



The International Wine & Food Society

Miami Branch

Beach Boys Night

The theme for our 250th Branch Event was “Beach Boys Night” and the private club “La Piaggia” was the perfect venue. This tiny piece of St. Tropez imported to Miami Beach by Master Chef and Proprietor Robert Pascal features sand, surf, pool, and fabulous French cuisine. Normally closed on weekday nights, they opened up to accommodate our group of 35 members and guests. Casual was the appropriate dress for this cool but dry night.

February 9, 2005

at

La Piaggia

Our

250th Event



Christopher Zoller
Host & Reporter



We started the evening with a 1992 Duval Leroy Champagne. This beauty showed its age very well, with a rich, caramel nose and wonderful creamy mouthfeel and those much sought-after tiny bubbles. It was crisp with citrus and grapefruit notes and good, but not grating, acids. The hors d'oeuvres consisted of canapés that included liver pate, two kinds of salami, smoked salmon, and ham on tiny triangles of thin French bread. It took a little longer than usual for all to arrive, but we finally got seated at tables of six in the open-air, but covered, restaurant.

The first course was Croustade de Lotte au Vin Blanc. Lotte has confusingly been called both Monkfish and Devilfish. Here it was a light, almost mousse-like salad preparation served in a puff pastry shell, complete with separate lid. The fish had a delicate flavor, enhanced with minimal herbs and the light touch of white wine. One diner commented it was “the best tunafish I ever had”. The great house of Verget produced a wonderful white Burgundy from the tiny (2.4 acre) “Le Grechons” vineyard in Ladoix. This was a very tightly knit chardonnay, with gravelly minerals and great, crisp acids. It was served a little too cold, but as



it warmed in the glass it developed a big fruity nose but kept its lovely dry finish. It was a real surprise and not everyone's guess would be chardonnay, proving to be very food-friendly. Like La Dorada in Coral Gables, La Piaggia sources its fish in Spain and has two to three shipments flown in weekly.



Our second course was also fish, this time a gorgeous Filet de Daurade Beurre Blanc de Poireaux. Described by one tablemate as “as good a piece of fish as I've had in a long time”, this was a perfectly cooked, skin-on filet of the delicate yet moist dorade.



It was so fresh you could smell the sea (or was that the Port of Miami?) and touched by a very light leek and butter sauce. The white flesh was tender and flaky and came on a small bed of haricot vert. This dish was exceptional. Another white

Burgundy was our accompaniment, this time the 1997 Chateau de Meursault. This large domain covers some 60 acres. The 1er Cru Chateau de Meursault comes from 6 acres of certified appellations (5 of Charmes and 1 of Perrieres) which are processed separately to bring out the individual characteristics, but since the 1995 vintage they are assembled into this wonderful chardonnay blend. The wine was more noticeably true to character, with a soft fruity nose and rich green apple and citrus flavors. With more body than the Ladoix, it was an excellent match to the dish, with power and roundness and clean acids.



The kitchen reversed the order of the next two courses, but that was not the only problem. We were served a Medaillon de Veau, Vallee d'Auge aux Morilles, with Sauce Calvados. As promising as this dish sounded, the best thing about it was the morels, which were large, plump, and juicy. The medallion of veal was fully cooked but still tender, and although the abundant sauce kept the meat from being too dry, the sweetness of apple in the sauce fought with the wine. It was perhaps a blessing that the wine, originally intended for the next course, was a fruity Red Burgundy. The 1997 Chateau de Premeaux (Nuits-Saint-George) came with a wonderful heritage. As our commentator, Ned Valois, explained, the Pelletier family has been vigneron on the family

farm since before the French Revolution. The current operator, Alain Pelletier, took over from his father in 1983 and immediately implemented a huge upgrade in the vineyards (vigorous pruning) and instituted estate bottling, new sorting techniques, and stopped fining and filtering. The improvements continue even today, as he gradually is moving toward organic growing practices. This wine was a delight, from a highly regarded vintage. It had a peppery plum nose, flavors of black cherry, blueberry, fresh herbs, and green wood an excellent structure. It was delicious now, and should continue to age well for another five years.

For our second meat course we had Civet de Lapinaux served with Grilled Polenta. The legs and filets of rabbit were sautéed in butter and had a crispy crust and tender meat, but some were a little dry. It was served on a bed of grilled polenta and napped with a rich and herbal red wine sauce. This course started two flights of





red Bordeaux. We were able to taste, side by side, a 1990 Chateau Pavie and a 1985 Beychevelle. The Pavie had a luscious dark ruby color and showed a nose of spice tinged herbs, with flavors of black cherries, earthy minerals and spices. The Beychevelle was ripe, round, low in acid and, loaded with fruit and tannin and had great balance. It seemed to be at its prime. Bob Hudson gave us a brief historical perspective on these two Chateaux, including the significance of the half-masted ship on the Beychevelle label, and then shared his tasting notes. Both wines were very enjoyable.



As promised on the menu and by the chef, we enjoyed an abundant display of fine, non-pasteurized French cheeses, the Plateau de Fromages. Seven varieties of hard and soft cheeses were served from a classic rolling cart and this course was a perfect foil for our next flight: 1988 Chateau Calon-Segur and 1988 Chateau

Pape Clement. The highly rated Calon-Segur had deep color, superb balance, and very rich and full bodied.

It had tons of earthy black and red fruits and was quite powerful. Boasting an even higher rating, the Pape Clement gave up odors of roasted herbs, smoke and earth and had flavors of hot stones and asphalt along with the black and red currant fruit. The wine had good body and structure with tannins big enough to stand up to the fruit. Both these wines were ready to drink. Our commentator, Bob Dickinson, was able to speak eloquently about these just off the top of his head,



and his tasting notes were right on the money. He also reflected on the '88 vintage in general.

Unfortunately, Chef Robert was not able to be with us this night. Obviously it is preferable when the Chef is in the kitchen. The service was excellent, thanks to sisters Valerie and Sandrine. The night was a late one, but thoroughly enjoyable by one and all. I give special thanks to Scott Bailey for assisting with the wines. It was a big night for the boys, and now we can prepare for our next 250 gatherings of Wine, Food and Friends.





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La Piaggia

February 9, 2005

Reception

PASSED CANAPES

1992 Duval Leroy Champagne

Menu

CROUSTADE DE LOTTE AU VIN BLANC

1999 Ladoix “Les Grechons” Verget



FILET DE DAURADE BEURRE BLANC DE POIREAUX

1996 Chateau De Meursault



CIVET DE LAPINAUX SERVED WITH GRILLED POLENTA

1997 Chateau De Premeaux



MEDAILLON DE VEAU VALLEE D'AUGE AUX MORILLES, SAUCE CALVADOS

1990 Chateau Pavie

1985 Chateau Beychevelle



PLATEAU DE FROMAGES

1988 Chateau Calon-Segur

1988 Chateau Pape Clement

Host: Christopher Zoller

Chef-Proprietor: Robert Pascal

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