

History
of the
Miami Branch

The International Wine & Food Society



1962 - 2009

SPRANCE

December 1989

NORWAY



LOUIS COTTEN SKINNER, JR., M.D.
(1917 – 2005)
Founder of the Miami Branch

DEDICATION

This history booklet is dedicated to the memory of Louis Cotten Skinner, Jr., M.D. (dec'd), who organized the founding of the Miami Branch of the International Wine and Food Society.

Lou Skinner was one of a short list of Miami's foremost authorities on gastronomy, the founder and dean of most of the area's gourmet wine organizations, caring / sharing mentor of many of us emerging oenophiles, dermatologist / professor to thousands of grateful patients and medical students and friend of all who were privileged to know him.

Lou was a proud recipient of the Society's Andre Simon Silver Medal. In addition, in 1982, he was named 'Mr. Gourmet' of the Society of Bacchus America. Also, in 1985, the French government awarded him the medal of Officier in the Ordre du Merite Agricole.

Lou's constant striving for excellence and innovation propelled the Miami Branch to the forefront of the IW&FS. He set high standards for future generations to emulate. Accordingly, this Branch history is chronicled at this time so that all Branch members, present and future, can be mindful of our past excellence in planning for the future. Indeed, our past must be a prologue for our future.

© March, 2009.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / PROLOGUE

Your Editor gratefully acknowledges the foresight of current Branch President Robert F. Hudson, Jr. and the current Board of Directors for encouraging the chronicling of our Branch history before it fades away in the memories of our most senior members.

In addition, credit also goes to Contributors Jose R. Garrigo (Member since 1978) and Robert H. Dickinson (Member since 1978) who provided inputs, fact-checking and valuable proof-reading assistance so that this booklet is an enjoyable read for our present and future Branch Members. Credit for the cover design and layout is attributable to John Kuczowski (Member since 1997).

As prologue, the reader needs to know that Lou Skinner practiced the art of fine and gracious living, and his extensive involvements in numerous wine and food organizations were an integral part of his life. In the 1950's / 1960's, 'Mia-muh' was a backwater. Lou, and several of his contemporaries, took it upon themselves to learn and enjoy more of life's varied pleasures of the tables and vineyards of the world.

Lou first met Andre Simon, the IW&FS founder, in London. They met again when M. Simon came to the USA to attend a Society event. Andre's encouragement led to discussions for the local organization occurring in Lou's 'Café Louis' at his home in 1961. The local group's Inaugural Event was held in on March 28, 1962, and our Charter was also granted in 1962.

The reader is also advised to read the late Carleton Mitchell's excellent Prologue to Lou's "Guide to Paris Dining", which is appended to this booklet. Mitch, a noteworthy sailor, America's Cup yacht racer, author of several books and journalist for the National Geographic, accompanied Lou on many of his France trips in the Seventies and Eighties, and was also a faithful member of our Branch.

As is lyricized in a Steve Miller Band song from the Seventies, 'Time keeps on slippin' . . . into the future'. Therefore, without further ado, the Miami Branch's history is presented on the following pages.

© Scott A. Bailey, Editor and Author / Contributor, 2009.
(Member since 1983)

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THE INTERNATIONAL WINE AND FOOD SOCIETY

THE MIAMI BRANCH 1962 - 1987

The Miami Branch of the International Wine & Food Society was founded in 1962. Dr. Louis Skinner laid the foundation and set up the organization having received permission to start the branch from Andre Simon the founding father of the Society in London. A chance meeting in Chicago of Dr. Skinner and Dr. Maurice Sullivan, head of the Baltimore Branch at the time, ignited the spark that led to Miami's being made a part of the International organization.

Starting with nine charter members, Charles H. Baker, Jr., a nationally known food writer, was elected President, the late Steven A. Lynch Jr. was made Vice President and Dr. Skinner Secretary and treasurer. The other charter members were H. Hood Bassett, Louis J. Hector, C. Deering McCormick, James H. McKillips, W. Vass Shepherd and Edward F. Swenson. The first dinner was held on March 28, 1962 at the Miami Club in the Columbus Hotel and a number of events were scheduled there during the first two years.

