



The International Wine & Food Society

Miami Branch

“Boys Night Out” at The Capital Grill”

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We returned to the very popular Capital Grill in the heart of the Brickell Financial District for an encore dinner and a chance to relish fine wine with great cuisine. A lucky thirty of us squeezed in. The Capital Grill features a high-ceilinged wood paneled room with an elevated bar and several private dining areas. We were welcomed in the piano lounge with glasses of Duval-Leroy Brut Champagne, vintage 1992. This was an unusual but delightful year in the region but not every champagne house declared a vintage. The wine was a crisp, light and fruity blend and seemed to reveal a majority of chardonnay juice. It has excellent acidity and was delicious with the Norwegian Smoked Salmon wrapped around Asparagus tips. Just a small touch of cream cheese held the delicate fish on the blanched spear. The pleasant piano music did not distract from our opportunity to meet and greet friends and guests.

We were ushered into the “Wine Room” for our dinner. This is a classic private dining room with the walls lined with some of the restaurant’s vast wine collection. Two long tables were set and the staff got right down to the service. Host and Branch President Suhel Skaf took a few moments to welcome us and introduce our few guests and then poured our first wine, a Puligny Monrached from Francois Gaunoux, 1996, one of the highest rated vintages for white Burgundy in the past twenty years. In a word, the wine was fabulous, crisp and dry with great chardonnay flavors and only a touch of oak. It showed good mineral and steely elements from the limestone soil and was not overwhelmed by heavy fruit or buttery notes. White Burgundy is exceptional with rich

shellfish and the selection was Lobster and Crab Cake served with Corn Relish and Tartar Sauce. The corn was cut right off the cob and very fresh. The seafood cake was wonderful. Large chunks of lobster claw were discernible amongst the delicate crabmeat, and there was no filler, just barely enough creamy sauce to hold it together. A light touch of spice could have been a little paprika and celery salt. As the wine warmed and softened in the glass it took on some soft tropical fruit flavors. This was a great pairing.

Petite Lamb Chops were our next course. Each plate was three lovely rib chops cut right off the rack and crusted with Rosemary Garlic and Garlic Thyme Sauce. Perfectly cooked and enhanced with the excellent sauce, one tablemate declared them the "best lamb chop ever". Lamb is a perfect meat to pair with Bordeaux and Suhel found another gem in our cellar: Chateau Calon-Segur from Saint Estephe, vintage 1988. The nose was luscious, very fragrant with leather, tobacco, barnyard, blackberry and currant elements in a great melange. The wine was spectacular, deeply colored, with very harmonious and complex flavors of sweet red and black berries. It was rich and full bodied and had great "dirt" in the earthy finish. With a silky smooth mouthfeel it was lush and ready to drink. What a delight!

We come to a steak house for great steak, and the Capital Grill delivered it: a 14-ounce Dry-Aged Sirloin cooked to order. This was a lovely lean boneless steak accompanied by wild Roasted Mushrooms and Fresh Creamed Spinach and another background for fine Bordeaux. This course featured Chateau Pavie from Saint-Emilion, 1982. This Premier Grand Cru is usually a blend of 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and the '82 started out with loads of tannin. Fortunately for us this had been well cellared and has shed most of those tannins. It had a beautiful ruby/garnet color and a nose of black currants and cherries, vanilla and roasted herbs. In the mouth it showed the soft tannin and great complex but supple fruit flavors. This wine was elegant and feminine, especially when compared to the Calon-Segur. It was quite a pleasure and a privilege to compare and experience these two Bordeaux.

For our Selection of Cheeses we jumped an ocean, a continent, and a decade to have the Stags Leap Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, 1995. Brie, Cheddar and Blue cheeses were served with Grapes to enjoy with the wine, which showed true "California Girl" characteristics. Displaying a rich and heavy mouthfeel and luscious red fruit the wine is still "big" with strong tannin and great acid. It seems to have enough balance to continue to show well for several more years. Without any blending wines in the mix, the California Cabernet is a bit more austere, direct, and less complex than Bordeaux. Tasting it tonight was another wonderful educational opportunity.

Chocolate "rules" for dessert, especially after all these classic courses. Ours this night was a Flourless Chocolate Espresso Cake. The superrich dense chocolate flavor enhanced with coffee was quite a treat and Suhel was up to the pairing challenge by bringing out a 1970 Warre Vintage Port. Sweet soft and smooth with an almost smoky finish, this wine had great balance and enough character to compliment the almost fudge-like chocolate cake. It was a sweet finish to a great evening of Wine, Food and (Male) Friends.





