

The Bluffs **Food & Wine**

October 2012 *gazette*

The Sorenson's Lamb Dinner

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Tom and Mary Murnan 2012

Wine Vacation Vol. 2



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



Photo courtesy of hugel.com

Editor's Corner

Finally, the heat of summer has broken and we are in the delicious season of Autumn. Eleven of us took the scenic drive to Harlan, Iowa to the Sorensen lamb farm for our monthly event. We were astounded at how wonderful the meal was. John Fischer discusses opening an old First Growth Bordeaux. Finally, Part 2 of the Murnans' trip to Portugal. Our first stop: the Port Lodge of Weise and Krone. I encourage other members to submit their wine or food adventures to share in the Gazette.

Tom Murnan



Event Report

September 23, 2012

A Lamb Dinner of Splendor

by Tom Murnan



The first Sunday of Autumn found eleven members wending their way across the rolling hills of Iowa Harlan to the Sorensen Farm. We didn't know it then, but we were in for a real treat: an all lamb dinner, with every course homemade by Mary Sorensen. It only added to our delight that it was one of the most perfect evenings in quite a while, weather wise, with scarcely a bug in sight.

As we mingled and attacked the quaffing wines, we had our choice of two different kinds of lamb liver pâté: one with blue cheese and one without. It was different than regular pâté in that it was more delicate, with a light lamb flavor. There was a nice selection of reds for quaffing, including the 2004 Penfolds Koonunga Hills Shiraz Cabernet, the 2008 Chaleur Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, a 2009 Gnarly Head Old Vine Zinfandel, a 2010 Columbia Crest H3 Horse Heaven Hills Cabernet, and a 2008 d'Arenberg Stump Jump Shiraz.



The Sorensen's lamb raising operation is called Patchwork Meats LLC. Jerry's main job is to sell animal pharmaceuticals, but he and Mary raise lambs as a side job on their farm. Jerry fired up the gas grille to give us a treat that none of us ever experienced before: **Petite Appetizer Chops**. These were utterly delicious, and very simply prepared finger food that came from Niman Ranch, a California based company who had a branch just a short distance away in LeMars, Iowa (home of Blue Bunny). Niman Ranch believes that in order to produce the finest tasting all natural meat, they should use small U.S. family farmers who are committed to caring for their livestock in the traditional manner. After a short grilling on a hot grille, with salt, pepper and McCormick's Grill Masters Montreal Steak Seasoning, these were a thin slice of culinary heaven.

While the grille was in full operation, Jerry moved to the **Lollipop Lamb Chop**. In reality, this was rack of lamb with an elegant, long Frenched bone end that served as a great handle. Expertly grilled, they melted in your mouth. Everyone had two pops. Again, these were very simply prepared, allowing for the full natural flavor of the lamb to come through. By now, we were all thoroughly impressed, but we were only at the appetizer phase of our dining experience.

We made our way to table for **Baked French Onion Soup**. I was wondering how the lamb would figure into this course until I took my first bite. The lamb was in the stock! I must confess, I have never had a dish with lamb stock in it, and I daresay most of the diners had not as well. It was very light in texture,



sweeter, and more elegant than the usual beef stock. Mary later told us that one of the secrets of the stock was that she used sweet yellow onions. She roasted the lamb bones one and a half hours, then placed them to the stock pot along with celery and the afore mentioned onions, added water and simmered until the marrow came out of the bones, about four to five hours. Delicious. The dish made a nice pairing with the two Chardonnays: a **2008 Cambria Chardonnay Katherine's Vineyard**, and a **2009 Foxglove Chardonnay**.

John Fischer put us to work thinking about which wine we thought was the best match. The Foxglove was light in color, and unoaked, while the Cambria had a pronounced oaky nose and flavor and a fuller flavor that went well with the rich soup. Since we conveniently had two tables, each table gave their opinion. Table 1, which consisted of the Hipple, Sorensens, and Kossows, preferred the Foxglove because it was smoother and they didn't like the oak in the Cambria. Table 2, which had John Fischer, Schierbrocks, Kricsfelds and Murnans, preferred the Cambria for its oakiness and for the fact that it was a bigger wine that stood up to the richness of the soup.

