



The International Wine & Food Society **Miami Branch**

2008 Holiday Party and 75th Anniversary Tribute

December 16, 2008

Reported by Christopher Zoller

Our Annual Holiday Party has become a true Miami tradition. Once again we asked Executive Chef Philippe Ruiz of the Biltmore Hotel's Palme d'Or Restaurant to create a special seasonal menu for our branch. Over the years Philippe has won great accolades and wowed his customers with many wonderful meals. This night was to be yet another. This event is always oversold and we cram into the restaurant and its two small adjacent rooms in an attempt to accommodate as many members as possible.

Our reception was held in the hotel's beautiful fountain courtyard. We teased our appetites with five delicious hors d'oeuvres and a legendary champagne. The Escargot en Croute was a toothsome garlicky snail wrapped in flaky phyllo. It was like an escargot Wellington. Smoked Fish Rilette came on crusty French Baguette instead of Endive, but was a tasty spread nonetheless. Foie Gras Mousse, also on baguette, was very rich, thick and luscious with strong but sweet liver flavor. A very creamy risotto laced with black truffles was wrapped in a phyllo dough beggar's purse that was lightly fried. Lots of good texture to go with the distinctive flavors. The Goat Cheese Mousse & Tapenade was an interesting blend of the tangy cheese and the olive and oil mixture. Every one of these gorgeous taste treats truly brought out the flavors, acids and creamy mousse of the 1999 Perrier Jouet Fleur de Champagne. This classic "flower bottle" presentation is world famous and with good reason. The wine had a delightful sweetness of apple and pear with good acidity and a delicate mousse to refresh our palates.

We try to find a great cold water fish for his seasonal menu, and none could be better than halibut. Philippe created an amazing course, Braised Halibut Filet with Brown Vermecelle in a Mussel Sauce with Baby Shrimp. The filet was soft, melt-in-you-mouth feeling and with a sweetness that stood up to the wonderfully rich, thick and flavorful shellfish sauce. Both the mussels and the shrimp were clearly in evidence and the crispy brown thin pasta gave a terrific texture and counterpoint to the whole dish, as well as a great way to sop up all that wonderful sauce. We chose a very interesting theme for the first two wines of the evening. With this complex seafood dish we had a 2002 Chassagne Montrachet 1er Cru Les Virondots by Marc Morey. This is the only wine from this vineyard currently on the market. Robert Parker gave it 92 points. It had a nose reminiscent of herbal liqueur and had a medium body. It was full of rich flavors of pears, flowers, and honey, and enough tartness to be a great foil for the wonderful dish.

We decided to stay right in Chassagne Montrachet for our next course, but this time pairing a red wine with the gorgeous Roasted Guinea Fowl stuffed with Foie Gras, accompanied by Duchesse Potatoes, Swiss Chard and a Supreme Sauce. Another nod to wintertime ingredients, this beautiful boned bird had a luscious moist tenderness (some said "like butter") enhanced by the rich, but not overpowering, foie gras and the elegant delicate sauce. The potato and chard were excellent on the side. Ramonet is most famous for its white wines, but this small vineyard of low yields from old vines showed excellent character and depth. Good fruit abounded in this highly regarded vintage: black cherry, blackberry, a little cassis balanced nicely by leather and tobacco. It had a medium body and a nice finish. It dealt very well with another complex dish, and the novelty of two lesser-known wines from a famous appellation was a real treat. Peter Benjamin, a huge fan of Ramonet, gave us a good background on the producer and his excellent tasting notes.



