



N O R M A N ' S

Welcomes Our Friends

I. W. & F. S.

Monday, February 9th, 2004
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Hors d'Oeuvres

Fluke *Sashimi* with *Ponzu* Dipping Sauce
Cornmeal Crusted Island Creek Oysters with Horseradish Foam
Mongolian Marinated Quail *Satays* with Tamarind Spice "Paint"
Chilled Cilantro Soup with Yogurt *Gelée*
Champagne Mumm, Cordon Rouge, Cuvee 1990



Brazilian Seafood *XinXim* with Maine Lobster,
Black Trumpet Mushrooms and Lobster Essence

Shafer, Chardonnay, Red Shoulder Ranch, 2001



Grilled *Lapsang-Souchong* Tea and Shallot-Stuffed Salmon Spirals with
Olive Oil Crushed Potatoes, Pearl Onions and Sauce *Mer Noir*

Shafer, Cabernet Sauvignon, Hillside Select, 1992



Carnaroli Risotto with Braised Summerfield Farms Veal Cheeks, Roasted Veal Loin,
Melted Heirloom Tomatoes and Red Wine Essence

Shafer, Cabernet Sauvignon, Hillside Select, 1994



Selection of *Artisanal* Cheeses

Shafer, Relentless, 2000



Warm Pear *Strudel*, Port Wine Drizzle and Cinnamon Ice Cream

Ch. Doisy-Vedrines, Sauternes, 1998

Subj: **RE: IW&FS Winemaker Dinner Report**
 Date: 2/18/2004 5:38:48 PM Eastern Standard Time
 From: jshafer@shafervineyards.com
 To: JohnK3628@aol.com

Dear Chris Zoller: Many thanks for sending along your report on the Feb dinner at Norman's. It was a great evening. Your summary and descriptions were simply excellent. Congratulation! Barbara and I really enjoyed ourselves.

With kind regards. John.

-----Original Message-----

From: JohnK3628@aol.com [mailto:JohnK3628@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2004 4:36 PM
To: jshafer@shafervineyards.com
Subject: IW&FS Winemaker Dinner Report



The International Wine & Food Society

Miami Branch

Winemaker Dinner ***Norman's***

February 9, 2004

By Chris Zoller

Just as we enjoy meeting the chef of a wonderful meal so we can show our appreciation and ask questions, it is a rare and wonderful pleasure to meet the winery owner and/or winemaker while we are enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Thanks to a great friendship, our President, Suhel Skaf was able to arrange a dinner for our branch with John and Barbara Shafer of Shafer Vineyards. This was a real treat, and a first for our group. The private kitchen room at Norman's was our venue, so a sold-out crowd of 60 members and guests was assured of wonderful food.

The champagne reception featured Mumm Cordon Rouge, Vintage 1990. This wine had a rich golden hue, showing its age and heritage and a lovely nose of toast and apples. At first taste it had a crisp but light acidity, and then opened into a creamy, lush richness. The passed hors d'oeuvres covered every flavor spectrum. Delicious "Mongolian Marinated Quail *Satays* with Tamarind Spice Paint" had a wonderful charcoal-grilled intensity. The "Cornmeal Crusted Island Creek Oysters with Horseradish Foam" were served in oyster shells; the foam was an extremely light touch on the crisp oyster. "Fluke Sashimi with *Ponzu* Dipping Sauce" was an excellent presentation: skewered fluke filet served in a square shot glass full of the very spicy sauce, making the "Chilled Cilantro Soup with Yogurt *Gelee*" a welcome cooling follow-up with its refreshing, mild, not overwhelming, flavor. Clearly these surpassed any normal cocktail fare.

After a brief welcome and introductions, Suhel introduced us to our guests of honor, John and Barbara Shafer of Shafer Vineyards. After purchasing the vineyard property in 1972 and extensive replanting and terracing, John's first vintage of what is now world famous and

cult status Shafer Estate Hillside Select was in 1978. He described how over the years, first he, then his son Doug, took responsibility for the winegrowing process, and how the vineyard and the winery matured and grew along with the other pioneers of world-class wine in the Napa Valley. He described the relatively small Stag's Leap District and the importance of appellation designation. We could tell that there are a great many stories for John to share, and he had a flair for telling them.

The first course was “Brazilian Seafood *Xim Xim* with Main Lobster, Black Trumpet Mushrooms, and Lobster Essence”. Actually there were some 30 ingredients in this light seafood stew, including clams, shrimp, mussels, scotch bonnet peppers, and cashews. The pairing was with the Shafer Red Shoulder Ranch Chardonnay, 2001 (a fabulous vintage). Red Shoulder Ranch is in the Carneros District, an area that benefits from the cooling fogs of the northernmost part of San Francisco Bay, ideal conditions for Chardonnay. This wine displayed rich thick fruit, a lighter touch of oak (only 40% new barrels) and butter, and a higher acidity to be more food friendly. There is no malolactic fermentation. The vineyard produces only 3 tons per acre (less than most) of small cluster, concentrated berries and was picked very ripe and barrel fermented and aged 14 months on the lees. It was delightful, and appropriate to the dish.

