

Dale Farm Diary

May 2018

This year it seemed like spring would never arrive at Dale Farm. But arrive it did in a headlong rush and everything burst into life. Everyone pitched in to ensure the plants were at their best for the plant sale on 19th May.

The 19th was a glorious sunny day and a great time was had by all. All hands had been filling planters under Mick's creative eye up to the very last minute. Hanging baskets nurtured under cover came into their own, trailing petunias flowers in deep pink, purple, red and white. The yard was ablaze with their colour and their scent mingled with the scent of the bedding plants. These included trays of alyssum, blue, white and sapphire lobelia, small begonias and their bigger blowsy ruby cousins, Sweet William, 'Impatiens New Guinea' with its deep green leaves and bright purple flowers, fuchsias, marigolds, geraniums and verbena, to name just a few.

Employees, volunteers and students helped customers with the selection and carrying of their wares to cars. Visitors could sit and take refreshment in the cafe or on the patio or catch their breath in the sensory garden.

Wooden planters, bat boxes and bird tables were on offer. Jars of Dale Farm honey and homemade marmalade were snapped up along with rhubarb cut fresh from the patch. Planters can be made to order and some plants and hanging baskets remain available to buy on a weekday.

The farm is now focused on planting fruits and vegetables. Tomatoes, courgettes, cucumbers, carrots, parsnips, spring onions, onions, lettuce, French and runner beans, are just some of the organic produce that will be available in the Farm Shop later in the year.

Dale Farm Open Week took place from the 4th to the 8th June, when prospective students and their families, social workers, carers and others visited this unique and fruitful place nestling in the Heswall Dales.



WINE COLUMN

By Graham Simpson, Whitmore & White

Six wines for when the sun shines

Here at Whitmore & White we don't like the grass to grow under our feet. It's very important in retail to try to stay ahead of the curve and, so, from both a food and wine/spirits perspective we like to keep our range as fresh, new and innovative as possible. As such, this month, I am highlighting some wines that we've recently taken on board to keep our wine portfolio keen and interesting.

Tio Pepe Fino en Rama £16.95

Sherry isn't everyone's cup of tea, so to say. However, this youthful and vibrant fino sherry from Gonzalez Byass is sensational. It's bone dry as expected. It is slightly salty and yeasty too. Again, as expected. Basically classic Fino Sherry style, but with extra oomph.

Great with anchovies and olives.

Ribbonwood Sauvignon Blanc £12.95

A classic Kiwi Sauvignon Blanc from the world-renowned Marlborough region. Produced by the internationally respected Framingham Winery, the name comes from the indigenous Ribbonwood tree which was planted next to the winery in 1998. This Sauvignon Blanc delivers intense notes of lemon peel, nettles and blackcurrant leaf, while retaining a good mineral character on the palate balancing with the fresh acidity.

Perfect on its own or with a goat's cheese salad.

The Wolftrap White £9.95

Made by the famous South African winery, Boekenhoutskloof, who make the cult classic The Chocolate Block, this combination of Viognier, Chenin Blanc and Grenache Blanc is a spicy, aromatic blend, giving generous notes of tropical fruit and toasty vanilla from maturation in oak barrels.

A wine that would match nicely with roast chicken.

Sogno di Ulisse Montepulciano d'Abruzzo £13.95

Wow! This is a very impressive wine. Many Montepulciano d'Abruzzo are run of the mill, standard Italian wine list fare and a good go-to when thinking about what to have with a pizza. This wine, however, is far from 'standard'. It is rich. It is ripely fruited with blackberry and redcurrant notes. It has good acidity to balance the fruit and the tannins are smooth. This makes for an incredibly pleasant drinking experience.

Yes, it will, of course, go with pizza, but try it with lamb as well.

'Zolla' Primitivo di Manduria £18.95

From the Vigneti del Salento winery in Puglia. This is the big brother to one of our best sellers, the 'I Muri' Primitivo. Made by Filippo Baccalaro, the famous winemaker at the Farnese winery, it is a super ripe and concentrated wine. With ultra smooth tannins and bags of bramble fruit, this wine is a sure-fire winner and, judging by its impact on our customers to date, it could be ever-present on the shelves.

Try this with a rare rib-eye steak.

Peter Lehmann 'The Barossan' Shiraz £17.95

The name Peter Lehmann has always been synonymous with the Barossa Valley in South Australia. He was a founding member of the 'Barons of Barossa' brotherhood and, until his death in 2013, was very influential in bringing Australian wine to the world. This wine is so rich, smooth, spicy and chocolate-like it's almost unreal. It has structure too, so will last many years in bottle if you can be tempted to put a few bottles aside.

Great with fillet steak or dare I say it... BBQ food...?