Onward to the main course, we next enjoyed a massive plate of **Braised Lamb Shanks in Red Wine Sauce**. The shanks again came from the LeMars branch of Niman Ranch. After browning by sautéing the shanks, they were covered with chicken stock, red wine, garlic, rosemary, and celery and placed in a 425° oven for two hours. The shanks were rotated every 30 minutes to assure even cooking. The shank was placed on a bed of garlic mashed potatoes and surrounded with the delicious dark sauce. It was wonderful! The garlic potatoes should more properly be called smashed potatoes and consisted of four whole heads of homemade roasted garlic, and half each of white russet and red potatoes with their skins, sour cream, whipping cream and chives. A hearty country style smashed potatoes that went perfectly with the shanks.

The wine pairings were a **2009 Mission Point Pinot Noir** and a **2005 Novy Syrah**. John again led the wine discussion. Both tables felt that the Pinot was way too light a wine for this hefty dish. Even the Syrah was underweight to deal with all the strong flavors. What would work better? Perhaps a Rhône or a California Cab (but not a Bordeaux). Perhaps the perfect

wine for this type of gutsy dish would be a Barolo, which if selected right, can be a huge monster wine able to stand up to all these flavors and not get buried by them.

We ended our dinner with, again, a made from scratch **White Chocolate Raspberry Cheesecake**. A high quality white chocolate was used: cocoa butter, not almond bark. It was quite rich. But, you might ask, how did the all lamb theme entered into the dessert equation? Well, a sheep raising friend from South Dakota made the wine. The **Chocolate Raspberry Port** came in elegant tall 350 ml bottles and was a great match for the cheesecake as it enhanced the raspberry flavors in the dessert.



After taking a group photo where Jerry enticed the sheep to come out of the barn to be used as a background (a corn bribe worked wonders to this shy flock), we all sat around the table enjoying the sunset and the after-glow of the meal. Finally, the darkness and impending chill lead us to call it the end of spectacular food and good wines. Many merci's to our Hosts for all their planning, preparation and work for a wonderful outing. One thing is for sure, many of tonight's diners will be returning should this event ever be offered again. *The Bluffs Food & Wine Gazette*

More photos of this event on the following page »





Château Latour

by John Fischer



The famous Latour dovecot is on the left.

Photo courtesy of majestic.co.uk/about/enprimeir/bordeaux2006/vintagereport



Château Latour label

Photo courtesy of antique-wine.com/topwines/latour.aspx

A few months ago, I was fortunate to have experienced a bottle of 1970 Château Latour. The wine was marvelous. So, while that experience is still fresh in my mind, I felt obliged to share with you a little bit about the history and character of the estate.

It was the Tor à St-Lambert that gave its name to Latour. Unfortunately, this famous tower was raised to the ground and nothing of it remains. Nevertheless there is an ostentatious dovecot (enclosure for domestic pigeons) that overlooks the vines that is commonly mistaken for the tower after which Latour is named.

In the early part of the 18th century, Latour had already established a reputation for making very fine wines. Around this time Alexandre de Segur gained control of the property and added it to his extensive holdings, which also included Château Lafite. The Segur family remained a shareholder to the property for the majority of its early years.

In the mid '18th century, viticultural practices improved in spite of several setbacks related to vine pests and diseases, such as Phylloxera and downy mildew. Nevertheless, the wines garnered a superior reputation and the estate was classified as a first growth in the 1855 classification. At the dawn of the 19th century, Phylloxera again devastated the vineyard, which was ultimately salvaged by grafting of their vines to

resistant American rootstocks. In spite of these upheavals, the superior quality of their wine maintained the lofty reputation of the estate.

Latour has a reputation for taking tens of years to develop, so if you are a person of many years and purchase a current vintage of the wine, you are taking a risk of never experiencing its full splendor. Nevertheless, in more recent vintages, the wine appears to be developing at a little faster, but still languid pace.

Latour is the darkest in color, highest in tannin, and fullest in body of all of the great first growths, yet in mature great vintages, it has the most complex and refined bouquet, and the most silky and opulent texture of the lot of first growths.

The nub of the flavor profile consists of savors of blackcurrants, minerals, fresh walnuts, cedar, and leather. You will undoubtedly find at least some of these flavors (especially blackcurrants) in every bottle of high quality wine. The wine is characteristically 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20 % Merlot with smidgens of Petit Verdot and Cabernet Frank.

