



The International Wine & Food Society Miami Branch

International Wine & Food Society 290th Branch Event Four Seasons Hotel, Miami October 15, 2008 Report by Christopher Zoller



If, as they say, necessity is the mother of invention, then clearly for Branch President Bob Hudson adversity is the father of innovation. Having had his best laid plans for our opening co-ed of the season doused by an unforeseen closing, he quickly rallied the troops and put together a fabulous event at The Four Seasons Hotel on Brickell Avenue. The new catering chef, Patrick Boucher, was immediately brought up to speed and Bob's chosen co-hosts, John Sullivan and Bob Dickinson, quickly and resourcefully paired some wonderful wines with both innovative and classic dishes. We had the Miami Room of the hotel all to ourselves and 63 members and guests were handsomely rewarded.



Our reception featured Pol Roger Extra Cuvee de Reserve non vintage champagne, a recent addition to our cellar from an old and revered Champagne house. Ariel Solorzano gave us an excellent oral history of the House of Pol Roger and a rundown on their various cuvees. Crisp and pure with clean fresh flavors, hints of apple and toast, we also noted a bouquet of brioche as it warmed in the glass. Sharp acidity and a forward mousse helped keep the palate clean for our passed hors d'oeuvres. Minia-

ture Croque Monsieurs were pan grilled crustless bread triangles filled with Sturgeon Caviar and La Tur cheese, an interesting departure from the original. The salty caviar and semi-soft cheese went very well with the champagne. On porcelain spoon came a Prosciutto & Mango Cream Cheese roll-up with fig jam. This was a delicious mix of the salty ham with a sweetened cream cheese and an added sweet dollop of jam. On a silver spoon was Soya Maple Salmon Bites, a nice cube of soy marinated



salmon filet with a maple glaze. These were all delicious. The sumptuous Miami Room, really a mini ballroom, has floor-to-ceiling windows on one side and ample room for our six tables. We were treated to multiple, attentive servers and throughout the evening service was excellent. After new member and guest introductions by President Bob, we were served one of the most unique and delightful starters we've yet had: Warm Foie Gras Veloute, topped with Anise-Scented Apple Crisp. This was, to my taste, a foie gras cappuccino, complete with a layer of foam! It was actually a rich but not thick soup distinctively flavored with foie gras. It even had the perfect light caramel color of a

latte. To match this unique dish we were fortunate to have another recent cellar purchase of the 2000 Trimbach Gewurztraminer Vendage Tardive. As Peter Benjamin, one of our resident Alsace experts, explained, this exceptional (Wine Advocate 93 points) dessert wine from the spicy, fruity Gewurztraminer grape gets its sweetness from boytritis, a mold which forms on the grapes as they stay on the vine into the cooler, rainier autumn. Hence: vendage tardive, the "late harvest". A sweet wine is always a perfect choice to cut through the fatty richness of foie gras, but since the soup was lighter, it was nice to have a lighter version to pair so beautifully with the foie flavor. Apricots, raspberries, peaches and even strawberries could all be detected in the wine, along with a little spice and a lingering finish.





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As a salad course, we had “Mediterranean Spiced Crusted Tuna, with Fennel Salad, Cucumber Consommé and Pickled Ginger Chips”. The cucumbers and fennel were thinly sliced lengthwise and rolled into a pile set in a bowl of a very green, clear broth. The fennel/cucumber mounds were topped with three thin slices of slightly seared, beautifully rare tuna. On the side, to be added as one wished, were the pickled ginger slices. The broth was garnished with two-inch long chives.

With all this going on in the plate, Bob D and John selected two excellent food wines. First was a 2003 Greco di Tufo from Villa Raiana. This unique grape was brought from Greece to Southern Italy in ancient times and was originally cultivated on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius. It was later planted in the province of Avellino, a little to the east. There is evidence of its enjoyment in Pompeii dating to the 1st century BC. This is a rich, distinctive wine with firm acids and a honeyed texture, and deep flavors of stone fruits and some apple, but decidedly more food-friendly than chardonnay. The second wine paired with this course was the 2004 Amayna Sauvignon Blanc Barrique. This wine was a wonderful surprise. Expecting a New World style Sauvignon Blanc, especially coming out of oak barrels, instead we were treated to crisp, cool-climate characteristics, including tropical fruit, melon, citrus and even hazelnuts. The color was lighter and greener than the Greco, and it was fresher on the palate, with great acidity and clean flavors. While both wines were fun to try with the dish, the Sauvignon Blanc was just a tad more interesting and pleasing. It was great to be able to experience two such different and rare wines, a great educational opportunity thanks to our cellar and co-hosts.