The next years expansion netted eight new members including Richard Danielson, Douglas Erickson, Conway Hamilton, Arthur Hilmer, Jim Redford and Luckett Yawn all of whom are still active today. Then a gradually increasing membership led to a total of fifty-five stag members as of today. After several years of experiment the society settled on more or less five formal dinners and three to four wine tasting and luncheons to be the general foundation for events during the course of a single year.

Serious attention has been paid throughout the history of the Miami Branch of the Wine and Food Society to the educational function of the organization. Theme dinners became popular utilizing the cuisine of such areas as Italy, Switzerland, Hungary, Lebanon, and particularly France with its numerous regional cuisines - Norman, Alsatian, Bordelaise, Lyonnaise, Provencal, Burgundian etc. all of which have been tried one or more times with results varying from bad to mediocre to superlative.

The superstars in Miami cuisine have always been few and far between but some early winners included the Bath Club and Raimondo's. With the advent of City Club Vinton's and the Grand Bay Hotel in the past twelve years new gastronomic highs have been reached many times particularly with the former restaurant and the quality and sophistication of our dinners are largely due to Vinton's and its major domo Hans Eichmann's devotion to high standards of materials, cuisine, and service. It is at present our gastronomic mecca, and that is why we have chosen it for our Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Dinner.



THE WINE AND FOOD SOCIETY

INAUGURAL DINNER MARCH 28, 1962

ESCRITEAU

OYSTERS ROCKEFELLER

Bourgogne Aligoté 1959

Domaine Etienne Sauzet

FILET DE SOLE AU BOURGOGNE ALIGOTÉ

Puligny-Montrachet "Les Combettes" 1959

Domaine Etienne Sauzet

FILET DE BOEUF PERIGOURDINE

Mercrey 1959

Sélectionné par les Jurés-Gourmets de la
Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin

Domaine Jh. Faiveley

SALADE LAITUE

PÊCHES FLAMBÉES

Chateau Yquem 1955

PETITS FOURS

EXPRESSO

Cognac Remy Martin V.S.O.P.

INTERNATIONAL WINE & FOOD SOCIETY
Miami Branch

The One Hundred and Twenty Seventh Dinner
Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

Vinton's

March 25, 1987

La Reception

Cremant Brut 1979
Alfred Gratien

Amuse Bouche du Chef

Les Vins
Condrieu 1983
Ch. Du Rozay
Condrieu 1985
J. Vidal-Fleury

Le Diner
Coquilles St. Jacques au Caviar
Joel Robuchon *
* * *

Montagny 1983
Les Loges
(I. E. C.)

Oeuf Poche en Feuillette au Huitres et au Currie
Paul Haeberlin *
* * *

Amontillado
(Tio Diego)

Consomme de Canard aux Perles du Japon
* * *

Chambolle Musigny 1979
Clos des Mouches 1979
(J. Drouhin)

Pannequets aux Cailles et ses Abatis
Sauce Piquante au Marc de Bourgogne
* * *

Frappe d'Orange Sanguine
* * *

Ch. Latour 1966

Medallion d'Agneau aux Feuilles d'Epinards
Facon Cisteron

Ch. Latour 1964
(Pauillac)

Pommes Macaire Mousse d'Asperges Verte
Petite Courgette Farcie aux Tomates Concassees
Celeris Braisee
* * *

Ch. Talbot 1978
Ch. Gruaud-Larose 1978
(St. Julien)

Flan aux Fromages
Pointes d'Endives
* * *

Ch. La Tour Blanche 1975
(Sauternes)

Souffle aux Fraises
* * *

Café ou The Oolong Peach Blossom
* * *

Mignardises
* * *

Dinner Committee:
Jose R. Garrigo
James F. Redford, Jr.

