



The International Wine & Food Society

Miami Branch

As saddened as we all were by the passing of Branch Founder, Collector, Gastronomer, Oenophile, and Gourmet Lou Skinner, we were thrilled to be able to participate in a dinner to honor him.



Lou's Stag



Christopher Zoller
Reporter

Organized by Lee Weintraub and Bob Hudson, this dinner proved to be a wonderful tribute. It was a night of memories. The tables were set with pictures of Lou as centerpieces and numerous guests came to add to the accolades. We gathered in the private “kitchen-dining” room at Norman Van Aken’s eponymous restaurant in Coral Gables. The reception featured Deutz non-vintage champagne. The passed hors d’oeuvres started with “Tortilla Espanola with Salsa Romesco”, a classic Spanish omelet of light potatoes barely held together with egg and topped with a light salsa. The “Yuca Stuffed Shrimp with Tartar Salsa” were excellent, cooked perfectly crisp and large and tasty. A “One Bite Steak Tartare with Montpellier Butter on Brioche Toasts” was very rich with deep beef flavors enhanced by the butter and the buttery brioche. The Deutz was up to the task of matching these diverse bites, very yeasty, toasty and also rich but enough acid to wash the palate.



A very unusual salad with some Asian influences started the meal: “Salad of Fall Vegetables and Greens; Cured Sea Trout and Vanilla Sabayon”. It was as much of a mouthful as its name suggests with parsnips, three types of turnips (some cut to the size and shape of peas), beets, tomatoes and baby carrots and a bottom layer of Tasmanian trout. The light Sabayon dressing featured Bergomon oil. The flavors and textures married quite well and the salad was uniquely refreshing. It was a great match for the 1998 Gewürztraminer by Trimbach. This storied Alsatian producer puts out a lot of wonderful wine,



and when it has some age on it as this one did, its subtle textures and flavors shine. The nose of dry lychee nuts was followed by a luscious, sweet and rich wine with a creamy mouthfeel, fresh apple and honey tones amongst the light spices of this grape, and a very smooth finish.

In a terrific take on an old favorite, Chef de Cuisine Jeffrey Brana created “Foie Gras au Torchon with Beluga Lentils, Duck Confit and Carmelized Plantain”.



This was a piece of partially prepared whole foie (“entier”) that was warmed, just by being plated in the kitchen atop a bed of lentils with duck confit, to the point of a slight melting.

The dish was gorgeous: the foie melted in the mouth and the lentils and duck confit gave it a cassoulet feel on a smaller scale. It was delicious. For a classic match Lee and Bob went with a 1995 Chateau Coutet Sauternes. This Premier Cru Chateau dates back to the 13th Century, and has 38

hectares planted to mostly Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc. This wine was very stylish and rich with full-bodied aromas of such stone fruits as young peaches and apricots. It had good acidity and a very smooth, sweet finish. As with all white wines, it was better as it warmed in the glass.



Our fish course was “Calypso Spiced Grouper on Purple Potato Shrimp Hash, Sauce Mer Noir and Escabeche Vegetables”. This great dish, so typical of Norman’s New World cuisine, had all the elements working on all 8 cylinders. The very meaty, lovely piece of fish had a subtle intriguing spiciness and was topped by a chiffonade (the “escabeche”) of vegetables. Purple Peruvian potatoes with shrimp made a wonderful bed of hash. The sauce set this dish apart: it was made from Pinot Noir and Squid ink! It had a very deep but not overwhelming flavor to complement the fish. With so much going on here in the dish it was an inspired choice to serve a 1996 Beaune Clos de Mouches. White Burgundy



is always a great match with fish, and this

choice from Drouhin proved to be up to the job. It had a wonderful forward bouquet with fat aromatics of apples and pears and a flinty minerality. On the tongue it was full-bodied, very crisp but with good fruit, some spice and mineral flavors. It had balanced acids and a long finish with just the right blend of richness and cleansing tannins.



Next up was “Bison Rib Steak with Calabaza Flan, Black Bean Jus and Hot Fried Onion Rings”. The buffalo (from Montana) was fabulous, a rare, lean tasty and tender steak with deep rich flavors. The Calabaza flan was a delicious flavor of the lovely vegetable and the black bean sauce, fortified with sherry, was another great complement. It seemed that this whole dish, even with the spicy onion rings, was made to go with Bob and Lee’s wine choice: 1994 Ducru Beaucaillou. I found caramel, cardamom, Chinese 5 Spice and ripe black fruit on the nose and rich flavors in the mouth. Deep but balanced tannins kept this wine very dry on the palate but the fruit was still very evident. The course was rich all the way around.





A spectacular presentation of three styles was “A selection of Artisanal Cheeses and Seasonal Fruits”. First was a simple cheese (I think Comte) with fig confit, a very nice, comfortable pairing. Next were large micro-thin slices of dried pineapple with three slices of cheese and then three slices of fresh pineapple. Different textures and the intense dry vs. fresh sweet pineapple were a great contrast. Lastly was Cabralas blue cheese baked into apple bread with cheese and an apple slaw on top. With all this going on in the dish, we were privileged to have a great wine to accompany: the 1990 Chateau Pavie. With a nose showing spice, herbs, tobacco and leather this wine opened up to reveal classic Bordeaux flavors, featuring more Merlot than Cabernet Sauvignon, full fleshy fruit and moderate ripe tannins. It was perfect and ready to drink in this setting.



The tributes to Lou were bitter-sweet, just like exquisite chocolate. Several members, former members and guests all added anecdotes and tales of experiences with Lou. Very notable was Phil Gallagher's reminiscence of his days as Lou's roommate, Jim Redford's recollection of meals and tastings, and Chip Cassidy's loving tribute to a man who was his mentor and his great friend. Everyone toasted Lou's generosity, his foresight as a founding member, his great passion for wine and food (and



women), and his devoted friendships on all continents. Let's not forget Lou's acerbic wit and passion for food. Drew Bailey read a portion of Lou's “Little Yellow Book” on Paris which regaled us with his description of his last visit to Tour d'Argent.

This was a memorable and delightful tribute to a great man, a pioneer in our appreciation of “Wine, Food and Friends.”





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LOU'S STAG



RECEPTION

TORTILLA ESPANOLA WITH SALSA ROMESCO

YUCA STUFFED SHRIMP WITH TARTAR SALSA

"ONE BITE" STEAK TARTARE WITH MONTPELLIER BUTTER ON BRIOCHE TOASTS

DEUTZ NV

MENU

SALAD OF FALL VEGETABLES AND GREENS

CURED SEA TROUT AND VANILLA SABAYON

1998 GEWURZTRAMINER TRIMBACH



FOIE GRAS AU TORCHON WITH BELUGA LENTILS

DUCK CONFIT AND CARAMELIZED PLANTAIN

1995 CHATEAU COUTET



CALYPSO SPICED GROUPER ON PURPLE POTATO SHRIMP HASH

SAUCE MER NOIR AND ESCABECHE VEGETABLES

1996 BEAUNE CLOS DE MOUCHES BLANC



BISON RIB STEAK WITH A CALABAZA FLAN

BLACK BEAN JUS AND "HOT FRIED" ONION RINGS

1994 DUCRU BEAUCAILLOU



A SELECTION OF ARTISANAL CHEESES AND SEASONAL FRUITS

1990 CHATEAU PAVIE

HOSTS: LEE WEINTRAUB & BOB HUDSON

258th Branch Event