

The Bluffs Food & Wine

February 2014 *gazette*

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A publication of the Council Bluffs Branch of the International Wine and Food Society

President's Comments

2011 Trapiche Broquel Malbec

100% Malbec - 90 Points Wine Spectator

Dear Members,

Malbec is a black-skinned grape variety native to southern France (specifically the area around Cahors). Over the last few decades Malbec has risen from relative obscurity to being the grape that brought attention to Argentina as a wine producing nation. It is grown primarily in Argentina's largest wine region, Mendoza, which is located on a high-altitude plateau at the edge of the Andes Mountains. The province is responsible for approximately 70% of the country's wine.

Malbec typically ripens midway through the growing season and produces small, intensely colored grapes. As it is so sensitive to its growing environment the level of ripeness has a considerable effect on the structure of the eventual wine. Malbec wines are generally aged in Oak to enhance the wines structure and aging potential.

Broquel is a brand produced by Trapiche, which has 120 years of history and is the most exported wine brand of Argentina.



A mature Malbec vine in Mendoza.

Aged 15 months in American and French oak barrels, the **2011 Broquel Malbec** is characterized by intense purple red color with ruby hues. Aromas of black fruit jam and liqueur, with an elegant touch of smoke, vanilla and chocolate. Sweet attack and full-bodied tannins. Long and pleasant finish.

Ideal to combine with pasta and mushroom sauce, grilled meats, stews and cheeses.

This wine is rated 90 points by Wine Spectator and available at the Madison Ave. Hy-Vee in Council Bluffs for just less than \$14.00.

Enjoy,

Bob Kossow
President

“Wine to me is passion. It’s family and friends. It’s warmth of heart and generosity of spirit. Wine is art. It’s culture. It’s the essence of civilization and the art of living.”

— *Robert Mondavi*

Editor's Corner

Dear Members,

It's been miserable cold out there. Some nice, fortified wine was just what the weatherman ordered, and we got it at our Tutored Tawny Port tasting and Spanish dinner event at España, the Tapas Bar in Benson. Since Portugal and Spain are neighbors, the cuisine fit right in after our educational experience learning about the somewhat neglected (in the USA that is) Port category, Tawny. Even though it is the most popular style of Port in Portugal itself, not that many Americans are familiar with this delicious tippie. And it tastes even better when the weather is cold and ugly! Read the **Event Report** to see how the sit down tutored tasting and dinner went.



PBS has been riding large on its hit show, **Downton Abbey**. Millions of people are enjoying the fourth season of this modern Upstairs/Downstairs, high class soap opera. The kitchen scenes of cooking a grand dinner on wood fired stoves and then having footmen in livery carry the meal upstairs on silver platters to the resplendent formal dining room (where dressing up nightly in white tie and fancy dress was de-rigueur for the upper class in the early 20th Century, and the china and sterling and even the chairs were carefully measured out to precise dimensions around the table): to me these alone are worth following the series. In the second episode, The Earl and Countess of Grantham commission a singer to entertain their house guests. But this is no ordinary singer. This is **Nellie Melba**, one of the first operatic superstars of the young 20th Century. The old school Earl and butler want to treat her as a servant by having her eat her supper on a tray alone in her room, away from the upper crust dining room guests. But the more aware Countess discovers this and insists that Dame Nellie (Kiri Te Kanawa) sit at table. The Countess seats Nellie next to the Earl, who is worried about what he could possibly talk about with a trades person. Later, he is impressed that she identified an unmarked dinner wine as Château Haut Brion. After dinner, she sings for the whole house, servants and all.

The reason I bring this all up is because Nellie Melba was a favorite of **Auguste Escoffier**, the subject of our mini-series and **one man play** on March 29th. He named two recipes after her, and to this day, their names have stuck. Escoffier was very much alive when this drama takes place in 1922. We continue our Escoffier series with two related topics: a short **history of the French restaurant**, and the establishment of a military-like organization of the kitchen: the **Brigade System**.

Please pencil this event unique event (**theatre and dinner**) now on your calendar! We have engaged a professional actor, Marty Skomal, to play the part of Escoffier.