Cigares Ramar
* * *

Host: Dr. Louis C. Skinner

Chef: Guy Michel Raymond
Maitre d': Charles Kaval
Sommelier: Suzanne McMahon
Proprietaire: Hans Eichmann

Three Star Michelin Restaurants
* Jamin (Joel Robuchon), Paris
* Auberge de l'Ill (Haeberlin), Illhausern (Alsace)

Chapter Two

Additional Commentary on the First Twenty-Five Years and the Transition from the ‘Francophile’ Eighties to the ‘International’ Nineties

The man responsible for kindling the fine dining and wine interests of Lou and other charter members was Steve Lynch, who was an aficionado of Burgundy, the proprietor of the Columbus Hotel and its restaurants in downtown Miami. The hotel was the site of the Inaugural dinner. Steve was also the Vice President of the founding group.

The charter members were a ‘who’s who’ of Miami business and society. Hood Bassett and Ed Swenson were brothers-in-law and served as Chairman and Trust and Investment executive, respectively, of (Southeast) First National Bank of Miami. Louis Hector was a founding partner of Steele, Hector and Davis, a major law firm in Miami’s past history. He was also a Director of First National Bank of Miami. Deering McCormick was a scion of the founding family of International Harvester and Vizcaya. Vass Shepherd was a Captain for Pan American World Airways and married to Lou’s sister Cotten.

The detail-oriented reader will note that the letterhead used to print the Inaugural menu in 1962 is titled “The Wine & Food Society”, which was our Society’s official name then. The logo contains a sheaf of wheat, a grape vine, a knife and crossed fork and spoon. In the Eighties, the logo remained the same; however, the Society’s name was then “The International Wine & Food Society” and our local group was initially identified as the “Miami Chapter”, which was later changed to Miami Branch in conformity with the Society’s standards.

Also, the “Branch medallions” were a golden disk containing the words “Wine and Food Society” surrounding a center which was embossed with the same logo as described above, along with a claret and gold ribbon. If a new member wanted to earn that medallion (which was optional), he would have to drink varied wines (which could not be wines that were served at Branch events), save the labels and mount at least two hundred fifty of them in a scrapbook. The collection was then presented to the membership at an Annual Meeting luncheon. The collector would then defend it and intelligently discuss any of the wines therein with the Officers / senior members. If your efforts were deemed worthy, you were awarded the Branch medallion.

The official Society medallions had been in existence for many years; however, Miami Branch members either did not purchase them or wear them to events. Now, since Society medallions are included in the cost of initiation, a majority of members wear it faithfully to events, both formal and informal.

A detailed comparison of the Inaugural and Twenty-Fifty Anniversary menus is striking in the upward leap in sophistication of the later menu. In the early Sixties offering, the menu was ‘supper club chic’, with Oysters Rockefeller, filet of beef with the black truffle-laced brown sauce a la Perigourdine and the obligatory flambéed dessert. The

Charter members' inclinations towards Burgundies are evident – note the serving of highest quality producers Sauzet and Faiveley – with Yquem '55 for a delicious finale¹.

In the 1987 menu, the enjoyment of international travel and Hans Eichmann's / Vinton's ability to re-create Michelin three-starred restaurants' signature dishes added to the growing sophistication and comfort of Miamians with fine French dining. This is a classic, eight course Menu Degustation of the style loved by the Dinner Committee in that era, i.e. Lou Skinner, Jim Redford and, occasionally Joe Garrigo and your Editor.

The comparison of the wine sophistication from menu to menu is also evident. My recollection is that one of the Latour vintages (probably the '64) was from Lou Skinner's cellar, in order to provide a comparison. Previously, the Club had purchased an array of '66's when Brian Hooker was President. On that evening, your Editor's notes indicate that the '64 was slightly more refined on the palate, while the '66 was a bit bigger; both 'blissfully elegant' and eminently worthy of their pedigree.²

Transition

In 1988, Joe Garrigo organized a three day weekend meeting of the North American Board of Governors, which was the predecessor governing body of the current Board of Governors of the Americas. 'Meeting' does not do justice to these events, which also included receptions, gala dinners and tours of the area's sights to highlight Miami and Coral Gables to the fifty to sixty out-of-town Governors and guests who attended these twice-yearly gatherings. Lou Skinner was elevated to Emeritus Governor and Joe Garrigo was elected a Governor at that meeting³.