Next came “Grilled *Lapsang-Souchong* Tea and Shallot Stuffed Salmon Spirals with Olive Oil Crushed Potatoes, Pearl Onions and Sauce *Mer Noir*”. Cooking with tealeaves has added a new taste dimension and opened up more opportunities to pair different wines. The salmon was perfectly cooked (that is to say rare) and took on a smokiness from the tea and the black sea sauce. It worked beautifully with the lush, soft Shafer Hillside Select 1992 Cabernet Sauvignon. This wine had a superb bouquet, with an earthy nose of cassis, blackcurrant and vanilla, and concentrated purple color with plenty of glycerin. It was extremely smooth with mellow tannins and delicious sweet fruit. Suhel decanted and gave this wine 45 minutes of air and it continued to develop in the glass. John explained that there never has been anything but cabernet sauvignon in his cabernet sauvignon (!) in spite of its softness and smoothness, usually ascribed to the addition of merlot. His estate vineyard is 100% cab and has that “special terroir”, along with 32 to 36 months of aging in 100% new French oak barrels. The fruit in these grapes can stand up to all that new oak, hence the balance and richness of Hillside Select. It really went well with the salmon, picking up the smoke and tea flavors, while being soft enough to go with fish.

More treats were in store for us as Norman's talented waitstaff brought out “*Carnaroli Risotto* with Braised Summerfield Farms Veal Cheeks, Roasted Veal Loin, and Melted Heirloom Tomatoes and Red Wine Essence”. The veal cheeks were cooked in the risotto with ample spice and the loin was sliced into perfect medallions cooked rare to medium rare, still moist and juicy. As always, Norman excels in exotic sauces but with a light touch, appealing as much to the eye as to the palate. This was a delightful and thick blend of tomato and red wine. John and Suhel presented the 1994 Hillside Select to go with this course and it was an exceptional treat. 1994 is considered a slightly better quality vintage than 1992, and this tasting proved that theory. This wine was richer, deeper, lusher, showing more earth, leather, and tobacco on the nose. With an opaque purple color, low acids and full body, it was rich, smooth, soft and feminine. It still had gobs of luscious sweet blackberry and currant fruit flavors and a velvety texture. It would appear that it still has plenty of time to develop even further.

For the cheese course, the menu only said “Selection of Artisanal Cheeses”. This was a lovely plate of Blue, Cheddar, and Tomme with a selection of chopped fig, peaches, and sliced pears. It was a delightful plate to have with a very new offering from Shafer, a blend of Syrah (80%) and Petite Syrah called “Relentless”, named for Winemaker Elias Fernandez, who has worked at Shafer Vineyards for nearly 20 years. His tenacious respect for the vineyards, from a mere laborer, tractor operator, picker and finally *vigneron*, has been exemplified by his relentless pursuit of quality. The 2000 Shafer Relentless is only the second vintage, from a vineyard on the southern fringe of Stags Leap District, near Oak Knoll. This is a huge, dense, rich young wine with big fruit flavors of blackberry liqueur and barbecue spices with hints of licorice and a peppery finish. Like the cabernet from the same region, it is full bodied, with lush and velvety texture. It will certainly improve with a few more years of bottle age.

How could any dessert stand up to all this? Easily, when it is Norman's “Warm Pear Strudel with Port Wine Drizzle and Cinnamon Ice Cream”. A delicious stuffing of cooked pear in a light puff pastry strudel with a “paint” of sauce on the plate and a garnish of crisp candied sugar. The ice

cream was a fresh and wonderful flavor. To wash this all down, Suhel chose a lovely light Sauternes, Chateau Doisy-Vedrine 1998. This wine has a rich nose and was smooth and light on the tongue, not overbearing, and hinting at years of future pleasure.

The staff of chefs, waitstaff, sommeliers, and manager John Ricardo, all ably assisted executive Chef Norman Van Aken in giving us one of our finest meals, if not one of the best dining experiences anywhere. The level of service is one of the many elements that set Norman's above all the rest. Their hard work made our evening extra special.

The pleasure of hosting such an experienced and accomplished proprietor as John Shafer was proven by his warm accessibility and wonderful insight into winemaking and his particular involvement with one of America's finest appellations. His wines feature soft tannins, velvety textures, superb balance, and exquisite fruit flavors, and all he has to say is "we let the grapes dictate the style". He proved to be a humble and gracious guest. Every one of our events benefits from the diligent attention to detail by our President Suhel Skaf. For this dinner he deserves a very special thanks for his extra effort and hard work in arranging, through his personal friendship, this very special event. Would that we could share more wonderful evenings of "*Wine, Food and Friends*" like this!