Finally, John Fischer discusses **fruit bomb wines**. Many wine drinkers really enjoy these fruit laden wines and are loathe to drink anything but monster reds. Others think they are too much. Read what John has to say about this style of wine.

Please note there has been a **change** in the Upcoming Events on the end page. The **Dixie Quicks** event has been moved from Tuesday March 4th to **Tuesday February 18th**. Hostess Sandy Lemke writes: "Chef René Orduna has planned an exotic and tasty menu for us to enjoy with our carefully selected wines. We'll start out with quaffing and art viewing in the RNG Gallery then move on to relax for a six-course meal. Offerings will include an Oyster Triad, Asian Cobb Salad and Chicken Pernod (as served on the Orient Express). Be sure to not miss this party train. We'll be on track to have a fab evening in the Bluffs."

Tom Murnan



Photo courtesy of hugel.com

Event Report

Tutored Tawny Port tasting at España

by Tom Murnan

We had a temporary reprieve in our winter frigid temperatures as 14 members and 5 guests made their way to Benson's tapas bar, España at 6064 Maple. The word Tapas means "to cover" and are not hors d'oeuvres, but rather small plates of almost any kind of food imaginable. Tapas always has an 's' at the end of the word, even if it is just one dish. It was a busy Friday for the restaurant, but we were snugly placed in a long corner behind the bar. Our corner of the bar was laden out with various tapas and 3 Quesos, or cheeses: Manchego, Mahon and Cabrales Blue on a plank. These were accompanied by sliced baguette bread, Marcona almonds, and Marinated Spanish olives, all displayed attractively in multiple little three tiered towers. All of the quaffing and dinner wines came from Spain.

Once at table, we began our **Tutored Tawny Tasting**, where we learned about how Tawny Ports differed from Vintage Ports, and we contrasted 10, 20, 30, and 40 year old Tawnies from the same producer, world renown Taylor Fladgate. It was pretty noisy in the restaurant, so getting the message out was a challenge. As the wine ages in the wood it becomes a lighter tawny color, something you might not expect. So the 10 year old had the darkest color and the 40 the lightest. For the money, most people seemed to think that the 20 year old offered a lot of value. This sells in the \$50.00 range. The 30 and 40 year olds were wonderful and complex, but at \$175.00 and \$250.00 a bottle, are price prohibitive, magnificent as they are.

A cold platter of **Pimientos Rellenos**, or stuffed red peppers with goat cheese, garlic and a Balsamic reduction sauce and Marcona almonds were served with a white wine, the **2011 Botani Moscat de Alexandria** served as our **Cold Tapas** plate.

We next moved on to the Hot Tapas where we had an abundance of different little dishes. Flambé Cheese, Sizzling Shrimp in Garlic, Sautéed Escargot in a spicy tomato Brava sauce, Sautéed Spinach with raisins and pine nuts, Sautéed

Mushrooms in its own juices, and Steamed Mussels in Sherry Cream all regaled our palates. A 2011 Bodegas Zerran had to contend with all the above flavors, but held its own quite well.

During the start of the Tawny tasting, owner and chef **Carlos Mendez** had started the **Paella Sacramento**. In a large two handled shallow Paella pan, he and waitress Anna brought up the finished product for all to see. Wonderfully saffron (yellow) tinted rice, loaded with peas, shrimp, mussels, chicken and calamari was later scooped onto our plates. We had two wines to compare, the **2010 Mas d'en Compte "Black Slate"** Porrera from the Priorat area, and a **2009 Rafael Reverte Cistum Garnacha** from the Navarra district.

We finished this Spanish feast with a **Spanish flan** and another Tawny Port: the **Dow 10** year old, which was a very good match. Many thanks to Carlos Mendez and his crew for an outstanding tapas event.



I have been accused of being too long winded in my event reports, so here is a shorter version of the event from the **Poet of Paella, Sandy Lemke**:

Tutored Tawny Tasting

Port is purported to be a portal into the world of fortified wine. Tom Murnan, master of all matters Madeira, hosted a Tutored Tawny Tasting in Omaha's Benson district -- the hip stop for Omaha's post-hipster set.