Lou's collection of fifty-two of the classified growths of the legendary 1961 vintage was thought by many international wine cognoscenti to be THE collection of that fabled vintage. His generosity was evident in his hosting of three tutored (all by Michael Broadbent, MW, and our Society's President) tastings as the wines evolved from their twentieth year (in 1981) through the twenty-fifty year (in 1986) to the final tasting in 1992 (which occurred one year late, because of the publishing of his 'little yellow book' – "The Guide to Paris Dining" – in 1991 and other scheduling issues.

The tasting panels were an assemblage of trade, vintners, amateurs, friends – local, USA and international. Each of the weekends was an occasion for grand parties and dining. An IW&FS dinner event was held on one of the evenings; another wine group or 'theme' meal occupied the other. When Lou threw a party, everyone showed up. It was also an opportunity for the local Branch members to meet and mingle with the 'wine people' from all over (but mostly Europe), thereby broadening everyone's knowledge.

¹ In Michael Broadbent's 1983 edition of "The Great Vintage Wine Book", he lists 1955 as a five star, great vintage for white Bordeaux; "frankly, one of my favorite postwar Sauternes vintages".

² Your Editor's food and wine notes from the 25th Anniversary dinner are in the Appendix.

³ Joe also served the Branch as Treasurer from 1985 – 2006 and as Branch Contact and Director for most of the same period.

In 1992, the venue was the Grand Bay Hotel, with Chef Katsuo 'Suki' Sugiura preparing his delicious cuisine to compliment the Rhone wines that were served that evening.

In this late Eighties – early Nineties time frame, California cuisine emerged on the scene (much to the abhorrence of Lou Skinner and Jim Redford, among others) as well as a local variant, Floribbean cuisine, practiced locally by the 'Mango Gang', i.e. Alan Susser, Norman Van Aken and, occasionally, Pascal Oudin. Also, 'Suki', an outstanding practitioner of Franco-Asian fusion cuisine, helmed the stoves at the Grand Bay Hotel (having succeeded Jean-Pierre Petit). Jean-Claude Plihon held forth at Vinton's, until 'the Last Supper' in late 1991. Guy Gateau opened the Hotel Intercontinental Miami.

Our club was somewhat stuck in the Eighties, 'Francophile' mode, which was declining locally and nationally. Further, our cellar was entirely European, overwhelmingly French (the next Chapter will go into more detail). The advent of 'cuisine minceur' or 'nouvelle cuisine' was not warmly embraced by many as the French culinary salvation. Event attendance was stagnant and membership was well below limit (which was 65 in 1990).

All dinner events (occasionally a coed luncheon was held) were Black Tie. In a nine event 'season', usually six were stag events and three coed functions (perhaps two black tie dinners and one coat-and-tie for the gents and 'hats for the ladies' luncheon). Vinton's was the 'go to' venue, akin to our 'clubhouse'. Three humorous recollections of your editor are worth sharing for posterity.

First, our dear Lou and the late Brian Hooker were the initial practitioners of 'Palm Beach' black tie fashion, i.e. no socks and black velour opera slippers. For Lou's seventy-fifth or eightieth birthday, the Branch presented him with a new pair embroidered with Society's logo.

Brian Hooker was an unforgettable character in his own right; equally courtly in demeanor, well traveled and glib of tongue. Brian and Lou resembled each other well. Brian was a diminutive eater. He always brought his British Airways flight bag along to the dinners, complete with baggies and small containers, so that he could 'replay' a portion of the dinner the next day at home. One evening at Vinton's, a particularly long evening, he took a nap between courses by laying his head down on the table! The aroma of the arriving next course woke him up. When asked why put his head on the table, he rightly answered that he did not particularly like to sleep sitting up and having his head snap back and forth.

