



The International Wine & Food Society
Miami Branch

IW&FS 2006 Holiday Dinner

December 13, 2006

Palme d'Or

Biltmore Hotel

Dear IW&FS Member:

You are invited to our 270th event.

WHERE:

La Palme d'Or at The Biltmore Hotel
1200 Anastasia Avenue
Coral Gables, FL 33134
(305) 445-8066

WHEN:

Wednesday, December 13, 2006
Reception at 7:00 PM
Dinner at 7:30 PM

EVENT DESCRIPTION:

Palme d'Or will again host our Holiday dinner. I don't know who enjoys this celebration more...Chef Philippe Ruiz or our members. Chef Ruiz has created another unique menu for our Branch celebration.

In keeping with our quest for traditional delights we turned to Holiday fare from Normandy, Alsace, and Northern Spain. Classic cold-water fish, French fowl stuffed with foie gras and succulent lamb, all served with appropriate trimmings. The wines from our cellar will offer some terrific pairings, all from the Old World as well.

Join your fellow gentlemen and ladies for this Holiday event. Members and first guest will have reservation priority for 10 days. Seats are limited, so reserve early. We will do everything in our power to accommodate all.

Your host is Christopher Zoller. We look forward to enjoying your company at this special Holiday celebration of Wine, Food and Friends.



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Holiday Party

Palme d'Or



DECEMBER 13, 2006

Report by Christopher Zoller

The Holidays are all about tradition, and our branch is creating one with our annual Holiday Event at the beautiful Palme d'Or Restaurant in The Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables. Even here in Miami we continue to search for "winter" ingredients and Chef de Cuisine Philippe Ruiz never disappoints. 81 members and guests took over the entire restaurant for this event, in black tie and full regalia. Our reception in the courtyard featured Pol Roger Brut Reserve Champagne, a dry, crisp non-vintage blend of equal portions of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Its color was gold-straw yellow with fine bubbles and a bouquet of floral and fruity aromas. It was ripe and thirst-quenching, with a hint of brioche and white fruits and sharp acidity. It was delightful with the passed hors d'oeuvres. Crab cakes with Avocado Mousse were delicate and sensual; an Endive stuffed with Smoked Fish Rilette was excellent and distinctly different; Philippe's Foie Gras Mousse was smooth and silky on a light cracker, as was the amazing combination of Goat Cheese Mousse with Tapenade, a great, if unusual, combination. The fabulous Coco Lobster Stick was the best adult lollipop imaginable, with the delicately coated lobster meat lightly fried and easy to eat.

The curse of such a popular party in a limited setting meant that we had to utilize one of the private dining rooms, but I think the partiers in there had a great time and did not miss a beat. We all managed to find great seats in this elegant restaurant and were prepared to get down to our menu, when suddenly Philippe offered up a wonderful surprise: Escargot a la Provençal. Talk about tradition, this was a classic French presentation and took some diners back to their visits to Provence. It was an excellent Amuse Bouche (mouth surprise). Our first course, Maine Halibut Filet with Leeks & Chorizo Confit in a Saffron Mussel Bouillon, featured the winter fish in a unique deep yellow broth with the delicate touch of leeks contrasted with the salty spicy Spanish sausage, all complementing the firm but perfectly cooked white filet. Reaching out to Alsace for the noble and food friendly Riesling grape, we had the 2000 Paul Blanck, Schlossberg Grand Cru. As Drew Bailey explained, this superb wine, from a top vineyard, displays the complex beauty of floral and mineral flavors with a bone dry finish to match the subtle flavors of the dish. Alsatian Riesling is very different from its German sister, picking up its unique characteristics from the terroir, leading many people to be surprised by its dryness, minerality, and clean acids.

In lieu of last year's goose, or the previous month's turkey, this year our fowl course was Breast of Pintade Stuffed with Foie Gras & Wild Mushrooms, with a Swiss Chard Gratin & Caramelized Chestnut. Pintade, or Guinea Fowl, is a classic French Holiday bird, and this presentation of a stuffed breast was moist and tender, with rich but not gamey flavor. The breadless stuffing was particularly rich and juicy, with the earthy flavors of its two ingredients. The Swiss Chard as a gratin instead of a starch was a brilliant and delicious touch, and the simple but tasty chestnut was an obvious nod to the Holiday theme.



Sticking with French wines, we enjoyed a 2002 Haut Cotes de Beaune Au Cretot, from the boutique merchant firm of Camille Giroud. From 40-50 year old vines, this wine had medium cherry red color followed by red cherry aromas with a hint of mint. It was quite approachable with ripe, slightly spicy fruit, a medium body, nice acidity and good length. In short, another food-friendly match, as the earthiness mixed with red/black fruits of Red Burgundy seemed made for mushrooms and poultry. Jim Cosmides, who was quite smitten with this wine at the pre-tasting dinner, gave us a great history of the merchant and a nice commentary on the wine.

