



The International Wine & Food Society Miami Branch

IW&FS Season Opener September 15, 2008

Report by Christopher Zoller

Heralding in a new President is always an exciting way to start off a season, and this one was exceptional on many levels. Our new President, Bob Hudson, is no stranger to administration, as he has been our vice President for three years. He solicited a friendly foursome to host our opening stag event and guided them down the path of wining and dining pleasure. The host committee was Aldo Busot, Jim Cosmides, Rick Hasty and Bill Reese. They must have cooked this one up on the golf course. Having tried to line up several venues, Aldo was able to grab the newest steakhouse in Coral Gables, Miami's third Morton's. And so an assem-

blage of 57 members and guests packed the second-story private room in the old Colonnade on Miracle Mile.

We got convivial while sipping Nicolas Feuillatte Brut Champagne, non vintage. With its fresh mousse and crisp, clean sense of apples it was very refreshing. Passed hors d'oeuvres included Smoked Salmon Pinwheels, small spirals of rich luscious salmon wrapped around a shmear of cream cheese on top of a light triangle of toast; and Roma Tomato, Fresh Mozzarella & Basil on Crostini, which was a perfect bite-sized example of this classic dish. We all settled down to tables of eight and President Bob wel-

comed us all and got us through the introductions of new members and guests.





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Our first course was outstanding. The Jumbo Lump Crab Cake was all crab, all the way. It was moist, dense, rich and melt-in-the-mouth tender. It did not even need the tiny dollop of Mustard Mayonnaise Sauce because its pure crab flavor was fresh as could be. The host committee truly benefited from some wonderful advice from Board liaison Peter Benjamin. I'm sure they pored over the cellar list to discover two interesting Napa Valley Chardonnays to pair with this lovely dish. The first was a 2001 Neyers. Bruce Neyers and his wife Barbara make over 20,000 cases of wine a year and three different cuvees of Chardonnay. With experience going back to Mayacamas in 1971 and 15 years with Joseph Phelps, Bruce is now ably assisted by Ehren Jordan of Turley fame. Bruce "moonlights" as a French wine distributor for Kermit Lynch. This 2001 Napa Valley offering was ripe and complex, big, beefy, creamy and lush. Large amounts of toasty rich deep oakiness complemented abundant ripe fruit flavors. It was a big wine for a big dish. The 2002 Forman gets totally different treatment. Ric Foreman makes his wine in more of a European style. He uses no Malolactic fermentation, preferring to let the vineyards express their terroir with the

interaction between the natural acids in his grapes and the characteristics of his barrels. This produces a more mineral and citrus infused chardonnay with more tart acids to pair with a wider variety of foods. It had a strong tart nose of kiwi and pears and a balanced tropical fruit flavor with hints of pineapple, pear and toasted bread. The bottles we had were not as delicate as some but still allowed the differences between these two chardonnay styles to show. They were both excellent and wonderful to pair and contrast with rich shellfish.



Moving on to the meat of the matter, we each received two Petite Lamb Chops with a lively and delicious herb crust, consisting of, I think, parsley, cilantro and a little rosemary. Again the committee decided to serve two wines with this course: 1996 Torre Muga Reserva and 2001 Pesquera Ribera Del Duero. The Torre Muga showed good acid and very strong tannins while the fruit was a little restrained. The Pesquera was rich with sweet black cherry and a

dense mouth feel. Both wines feature the Tempranillo grape as the major component, giving them a dark purple color and scents of black fruits like currants, cherries and blackberries. The Pesquera also gave up hints of chocolate, raspberry and licorice. It had a full body, good acidity and a long finish. The denser, more muscular Muga had more earth, cedar and tobacco notes and was very full bodied and tightly-knit. On this night anyway, it was outshined by its younger cousin. Co-host Aldo gave us a very nice history of these two distinctly different wines and their neighboring regions on each side of the Duero River, Rioja just a little further east and north of Ribera Del Duero. Both of these wines are considered classic matches for grilled lamb or pork chops and they served very well here. Both also scored in the low 90's by Robert Parker.





