



The International Wine & Food Society
Miami Branch

Dear Member:

You are invited to our 267th event!

WHERE:

Restaurant Brana
276 Alhambra Circle
Coral Gables, FL 33134
Phone: (305) 444-4595

WHEN:

Monday, September 25, 2006
Reception at 7:00 PM
Dinner at 7:30 PM

EVENT DESCRIPTION:

Jeffrey and Anna Brana's Restaurant Brana premiered July 14 in Coral Gables. Several of our members now frequent the establishment and declare it "One of the Best!"

During Jeffrey's tenure as executive chef at Norman's, the Gables establishment was nominated for the prestigious James Beard Foundation's Best Restaurant in America. Anna formerly served as Norman's marketing director and is promoting the cuisine at their new digs as "modern with influences of Old Florida." Chef Brana describes his cooking style as "a quest for purity and clarity ... with a focus on sustainability and a forward-thinking approach to technique."

Bob Hudson is your Host, with wine selection assistance from Bob Dickinson. Jeffrey has prepared a menu for our Opening Stag featuring his Spiny Lobster Salad, Quail with Pork Belly, Beef Rib-Eye, Artisanal Cheeses and Chocolate Tort. Eight wines have been chosen by the "Two Bobs", including 1988 Pichon Lalande, 1994 Chateau Latour, En Magnum, 1994 Mondavi Reserve, and 1995 Stags Leap and 1979 Banyuls. We will enjoy comparing two different wines with both the beef and cheese courses.

Your food & wine appetite promises to be satisfied and your friends' camaraderie awaits you. Reserve early!



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Opening Stag

September 25, 2006

Report by Christopher Zoller

For our Season Opening Event this year our host, Bob Hudson, chose one of Coral Gables newest venues, staffed by some of the most experienced and professional folks in the business. Well known and popular Chef Jeffrey Brana, after five years as Executive Chef and Norman's, has opened a beautiful new restaurant on Alhambra Circle, along with his wife Anna, also a Norman's alum. Restaurant Brana was set with two long "royal" tables for our party of 38 members and guests. The lovely room features high ceilings and warm tropical colors; all designed so as to never interfere with Jeffrey's "modern cuisine with influences of Old Florida" and his meticulous attention to the freshest of ingredients. Our menu for this dinner was artfully paired with wines from our cellar by Bob, with the assistance of Wine Committee Chairman Bob Dickinson. The result was superb.

We caught up on summer news over Champagne Deutz and several unique passed hors d'oeuvres, including parmesan crisps, smoked salmon, and crudities. Although Deutz is a non-vintage blend, each release is slightly unique, and we continue to buy it for our cellar and enjoy it often. This night it smelled of tart apples and light berries, and was delightfully crisp, with a clean acidity to keep the palate fresh. The restaurant features a small bar area and a little room between the tables, but it is clearly set up to feature Jeffrey's creative talent, which we eagerly got started.

The first course was a Spiny Lobster Salad. Three pieces of perfectly cooked (meaning rare) Florida lobster tails were warm and tender with pure and clear lobster meat flavor. They were garnished with three beautiful purees: eggplant, tomato, and celery, each enhancing the experience with their own unique flavor. There was a lovely presentation of remarkably fresh micro greens to complete the salad. To match this course we had a 1996 White Burgundy, the Clos des Mouches by Joseph Drouhin. Domaine Drouhin owns 32 acres - more than half - of this Premier Cru vineyard and produces both red and white wine from here. In fact, Beaune Clos des Mouches is considered to be the "signature wine" of the 125 year old Burgundy estate-owner, winemaker and *negociant*. Chardonnay is always an excellent choice for shellfish, and this pure example of clean dry wine had a nose of apples and minerals, with a pleasant whiff of petroleum. The fruit flavors continued the apple theme, but it was also dry and smooth in the mouth with clean tart acids, limestone and mineral components. It was very refreshing and a great pairing. Bob Dickinson gave us a tutorial on the wine, the vineyard and the producer.

Searching for impeccable, sustainable and mostly organic suppliers has led Jeffrey to Four Story Hill farm and their gorgeous quail, which he paired with pork belly and Zellwood Corn. The distinct flavor of quail was evident in this preparation of leg and breast, just quickly broiled, the leg almost like a lollipop, and the tender breast meat quite juicy. The pork belly was chopped as an accompaniment. The corn was presented as a brioche-type corn fritter, very puffy and with pure corn flavor. The "Bobs" picked a 1999 Panther Creek Reserve Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley in Oregon. In the tradition of founder and winemaker Ken Wright (who has since sold the winery), this wine is an artful blend of several vineyards. The wonderful nose of raspberries, blackberries and coffee was followed by a concentrated, high acid mouthfeel. As it aired in the glass it took on mild, earthy flavors and kept a delicious finish of black berry fruits. It clearly evolved in the glass and was delightful with this fine dish.

