

IWFS Miami Branch 229th Event

October 17, 2002

Norman's Restaurant Coral Gables

Report by Christopher Zoller

Our Miami Branch was extremely privileged to host several members of the International Council at our 229th event, as well as to be the venue for the installation of the new International Chairman of Council. Event host Bob Dickinson was able to secure the private dining room and display kitchen at world famous Norman's in Coral Gables. Norman Van Aken was on hand, not only supervising a large number of chefs, (at one time I counted nine toques) but actually cooking for our group. Unfortunately we were limited to only 66 persons, including our thirteen visitors. The crowd was elegantly turned out in black tie with Society medallions.

As we gathered and met our members and guests, Norman's staff passed elegant hors d'oeuvres. We enjoyed polenta cakes with lamb shoulder and cranberry bean salad, thin crust pizza with confit of fingerling potatoes, lobster wontons with red curry coconut crema, and smoked sable on brioche with yogurt and Osetra caviar accompanied by Nicolas Feuillate Brut Champagne.

Open seating allowed us to sit with a wonderful mix of old and new friends, and we made sure that each table hosted an out of town guest. The visiting IWFS dignitaries included Bruce Alderman of Baltimore, the outgoing Chairman of Council and Fil A. Juntereal of Manila, the incoming Chairman. Other members of Council present were John Valentine and Ian Rushton of London, Dr. Nils Sternby of Malmo, Sweden, Lee Hambleton of Montreal, David Klott of Marin County, and Phillip Clark, the London Secretariat Executive Director.

Thanks to his familiarity with the cuisine and several consultations with Chef Norman, Bob was

able to pick some beautiful wines out of our Branch Cellar.

For a delightful autumn twist to a favorite ingredient, Norman served seared foie gras on a caramelized onion and apple filled tartlet brushed with a duck and apple juice gastrique. We enjoyed a 1995 Domaine des Baumard Quarts de Chaume, a great complement to the fruit and a lovely foil for the rich and savory foie. We also enjoyed an exchange of amusing anecdotes as Bruce passed the "chain" of command on to Fil. (You had to be there!)

The second course was seared Sea Scallops served over a pumpkin and pork belly risotto with a "dark sea" sauce. For this Bob found a superb wine and with careful handling he showed its beauty. (No wonder he heads our Wine Committee). The 1989 Chateau Leoville Barton needed every bit of the one-and-a-half hours in decanter, and proved to be distinctive but not overpowering for the dish. A very elegant St. Julien, and another triumph for those who espouse the drinking of red wine with seafood.

Continuing a seasonal theme for every ingredient, Norman presented us with roasted breast of squab and squab leg confit on a Yukon Gold mash with Chanterelles, Callaloo and a red wine squab jus. Callaloo is traditionally made from leaves of the West Indian dasheen plant and resemble spinach, and the dish can include coconut milk, crab and salt pork. The wine for this course was the 1989 Chateau Le Bon Pasteur. With its generous blend of merlot, this wine showed a supple mouthfeel, rich fruit and a soft feminine side. It was outstanding with the almost game-like squab and delicious vegetables.

Bob wisely saved a powerhouse for the cheese course. As we discussed the wines, he pointed out that Chateau Lynch Bages was a 5th Growth that many feel should be a 2nd. We had the 1988, which was a great contrast to the Pasteur. It was showing well, in a masculine style heavy with cabernet sauvignon. It has a classic big structure and was chosen because the cheese would bring out the fruit in the wine, and it truly did. What a great education!

Dessert featured another great pairing. It was Caramel orange panna cotta with seasonal fruits and the 1990 Chateau Rieussec Sauternes. One of the visiting guests at our table described it well: " a perfect match. No conflict and yet the complexity comes through." That is a perfect sentiment for the entire event.

It was great fun to host visiting dignitaries and still mingle with many more members of our branch. Many thanks to Bob Dickinson and Norman Van Aken.