



The International Wine & Food Society

Miami Branch

***A Burgundian Affair
(to remember)***

Miami City Club

October 27, 2004

Report by Christopher Zoller

The full moon hung over the gorgeous Miami Skyline as 76 of our members and guests ascended to the 55th floor of the Wachovia Tower, the highest dining elevation south of Atlanta, for our October black tie coed dinner. We were drawn by the lure of a menu by renowned chef Michelle Bernstein and a host of Burgundian wines. The venue was the fantastic City Club, and the room was set for maximum enjoyment of the view. With lots of room for our champagne hour, we drank the delightful Joseph Perrier Brut NV with three passed hors d'oeuvres: a demitasse of a warm corn chowder, a porcelain spoon of ceviche with watermelon juice, and a wafer with a smoked fish dip. The chowder was thick and rich with corn flavor, the sweet/tart juice enhanced the ceviche, and the fish salad was very mild and lightly smoked. The champagne was medium bodied with a slight toasty finish, always a pleasant aperitif.

We settled into tables of eight to nine, each one having a great view of the upcoming eclipse of the moon. The first course from the kitchen was a Crabmeat & Avocado Timbale with Quinoa

Salad and Gazpacho essence. The Timbale was a layered tower of finely flaked lemony crab, diced avocado, the quinoa gave it a fine grain base and the clear gazpacho essence was tomato water with cucumber and a hint of fennel. The whole dish was very refreshing. The wine choice was the perfect accompaniment: a Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru “Les Combettes” 1998. Exceptional chardonnay flavors in the typically dry Burgundian style that really works so well with shell fish of all kinds, this wine had hints of citrus and butter and a light minerality, but was never overwhelming.

Next was an exquisite preparation of Foie Gras with Fresh Bean and Leek Stew. A generous lobe of goose liver was gently poached, but not at all overcooked, and presented in a savory, buttery broth, rich with duck flavor. Split lima beans and finely minced carrots added color and crunch. Most of us are used to seared foie gras, so this was a bit of a departure, but the leek broth was excellent and a great combination of textures. For our first red wine of the night we had the exceptional Etude Pinot Noir 1999, from the Carneros region of Napa Valley. This wine is inspired by Tony Soter’s love of Morey-St.-Denis. It had a wonderful nose of toasty black cherry fruit and a touch of spice. The flavors also showed delicious black fruit, light spice, and earthy tones. With a medium to full body, good structure and tannin, and a rich mouthfeel, it was an excellent, if unusual, pairing for the foie, thanks to the lovely fruit.

For our fish course Chef Michelle wrapped beautiful filets of Halibut in Pancetta with Apple-Fennel Fondue and an Apple-Veal Jus. The halibut was fantastic, very meaty and firm in its salty wrapper. The creamy apple and fennel fondue gave the dish real autumnal flavors, and the jus was more like a Demi-Glace, flavored with Granny Smith apples and cognac. The meat-like texture and flavors lent itself to a fine red Burgundy, and we had the 1997 Chateau de la Charriere Santenay “La Maladiere,” a Premier Cru. While Santenay lies in the Chardonnay-dominated Cote de Beaune, almost 99% of its wine is red (Pinot Noir) and can be the source of some great values. This particular wine was light, both in color and weight, and had good acidity to help cleanse the palate.

It seems that fall is a great time for comfort food, and Michelle offered up Short Ribs of Beef Braised with Red Burgundy accompanied by Celery Puree. This dish was outstanding, with the beef perfectly cooked to melt-in-your-mouth tenderness but still rare. The wine braising liquid gave off enough juice for a wonderful glaze on the very tasty short ribs, and the celery puree was an exceptional foil with its distinctive flavor.

To continue our tour of Burgundy, we had a Gevrey-Chambertin “Vielles Vignes” 1998 from Philippe Rossignol. While not all the grapes in this wine are necessarily from the same vineyard, they all must be from vines at least thirty years old to carry the “Old Vines” designation. This wine was by far the most tannic of the night, which stood up well to the hearty beef. The dish really brought out the good core fruit (black berries and cherries), structure, and balance in the wine. More proof that Pinot Noir is very food-friendly.

Our dessert, a Semi-Freddo Chocolate Terrine & Nougat, was loaded with hazelnut crunch and luscious ice cream with a raspberry and a vanilla coulis. Wonderful textures and flavors to match with the wine for this course: Domaine La Tour Vielle Banyuls, 2002. Banyuls is a deliciously sweet red wine made from Grenache grapes typically spending 8 years aging in oak. Top Banyuls can age for over 20 years, and it is recognized as one of the world’s best wines to have with chocolate. It is woody, like tawny port, with sweet and refreshing flavors of vanilla and cinnamon and a crisp finish. Ours this night was a young wine, with very little oak aging, but still displayed the range of flavors and was a great match for the dessert.

This was a spectacular evening for a large crowd, thanks to the tireless efforts of hosts *Tory Jacobs* and *Bob Moschell*. They worked hard to obtain the talented Distinguished Visiting Chef Michelle Bernstein, and timing was on their side. Michelle is now freelancing and pursuing another opportunity after her years as the inaugural chef for the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Miami. Her former sous chef, Mark Zeitouni, is now the Executive Chef at the City Club, and the quality of food showed how well they work together. Every good chef knows that one must use high quality wine when cooking, and our club’s cellar contributed two bottles of Ladoix 1999 white Burgundy for the foie gras course, and two bottles of Haut Cote de Nuits 1997 for the short ribs.

This evening was another great educational opportunity, as we learned about New World vs. Old World Pinot Noir, including all the different terroirs in both worlds and their influence on flavor with this “heartbreak grape.” Pinot Noir is also a component in Champagne, and even makes a lovely rose. It is a food friendly world-class noble grape and a perfect theme for another wonderful evening of “Wine, Food,

and Friends.”