For an outstanding meat course we had a Beef Rib Steak, again cooked to perfection, and served with a mélange of Chanterelle mushrooms. Topping the beautiful piece of meat was a Soft Boiled Egg! This great addition gave each of us the option of eating the beef with a rich sauce created by the egg yolk and mushroom juices, or eating the elements separately. The blended flavors were exceptional, making



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this a truly outstanding dish. We had two of the top wines from Pauillac to compare with this course: the 1988 Chateau Pichon-Lalande in 750 ml bottles and the 1994 Chateau Latour, in magnums. The nose of the Pichon showed classic tobacco, composte, and cassis aromas. The color was a deep garnet. In the mouth it displayed great black fruit and rich earth flavors, with distinct elements of root vegetables. It was medium bodied, well structured with good tannins, and it finished with fine focus. The Latour was somewhat lighter in color and lighter on the nose, with slight hints of leather, but not as much fruit. On the palate it had a flat minerality, with not quite enough fruit to bring it into balance. The larger format and later vintage may yet improve this wine with more time. It is always a treat to be able to try a famous First Growth and a Super Second, and we had a nice discussion of these wines led by Peter Benjamin and Scott Bailey.

We then had a very unusual change of pace for our cheese course. Again sourcing the finest of producers, Jeffrey turned to the Sweet Grass Dairy and its "Holly Springs" goat cheese, served with grilled bread and beets. Evidently this is a hard goat cheese. It presented as a beautiful mound of snow-like shavings on the toast, and truly melted in your mouth, as if it were snow. The flavor was delicate but distinct, and the platform of bread and beets completed great taste sensations. For this course we stayed with the Cabernet Sauvignon grape but moved to the best of Napa Valley: a 1994 Mondavi Reserve and a 1995 Stags Leap. '94 was a spectacular year in California and the Mondavi is now beginning to show why. Rich dark ruby in color, it displayed elegant black fruit on the nose, with blackberry and cassis and a touch of leather and tobacco. It is still quite youthful, with rich fruit flavors and strong tannins. This wonderful wine has many years ahead of it. The 1995 Stags Leap also opened up in the glass to show blackberry and cassis aromas and it had a deep dark garnet color. On the palate it had a great combination of strong acid and ripe fruit flavors, and strong tannins, indicating it too will continue to improve. As with the Bordeaux comparison in the previous course, this was a unique opportunity for our members to compare two rare and outstanding Napa Cabernets that are not readily available except through our cellar. Jim Cosmides and Steve Mandy took us through some of the history and tasting notes for these great wines.

For dessert Jeffrey prepared a Chocolate Mousse and paired it with Black Mission Fig and Vanilla Bean Ice Cream. The mousse was gorgeous, rich and smooth and dark. Figs are very wine friendly and the ice cream was a perfect foil. Bob (D) sourced a fine dessert wine for this course: 1979 Banyuls, from Dr. Parce's Domaine de Mas Blanc, Clos St. Martin. This unique region is in the Pyrenees of Southeastern France. Banyuls is made from Grenache grapes and spends a minimum of 8 years aging in oak. Typically it is sort of woody, like a tawny port, with sweet refreshing flavors of vanilla and cinnamon. This one was particularly well aged, smoky dark brown sugar colored, with moderate weight and a fairly dry chocolatey character. It was a slightly lighter alternative to port and was very complementary to this rich dessert.

One highlight of the evening was a presentation by the Board of Directors of a Certificate of Appreciation honoring President John Kuczanski for his many years of tireless service to our Chapter. John has been a man for all seasons for our group. He has been secretary, photographer, publisher, reservationist, composer of invitations, innovator of internet-based member communications, hosted numerous dinners, herded lots of cats, overseen several committees, and a wonderful President, now entering his third term. We congratulate and continue to be extremely grateful to John for all his hard efforts that too often go unrecognized. We took this opportunity to let the members, and John, know how much we truly appreciate him.

Restaurant Brana did us proud, with Jeffrey's "quest for purity and clarity" in food and his "focus on sustainability and a forward-thinking approach to technique." His staff was wonderful, serving our large group in a tight space with extreme professionalism. This is a great new addition to the dining scene and we encourage members to continue to patronize and support Jeffrey and Anna as they grow their business. Even for non-members, it is a great place for Wine, Food and Friends.



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Monday September 25, 2006

Reception

Champagne Deutz

Spiny Lobster Salad with Heirloom Tomatoes and Vanilla

96 Beaune Clos de Mouches (Blanc), Drouhin

Four Story Hill Quail with Pork Belly, Corn and Amaranth

1999 Panther Creek Reserve Pinot Noir

Beef Ribeye with Chanterelle Mushrooms and a Soft-Boiled Egg

1988 Ch Pichon Lalande

1994 Ch Latour, En Magnum

A Selection of Artisanal Cheeses

1994 Mondavi Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

1995 Stags Leap, Cabernet Sauvignon

Chocolate Torte with Mountain Huckleberries and Earl Grey Ice Cream

1979 Banyals Clos St Martin, Dr Parce