



The International Wine & Food Society

Miami Branch



Holiday Party



This year's Holiday Party, now almost a tradition with a menu by the outstanding Chef Philippe Ruiz, boasted an unprecedented turnout. Our events now sell out in a matter of hours, and thankfully our hosts, chef and the restaurant staff were able to add two more large tables to accommodate a record 87 members and guests. We had a lively cocktail reception under the portico in the courtyard featuring Champagne Louis Chaurey Brut, NV. The large assortment of passed hors-d'oeuvres and canapés included a hearty mushroom ravioli full of earthy flavors, a spicy chorizo and manchego croquette, smoked salmon, marinated vegetables with goat cheese, pate of Foie Gras, and a crab cake. The crisp, dry champagne made a wonderful aperitif, with light citrus touches, subtle vanilla undertones, and great acidity.

December 14, 2004

Hosts: Scott Bailey &
John Kuczanski



Christopher Zoller
Reporter



The redecorated Palme d'Or lends itself beautifully to our dinners. Tables of eight to twelve are separated by large mirrored columns, making each table seem intimate, yet allowing for varied views of the other diners. To accommodate our "overage" Maitre'd Sébastien Verrier opened two smaller private rooms where the diners managed to keep up with the whole group. Throughout the evening the amazing and wonderful staff kept the pace of service at five star levels seemingly without effort. After an amuse bouche of light salmon mousse, our first course arrived: Maine Lobster Ravioli with fresh Coriander, Light

Langoustine Bouillon and Morel Mushrooms. This dish was crammed with fabulous lobster flavors, in the "bouillon", which was closer to a bisque, as well as in the extremely light, thin raviolis wrapping the delicate lobster mat. The sliced morels were rich and earthy, and the coriander gave a nice lingering bite. The wine for this course was a wonderful match, Baron Charriere Meursault "Les Narvaux" 1998. White Burgundy is 100% chardonnay and perfectly suited to shellfish, with its full round flavors of apple, pear, and grapefruit and bright acids. This wine is from a very small producer and the grapes are from a highly regarded vineyard in Meursault. As with many great chardonnays, it improved as it warmed in the glass.

We then had an opportunity for some quick education. President and co-host John Kuczanski persuaded several members to research and report on the various wines served. Our first reporter was John Sullivan, who told us this Champagne was 100% Chardonnay and only 1250 cases were produced each year. Our second report on the White Burgundy was from Bob Hudson, who discussed the village of Meursault and the tiny vineyard of Narvaux, which supplies several producers.





Our next course was a simple Braised Filet of Turbot, but served atop a brilliant Fondue of Baby Leeks and surrounded by a Saffron Mussel Sauce. This was a very special dish, with perfectly cooked turbot (even for 87 persons), and delicious caramelized leeks. Co-host and our sommelier for the evening was Scott Bailey, who chose a Riesling, the Trimbach Cuvee Frederick Emile 1998, for this course. Some consider Riesling the ultimate white grape, and certainly one of the most food-friendly wines in the world. This soft, semi-sweet wine had a luscious mango and tropical fruit nose that followed through on the flavor, and wonderfully drying and palate cleansing acids. The real treat was to see how the unbelievable saffron flavors in the sauce



brought out the best of the Riesling, and vice-versa. This was a huge success. Jose Garrigo gave us an excellent history of Riesling, the Trimbach family, and this special Cuvee.



Chef Philippe does wonders with duck, and this presentation was Duck Legs Confit Croustillant, with Fava Beans and Red Wine Reduction. Rich confit of shredded leg meat was cooked in a crispy phyllo crust and served on a bed of pureed Fava beans with a pour of thick, hearty reduction sauce. This dish was outstanding, both in presentation and in the mouth. The duck was tender and moist, the bright green beans added great color and a soft vegetable consistency and the sauce was rich and flavorful. The crunch of the crust was a delight. Scott discovered two wonderful Red Burgundies from Joseph Drouhin, perfect for a Grand Cru tutorial. We received alternate pours, to share with our neighbor, of the 1991 Musigny and the 1990 Romanee-St. Vivant. These two Cote de Nuits vineyards, probably less than two miles apart, offered a fascinating study of Pinot Noir. The Musigny, from a 26.5-acre vineyard adjacent to the famous Clos Vougeot, had a deep ruby color, a nose showing rich

