



The International Wine & Food Society

Miami Branch

BOYS' NIGHT OUT

APRIL 18, 2006

GRAZIANO'S

HOST: CHRISTOPHER ZOLLER

We decided to take a more ethnic approach for our stag steak night, compared to the usual cholesterol-challenging dinner. We convened at the relatively new Coral Gables location of the famous Argentinean *parilla*, Graziano's.



Christopher Zoller
Reporter



For years, we enjoyed their premier Bird Road location. Long know for their extensive wine list and authentic Argentinean barbeque pit, they cook their meat on a grill indirectly off the flame, resulting in meat that is tender, perfectly cooked and with only a slightly charr taste. Proprietor Leo Graziano was most helpful and accommodating for what turned out

to be our biggest stag night ever, with 41 members and guests.



We had the entire back room and its large bar area all to ourselves, giving us plenty of room to mingle and enjoy our "cocktail hour". We sipped on the wonderfully dry, full-bodied "R" by Ruinart, a non-vintage brut champagne from one of the oldest family-held houses in all of Champagne. The bubbly was perfect for the



hors d'oeuvres, with its toasty nose, excellent mousse,

and rich flavor. One of Graziano's most famous dishes, and a personal favorite, we had large platters of *Mollejas de Res a la Provençal* (grilled Argentinian-style Provençal Veal sweetbreads.) These gorgeous bite-sized crispy morsels were seasoned with pepper and garlic and were as tender as they could be, easy to eat off the toothpick. Immediately following those, was another big platter, this time of *Chorizo Casero a la Parilla*, grilled homemade sausages, made with pork and beef and lightly seasoned. These were very hearty, sumptuous pieces in both spicy and sweet style. Finally were the lightest, tastiest empanadas imaginable, *Empanada Carne al Horno*. Extremely light dough (for an empanada) filled with either beef, chicken or spinach and ricotta, cut into bite-size and wonderfully flavorful. There was more than we could finish and still get to the table to savor more delights.





Our first course, following a steakhouse menu theme, was a classic ingredient: shrimp. We enjoyed *Langostinos Patgonicos al Asador con Azafran de la Mancha* (Patagonian Prawns from the Grill in Saffron Sauce). It is a challenge for any kitchen to get 41 dishes out all at once, and all the same, and the chef did an admirable effort in cooking 124 prawns. The dish came with baby



greens and the large shrimp were napped with light oil flavored with the subtle saffron and was a perfect foil for a big, rich California Chardonnay. We found some 1998 Beringer Private Reserve, Napa Valley that was more than ready to drink and perhaps a tad older than it should have been. Some of the bottles were better than others and it was a great learning experience to taste this wine, teaching us a little about food pairing and wine aging and storing.



Next up we asked the chef to prepare his famous rack of lamb, marinated with lemon, thyme and garlic and sliced into chops. The *Cordero Lechal a la Parilla al Horno en Finas Hierbas* was juicy and tender, each chop with a nice herb crust. The chef gladly re-cooked the lamb for those who like it a little less rare. We reached out to Piedmont for a classic lamb match and scored one of the greatest vintages in recent history with the 1997 Barbaresco Sori Paitin. Barbaresco



is made from the Nebbiolo grape, and in that vintage, it had ripened earlier than usual, creating big, fruity, high alcohol, low acid wines. The wine was a bright ruby color, rich and decadent with leather, berry and cherry aromas and intense flavors. It was full bodied with a long firm finish with some cherry and spice, and the big tannins had softened with the little bit of age. It was excellent with the dish.



To get to the main event, and to cater to the larger than usual number of participants, we decided on a California Cabernet flight of three famous wines. The backdrop for this tour de force was *Bife de Chorizo a la Parilla*, quite simply Sirloin Steak, all natural and minimally processed. The meat was rich and flavorful;



with steamed vegetables, and with a potato side dish, we could easily concentrate on the wines. From magnums we poured the 1992 Joseph Phelps Insignia, which proved that the larger format bottles can age much longer than the standard 750ml. With an earthy nose that also included black cherry, the wine had a deep, dark ruby color, a smooth and powerful mouthfeel, and good black fruit





flavors with a hint of mint, sage and maybe leather. The justifiably famous and popular Robert Mondavi was represented by the 1990 Reserve. This huge wine had a dark purple color and a nose of earth, chocolate, blackberries, flowers and currants. The flavors of the fruits were abundant, the palate was smooth with good texture and soft tannins, and it was balanced with good structure and had a lovely long finish, still showing black cherry. The youngster in this group was the 1995 Spottswoode. With a less forward nose of cassis, cedar, blackberry and black cherry, the color was also a dark purple/red. The tastes of those fruits were rounded out by a tarry, licorice quality with a hint of coffee and spice. It had young, strong tannins and a slightly bitter finish. The Insignia and Mondavi were clearly blends, with over 85% cabernet sauvignon in each. The Insignia was rounded out with merlot, while Mondavi usually uses malbec, cabernet franc and petite verdot. I could not determine any blend for the Spottswoode. We continued to enjoy the wine comparisons and some lively discussion over a plate of Artisan Cheeses with accoutrements of chopped dried fruits, grapes and nuts. The selection included brie, comte, gouda and chevre.



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For a finish with flair, the staff brought out *Panqueques de Dulche de Leche Flambeados Con Cuantreau.*



These beautiful, rich sweet crepes were filled with dulce de leche cream, doused with Cointreau and then set aflame upon presentation, hopefully to burn off some of the alcohol. They were truly decadent. Normally a sommelier would try to match a sweet dessert with an even sweeter wine, but in this case we opted for a great choice in a 1986 Quarts de Chaume Bellerive. This wonderful wine from a unique microclimate in the Loire Valley had a rich, golden hue and a lively nose of beeswax, mineral and lime. Very light on the palate, it had a delightful sweetness with some sharp citrus notes and great acid. Always a very food-friendly wine, it worked remarkably well with the super rich dessert.



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Lacking only a patio for cigars and port, this was one of our great stag events, with

lots of good commentary on the wines and food and great camaraderie amongst members and guests. The lovely room, lined with bottles from Graziano's wine list, was a great atmosphere for more Wine, Food and Friends.





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RECEPTION

MOLLEJAS DE RES A LA PROVENÇAL

CHORRIZO CASERO A LA PARILLA

EMPANADAS

R DE RUINART - BRUT CHAMPAGNE NV

MENU

LANGOSTINOS PATAGONICOS AL ASADOR CON AZAFRAN DE LA MANCHA

PATAGONIAN PRAWNS FROM THE GRILL IN SAFFRON SAUCE

1998 BERINGER PRIVATE RESERVE CHARDONNAY



CORDERO LECHAL A LA PARILLA AL HORNO EN FINAS HIERBAS

GRILLED YOUNG LAMB MARINATED WITH LEMON, ROSEMARY, THYME AND GARLIC

1997 BARBARESCO SORI PAITIN



BIFE DE CHORIZO A LA PARILLA

SIRLOIN STEAK

CALIFORNIA CABERNET CHALLENGE

1992 JOSEPH PHELPS INSIGNIA EN MAGNUM

1990 ROBERT MONDAVI RESERVE

1995 SPOTTSWOODE

ARTISANAL CHEESES



PANQUEQUES DE DULCHE DE LECHE FLAMBEADOS CON CUANTREAU

ARGENTINE-STYLE DULCHE DE LECHE CREPES FLAMBE WITH COINTREAU

1986 QUARTS DE CHAUME BELLERIVE

HOST: CHRISTOPHER ZOLLER

263rd Branch Event