The late Conway Hamilton had a fondness for Yquem (which is also shared by many). At another Vinton's dinner, he convinced Lou to permit him to arrange for the dessert as he was going to donate the Yquem from his cellar. The dessert that was served was a dish of chocolate ice cream! Conway's comment: This proves that Yquem goes with everything!

Chapter Three

The Branch's Wines

In the earlier years, the organization's governance was a hybrid of the 'benevolent dictatorship' and 'Officers / Directors' models. The yearly operating plan was to hold approximately nine events in the 'season' period September – May, even though many of the senior members spent September elsewhere, i.e. France, North Carolina or 'up North'. Therefore, it was felt that a semi-retired or self-employed member was the best President, in order to have time to administer putting on dinners, receiving wine shipments, etc. In other words, a 'strong mayor' or 'benevolent dictator' was appropriate.

The other Officers and Board members were consultative in practice. Meetings were occasional, to hear what the President felt needed to be done, offer advice thereto, and for all to sample wines from the cellar to gauge readiness / drinkability. The President decided what wines should be bought, executed the orders and stored the wines (not necessarily in ideal conditions). An annual inventory was distributed at each Annual Meeting. In 1985, the cellar consisted of approximately 1,000 bottles.

In the early years, self-importation of European wines was permitted, 'for personal use' and not to exceed something on the order of 100 cases per person per year or so. Also, several Branch members belonged to various co-operatives, such as IEC or the Stevenage, U.K.-based Wine Society Ltd, which were sources of unusual French and Italian wines usually only available in the regions where they were produced. We were privileged to partake of these wines – some very good and others less than wonderful – but they all added to our individual knowledge and helped to forge vinous preferences.

Personal relationships of Jim Redford, a long-serving President of the Branch (i.e. Robert Drouhin of Maison Drouhin in Burgundy and the owners of the negotiant house of Vidal-Fleury in Ampuis / Northern Rhone, acquired by Etienne Guigal in 1986) also played significant roles in stocking the Club's cellar in the Eighties. The observant reader of the Twenty-Fifty Anniversary menu will note that an I.E.C. bottling – the 1983 Montagny (white Burgundy); Vidal-Fleury's 1985 Condrieu; Drouhin's Chambolle-Musigny and Beaune Clos des Mouches 1979 – were served.

With the growing Internationalization of wines, and club members' palates, increasing requests for wines other than French were the norm; however, Club management was reluctant to stock them for a number of reasons, including an early test of cellaring California wines that was disastrous. Finally, in 1994, the membership was successful in authorizing the creation of an advisory Wine Committee to make purchase recommendations to the Board. The initial Wine Committee members were Bob Dickinson, Leo Corradini, Carter Hopkins, Jr. and Scott Bailey.

The Cellar Inventory in June, 1994 consisted of approximately 2,800 bottles, or 231 cases. There were 21 cases of Italian wines and 210 cases of French wines; zero cases of California or any other wines! The initial recommendations of the Wine Committee were

to include certain California, Spanish and Australian wines, as well as a selection of Ports to the cellar. The French emphasis was to focus on better wines, rather than unique or oddments from various off-the-beaten-track AOC's. We needed different wines to serve with California cuisine, Floribbean menus and a waning of French / Continental cuisine.

In June 1994, the club membership was 53; with a cap of 65. Some other interesting statistics from the initial Wine Committee report:

- Nine events per year; mix of (mostly) stag and (a few) co-ed affairs;
- Consumption: between one and 1-1/4 bottles per person
- (High) average attendance forty persons per event
- Usage of 40 cases/year (for event consumption, tasting, test dinners, spoilage etc.)
- With 231 cases on hand, the cellar contained an almost six years' supply of wine.

