

**IWFS / Miami Branch
Bordeaux Tasting
at
Morton's Steakhouse
230th Event
November 13, 2002
Reported by Christopher Zoller**

It is a rare and delightful opportunity when we can feature wonderful Bordeaux wines with simple but complimentary cuisine. This was the theme of our 230th Event as prepared and hosted by President Suhel Skaf. The venue was one of Miami's greatest steakhouses, Morton's of Chicago on Brickell Avenue. The idea was to serve classic American steakhouse fare with Bordeaux wines of the eighties. Suhel reserved the Boardroom, a private dining room limited to 30 guests with plenty of room for cocktail socializing and a proper wine service. The wood-paneled walls, lush carpeting and comfortable furniture fit the theme well. It was a night for the gents; jackets, but no ties required. To whet our appetites we sipped on Chateau Montaudon non-vintage Brut and nibbled smoked salmon pinwheels.

There was enough table room to accommodate all the glassware that was going to be required for the seven wines we were going to explore. As we settled in, Suhel enlisted the help of Bob Dickinson and together they poured the wines for each course. This assured proper service and gave Bob and Suhel a chance to visit with everyone. They are both quite ambidextrous, especially with wine.

Our first course was a perfectly prepared Jumbo Lump Crab Cake with no filler at all; just enough seasoning and moisture to hold the crabmeat together before it finally melted in the mouth. A great pairing for crab is white Burgundy, and Suhel found a classic on our IWFS cellar: Joseph Drouhin Batard-Montrachet Grand Cru 1991. This chardonnay was crisper and more acidic than the usual California chard and complimented rather than overwhelmed the dish. The wine also improved greatly in the glass, showing us that even white wines benefit from a chance to "breathe".

The next course started our opportunity to explore Bordeaux. Petite Lamb Chops seemingly devoid of fat, perfectly cooked and served with a Rosemary Merlot Demi-Glace. These were a rich and tasty treat to showcase two wonderful, if lesser-known, Bordeaux. The first was Chateau Grand Ormeau 1985, from Lalande-de-Pomerol. This wine was showing its best with the lamb, displaying the rich fruit flavors of black currants and cherries familiar to lovers of the Right Bank. The wine was supple and ripe, almost soft. It is probably at its peak, and showed very well with

food. Grand Ormeau is known to be one of the best values in Bordeaux. The second wine with this course was Chateau L'Arrose, 1985, from Saint Emilion. Proclaimed one of the top wines of the vintage, this wine displayed its hidden talents early in the evening and improved with time in the glass. It had good structure, almost edgy compared to the Grand Ormeau, and opened up to give us great black berry fruit flavors and soft tannins. This wine also seemed to be at its peak. We were extremely fortunate to have both these wines in our cellar and ready for us to enjoy now. It was a great lesson for those of us in attendance on the benefits of "airing" Bordeaux, but that all wines cannot be treated equally.

The beauty of a steakhouse setting was the opportunity for each of us to choose our next course: either New York Strip Steak, Au Jus, or Filet Mignon, with or without Mushrooms in Demi-Glace Mustard Sauce. Everyone agreed that his meat was perfectly cooked and was a great background for the next flight of wines. The first was a Saint Estephe, Chateau Les Ormes de Pez, 1982, in magnum. Suitable for this group, the wine showed its masculine, tougher characteristics from the heavier soil, as well as its firm tannins. Nonetheless, it was lush, fruity and quite well balanced. In the large format, this wine still has plenty of life. Once again our IWFS cellar produced a star of the vintage for our next wine: Chateau Talbot, a Saint Julien (1982 also). Highly regarded by the wine press, this was a real treat for all of us. While possibly slight softer (more feminine?) than the Les Ormes de Pez, it was showing sharper tannins and richer body, with a truly smooth, silky mouthfeel. The abundance of fruit in this wine contributed to its better balance.

For our cheese course (Gouda, Fontina, Chevre and Camembert) we were served Chateau Pichon-Longueville, Comtesse de Lalande (Pauillac) 1988. This was the icing on the cake! Raves for this wine included "possibly the wine of the night", "...a kaleidoscope of flavors" and "showed better than the '82's". The wine was lovely. Complex but distinctive flavors, very rich fruit, full body, and a great bouquet. While 1988 was originally not considered as great a vintage as 1982, this wine proved that you can't always believe what you read. The proof is in the glass, and sharing with good friends enhances the experience.

For dessert we had a Chocolate Velvet Cake, but those of us who stayed marveled at the still evolving Lalande-de-Pomerol and Pichon Lalande. At yet another fantastic evening of good food, good wine and good friends, we were able to welcome six guests and recognize some long standing and often missed members. Thanks to Suhel for a fantastic theme: relaxing and unpretentious, but educational and delicious. While some wines may be at their peak, dinners like this show that our branch is still ascending.