



*The International Wine & Food Society*

**Miami Branch**

*Bordeaux Wine Tasting Dinner*  
*At*  
*Morton's The Steakhouse Miami*

*November 19, 2003*

**Reported by Christopher Zoller**

Undaunted by a last minute change of venue, FTAA celebrants and protesters, and the second annual televised fashion show *extraordinaire*, our host and President Suhel Skaf created an exquisite wine tasting and meal at the ever-popular Morton's. It was Gents only, and we gathered in the walnut paneled bar to enjoy some Champagne Taittinger, Millesime 1996 with smoked salmon and cream cheese pinwheels on toasted pita triangles. The champagne was crisp, with medium body and good acids, a truly first class drink. The hors d'oeuvres, with their creamy salty crunch, were superior to bland canapés, and perfect for the bubbly.

We were ushered into the lovely and private boardroom set with five tables and four crystal wineglasses per person, a hint of treats to come. After the introduction of one guest, Suhel made a point to introduce two new members, and let them know what they were in for at their first "stag" dinner. He was surprisingly gentle with very little hazing. It was immediately evident that this group was all about camaraderie and good-hearted jesting, and the room buzzed with banter. Suhel was assisted in pouring the wines by Joe Garrigo and Scott Bailey. The first wine was

Joseph Drouhin Mersault-Charmes, 1995 (a great white Burgundy vintage) and it was paired with a fantastic Jumbo Lump Crab Cake served with Field Green Salad and Classic Vinaigrette Dressing. The crab cake was outstanding mainly for its simplicity, the quality of the very large chunks of crabmeat, a light touch with the seasonings, and absolutely no filler. This rich fish dish lends itself well to the chardonnay grape in the Burgundian style: more acid than oak, more dry fruit than butter. This wine provoked many comments from the tasters and again showed the importance of proper storage and constant scrutiny. It was austere, tasting like the currently popular “un-oaked” chardonnays. It was showing more than its age and there was some distinct bottle variation, as one glass opened up beautifully while another tasted maderized. The dish itself showed the contrast between the lush crab and the slightly bitter greens with the vinaigrette, and the wine completed the balance with palate-refreshing acids and dry but aging fruit flavors.

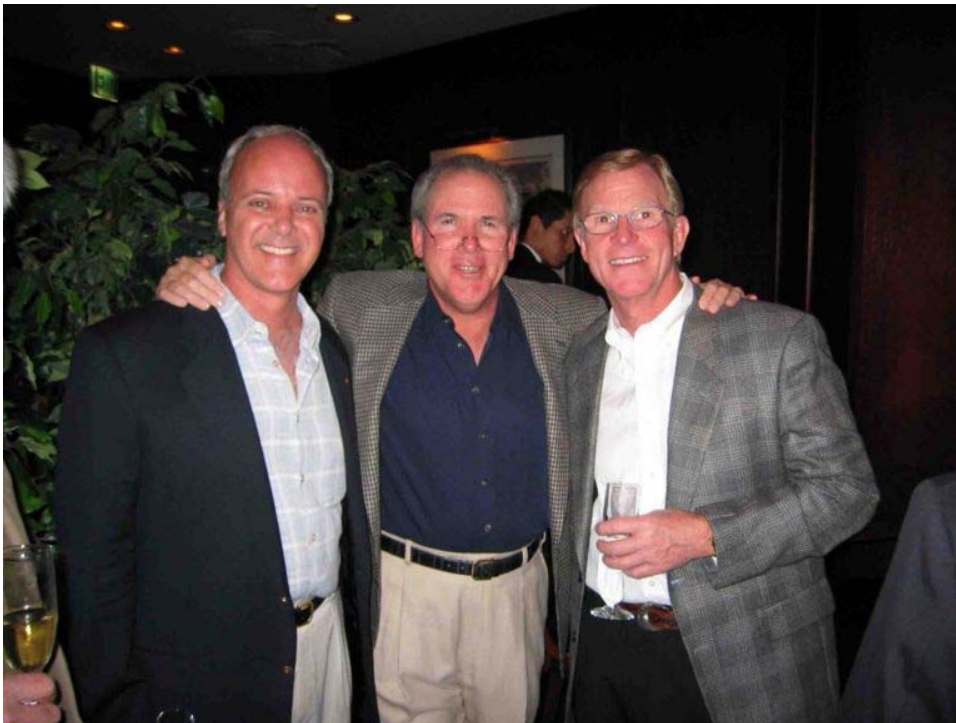
The next course started our serious Bordeaux tasting and pairing. For the first Bordeaux, Suhel chose Vieux Chateau Certan 1986 from Pomerol. This wine was a revelation! Some consider the vintage still too tannic (87 out of 100 points by Robert Parker) and others rate it as ready (4 out of 7 points by IW&FS) but the wine told the story. It was rich with spectacular fruit, hints of leather and a slight tobacco finish; it is everything one hopes Bordeaux can be. Black cherry and cassis flavors at the first sip grew mellow and complex in the glass, showing more terroir. It was a real pleasure and privilege to taste this delightful wine, and another great lesson in our continuing education. The dish could not have gone better: Petite Lamb Chops in Rosemary Merlot Demi-Glace Sauce. The chops were perfectly cooked and topped with a dab of Treasure Cay Blue Cheese for a little extra dimension with the delicious wine.

