
Hornet Services Sailing Club

Club Secretary: 02392 580403
02392 765828



Haslar Road, Gosport
Hants PO12 2AQ

Marina Manager: 02392 602480
02392 765051

Fax: 02392 589650

Website: www.hornetservicesailing.org.uk

e-mail: hornetsailing@btconnect.com

Patron: HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO

Club Wine Strategy

At the AGM I mentioned my intent to improve the wines on offer to members, and that the club had just become a corporate member of The Wine Society (www.thewinesociety.com). The purpose of this note is to explain the broader strategy.

On becoming RC (House), a few members collared me seeking some improvements in our wines. A theme was that we needed some smarter wines amongst the sea of average offerings. My father enrolled me in The Wines Society (WS) I think about 40 yrs ago, and for the last 30 years I have hammered my membership! So I felt I understood the issue, and that some solutions would not be too tough to achieve.

Over the last few years, attending mess dinners at some very smart schools, I noticed that some were serving WS wines. Having discussed this with the membership team at The Society, I was pointed in the direction of a corporate membership for our club, which we now have. Rather than me trying to explain this cooperative to you, I commend you to peruse the web site, to understand why this is such a “no-brainer”, and to root around the wine offers from all over the world. Our club can now access these, should you wish.

I have discussed and agreed what I have grandly called the strategy with Arty and our Social Sec, Rowena Heale. It looks loosely like this:

- Use WS wines for events and dinners.
- Source a specialist wine merchant for bar sales, rather than using Fuller's. Include a broad range of wines with professional tasting notes, including Sparkling and non-alcoholic.
- Hold tasting events.

Corporate membership of the WS does not enable members to sell, hence we cannot stock the bar with WS wines. But we can provide them at all-inclusive events, such as the Christmas Ball, for our own receptions, and at the reception/gathering part of our dinners. We can also use WS Ports and Madeiras at our dinners. Members holding personal events, such as weddings or anniversaries, and income-generation lunches and dinners may also use the WS wines – discuss your needs with Arty. But please, if you want to stock up your boat's bilges or mansion cellars, enrol yourself in the WS rather than hassling Arty.

Our first foray with WS wines looks like this:

- Arty is using Bordeaux wines for an income-generation dinner
- Reception for the rededication of the Coastal Forces war memorial – WS Sparkling Saumur and non-alcoholic sparkling (both made by WS own champagne house); WS Claret, WS Bordeaux/Sauvignon and WS Chilean Chardonnay. Note – we felt that these wines had a similar price point to extant club dinner wines.
- Waterloo Dinner. Wines as above at reception, and available for members to buy for dinner. WS Late Bottled Vintage Port and Madeira included in dinner price.
- Test and adjust – provide for Battle of Britain night.

- If time allows, hold a tasting event before Trafalgar Night and vote for wines. This would be a ticketed event, with some grub and a range of wines to enjoy, with voting slips; not a tutored tasting. The purpose to expose members to a wider selection of wines that we could use for our events, and see what we all think; and of course to have fun in the process!

Selecting another specialist wine merchant is a key part of the strategy, and we will keep you updated with progress. This will include providing wines at a more varied price point, and ventures into Sparkling, a “house” Champagne, and some non-alcoholic. The merchant should provide a list with clear and sufficient notes to help members make their selection and enhance their enjoyment, rather than crudely “a French Chardonnay”. So, I seek detailed provenance (country or origin, region and wine-maker), grape varieties, year, and alcohol % .

Meanwhile, I have been scanning various sailing club wine menus and seeking details of providers in the Solent area. Taking my role as RC (House) with due diligence, I have also been inspecting and when necessary using the heads and showers in these clubs to benchmark where we might like to end up as we consider improvements to our own facilities in 2020.

In summary, this is the beginning of what should be an enjoyable and interesting change to our club wine offers. As we progress, we will adjust as necessary, improve, take note of comments and aim to provide value for money as well as wider variety.

Roger Armstrong
RC (House)