

THE TWENTY CLUB SESSION 117 MEETING 6 WINE NOTES

Uruguay All Delifonseca

Uruguay- humm. What's to say about Uruguay, apart from that there are and awful lot of Us in the word and that cannabis is legalised- if you are a resident. That's about it. Also, my uncle Leo (mother's brother). From about the late 1950's- early 80's (or maybe the 70's) Leo was in the Merchant Navy. He'd come to visit us when he called in London- or was just back in England. I'd be delighted to see him, he was, as is only right, avuncular. He and my father would disappear into the London night, and the next morning Leo would look terribly poorly, dad was usually fine, which in retrospect is a worry really. Anyway, just about the worst thing that you can do as a Merchant Seaman is miss your ship. Why? Well, lots of reasons. 1) You don't get paid. Back then you'd only get your pay at the end of the voyage (at least what little was left of it considering the amounts you could draw down when going ashore) 2) You will be stuck with a) no money and b) no change of underpants 3) It went permanently on your Seaman's Record¹. So, getting another job could be somewhat problematic. And 4) probably other reasons. Anyway, on the 18th of March 1967 young Leo Mason (then a tender 21 years of age) missed his ship in Montevideo. He and his friend could not quite be bothered to make it to the docks to sail with Aragon² of the Royal Mail Lines in time, so carried on drinking. Oh dear. It all went a bit Burns night. But much worse, McCormick minor take note- you got off lightly. They were stuck. He'd spent all his money ashore and even if he'd been paid, he had precious little left after time in Buenos Aires the night before. The British Vice Consul was (I quote) "*a very obnoxious creature*". The meeting was short and perhaps less than cordial. The officious official was sporting a black eye from his last encounter with a stranded British seaman and sent poor Leo and his friend on their way with 141 Uruguayan Pesos (about £1 between the two of them). They dodged bedbugs in the Salvation Army Hostel for a week, washing their clothes at night and spending the morning in bed as their underpants dried out, as did they. I'm sure that members will be interested to know that the Aragon, and her sisters Amazon and Arlanza, collectively "The Three Graces of the South Atlantic" connected London and Boulogne with Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina by way of Portugal, Spain and Las Palmas, taking mail, cargo and passengers in variable degrees of comfort. From First Class, with deluxe service, staterooms, swimming and tennis through to the third-class passengers, almost exclusively emigrants from Spain and Portugal seeking new lives in South America. Yet accommodation in third was still said to be very simple, but clean and in 2, 3 and 4 bedded cabins.

Which I'm glad to say brings us to wine. For of course it was the emigrants from Southern Europe who brought it. Here much more recently than Chile and Argentina. It seems that things really started in the 1870's with Basque emigrants bringing Tannat, more usually found in Southwest France, but there is now more in Uruguay than just

¹ Young Leo's record also notes that he missed his ship in Sydney as well as in Barranquilla Colombia, but luckily, he managed to catch his ship up by getting the bus to Cartagena.

² Built 1960 Harland and Wolff Belfast, 20362 tons, 583ft, 107 1st, 82 Cabin and 275 3rd class passengers. Became a car carrier and scrapped in 1981.

about anywhere else. The familiar picture of rather rubbish domestic (in this case rosé) wines being made for domestic consumption was the norm until recently. I first found some in Scatchards when it was hidden somewhere near the Town Hall, I had a Tannat and a Merlot and was delighted. But finding just where Scatchards has decided to move to has always been a mystery to me. Is it somewhere underground near Mathew Street? No. Is it near the Town Hall? No. Is it now called Wine Time just past Costco? No. Humm somewhere else then or bust. FFS. Now Tannat (or Harriague here, named after the Basque who established it)³ is tricky. I've had a fair bit, and it can vary enormously, even though Uruguayan is generally much gentler than that in Madiran, the tannins can be very chewy if you don't drink it at the right time. They also produce other varieties, Albariño and for us some Pinot Noir. Unlike Chile and Argentina- there is plenty of rain, sea breezes, soil is quite varied.

All the wines this evening are from Delifonseca and I thank Lavinia the general manager for her help, she ordered these bottles to be delivered especially for us. I'm sure that some of us will have enjoyed evenings with their food and wine pairings, and at a recent one tonight's PN was very well received.