Next came a truly impressive meat entrée: Slow Cooked Buffalo Short Ribs. This was an exceptional cut across the rib, with four or five ribs bound together with succulent buffalo loin. The meat literally fell off the bone and you did not need a knife. The dark rich yet lean meat was a perfect barbecue foil for two great wines. Served with perfectly braised leeks and an amazing mushroom cornbread pudding, this was a beautiful dish. The white/green vegetable with its cellulose texture and the comforting earthy pudding with its luscious flavors were perfect accompaniments.

Bob (D) and John found two perfect pairs in our cellar. Both were quite young and may be showing better in a few years, but tonight was their night to shine for us. First, there was an Australian, the 2003 Mitolo Shiraz GAM (named after the family’s three children). This is the Syrah grape in the classic Aussie tradition, sharing flavors that could be in cabernet sauvignon, merlot or petit syrah: aromas of lead pencil shavings, black and blue berries, cassis and licorice, it also showed its aging in new oak barrels. The wine was well integrated and smooth, but as happens with younger and new world wines it was quite “hot” with about 14.5% alcohol. Next to this the co-hosts poured the 2005 Gambal Old Vine Moratto Vineyard Zinfandel. This wine hails from my personal favorite Sonoma California appellation of Russian River Valley. Zinfandel was long considered the only native American grape varietal until recent DNA results have shown it to be a descendant of Primitivo from Croatia. Zin is also considered to be one of the finest matches to rich barbecue dishes. This wine had typical spice and body of zinfandel with heavy fruit flavors of black cherries, black and raspberries, pepper and roasted herbs. As with the last course, this was an impressive lesson in food

and wine pairing, with very pleasant results. Bob Hudson gave us a quick rundown on the Shiraz and co-host John Sullivan briefed us on the Zinfandel.

For our finale our hosts chose to forgo dessert in lieu



of a dish of American Artisan Cheeses. This was a terrific course of four cheeses to go with a classic Napa Valley iconic wine, the 1993 Joseph Phelps Insignia, served from magnums. The cheeses came with sides of jam and fruits and toast, but the wine was what this course was all about. Robert Parker gave this 95 points, and Bob Dickinson shared his insights and thoughts with us. It is a blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot, a simple yet delicate and intricate Bordeaux style blend. The deep, dense, almost opaque color led to a big sweet nose of black currants, spice, vanilla and dark red fruits. Very rich, almost thick on the palate, it had layers of fruit flavors and was extremely concentrated. Because of its very ripe tannins, high glycerin and intensity of fruit it fooled us into thinking it was ready to drink, but in reality this was another example of the ability of super Napa Cabernet’s ability to age. If you own this wine you can share it with your grandchildren.

This opportunity for our members to experience fine service, cutting edge and comfort cuisine and to learn about food and wine pairing on the fly was just another example of what makes our club so great. These three gentlemen, Bob, John and Bob, stared down adversity and came up with a fantastic evening of Wine, Food and Friends. A great time was had by all attendees.





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October 15, 2008

RECEPTION

CROQUE MONSIEURS, STURGEON CAVIAR AND LA TUR CHEESE
PROSCIUTTO & MANGO CREAM CHEESE WITH FIG JAM
SOYA MAPLE SALMON BITES
POL ROGER CHAMPAGNE

MENU

WARM FOIE GRAS VELOUTE
TOPPED WITH ANISE SCENTED APPLE CRISP
2000 TRIMBACH GEWURZTRAMINER VENDANGES TARDIVES



MEDITERRANEAN SPICE CRUSTED TUNA
WITH FENNEL SALAD, CUCUMBER CONSOMMÉ AND PICKLED GINGER CHIPS
2003 GRECO DI TUFO, COMPANIA BLANC

AND

2004 AMAYNA BARRIQUE ACONCAGUA SAUVIGNON BLANC



SLOW COOKED BUFFALO SHORT RIBS,
BRAISED LEEKS, MUSHROOM CORNBREAD PUDDING,
BLACK CURRENT JUS

2003 MITOLO SHIRAZ G A M (RP 96-100)

AND

2005 GAMBAL OLD VINE MORATTO VINEYARD (RUSSIAN RIVER) ZINFANDEL



AMERICAN ARTISAN CHEESES

1993 JOSEPH PHELPS INSIGNIA EN MAGNUM

HOSTS: BOB DICKINSON AND JOHN SULLIVAN

EXECUTIVE CHEF: PATRICK BOUCHER