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It was now time for the beef, and we had plenty of it. Two cuts, a Single Cut Filet Mignon and a Prime Ribeye were true to the Morton's tradition. The tender filet came with a Sauce Béarnaise and could be cut with your fork. The chef did a miraculous job of putting out 57 all still rosy red and medium rare. The lovely piece of tasty Ribeye was well marbled and very flavorful, with a just right steak mouthfeel. Once again we were able to try two neighboring wines, this time from the same vintage.

For an unusual but not untraditional pairing, the committee decided on trying the grilled aspect of the steaks with the earthy spice of Cote Rotie, aka "the roasted slope" referring to the long hours of sun that bake the syrah and viognier grapes on their steep hillside vineyards that, by law, make up these terrific wines. Up to 20% Viognier, a white grape, is allowed in the cuvee, mostly to lend some great floral aromatics. Yet even without the viognier Cote Rotie can have the paradoxical combination of meat aromas (including bacon) and floral aromas. The 1999 Andre Francois was a little-known gem from our cellar that is so rare we're not even sure they have an importer right now. It possessed sweet fruit flavors of black currants and cherries (familiar) and good

oakiness with low acidity and a medium finish. From a much more famous and widely available producer came the 1999 Chapoutier Cotes Rotie Les Becasses. This wine had a classic nose of cassis, tapenade, smoke and espresso giving us an immediate rush of Provence. It was fuller-bodied than the Andre Francois, more voluptuous and elegant. It had great spice notes, along with coffee and mocha in the mouth. Peter Benjamin discoursed eloquently on both of these.

Finally, we ended the evening with outsourced cheeses. Co-host Jim Cosmides was charged with bringing in the cheeses that would match well with red wine, and he found three great choices at Sunset Corners (thank you Michael and Jamie!). We had an aged Gouda, the Cabot/Jasper Hills (Vermont) aged Cheddar, and an unusual Sbrinz Alpen, which is a Swiss version of a Parmagiano Reggiano. The pairing was a 2001 Kay Brothers Shiraz from the Amery Hillside Vineyard. All the cheeses were hard, dense and full of their distinct flavors. The Shiraz proved to be the "big boy" of the night, extraordinarily dense with chewy notes of blueberries, melted licorice, blackberries, tar, smoke and earth. It was very concentrated with a long lasting finish. I found it to be de-



licious. In fact, the red wines on this night could have been mixed and matched a few different ways. With great classic steak house fare it was fun to try these different styles and varietals.

The evening proved to be a big success for the new President and Board as we brought in some first-time dinner hosts who cut their chops on a great meal. Fifty seven members and guests once again gave real credence to "Wine, Food and Friends".





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RECEPTION

SMOKED SALMON PINWHEELS
ROMA TOMATO, FRESH MOZZARELLA & BASIL ON CROSTINI
NICOLAS FEUILLATTE BRUT CHAMPAGNE

MENU

JUMBO LUMP CRAB CAKE, MUSTARD MAYONNAISE SAUCE
2001 NEYERS NAPA VALLEY CHARDONNAY OR 2002 FORMAN NAPA CHARDONNAY



PETITE LAMB CHOP
1996 TORRE MUGA RESERVA AND 2001 PESQUERA RIBERA DEL DUERO



PRIME RIBEYE STEAK
SINGLE CUT FILET MIGNON, SAUCE BÉARNAISE
STEAMED FRESH BROCCOLI, SAUCE HOLLANDAISE
1999 LES BÉCASSES, M. CHAPOUTIER AND 1999 DOMAINE ANDRE FRANCOIS



ASSORTED CHEESES & FRESH FRUIT
2001 KAY BROTHERS AMERY VINEYARD McLAREN VALE SHIRAZ

HOSTS: ALDO BUSOT, JAMES COSMIDES, FREDERICK HASTY AND
WILLIAM REESE

EXECUTIVE CHEF: PEDRO AGUILAR