



Armand and his Merry Musketeers visit Armagnac



Tuesday

Armand Fasola and members of the UKBG Thames valley South west branch and some members from London, took to the streets of Gascony escorted & organised by Amanda Garnham from the BNIA , who took them to lunch at the La Vie en Rose in the town of Eauze.

The Merry Musketeers then went to visit a few selected Vineyards & Chateaus, the trip started by visiting **Chateau du Tariquet St Armand (not our Armand although we think he has some Saintly qualities)** where they treated us to some rather excellent Armagnac.

The next visit was to the Chateau de Pellehaut here they were treated to the wines of Pellehaut vineyards plus three of their superb Armagnacs .

We all wished Amanda a happy birthday and presented her with a bouquet of flowers and a present from the UKBG.

It was then off to the Hotel for dinner minus Amanda as she was off to celebrate her birthday,

Some of the guys went to the bar for a night cap.



Wednesday

The group went to the market of Condom(no not what you think) to see the local produce being sold on the weekly market after a brief look around they went to visit Ryst Dupeyron where they were shown around by Jacques -Francois Ryst & given a film presentation on the history of the chateau & production methods, they finish off some of their Armagnacs in Madeira casks for that extra finish.

They were then shown around the museum and treated to some rather excellent Armagnac, the 30 year old was superb.

All the Merry Musketeers were then presented with the "Diplome de connaisseur en Armagnac " by Jacques-Francois Rys.

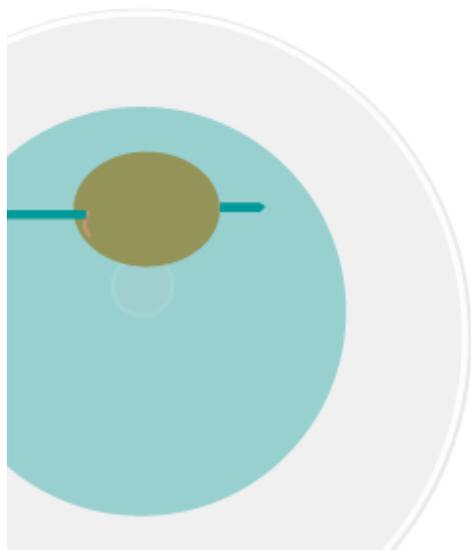


Mike Sweetman being awarded his Diplome

After that excellent visit and presentation they went for lunch at the Hotel Continental in the town of Condom, after an very good lunch to soak up some of the Armagnac.

They then set off to the next amazing adventure which was Armagnac Gelas at Vic-Fezensac, where they were given a tour of their cellars and a tasting of some of their very nice Armagnacs including their new 60% Armagnac Blanche which is a new product for them .They have been ageing and blending Armagnac since 1865.

Their next stop was that of Delord Of Lannepax who grow their own grapes and distil on site but they also hand bottle, label cork & wax all their bottles they had a well selected tasting ranging from the Blanche to a very nice 30 yr old.





That was the end of another fantastic day so lets have dinner, tonight they are dinning at the L'auberge restaurant in Lannepax, a lovely quite little town so peaceful it was heaven.

Thursday

Today they were off to visit Samalens where they have one of the largest stocks of Armagnac, it is here that we learned that different countries like their Armagnac in different styles , some countries like it a little sweeter so they have the max amount of sugar allowed in Armagnac , and others like it to look dark so they have the max amount of spirit caramel allowed.

But the good old English like it as it comes full of flavour and body.

They were privileged to taste some Millenium Millesime 1900 & Reserve Imperial XO, Vieille Relique 15 year old, & some Blanche Armagnac also VSOP 8 year old.

We were given a very interesting tour and presentation about Armagnac, their Alembics and the process of distillation.

Then they were in for a special treat a visit to the Castarede Chateau and have lunch with Madame Florence Castarede, who gave us a guided tour of her Chateau and cellars , then they were treated to a lunch fit for a King on the lawn of the Chateau overlooking the vines, the view was magnificent so was the Aperitif and the lunch, and of course some Superb Armagnacs to finish the lunch, Armagnacs of the top quality that you would expect to find at such a Chateau.

They were offered the VSOP 10 yrs the 1974, 1954, 1945 , & the Hors d'age. & also a privileged tasting of a bottle 1888, which is very rare only 12 bottles left in the cellars, this was truly a rare treat.



This is the life

Then it was on the road again this time to visit Chateau Laubade where David the Cellar Master gave us a tour of the distillation area and their wonderful cellars, & down into their "Paradis" where all the very old Armagnacs are kept , some are pre Napoleon. then into the Chateau for a sublime tasting which included their, Signature- VSOP, XO, & Vintage Armagnacs , which were all of the highest quality,

Their Chateau was set in a fabulous surroundings of acres of vines and gardens.

Our next visit was to the house of Dartigalongue in Nogaro, they don't have vines they only distil , mature & bottle we tasted some very fine Armagnacs from their cellars, we were offered Armagnacs 15, 20 & 25 years old Amazing,

Madame Françoise Dartigalongue then gave them a rare treat, a visit to her amazing museum of Armagnac, with the old style tools they used in the past also a fantastic.

Collection of old manuscripts , books, documents , & military uniforms dating back to Napoleon 3rd , this was a rare treat.

From there we left (without Chris who was in a shop looking for an ice lolly bye bye)

That evening we were treated to a superb dinner of Duck Fois Gras to start then for mains we had Duck breast. at the restaurant " LA Bonne A'uberge".



Friday

We finished our trip with a visit to the cellars of the Maquis of Montesquiou who distil, mature and bottle Armagnacs , The building where they mature their Armagnacs is called “ The Cathedral “ as it is very big and has an unusual high roof & Structure., Here they chill filter some of their Armagnacs.

Our last visit was to be Baron de Sigognac near Eauze , this was a boutique vineyard surrounded by grapevines , it is here where we are shown the actual plates that are in the column of the still that the vapours rise through prior to going into the condenser , these plates determine what strength the distiller wants his Armagnac.

We then pay a quick visit to a foie gras farm to see how it was made ,there we are treated to some very fine Foie Gras & some local wine which complemented the Foie Gras.



We Finished our Fantastic trip by having lunch at the Henry iv restaurant in Eauze with Amanda , there we had a very nice lunch , and sadly parted with Amanda as without her this trip would not have been possible.

Mike Sweetman

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