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For such a young chef, Philippe Ruiz has already created a few classic dishes, and we craved once again his Seven Hour Braised Beef Effiloché, this time served with a Truffled Rustic Polenta and a Turnip Confit. This is comfort food taken to the extreme gourmet level. Actually braised for 7 hours, the beef turns a very dark brown and tenderizes almost to the point of caramelization. It is succulent, with rich beefy flavors enhanced by Philippe's secret but delicately applied spices. Turnips, another winter vegetable, were made almost sweet and soft in the confit and the polenta was far from rustic given the rich addition of truffles. Another theme that came to Bob and me was to pair two Bordeaux wines from 1986, the Lynch Bages from Pauillac, and the Cos d'Estournel from St. Estephe. Coming from and from neighboring appellations and one of the finest vintages in two decades, this was a fun and educational opportunity to taste these beauties side by side. Many thanks to Edith Hudson for carefully and lovingly decanting these wines to optimize their flavors, as this is a long-lived vintage. The Lynch Bages seemed to be a little tighter than the Cos, with a dense purple color and a nose of leather, oak, black fruits and minerals. It was full bodied and still a little dominated by its tannins, but good fruit indicating an even longer life. Bob Hudson gave us a fine commentary. The Cos, by reputation, should have appeared as the younger wine, but on this evening it was drinking deliciously, with a bouquet of ripe plums and licorice. It was highly extracted with huge ripe flavors, great concentration and depth and richness. Again, firm tannins combined with opulent fruit, suggesting a lot of power and life. Steve Mandy, one of our best Bordeaux connoisseurs, gave us a great history of Cos and his own excellent tasting notes.

An unexpected bonus plate of a little Reblochon cheese appeared as a gift from Philippe to help us transition from these great reds to our delicious dessert: Warm Apple Confit Napoleon with Hazelnut Ice Cream. Again, perfectly prepared comfort food, the house-made ice cream was a real treat. Trying to stick to a classic pairing rule, we found a wine sweeter than the dessert and a perfect foil for the apple and hazelnut flavors: 1996 Chateau Guiraud 1er Cru Sauternes. Proclaimed as one of the stars of the vintage, this wine had a honeyed nose of light orange or tangerine with a little caramel. Already showing a deep golden color, it had rich deep flavors of marmalade honey and citrus. Past President and Sauternes aficionado John Kuczanski gave us a fine report on the chateau and the wine.

For the score-keepers, all of the wines on this night were been rated 91 to 96 points by Robert Parker.

This was a special occasion on many levels, local and international. This evening was our way, locally, of celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the (then- named) Wine and Food Society. Internationally we are blessed to have at least 3 of our members (one immediately past member) on the Board of Governors of the Americas. Past Chairman of the Board is Jose Garrigo; recently moved member Austin Stubblefield was elected to membership while still in our town; and immediate past Branch President John Kuczanski was elected to the Board last year. On this special evening, Jose presented John with recognition from the Board of Governors that very few members ever receive, the Andre Simon Silver Medal. Member, past Board member, and special events coordinator Jerry Stein also has a Silver Medal, and Joe Garrigo has earned a well-deserved Gold Medal for his 6 year term as Board Chairman. This was truly a great opportunity and evening of celebration of Wine, Food and Friends.



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Palme d'Or



DECEMBER 16, 2008

RECEPTION

ESCARGOT EN CROUTE
SMOKED FISH RILLETTE & ENDIVE
FOIE GRAS MOUSSE
TRUFFLE RISOTTO
GOAT CHEESE MOUSSE & TAPANEADE
PERRIER JOUET FLEUR DE CHAMPAGNE 1999

MENU

BRAISED HALIBUT FILET
BROWN VERMECELLE, MUSSEL SAUCE AND BABY SHRIMP
2002 CHASSAGNE MONTRACHET 1ER CRU LES VIRONDOTS, MARC MOREY



ROASTED GUINEA FOWL STUFFED WITH FOIE GRAS
DUCHESS POTATO, SWISS CHARD 7 SUPREME SAUCE
2002 CHASSAGNE MONTRACHET 1ER CRU CLOS ST. JEAN, RAMONET



SEVEN HOUR BRAISED BEEF EFFILOCHE
TRUFFLED RUSTIC POLENTA & TURNIP CONFIT
1986 LYNCH BAGES
1986 COS D'ESTOURNEL



WARM APPLE CONFIT NAPOLEON
HAZELNUT ICE CREAM
1996 CHATEAU GUIRAUD 1ER CRU SAUTERNES

HOSTS: BOB HUDSON AND CHRISTOPHER ZOLLER
CHEF DE CUISINE: PHILIPPE RUIZ

292nd IW&FS Branch Event