



The International Wine & Food Society
Miami Branch

RAUZAN-SEGLA WINEMAKER'S DINNER

May 9, 2007

Norman's Restaurant

Dear IW&FS Member:

You are invited to our 275th event.

WHERE:

Norman's Restaurant
21 Almeria Avenue
Coral Gables, FL 33134
(305) 446-6767

WHEN:

Wednesday, May 9, 2007
Reception at 7:00 PM
Dinner at 7:30 PM

EVENT DESCRIPTION:

Several years ago, Suhel Skaf initiated our first winemaker's dinner at Norman's when we hosted John Shafer and his wife, and we enjoyed a wonderful selection of Shafer Vineyards Hillside Select wines. We resumed this format last year, enjoying a terrific vertical spanning some 20 years of Chateau Palmer wines presented by Bernard de Laage de Meux, the International Marketing Director for Chateau Palmer.

Thanks to the introduction by Mike Bittel, we are continuing our new found tradition this year with a 12-vintage vertical of Rauzan-Segla, a distinguished Margaux estate (for which Robert Parker has ratings back to its 1847 vintage), with John Kolasa, the Chateau's chief Administrator and Winemaker leading us thru a 2005 to 1983 vertical, including the highly acclaimed 1986. (John Kolasa also heads up the sister property in St. Emilion, Canon, also owned by the Wertheimer brothers of Chanel fame, and is widely credited with restoring both estates to the top ranks since taking over the stewardship of these Chateaus.) Several of our members had the pleasure of visiting with John Kolasa at these estates last September and have assured us that we are in for a thoroughly entertaining, as well as educational, evening!

The food, of course, is a critical component of any such evening, and our master gourmet and wine connoisseur, Scott Bailey, has worked diligently with Norman's team to design a 5-course menu that should pair masterfully with these rich full-bodied wines. The dishes will include pan seared fish, oven roasted duck breast and Black Angus New York strip—all with the appropriate red-wine sauces!

This is an event that is sure to book up quickly, so please RSVP promptly. We will confirm wait listed guests after April 23 if any seats remain.

Your hosts are Bob Hudson, Mike Bittel and Scott Bailey.



Chateau Rauzan-Ségla

As reported by The Wine Doctor



It is September, 2002. I'm enjoying a blind tasting of 1985 Bordeaux where, nestling among the super-secondos such as Léoville-Barton and Léoville Las-Cases, there is one wine which simply astounds; ripe, flavoursome, but with such a precise, stream-lined, glabrous structure which almost beggars belief. To this day, it remains one of my most memorable bottles. When the label was revealed, it was Chateau Rausan-Ségla 1985.

It is March 2006; my birthday. Such an occasion, in fact any special occasion at all, demands a special wine. Something treasured, something memorable. A wine that will offer a complex array of aromas and flavours, framed with a finely balanced structure. A wine that will give pleasure, stimulating the palate and the mind. I open, and enjoy, a bottle of Chateau Rausan-Ségla 1982.

And so this is the story of Chateau Rausan-Ségla, or Chateau Rauzan-Ségla, for they are one and the same; a change of name in 1994 accounts for the metamorphosis from Rausan to Rauzan (with Rauzan being the original spelling, in fact, so this change seems entirely appropriate). A second growth property, one that would pretend to the list of 'super-secondos' along with the Pichons and the Léovilles, but somehow not quite making it. Like many Margaux chateaux, Rauzan-Ségla seems to have had to have a problem with sporadic under-achievement, every great bottle and every great vintage countered by a less than stellar performance at another moment. But Rauzan-Ségla can deliver, and when it does it can do so with a heavyweight punch. For that reason alone, it is worth knowing this property.

I have already mentioned the Pichons and the Léoville; there is indeed one certain similarity between all these chateau; like these leading estates of Pauillac and St Julien, Rauzan-Ségla was once part of a much larger vineyard, from which Rauzan-Ségla and one other Margaux second growth, Rauzan-Gassies, originate. The Rauzan estate was created by Pierre des Mesures de Rauzan, who in 1661 purchased a large portion of the Médoc around Cantenac, the swath of land incorporating many vineyards that are today classed growths in their own right. The Rauzan property went from strength to strength, but nevertheless it became fragmented as it was inherited from one generation of the family to the next. Quality was maintained, but the original Rauzan estate could not be saved; by the time of the 1855 classification, the estate was firmly divided into two; Rauzan-Ségla and Rauzan-Gassies; it remains so divided today.

The next most significant change came in 1903, when Rauzan-Ségla came to Frédéric Cruse, of the locally renowned Cruse dynasty. Their tenure lasted for half a century or thereabouts, however, and is reputed to have been rather ignominious, although I have tasted none of these wines myself. It seems to be the usual story; at its root, a lack of investment by the owners, with the continued use of ageing cellar equipment including infected barrels which left their tainted mark on many of the wines. They were responsible for the construction of the chateau, however, so the Cruse family did leave at least one positive mark here. Nevertheless, they were forced to sell in 1956, leaving the Cruse descendants with no major properties other than Chateau d'Issan, where Emmanuel Cruse remains in charge to this day.