A hush came over the bustling busy dining room when Murnan began his Port discourse. The gathered guests at the long narrow table tasted Taylor Tawnys aged 10, 20, 30 and 40. The palates awoke to Tapas hot and cold. Plates were passed with Pimientos Rellenos. Peppers stuffed with Cheese smoldered. Marcona almonds teased the tongue. Queso Flambé flirted with Sautéed Escargot. The Mejillones were crémed and the Spinach was Sautéed.

Paella with Pork was served with Porrera Priorat, rated 93. Spanish Flan was splashed with a Ten-Year Tawny. Mary and Tom Murnan said the Flan was top rated and we all were sated.

Thanks for the poet's view Sandy!



More photos of this event on the following pages »



More photos of this event on the following pages »



A Short History of the French Restaurant: 18th to Mid 20th Centuries

by Tom Murnan

Most people today have no clue as to how food in the past was prepared and served for the traveler, or just hungry diners with money, home or away from home. The professional trained chef is relatively recent in the historical scheme of things. The development of the restaurant as we know it only occurred at the end of the 18th century in France. Instead of one menu for everyone, this new innovation called a restaurant produced numerous dishes for different diners at different times of the day.

In much of Europe, and France in particular, food preparation outside aristocratic households was done by various guilds, who had a monopoly on certain kinds of preparations. One preparation was a “restorative,” highly flavored and rich soups or stews. In fact, the word restaurant comes from the French word **restaurer**, meaning **to restore**. Their original purpose was to restore strength



Antonin Carême



and vigor. So during the reign of King Henri IV (1553-1610) there were guilds for **rôtisseurs** who cooked main cuts of meat, **vinaigriers**, who made sauces, **pâtissiers**, who cooked pies and poultry, **tamisiers** who baked bread, and the like. **Taverns and inns** typically served food prepared by these guilds. Food was not the main focus of these establishments: drinking and a place to sleep was. Food was an afterthought, and there was a very limited selection. Food was prepared at the guild and brought in. Diners would share a common table and eat family style.

The first restaurant opened in Paris in **1765** when a tavern keeper, Monsieur Boulanger, hung a sign advertising his restorative: sheep feet in white sauce. After winning a lawsuit brought by a guild who thought they had the monopoly on soup and stew preparation, the restaurant went



César Ritz

on to prosper. Boulanger's innovation was to **focus on food**, offer a **selection** of prepared food instead of just a preselected, limited menu, and the food was **prepared on site** as you waited. Since it was a restorative, it had a kind of medical application. As time progressed, this medical aspect was dropped in favor of a diverse selection of ordinary food.

During the **French Revolution** (1789-1799) the guilds were abolished, as well as the aristocracy. Their private chefs and kitchens were scattered, but some of the well trained, sophisticated chefs started restaurants.

The Grande Taverne de Londres opened in Paris in 1782 by Antoine Beauvilliers, the former steward to King Louis XVIII (1814 to 1824). His innovation was to offer food service during **fixed hours** as well as a **printed menu**. A wait staff was impeccably trained and patrons sat at **small tables** instead of a communal table.

By the middle of the 19th century, several large, grand restaurants in Paris were serving elaborate meals which recalled the days of grande cuisine of the aristocrats. **Antonin Carême** perfected this

trend of dozens of courses, elaborately prepared and painstakingly garnished and sauced. Cuisine had become an art form. There were not, however, just restaurants serving grande cuisine. Some restaurants combined grande cuisine with cuisine bourgeoisie to create a simpler menu.

In the late 19th century, **hotels** offered the finest restaurants. **César Ritz** opened restaurants, first in London at the **Savoy**, and later the Paris Ritz and London Carlton. He allied with **August Escoffier** to make the hotel restaurant a destination, the showpiece of his hotels. Escoffier refined and simplified Carême's cuisine, and organized the kitchen and wait staffs in a hierarchical system, with division of labor to make food preparation more efficient. The first American internationally known chef, Charles Ranhofer (1836-1899) opened **Delmonico's** restaurant in New York City. Restaurants were now **Map & Eat** to the form we are familiar with today.