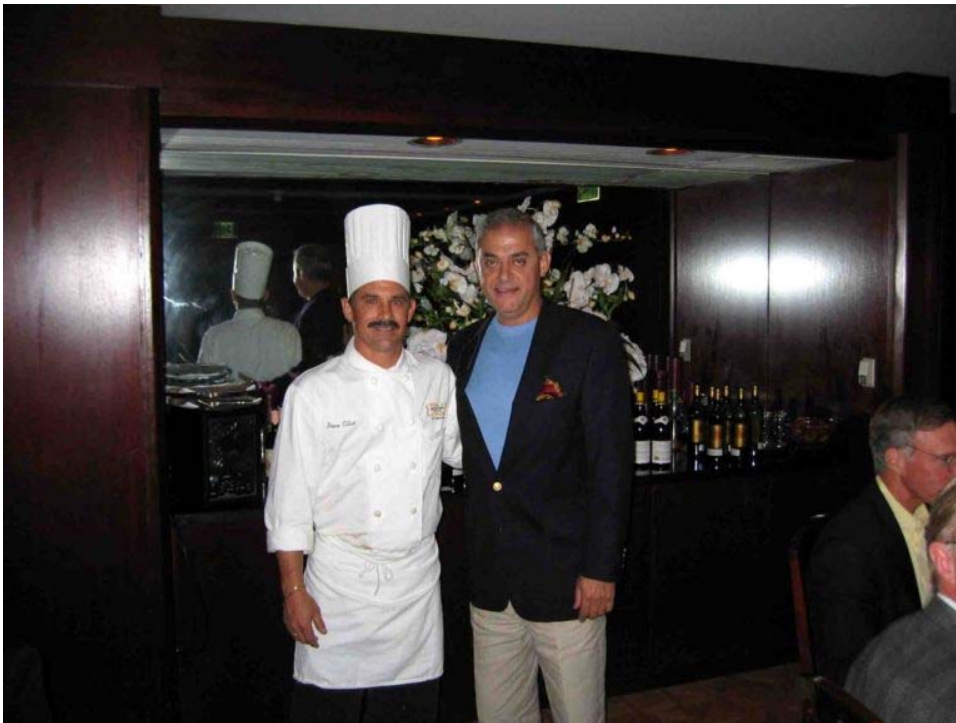
Morton's lives up to its name as a delight for steak lovers, and to make everyone happy they offered two choices for the next course: Filet Diane with Sautéed Mushrooms in a Demi-Glace Mustard Sauce or New York Strip Steak with Aus Jus Sauce. You could not go wrong with either one. Both were cooked strictly to order and choices ranged from black and blue to medium rare. The filet was large and tender and the strip was even larger and well trimmed. It's hard to beat Prime aged beef with fine Bordeaux. Our next was from the outstanding 1982 vintage, Chateau Batailley in Pauillac. The first taste was smooth and smoky showing perfect development at its age. It is human nature and a connoisseur's requirement to compare and contrast, and this tasting was a wonderful opportunity to experience different styles, blends, and appellation characteristics. While the Batailley had less fruit than the Certan, it also was more subtle and elegant. It was lighter on the mid-palate and a little more balanced on the finish. It is another outstanding wine, showing its terroir and vintage to the best advantage.

A fine plate of Imported Cheeses came next. French Camembert, Italian Fontina, Chevre, and Pont L'Eveque were served with red and green grapes and another spectacular Bordeaux offering: Chateau Beychevelle 1985, a Saint-Julien. The cheeses were plentiful and a wonderful course to continue showcasing the wines. The Beychevelle had a great balance of strong fruit and earthy components. Hints of mushroom, leather, even loam or soil were present under the black fruit flavors. 1985 was another highly rated vintage and considered ready to drink. This wine may or may not have been at its peak, depending on who you talked to, but it was a great expression of its terroir and vintage, and another treat to see how it is developing. All of these Bordeaux, ranging from 17 to 21 years of age, were smooth with mature tannins. Their distinct differences made for a wonderful Tasting Dinner, as advertised.

For dessert we had a luscious Chocolate Velvet Cake, moist layers of milk chocolate cake with dark chocolate filling and icing topped with a mint leaf and a raspberry. Another great pairing is Port with chocolate, and Suhel provided the delightful Fonseca Guimaraens Vintage 1984. This little known name was a separate brand before being bought and finally absorbed by the larger firm. The wine was rich and smooth, with medium body and superb flavors without being too sticky. It was a very nice finish.

This evening was a classic example of Wine, Food and Friends: a very convivial group with strong tastes and opinions and a wonderful forum for learning and sharing.







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*Champagne Reception*  
*Smoked Salmon Pinwheels*  
*Champagne Taittinger, Millesime 1996*

*Jumbo Lump Crab Cake*  
*Served with Field Greens Salad, Classic Vinaigrette Dressing*  
*J. Drouhin, Hersault-Charmes, 1995*

*Petite Lamb Chops*  
*In Rosemary Merlot Demi-Glace Sauce*  
*Vieux Chateau Certan, Pomerol, 1986*

*Filet Diane,*  
*Sautéed Mushrooms in Demi-Glace Mustard Sauce*

or  
*New York Strip Steak, Au Jus Sauce*  
*Both entrees served with Roasted Herbed Potatoes and Fresh Sautéed Vegetable Medley*  
*Chateau Batailley, Pauillac, 1982*

*Imported Cheeses*  
*French Camembert, Italian Fontina, Chevre, Pont L'Evêque with Red & Green Grapes*  
*Chateau Beychevelle, Saint-Julien, 1985*

*Chocolate Velvet Cake*  
*Fonseca, Guimaraens, Vintage Port, 1984*

*Executive Chef: Steve Elliott*

*Host: Sabel Skag*