Another major change in the Club's wine policy was purchasing and constructing a 3,500 bottle capacity temperature controlled wine cellar that was located in member Joe Cerniglia's Florida Mushroom facility in the Food Distribution center near Jackson Memorial Hospital. In 1996, the club's wines were moved into this location, which served the club very well until 2008 (when Florida Mushroom relocated to other premises). A most hearty 'Thank You' to Joe Cerniglia (Member since 1995) for his generosity. In fact, once we had an enjoyable Annual Meeting luncheon at the facility so that the Members saw the Club's assets in the actual operational environment.

By 2003, the wine count was approximately 2,900 bottles; however, the mix had changed to only 3/4th's French (of which 50% was Bordeaux). Spain and Italy each held a 6% cellar share, and New World wines now represented 11% of the bottlings.

There was a dramatic increase in wine purchases and inventory between 2003 and 2005. Previously, wine holdings were controlled (in order to not get into a situation where the 'cellar ran the club') and a hefty cash balance was maintained. With the upward spiral of wine prices, the club reasoned that it was probably better to hold wine rather than money; therefore, the 2005 cellar escalated to 3,800 bottles on hand. French wines were further reduced to 64%, Spain and Italy held 11% of share, New World increased to 16% and ports/sweets comprised 9% of the collection. Based on a Lower of Cost or Market calculation at that time, a value was estimated at approximately \$275,000. For the record, it is noted that the Branch's wine holdings are uninsured.

In 2008, the count has further increased to 4,300 bottles. French wine (including sweets) is 73%; Spain and Italy are 8%; New World 19%. The wine-buying philosophy is to focus more on higher cost / quality wines and therefore acquire less volume of wine.

Another matter of significance in 2008 was the cellar move from Florida Mushroom to International Wine Storage, on S.W. 8th St. in downtown Miami. The move and inventory were smoothly managed by Cellar Master Christopher Zoller (Member since 1999).

Chapter Four

The New Millennium and the Expansionist Era; The Branch's Increasing Involvement in the BGA

The Branch's membership rolls steadily increased in this period, and the membership cap was increased several times to its present 85 person limit. Event attendance had been on the rise and the number of guest appearances was also higher than ever in the history of the Club. These trends are not universally embraced by the Club membership, as a minority of the membership expresses discomfort at the size of the Club membership and the size of the events and the ever increasing prices. These trends will have to be reconciled by the Officers and Directors, in keeping with restaurateurs' ever increasing prices charged to us for events and the increasing of the number of places necessary to meet / defray site minimum guarantees.

In the early 1990's, the Branch began a worthwhile tradition of external outreach by supporting a scholarship in Hospitality Management at Florida International University. Annually, the funds are applied to scholarships and to help deserving students who are pursuing excellence in the culinary arts.

The Greater Miami dining scene today is quite different and continues to evolve to meet market whims and tastes. What has not changed is that Miami diners continue to be a fickle lot who gravitate to the newest, trendiest, 'in' place, and are not necessarily supportive of its' tried and true favorites.

- For French haute / bistro cuisine, Philippe Ruiz at Palme d'Or and Pascal Oudin at Pascal's on Ponce are excellent and reliable. Les Halles puts forth excellent brasserie fare.
- Steak houses' of all varieties multiply faster than rabbits. The food qualities are variable, but you can count on all of them to be overly boisterous, noisy venues.
- Italian cuisine in Miami is not exciting nor interesting (Lou's view of it in his writings - 'the dubious delectability of Italian cuisine' sums it up).
- Classical Spanish cuisine should be more available but, for some reason, our membership will not fully support such an event.
- Luncheons – other than the Ship luncheon – are no longer popular.

Board of Governors of the Americas

As noted earlier, Lou Skinner was listed as our first 'Corresponding Secretary', a title which was later changed to Branch Contact. Lou was also a Governor / Emeritus Governor. Joe Garrigo was first elected as a Governor in 1988 and since then has represented Miami's interests on the BGA. Jerry Stein was also very involved in BGA affairs, and when he transferred to Miami and joined our Branch, we then had two members who are very involved with the regional governance of our Society.