Escoffier Introduces The Brigade System to the Kitchen

by Tom Murnan



Continuing our miniseries on the important French Chef, **Auguste Escoffier**, we move to a significant improvement that he introduced that revolutionized how kitchens were organized.

When the Franco Prussian War broke out in 1870, Escoffier became an army chef. While in the service, Auguste noticed how the military was organized in a **hierarchical system**. He thought he could apply this kind of structure to the kitchen to gain more efficiency, reduce duplication of effort, and identify specific staff functions. He organized what today is called the **Brigade System** with its clear chain of command. This streamlined and reduced duplication of effort in hotel kitchens. There were two main divisions in a restaurant: The **Kitchen Brigade** and the Front of the House, or **Dining Room Brigade**. Each station has clear cut responsibilities. Today, with modern equipment, or a smaller establishment, the number of positions can be reduced. Maintaining a well-organized kitchen was key for Escoffier who could be managing up to 60 or 80 members of staff at any one time. The aim was to cut down on waiting times and to ensure that food was served efficiently at exactly the right temperature. Most importantly, Escoffier brought a sense of calm and order to the kitchen. The Brigade system is only for large kitchen staffs, but even smaller professional kitchens will adopt some portion of Escoffier's organization and division of labor even today.



The Kitchen Brigade

At the top was the **Chef de Cuisine** (executive chef), responsible for all kitchen operations and all those under him. He developed the menus, the theme of the restaurant and set the tempo and tone. Beneath him was the **Sous-Chef**, or second in command. He was directly responsible for scheduling the staff, placement and changing staff at the different stations, and sometimes relaying orders from the waiter to the kitchen. Next came the **Chefs de Partie** or station chefs (Commis). In the old system, duplication would occur at this point because each station made what they needed. You could have more than one station making the same sauce, for example. Now roles were clearly defined at each station.

The **Saucier** (sauté and sauce station chef) held one of the most important and exacting stations, demanding experience and expertise in making sauces and sautéing most dishes. The **Rôtisseur** (roast station chef) were responsible for roasting and jus. The **Poissonier** (fish station chef) was responsible for fish and shellfish. The **Potager** was responsible for stocks and soups. The **Pâtissier** (pastry chef) was responsible for all baked items, such as bouchées and puff pastry, and supervised the **Boulangier** (bread baker) who made rolls and breads. There was a **Entremetier** (hot vegetable chef), a **Garde-Manger** (pantry chef) responsible for cold food preparations, salads and cold appetizers, and a **Chef Tournant**, or relief chef. Under these chefs, responsible for a certain station, were the **demi-chefs** (assistants) and the **Commis** (apprentice), in English known as **cooks**.

The Dining Room Brigade

The front of the restaurant also had its hierarchy of authority. Even today, students at culinary institutes study both the front and the back of the house.

The **Maitre d'Hôtel**, or **Maitre D**, is in charge of the dining room and is responsible for operations in the front of the house. He or she trains and manages the service and wait staff, works with the Chef de Cuisine to develop menus, is responsible for the wine list, and seating of patrons.

The **Sommelier** or **Wine Steward's** duties include all aspects of the wine service: selecting and purchasing wines, printing a wine list, assisting guests in selecting the best wines based on customer preference, price and affinity for the food selected, and the proper opening and serving of the wine. Wines may need to be decanted at tableside. Some restaurants have a Beverage Manager

The **Chef de Salle**, or **Head Waiter**, is in charge of the service and waiters for the entire dining room.

The **Chef d'Étage** or **Captain** deals with the guests once they are seated. He or she explains the menu, answers questions and takes the order. Should there be tableside food preparation, the Captain does it.

The **Chef de Rang** or **Front Waiter** sets the table for each course, ensured that the food is properly delivered, and that the guests' needs are promptly and courteously met.

The **Demi-chef de rang** or **Commis de Rang** (Busboy) fills water glasses, clears plates between courses, fills bread baskets and assists the front waiter or Captain as required. *Wine & Food*
January 2014

A Dissertation on “Fruit Bomb” Wines

by Dr. John Fischer



The term “fruit-bomb” has antipodal meanings. To some the meaning is positive, referring to well-structured wines that emphasizes lavish, ripe, jammy fruit flavors. To others the term has a negative undertone, alluding to wines that are unbalanced and over-extracted, implying that these mature fruit flavors come at an expense. Often such wines are unbalanced, top-heavy, in-your-face, and obsequious. This discussion will limit itself to “fruit bombs” that have a more positive spin.

