

## [Fun of the London Wine Fair](#)

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Another year, another London Wine Trade Fair done and dusted. I don't always look forward to the LWTF with the greatest anticipation. Excel in Docklands is not the most soulful venue on earth after all, although standing outside on the river on a sunny day can be pleasantly diverting. The problem for a journalist is that apart from catching up with old friends from overseas, if you don't have a focus, you can easily end up wandering around zombie-like, being buttonholed by PRs and marketing people who twist your arm into tasting on their stand, and halfheartedly tasting wines which you're not that interested in and can't concentrate on anyway.



**Enjoying a quiet moment ©Charmaine Grieger**

This year the fact that the Wine Gang was showing a selection of 100 wines based on indigenous grape varieties gave me a *raison d'être* at the Fair. We had a little stand at the end of the hall with three lovely helpers, Lucy Rundle, Lucy Moses and Romy Lisners, but the main attraction was our top 100, selected in four different price points: under £6, £6 - £8, £8 - £10 and finally over £10. Organised by the indefatigable Ray (Chelsea supporter and bouncer but never mind) and the obliging Emma-Jane, it was efficiently run and pretty successful with good attendance from the press and trade and plenty of positive feedback. There are no winners and losers but Ray and the team keep an eye on what's most popular and according to them, the most popular wines (nothing to do with the fact that they were all over £10, surely?) were:

2007 Dog Point Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand  
2002 Tyrrells Vat 1 Semillon, Hunter Valley, Australia  
2005 Prunotto Barolo, Italy

2006 Condrieu Les Terrasses du Palat, François Villard, France  
2007 Tokaji Kiralyudvar, Hungary

The funniest moment of the Fair was without doubt when I was introduced before a seminar I was giving jointly with Dr. Roger Corder on the wines of South-West France. Having taken down the fact that I write for The Independent and The Wine Gang, the man from South West (I won't mention his name to spare his blushes) introduced me as Anthony Rose of The Independent and The Gang Bang. There was a moment's hushed silence. André Dubosc from the Plaimont Co-operative was none the wiser as he doesn't speak English. It seemed to go over a few other heads too, but when the penny dropped, a handful of people collapsed into giggles. Priceless. Not quite so amusing was when my talk on vins de pays stand was postponed to the following day because the microphone didn't work (look out for our Vins de Pays report in thewinegang.com's July issue). The most theatrical moment was when star hula-hoop artist Janine Haynes of Spirithoopcake strutted her stuff on The Wine Gang stand for 5 minutes, with a glass of wine.



**Janine Haynes hulas**

The South West seminar was brought to life by Dr. Roger Corder's explanation of the research he's carried out on how red wine is good for the heart. In a nutshell, he has identified certain properties called procyanadins as the most active polyphenols in red wine capable of reducing the risk of blockages and heart attacks. He's also discovered they're particularly prevalent in tannic, traditionally made wines from the South-West such as Madiran and Saint Mont. Dr. Corder is not advocating red wine as a panacea for all ills but tells us (see *The Wine Diet, Sphere*, £9.99) how red wines can have significant benefits for a healthy heart and long-term wellbeing. A no-brainer you might say. I'll revisit the site soon with a list of the wines I was presenting and some information on them.

I tasted quite a few of the 2009 Australian wines, among which were a number of albariños. You may remember that in my 20 April blog (which I call this week / journal because I don't like the word blog much), I explained how albariños in Australia were in fact discovered not to be albariño at all but the Jura grape savagnin. Anyhow, tasting a few of these, I could understand how they could be confused with albariño because they tasted more albariño-like to me than any savagnins I've tried. Clearly the Australian

climate does something to the variety, while savagnin from Jura anyway tends to be somewhat idiosyncratic and rustic. I wasn't bowled over by the Tscharke albariño, Girl Talk (which was actually a 2008), but I was impressed by a fresh and peachy Gemtree Moonstone McLaren Vale Albariño and even more so by a thoroughly delicious, leesy, intensely flavoured and concentrated Golding Adelaide Hills Albariño. Lovely.

### Wines of the Week

In a rare quite moment I returned to the Wine Gang's Top 100 wines stand and tasted my way through a handful of the gold medals we gave (plus a handful of bronzes and silvers) as I could. They were:

2008 Tagus Creek Chardonnay/Fernão Pires, Ribatejo, Portugal

A fresh, melon-like blend of chardonnay and the native Portuguese variety Fernão Pires with crisp and juicy citrusy acidity and a touch of oak. Around £5.49, Tesco.

2008 Salomon Undhof Grüner Veltliner, Kremstal, Austria

Pale and delicate, juicy fresh pear fragrance and lovely flavours finishing deliciously dry. £9.95, Lea & Sandeman.