For a hearty meat course Philippe prepared Braised Lamb Shank Croustillant in a Red Wine Reduction with Light Pumpkin Puree & Micro Green Salad. He has become famous for his slow roasted meats, shredded and formed into perfect rounds and quickly broiled for a nice crust. The meat simply melts in your mouth and the intense flavors blend into the delicious reduction sauce. Lamb and pumpkin again were deliberate Holiday choices and really did the trick. The wine exercise here was to try two different Right Bank Bordeaux from the same vintage, and the challenge was to have enough for 81 persons. Featuring more Merlot than Cabernet to compliment the lamb, we had a side-by-side tasting of 1986 Chateau L'Arrossee and 1986 Chateau L'Eglise-Clinet. The L'Arrossee showed a dusty, herb, black cherry and mineral nose and had medium body with very concentrated flavors and firm tannins indicating a good future. It had considerable power and muscle. The L'Eglise-Clinet, in contrast, had a nose of cedar, plum, black berries and fruitcake and was somewhat softer and sweeter with a smooth, fine finish. They were both delicious and provide much commentary for our guides: Bob Hudson gave us his tasting notes on the L'Arrossee and Peter Benjamin quite succinctly summed up the beauty of the L'Eglise-Clinet.

We asked Philippe for three classic hard cheeses and suitable accoutrements, and we delighted in a Gruyere, Tomme de Savoie, and Comte. Gruyere is of course Swiss, firm and tasty; Tomme de Savoie is made from full-fat raw goat's milk with strong flavors; and Comte is a pressed cooked cheese from cow's milk. All three featured fruity and nutty flavors in distinct styles. The wine choice for this course took us to the Alexander Valley of Sonoma County for the 2002 Scherrer Old & Mature Vines Zinfandel. A deep red/plum color and a nose of spice, blackberries, cassis and a hint of licorice led to a medium bodied, high acid, slightly spicy wine that gave us a nice opportunity in pairing. These vines are now nearly 100 years old, planted by Fred Scherrer's grandfather before Prohibition, and the vineyard is still lovingly tended by Fred's 78 year-old father. It was a bold and refreshing match with the cheeses.

Stepping away from chocolate for a change, we had a Mascarpone & Amaretto Crepe with Sautéed Black Mission Figs and accompanied by Pistachio Ice Cream and Amarena Cherries. This dessert, full of rich creams, ripe fruit flavors and a hint of nuttiness was made all the better by the sweetness of the 1995 Chateau Suduiraut Sauternes. A great dessert wine needs to be sweeter than the dessert itself, and this medium bodied wine brought out the tartness for the fruits while complimenting the sweet amaretto and pistachio. It had great acidity to help cut the Mascarpone cheese and the ice cream.

Tucked away in this elegant setting, between the courtyard and the famous Biltmore pool, Chef Philippe Ruiz continues to work magic in his kitchen. His exceptional staff, led by Maitre d' and Sommelier Sebastian Verrier, has always been extremely generous to our members. The regular menu offers small plates and Philippe is always creating new treats for us. Probably our favorite Miami venue, this was, once again, the best place to welcome the Holiday Season with Wine, Food & Friends.



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DECEMBER 13, 2006

RECEPTION

CRAB CAKE & AVOCADO MOUSSE
SMOKED FISH RILLETTE & ENDIVE
FOIE GRAS MOUSSE
COCO LOBSTER STICK
GOAT CHEESE MOUSSE & TAPENADE
POL ROGER NV BRUT CHAMPAGNE

MENU

MAINE HALIBUT FILET

LEEEKS & CHORIZO CONFIT, SAFFRON MUSSEL BOUILLON
2000 PAUL BLANCK RIESLING SCHLOSSBERG



BREAST OF PINTADE STUFFED WITH FOIE GRAS & WILD MUSHROOM

SWISS CHARD GRATIN & CARAMELIZED CHESTNUT
2002 HAUTE COTES DE BEAUNE AU CRETOT, GIRAUD



BRAISED LAMB SHANK CROUSTILLANT

RED WINE REDUCTION, LIGHT PUMPKIN PURÉE & MICRO GREEN SALAD
1986 CHATEAU L'ARROSSEE AND 1986 CHATEAU L'EGLISE-CLINET



CHEF'S ARTISAN CHEESE SELECTION

2002 SCHERRER OLD & MATURE VINES ZINFANDEL



MASCARPONE & AMARETTO CREPE

SAUTÉED BLACK MISSION FIGS, PISTACHIO ICE CREAM & AMARENA CHERRIES
1995 CHATEAU SUIDUIRAUT SAUTERNES



COFFEE & MIGNARDISE

HOST: CHRISTOPHER ZOLLER

CHEF DE CUISINE: PHILIPPE RUIZ

270th Branch Event