Meanwhile here's Leo washing his underpants.



White Pisano RPF Albariño, Progreso 2024 13% £20.50

Mostly from Galicia and in Vinho Verde, but now very popular elsewhere, Albariño is a thick. Skinned with lots of pips, which can give rise to residual bitterness if not handled properly. Hand harvested, fermented and aged in 500l barrels without (Wilde's) dreaded malolactic fermentation. Typically botanical, this version will have citrus, white pepper and a good acidic edge. Any sea food. But what about apple tarts, sheep or goat cheese?

Red- Pisano Río de los Pájaros Pinot Noir 2023 12.5% £18.95

Much lighter than a Tannat. 100% PN from a 30ha vineyard on calcareous soil. Cool climate and 5-6 months in used French oak barrels. Low levels of polyphenols (unlike the chemical warfare of an old Tannat). We will enjoy this with some pork, but it would

³ See also wine note Session 116 meeting 1.

also work well with rabbit, tuna, salmon or perhaps chicken thighs stuffed with mushrooms and truffle. The fruit brings cherry, raspberry, and the oak some coffee and leather. This will be served slightly below room temperature.

Dessert- Domaine de Grange Neuve Monbazillac 2022 Semillon 80%, Sauvignon 10%, Muscadelle 10%. 12.5% £14.95/ 50cl

Last month's Monbazillac was very popular, and great value. Here's another, this time with some other grapes in the mix. Again Nobel rot, with a labour intensive three triages of hand harvesting to get the pick of the bunches. Fermented in stainless steel, matured for 24 months. As with all these sweet French wines it can work at several stages of a meal. An aperitif, with foie gras, pâté, blue cheeses or as tonight appley desserts.

Madeira & Port

The Treasure's response to the receipt was- "*Madeira AND Port!!*" Which is fair enough, and so an explanation is required. At the last meeting a question was "*what's the difference between Madeira and Port?*" Now, although I'd explained exactly what the difference was in the production- so what? Better is to have both on the table to compare. But, which two? Well obviously, examples that are both in Delifonseca and our budget. Maderia comes as standard blends classified by style and age and also as single varieties, which must contain at least 85% of the specified grape: Sercial, Verdelho, Bucal and Malmsey (Malvasia) Because of its stability it can be stored upright. Throws very little sediment. Lasts forever. But if Maderia had remained under British control after the peace of Amiens and was free of Stasibourg, it could call its wines anything it wanted.

Madeira Henriques & Henriques Finest Full Rich 5 Years Old 19% £15.45 / 50cl

80% Tinta Negra Mole, 20% Malmsey. Dark gold (compare with the port), dried fruit, great with nuts of blue cheeses (we will have both). Lasts more or less indefinitely.

Henriques & Henriques are very well established, from 1850 and make just about every style of Madeira, if you'd like to try more- get yourselves down to Delifonseca an buy a couple, they will last you for many Christmases to come, unless you sneakily sip them away.

Port Fonseca Guimaraens Vintage 2012 20% Port Blend £36.95

Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Cão, Tinta Amerela. Don't worry, I'm sure the feet that trod them were clean. Deep ruby, narrow purple rim, woodland berries, resin, garrigue (undergrowth). Grippy tannins and a long finish. Rich, blue cheeses, figs, walnuts. Throws a massive sediment.

Wine Update

McCormick Minor will have 20 bottles of a mystery Pauillac ‘resting in his account’ for a few years. It was bought at the end of 2025 at £26 a bottle. Although it is possible to drink now after an hour or so of decanting (I suspect I’d rather a whole day) it will be better after a few years, maybe from 2030. This is a plain label wine, the Wine Society can’t say where exactly which Chateau it is from other than ‘an impeccable source’. It is from Ulysse Cazabonne, which in turn is owned by Chanel. They act as negociants for Latour’s second and third wines. It is widely believed that this is Pauillac de Latour- usually double this and scores very well indeed. So we can experiment over a couple of sessions. I’m also trying to get some more house wine at £5.66 before duty and VAT.