The subsequent proprietor sold onto a Liverpool firm, John Holt, in 1960, and the management of the property was taken on by the négociants Eschenauer, who in doing so gained exclusive distribution rights to the wines of the property. This team started the long process of turning Chateau Rauzan-Ségla around, expanding the vineyards which were in decline, and replanting high-yielding, low quality Merlot clones with fresh swathes of Cabernet Sauvignon. Much of the improvement followed on from 1983, when Jacques Théo headed up the team, replacing the cellar master with a M. Pruzeau, and gutting the cellar, replacing the mouldy barrels with new stainless steel equipment. Judging by my tasting of some vintages from this era, there were certainly some very good wines bearing the Rauzan-Ségla label at this time. The 1982 is said to be the vintage in which the investment shows through in the wine, even more so in the 1985, and I would not disagree with this assessment. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement. Perhaps this was in the mind of Brent Walker, who purchased the property in 1989. Whatever plans he had, however, they were not to bear fruit; in 1994 he sold the estate on to the Wertheimer family of Chanel, who installed a winemaking team led by David Orr (from Chateau Latour) and John Kolasa. Chanel remain the current owners, and they are credited with continuing to push the quality ever higher.

The vineyard at Chateau Rauzan-Ségla supports 51 ha of vines, with a dominance of Cabernet Sauvignon (61%) and Merlot (35%), with 2% each Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. The soils underfoot are typical Gunzian gravel, the fruit harvested manually, the must fermented in temperature-controlled stainless steel. The wine will then go into barrel, 60% new each vintage, for up to twenty months, finishing with an egg white fining. The end product is bottled unfiltered. The *grand vin* is **Chateau Rauzan-Ségla**, of which there are typically 8000 cases produced per annum. Rigorous selection is essential, ensuring that only the choicest portion of the harvest goes into the *grand vin*, the rest going into the second wine, **Ségla**. This has helped to push quality further forward - in 1987, for instance, the entire crop was declassified, with the whole production being channeled into the second wine, or sold off in bulk.

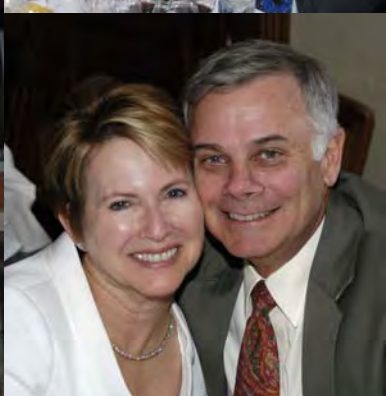
I think I have probably said enough about the quality of the wines from the latter part of the Eschenauer era, which can be, in my experience, exceptional. But what of more recent vintages? Chanel took control of Rauzan-Ségla in 1994 (and of Chateau Canon in St. Emilion in 1996), and there certainly doesn't seem to be any dramatic reduction in quality. I thought the 1996, in particular, to be excellent, and both the 2001 and 2003 were extraordinarily good, crammed with potential for the future. Other vintages, such as the 1998 and the 2004, are less convincing. My most recent tasting was of the 2005 vintage, and I wasn't swept off my feet in the way I would have hoped. Perhaps expectations were too high, but considering this is a once-in-a-lifetime vintage (until the next one comes along, anyway) the wine demonstrated a remarkably short finish; this was a great shame, as everything else was in place. I will reserve judgment, however, as this was a barrel sample of a wine barely finished fermenting, and certainly at the tail-end of malolactic. Time will tell.





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Wine Commentator: John Kolasa



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Hors d'Oeuvres

Veuve Clicquot NV Yellow Label Champagne

Wild Mushroom Soup

Château Rauzan-Ségla 2000 – 2001

Crushed Marcona Almond – Bone Marrow Crostini

Ségla 2000

Pan Seared Yellow Tail

Château Rauzan-Ségla

With Baby Vegetables, Mild Herbs and Red Wine Essence

1989 – 1988 – 1986

Oven Roasted Duck Breast

Château Rauzan-Ségla

With Truffled Potenta and Bordeaux Reduction

1990 – 1985 – 1983

Black Angus New York Strip with Ash Roasted Onions

Château Rauzan-Ségla

Bordelaise Enriched White Beans and Sauce Bearnaise

1998 – 1995

Comté, Cow Milk Firm, France – Idaxabal Sheep's Milk, Spain

Château Rauzan-Ségla

Campo De Montalban, Cow, Sheep and Goat's Milk, Spain

2005 – 2003

Assorted Petit Fours

275th Branch Event