2007 Knappstein Asda Extra Special Clare Valley Riesling, Clare Valley, South Australia

Zippy lemon and lime fragrance with a hint of riesling petrol and plenty of zingy, zesty lime, apple and stonefruit flavours with a tangy acidity. £8.12, Asda.



**The Famous Five © Charmaine**

**Grieger**

2006 Dog Point Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand

Impressive classic fresh passion fruit scents with gorgeously intense and exotic passion fruit and gooseberry flavours and added white Graves-like complexity from the lees . £13.99, Oddbins.

2006 François Villard Les Terrasses du Palat, Condrieu, France

Acacia and honeysuckle scents presage a seductively apricoty, spicy dry northern Rhône white yet with an elegant acidity that keeps this powerful wine ultra-fresh and absolutely delicious. £24.50 - £30, H&H Bancroft, Waitrose

2008 Gaia Wild Ferment Assyrtiko, Santorini, Greece

Perhaps the grape should be called assertivo because when it's made in this style, cunningly barrel-fermented and lees-stirred, it's pure, rich and full-flavoured with a hint of sea-salty Mediterranean and the minerally complexity that this volcanic island's soils bring. 13.99, Novum Wines

2002 Tyrrell's Vat 1 Semillon, Hunter Valley, New South Wales, Australia

This is the latest vintage of the 2000 vintage we wrote about earlier and it's a more than worthy successor, a fabulous, surprisingly unoaked dry white of unique personality and sense of place from one of the great proponents of the variety, with its stunning lemon zest and farm-buttered toast aromas and flavours, all encased in the most delicate framework. £19.99, Tesco.

2005 Finca Allende Rioja Blanco, Rioja, Spain

In our last report we wrote about the 2005 but the 2006 is equally good, perhaps a little fresher still, an accomplished dry white Rioja and you don't often hear that) with an expressive smoky / yeasty aroma, plenty of vanilla oak as you might expect and lovely seductive peachy fruitiness, £17.99, Oddbins.

2005 Roger Sabon Châteauneuf-du-Pape Reserve, France

Vibrant rich and spicy, with masses of opulent blackberry, plum and prune fruitiness, this is a deliciously full-flavoured example of its ilk, with a chocolatey richness etched with peppery undertones and a complex structure of tannins and acidity that suggests it has many years life ahead of it. £20.00, WoodWinters.

2004 Skillogalee Shiraz, Clare Valley, South Australia

Not only is the restaurant terrace of this family winery run by British couple Dave and Diana Palmer as delightful as the name sounds, but this is a seriously excellent and pure Clare Valley shiraz, peppery, minty and spicy with a lovely richness and purity of black fruit flavours in a relaxed framework of fine tannins and acidity. Great price too. £12.99, Booths.

2004 Yacochuya, Cafayate, Salta, Argentina

Wow, is this really 16.4% alcohol because if so it handles it extremely well all things considered. This is the place in Argentina that got the French uber-consultant Michel Rolland excited about Argentina in the first place. Made from very old malbec vines and a shading of cabernet sauvignon, it's high altitude (over 2000 metres) stuff whose sweetly ripe, chocolatey, dark berried fruit is held in check by a twist of astringency and tannic backbone. £42.50, H&H Bancroft.

2004 Prunotto Barolo, Piedmont, Italy

Evolved in colour with an almost garnet hue, this is classic north-west Italian nebbiolo from an excellent vintage, tarry, vibrant and spicy with a hint of oak, and full of vivid raspberry and plum fruitiness framed by savoury acidity and firm yet delicate, fine-grained tannins of the grape, which are nevertheless ripe and beautifully resolved. Around £30.95, Roberson, Selfridges.

2005 Ca' Rugate Amarone della Valpolicella, Veneto, Italy

This is a modern interpretation of the traditional amarone style, a blend of the native corvina, rondinella and corvinone, that is, dried on mats to concentrate the juices, fruit and acidity, with the result that this is full of rich yet elegant cherryish fruit and fine tannins, £38.00, H&H Bancroft.

2006 Királyudvar Tokaji Hárslevelü Lapis, Tokaj, Hungary

From Anthony Hwang, the Asian who also owns Domaine Huet in Vouvray, this is quite gorgeous stuff, a fragrant sweet white whose stonefruit / peachy flavours are beautifully offset by spicy, ripe, multi-layered fruit character and fresh acidity. Around £22.50, selected Waitrose and The Wine Society.

Champagne René Geoffroy Premier Cru Empreinte Brut

An amazing champagne with all sorts of baked apple and cinnamon aromas and plenty of expressive, textured rich baked apple and spice fruitiness. Very characterful stuff. £18.75, H&H Bancroft.



the winegang.com's Top 100 stand © Charmaine Grieger