There is an emerging trend for new world winemakers to direct the palate to zero-in on fruit above all else. Such wines are soft, well-balanced, complex, concentrated, and eminently enjoyable, though not terrible contemplative. All of the flavors are well focused and laid out in plain sight. It is an easy wine to enjoy without having to think much—just sit back and luxuriate in a sybaritic bubble of hedonistic savors—a quick fix for a thirsty palate. Certainly there is something satisfying to be said for that style. Many “fruit bombs” are just plain delicious!



John Fischer is a member and two-time president of the Omaha Branch of the IW&FS, past director of the Nebraska Chapter of LADV, and founding member of the Council Bluffs Branch of the IWFS. He teaches a course on wine and matching wine with food at the Institute for the Culinary Arts in Omaha, NE and is author of two books: *The Evaluation of Wine* and *Wine and Food – 101*.

One problem with such wines is that their usually high alcohol content and tempered acidity somewhat limits their ability to pair with foods. They are simply too big and suffocate many of the flavors in the paired foods. What’s more, many of these fruity behemoths are short lived, and their price tag can be staggering.

On the flip side are the more refined and sophisticated wines from the old world. They are more subdued—elegant, forthright, yet graceful. They have a compliment of fruit, but that fruit is embellished with non-fruity savors such as tobacco, truffles, mushrooms, minerals, flowers, smoke and other like flavors. Punctilious balance makes these wines engaging and contemplative. They are wines with finesse and great character that never pall. Their phantasmagoria of flavorful extracts invigorates the senses and stimulates the intellect. Such wines have great longevity and are very food friendly; some of the great Bordeaux wines can last and improve for fifty years or more.

“Fruit-bomb” wines can offer a convenient transition to the more subtle and thought provoking old world style of wines. Their immediate likeability and simplicity offer an attractive pathway to a more contemplative style. Once people become intrigued with this less obvious style they are likely to at least include old style wines in their repertoire.

Tasting a “fruit-bomb” wine in the company of the more restrained old-world style can be problematic. The bombastic “fruit-bomb” is likely to dominate, decimate, and completely wipe out the character of a more subtle wine in the same manner that it does in blanketing the flavors in food pairings.



Personally, I grow weary of wines loaded with fruit and not much else. They are powerful and instantly satisfying, yet superficial and wanting. They lack restraint. I guess that I just don’t like my palate to be bullied and poked. I prefer it to be gently caressed with thought provoking nuances. There is more to a cake than the frosting. *Wine & Food*

Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!

Tuesday, February 18, 2014

Chef René Orduna has planned an exotic and tasty menu for us to enjoy with our carefully selected wines. We'll start out with quaffing and art viewing in the RNG Gallery then move on to relax for a six-course meal. Elizabeth Cannon & Sandy Lemke host.

Note this event is on a Tuesday.

Saturday, March 29, 2014

An Unique event: Theatre and Dinner! We will feature a one man, one act play about French culinary legend Auguste Escoffier at the Council Bluffs Country Club.

Professional actor Marty Skomal will play Escoffier.

Hosts: Tom Murnan and David Tritsch.

FEBRUARY						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
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MARCH						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29 
30	31					

Friday, April 12, 2014

Stacie Matz & John Fischer host this event at the Happy Hollow Country Club in Omaha.

Saturday, May 18, 2014

Patti Hipple hosts a Spring Fling at one of Omaha's best restaurants: V. Mertz in the Old Market.

APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
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MAY						
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Hosting an event?

Let us know when, where and a little bit
about what's going on!

We would love to include YOUR event on the calendar!
email details to: bob.kossow@cox.net



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Keep In Touch!

Please notify Club Membership Chairman
Diane Forristall at Diane@Forristall.us
to let her know if you are interested
in hosting an IWFS event.

*Purpose: To meet communication and service needs, to broaden participation
and understand and to be an information exchange for the membership of
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