If you ever have the opportunity of tasting a mature sample of this legendary wine, it will be the hedonistic experience of a lifetime.



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.

Tom and Mary Murnan 2012 Wine Vacation

Vol. 2: Wiese & Krone

by Tom Murnan



After taking in all the sights of this busy city center, with its river full of barcos and modern watercraft, we walked partway up a steep hill to our destination: the Port Lodge of **Wiese and Krone**. The house was founded by, of all things, two Norwegians in 1865.

They initially shipped to Scandinavian and German countries, but now ship to the USA and Brazil. The present lodge was built in 1880, and consists of extensive barrel aging rooms. Port barrels lose about 2 to 3% of their contents per annum due to evaporation. The firm has about five million liters of Port aging throughout about six warehouses throughout the city of Gaia, so this is one reason why old wines cost more.



Proprietors Iolanda and José Carneiro

and their product in particular. In their marketing, the firm has dropped the name Wiese, and is now known primarily as Krone.

We were met by the owner, **José Carneiro** and his sister, **Iolanda** who talked to us for about four hours, providing us a wealth of information about the Port industry and its politics,

A short primer in Port is in order here. The most famous, and arguably the best, Port is **Vintage Port**. These Ports use only the finest juice, are only made in three out of ten years, and are only aged in barrel for about 2 years, where they spend the rest of their life in the bottle. Krone, however, specializes in the other major quality group of Port that we do not hear so much about: **Tawnies**. Tawnies are actually more popular in Portugal than Vintage Port. These wines also use only the finest juice but spend years in the wood, usually at specified intervals of 10, 20, 30 and 40 years. There is a special category for over 40 years that is not used in the United States. Tawnies can be blended from various years. A **Colheita** is a tawny from a single vintage, and must be aged a minimum of seven years in the pipe or cask.

We were treated to a vertical of Krohn Colheita Ports. From youngest to oldest, they were from the years: **2002, 1997, 1983, 1978, 1968, and 1961**. The quality of the wine increased as the barrel aging increased the complexity and darkened the color of the wine. Port is fortified with **aguardente**, a spirit made from grapes. The price of aguardente has risen recently because of potato crop failure in Russia. Potatoes, of course, are used in Vodka, and the Russians are scrambling for a replacement for Vodka. There was a lot of spitting because of the high alcohol content of Port.

We then took a tour of the facility, walking around a caged room that was locked. There were many rooms of barrels quietly aging their contents for future use. When we returned from the tour, we were given a real treat.



Mary peering into "The Garden"

We discovered that the caged in area had a name, and it had been unlocked. We were allowed into "The Garden" [I think the real name must be The Garden of Paradise!] for barrel samples of a red and a white Colheita from the year **1896**. But the pièce de résistance was a Krone Colheita Port from the year **1863**. Abraham Lincoln was President of the USA in 1863. The trio proved to be one of the most impressive set



Tasting the 1863 in "The Garden"

of wines I have ever tasted. Our tour guide and Port expert, Roy Hersh, gave the 1896 wines a rating of 98 for the red, a 99 for the white, and the 1863 a perfect 100 points. They were all truly stunning wines, a revelation for those who think that Vintage Port is the only kind of quality Port. This is why one joins a specialized tour: they are not pouring 1863 for the hoards and the droves who visit the lodge daily. As we left, I was thoroughly impressed with the quality of Tawny Ports.

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Next time: Our first really good restaurant in Portugal: O Papparico in Porto.





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Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events! Mark Your Calendars!

October 19 • John Fischer and Stacie Matz are planning an event at Happy Hollow Country Club in Omaha.

November 2 • Bob & Suzanne Kossow will present a meal of Spanish tapas at Elaine Fenner's house.

December 1 • Will be the President's Event again at the Omaha Press Club. Mark this one on your calendars now. You know how hectic the Christmas season becomes.

February 25 - March 4, 2013 • Steve Hipple asks that we join him for an 8 day wine and food extravaganza, featuring a 3 night/3 day Miami culinary adventure followed by a quiet and relaxing Caribbean Cruise. You may choose one or both. If you didn't get an email, already, contact Steve.

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: stephenhipple@hotmail.com

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KEEPING 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.

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