those enormous unstoppable four-by-fours. The rest of us have been slithering about the roads for four days.

Margaret was more concerned about the number of attempted break-ins which appear to be on the rise and asked about police cover over the festive

season and on an on-going basis. As we were beginning to sound like a community council meeting, we went back to drinking.

I was surprised when Roger said he would be along for the evening. This close to Christmas I thought the pub would need all hands to the pump. His brief was to find the perfect accompaniment to roast pork and I welcomed him with open arms when I saw what he had brought along. An aromatic creamy full-bodied wine, the Chateau Lafleur Laroze is a Saint Emilion grand cru, £16 per bottle from Chateau Online.

Argentina attracted us for the second time when I chose a Mendoza Malbec to accompany the pork or, for that matter, any juicy red meat. Pulenta Estate's Malbec should be allowed to breathe for half-an-hour before serving, preferably after decanting. Deep red cherries and vanilla last a long time in the mouth and leave you feeling warm and satisfied.

Bob was tasked with finding the wine to go with a plum pudding. I was reasonably certain that Bob would opt for sauternes. I would too. I was staggered when he said he had bought it at the Co-op. Chateau Roumieu is a beautifully balanced sweet wine, £12 per half-bottle.

All that remains is to wish you a very happy festive season. And we'll see you in 2010.