

Decanter

Spurrier's World

Decanter's globetrotting consultant editor gives us a round-up of recent tastings, his views on current issues in the wine world and top bottles to drink or keep

- *“Authenticity of origin - a sense of place - is essential for wines that aspire towards nobility”.* -



Steven recommends...



**Altamira, Mendel
Semillon, Uco Valley,
Mendoza, Argentina
2011**

Astounding fruit freshness matched by a surprising, satisfying elegance of flavour and texture. It's a simply beautiful, perfectly balanced wine - an inexpensive benchmark from Mendoza.

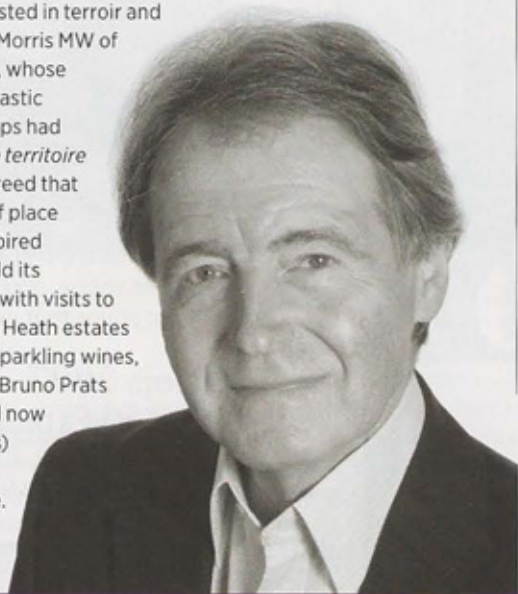
Drink: 2012-2013. Alc. 13.6%

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Terroir or territoire?

The AGM of l'Académie Internationale du Vin (AIV), the international think tank that I describe as 'the conscience of the wine trade', took place as usual in early December in Geneva. Opening the discussions on the second morning, Juan Carlos López de Lacalle, owner of Rioja's famous Artadi estate, stated that his wine philosophy could be contained in a triangle, with authenticity and quality taking the two bottom corners and nobility the top. Jean-Pierre Perrin (Château de Beaucastel) said that he was much less worried about the future of *vins d'origine* today than 20 years ago, with consumers searching for more originality and nuance in their wines, and less power. Spanish wine expert Victor de la Serna countered that it was not wines of origin that were under threat from his government and that of France, but wine in general. That said, he admitted that 'the young' were becoming more and more interested in terroir and was supported in this by Jasper Morris MW of UK merchant Berry Bros & Rudd, whose customers are taking an 'enthusiastic amateur' approach, which perhaps had them looking for broader *vins de territoire* rather than *vins de terroir*. All agreed that authenticity of origin – a sense of place – was essential for wines that aspired towards nobility. The AIV will hold its Summer Symposium in London, with visits to Nyetimber, RidgeView and Hush Heath estates to test the ambitions of English sparkling wines, and a public debate, inspired by Bruno Prats (formerly of Cos d'Estournel and now making wine on three continents) on the question 'Is *vin noble* a valid concept?' Watch this space. (For more, see box right.)

'Authenticity of origin – a sense of place – is essential for wines that aspire towards nobility'



Local and surviving

One of the most interesting papers presented at the AIV was by Daniele Cernilli (ex *Gambero Rosso*, now writing for *Bibenda*), on traditional Italian grapes. Diversity thrives across Italian vineyards, where 370 varieties are planted (there are 220 in France). Of these, 90% are 'traditional' and, better still, original and local. Starting in the north, he cited Timorasso, a late-ripening white grape whose high sugars and ageability lend comparison to Rhône's Roussanne. Moving east to Lake Garda, he praised the red Gropello, used both for the blended Garda Classico and on its own for Chiaretto del Garda, one of Italy's best rosés. Further east, on the Venetian plain, where most wines are made in quantity at a cheap price, an exception is Raboso, which yields a rich red – often robustly tannic when young, but surprisingly good as it matures. From the more hilly Friuli region, a reservoir of traditional varieties, he noted the white Verduzzo, whose thick skins made it suitable for late harvests, and the more delicate and aromatic Picolit. For reds he liked the rich Refosco, high in natural acidity, and the elegant Schioppettino (also known as Ribolla Nera) as well as Pignolo, similar in the form of its bunches to Pinot Noir, which has recently been saved from extinction. This brought a suggestion from Prats that the AIV create an annual prize for the grower, estate or merchant responsible for reviving such historical grapes. (For more on native grapes, see our *Italy guide* with last month's issue, and Richard Baudains' focus on underrated Italian DOCs in our next issue.)

Save Beaujolais

The final presentation came from Dominique Piron, who discussed the crisis threatening his region, Beaujolais. An area of forthright, firm-minded figures, he said the post-war period until 1970 saw a collective effort in rebuilding the vineyards and each village opening a tasting room to

Steven recommends... (for full details of UK stockists, see p108)



Cono Sur, Sparkling Rosé, Bio Bio, Chile NV

POA Concha y Toro

I am more and more impressed by the fruit in sparkling rosés, the best of which have given up sweetness for elegance and purity of flavour, which this 100% Pinot Noir example with its touch of wild strawberries shows so well: a lovely glass of wine.

Drink: 2012–2013. Alcohol: 13%



Domaine François Chidaine, Les Argiles Sec, Vouvray, France 2010

£14.95–£15.50 Genesis, H2Vin
Biodynamic since 2003, Chidaine makes some of the purest wine in Vouvray – the finest expression of Chenin Blanc, blending summer fragrance with a honeyed, floral fruit lifted by perfect acidity.

Drink: 2012–2015. Alc: 13%

