



## The IW&FS/Miami Branch

Wednesday, April 14th, 2004

### Hors d' Oeuvres

Esparragos en Tempura  
Tropical Tuber Liquid Croquetas  
Temaki-Sushi "Cone": Shrimp/ Avocado/ Unagi

*Philippomat, Champagne, Royale Reserve, Brut*

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Piquant BBQ'd Shrimp/ Orzo/ Calabaza  
*Joseph Drouhin, Puligny-Montrachet, Folatières, 1996*

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Duck Pizza/ Chinese Sausage/ Shiitakes

*Joseph Drouhin, Musigny, 1990*

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Citrus-Soy Salmon/ Stir Fry Vegetables

*Viña Real, Reserva, Rioja, 1981*

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Angus Strip Steak/ Three Textures of Potatoes

*Remelluri, Rioja, 1994*

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Tropical Sampler

*Quarts de Chaume, Roche Moreau, St. Aubin, 1999*

*Hosted by Subel Skaff*



## **Mundo Café & Mercado** **Wednesday, April 14, 2004**

**Report by Christopher Zoller**

The new, hip café cum market by Norman Van Aken was the venue for a popular coed dinner hosted by President Suhel Skaf. The “mercado” area is quite small but the large lovely space of the restaurant, with its many areas defined by rows of booths interspersed with individual and communal tables, is almost cavernous. It reminds one of the old Oyster Bar in Manhattan’s Grand Central Station, only with dark woods, open kitchen and floor-to-ceiling wine storage. There is ample room for indoor and patio dining.

We gathered in the reception area, almost like a library complete with a live plasma screen view of the kitchens, for hors d’oeuvres and Phillipponnat Champagne, Royal Reserve Brut. The Esparragos en Tempura were stalks of still crisp asparagus tips in a lightly quick-fried batter, perfectly cooked. Tropical Tuber Liquid Croquetas were a fantastic take on an almost mundane Miami staple. They are a mix of potato and boniato, so gently fried as to literally melt in your mouth like a truffle. The Temaki-Sushi “Cone” of shrimp, avocado and unagi was one of Norman’s takes on sushi with fresh flavors. All three matched extremely well with the crisp, dry champagne and it’s good chardonnay flavors. An excellent beginning.

We were seated at various tables of eight or ten in the first area of the large restaurant. The open café/bistro environment allowed only for good table conversation, as the convivial room was too big to allow formal (or informal) speeches. Our first course was Piquant BBQ’d Shrimp on a base of Orzo with Calabaza. The barbecue sauce was vinegar based on the very hot spiced, perfectly cooked shrimp. The timbale of orzo and pumpkin was a refreshing counterpoint. The flavors

made you sit up and take notice! We had a delightful Puligny-Monrachat (Folatières) by Joseph Drouhin from the highly rated 1996 vintage. The wine was pleasantly dry with a steely mineral quality to the chardonnay fruit and was surprisingly good with the spicy dish.

The next course was Duck Pizza with Chinese Sausage and Shiitakes. By now we were getting a sense of the “mundo” theme of the cuisine, as Norman reached out to all the world’s continents to find flavors and ingredients. This pizza was superb. The slightly Asian take of the toppings on flatbread gave a bold and rich combination and wonderful texture. Paired with this course was another Burgundy from Joseph Drouhin, the 1990 Musigny. The better examples of this wine showed a delicate nose of barnyard, leather and earth. Pinot noir is an excellent choice for duck and mushrooms and sausage, and this fine vintage showed good fruit flavors of old black berries and cherries. With proper storage these wines become the most delicate and subtle pairing for the newer, bold flavors of this cuisine.

Our fish course was Citrus-Soy Salmon with Stir-Fry Vegetables. The filets were moist and tender inside the seared crust, showing masterful kitchen skills for so many diners at once. The sauce was teriyaki-like without being overbearing on the salty soy. To continue the worldly theme, and set us up for an intellectual pursuit, Suhel chose a 1981 Rioja, a Reserva from Vina Real. This is the classic old style of Rioja, very elegant and feminine with delicious aged, but not dried-out, fruit perfectly balanced with fully resolved tannins. This wine was at its first peak but capable of more life hereafter. Delicious.

The intellectual challenge came in the form of the “new” style Rioja with the next course, Angus Strip Steak with Three Textures of Potatoes. A nice filet of aged Angus beef was again in a spicy, vinegar-based sauce; this time a chimichurri. The roasted potatoes, potato chip and whipped potato foam all helped balance the flavorful steak. The new style Rioja was a 1994 by Remellion, and was a perfect choice for the dish. This wine had a heavier, masculine mouthfeel and was more fruit forward. Made in the so-called “international” style to be fruitier and richer, only time will tell if this newer generation of Riojas will age as gracefully and elegantly as their forbears. For this night, the wine was another excellent pairing.

Dessert was a remarkable Tropical Sampler, featuring a range of flavors and textures. Chocolate in the form of a rich decadent warm brownie and a light mousse was a favorite. Also elegant was a light tropical ice cream and a richly flavored key lime tart. All were beautifully displayed in an attractive presentation. To wash this down we enjoyed a 1999 Quarts de Chaume from Roche Moreau. Lighter than a sauterne and easier on the tropical flavors than a port, this was a lovely finish to our visit to the new, and hopping Mundo. This was another superb job of matching cuisine to the wines in our cellar and supervising the service by our diligent President, Suhel Skaf. It was a great evening with lots of sharing of Wine, Food, and Friends.