red berries and a little oak and soft and elegant flavors of ripe raspberry and cherry fruit. It had very good depth and overall balance. The much smaller vineyard of Romanee St. Vivant, between Romanee Conti and Richebourg produced a fabulous 1990 vintage. This wine had a more concentrated color, with a nose showing leather and tobacco and classic black berry fruit and a hint of oak. The flavors were sharp, clean and brisk with firm tannin on the palate, and an excellent balance of ripe red and black fruit and oak and earth. In short it was a top wine from a top vineyard in a top vintage.

The unique cheese course was Chef's Country Style Cheese & Petite Green Salad with Shallot Vinaigrette. This was Roblechon cheese, packed with cooked potato slices and wrapped in phyllo, then baked until the phyllo was crispy and the cheese was almost oozing. The wine study here was to cover the Rhone Valley from top to bottom, again with





alternate pours. From the far north was Ogier Cote Rotie 1991 and from the south was Beaucastel Chateauneuf du Pape 1994. Ninety-one was a fabulous vintage in the Northern Rhone, and this wine displayed a superb nose of blackberries, raspberries and spice. It had a velvety texture,

great concentration and a soft finish. It was at its peak and ready to be consumed. From the southern end of the valley, the Chate

teauneuf du Pape 1994 had a smoky, more closed nose, a dark purple color and was a big tannic powerhouse, with less subtle flavors, especially in the comparison. It had peppery spice but tighter fruit. As Drew Bailey pointed out in his excellent Rhone tutorial, vintage variation and grape selection can make a huge difference from north to south.



For dessert we had a light Pear Panacotta with Caramel Ice Cream. The panacotta was a light flan with very subtle pear flavors and the caramel ice cream was a big hit. So as to not overwhelm this delicate delight, we had a Domaine de Beaumont

Quarts de Chaume 1994. This wine is not aged in oak casks, allowing the pure flavors of the grape to dominate. It was rich with honey, apricot and peachy floral flavors, and a long lasting finish. As "Professor" Mitch Lundeen reported, the wine gets its sweetness from the noble rot, botrytis. Made from only 100 acres of Chenin Blanc grapes in the Loire Valley, and limited by French law to surprisingly low yields, it is a rare and little known treat, especially as Domaine de Beaumard is considered one of the top four producers. This is a great alternative to Sauterne if you are seeking a lighter mouthfeel.



Needless to say, from the varied and delicious passarounds to the sweet finish, this Holiday Party more than lived up to its hype. Thanks to an extremely professional staff all of us were served swiftly and expertly and the kitchen worked miracles. Hosts John and Scott did a wonderful job, Chef Philippe out-did his usual excellence, and Sébastien kept the floor cool and collected with ease. The Palme d'Or proved again its greatness. The educational component was a nice touch, and the fabulous food, the superb wines, and the convivial camaraderie made for another exceptional evening of Wine, Food and Friends.





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Palme d'Or



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CANAPÉS

Champagne Louis Chaurey Brut NV



AMUSE BOUCHE



*MAINE LOBSTER RAVIOLI WITH FRESH CORIANDER,
LIGHT LANGOUSTINE BOUILLON & MORELS MUSHROOM*

Baron Charrière Meursault "Les Narvaux" 1998



BRAISED TURBOT FILET, BABY LEEK FONDUE & SAFFRON MUSSEL SAUCE

Trimbach Cuvee Frederick Emile 1998



DUCK LEGS CONFIT CROUSTILLANT, FAVA BEANS & RED WINE REDUCTION

Joseph Drouhin Musigny Grand Cru 1991

Joseph Drouhin Romanée-St. Vivant Grand Cru 1990

(in alternate pours)



CHEF'S COUNTRY STYLE CHEESE & PETITE GREEN SALAD WITH SHALLOT VINAIGRETTE

Beaucastel Chateauneuf du Pape 1994

Ogier Cote Rotie 1991

(in alternate pours)



PEAR PANACOTTA WITH CARAMEL ICE CREAM

Domaine de Beaumard Quarts de Chaume 1994

Chef De Cuisine: Philippe Ruiz

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248th Branch Event