Joe Garrigo was elected Chairman of the BGA in 2002, and served in that capacity for six years. This is truly a momentous honor for both Joe and the Miami Branch. Bravo, Joe!

Joe Garrigo and Jerry Stein collaborated in the Miami Branch's planning and hosting of the BGA Fall meeting 2003 in Miami, which included a series of land based and shipboard venues, meetings and dinners. Many of the Branch members also assisted / participated in the activities.

Also, a former Branch member, Austin Stubblefield, served as Treasurer of the BGA for several years. Now, John Kuczwanski is also a Governor.

Jerry Stein (Member since 1963, including his New York tenure), Bob Dickinson and Michael Bittel (Member since 2005) collaborated on the organization of a successful IW&FS Cruise in Winter 2009; a Wine & Food Festival at Sea for over two hundred persons. Numerous of our Members have attended Regional, National and International Festivals since the Eighties.

All of these gentlemen devoted many hours and years of service in varying aspects to our Branch, which functions very well. In turn, they have and are sharing their experience in the guidance of our regional governing body, which reflects well on our Branch as well as them individually.

In closing, the Miami Branch commemorated the Society's 75th year at our December, 2008 co-ed, formal Holiday Party. We look forward to a celebration of the 47th anniversary of our Branch's Inaugural Dinner in March, 2009. More importantly, planning should begin for our Branch's Fiftieth Year Golden Jubilee with some very special events to be held around March 2012.

Respectfully submitted, and Best in Wine, Food & Friends,
Scott A. Bailey, Editor and Author / Contributor
(Member since 1983)



The International Wine & Food Society
Miami Branch

2008 Holiday Party and 75th Anniversary Tribute

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
DUCHESSE POTATO, SWISS CHARD & 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

Miami Branch Presidents

From 1962 to the early Eighties (in alphabetical order)

Charles H. Baker, Jr. Charter / first President
Alvin E. Duryea, Jr.
Douglas Erickson
Thomas Fletcher, Jr.
Brian E. Hooker
Walter C. Jones III, M.D.
C. Deering McCormick
William E. Porter
Theodore B. Rogers III
Barry Ryan
Wayne F. Sessions
Louis C. Skinner, Jr., M.D.

From the early 1980's to Current Date (in chronological order)

Early 1980's – 1996 James F. Redford, Jr.

1996 – 2000; Mitchell L. Lundeen
2001 – 2002

2000 - 2001 Patrick R. Sullivan

2002 - 2004 Suhel Skaf

2004 - 2008 John Kuczwanski

2008 - Robert F. Hudson, Jr.

Andre Simon Medal and BGA Medallion honorees – Miami Branch

Jose R. Garrigo	Andre Simon Gold Medal
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Louis C. Skinner, Jr., M.D.	Andre Simon Silver Medal
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Gerald Stein	BGA Silver Medallion
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D. Austin Stubblefield	BGA Silver Medallion
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BGA Officers and Governors - Miami Branch

Jose R. Garrigo	Chairman
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Louis C. Skinner, Jr., M.D.	Emeritus Governor
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Gerald Stein	Governor
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D. Austin Stubblefield (Member Memphis, TN)	Treasurer / Governor
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John S. Kuczwanski	Governor
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The International Wine & Food Society

Miami Branch



LOU'S STAG

GUIDE TO PARIS DINING

An up-to-date,
concise and candid look at
150 Michelin-rated Bistros,
Brasseries and Restaurants
in the world's greatest
food city.

By
Dr. Louis C. Skinner, Jr.

\$8.95

Here is a straightforward and distinctly personal look at many Michelin-rated eating establishments picked from the Paris section of their famous Red Guide to France.

It is a fresh and lively appraisal written by a person well qualified in the world of wine and food who tells it as it appears to his own highly tuned taste buds and wide dining experience in Paris over the past twenty-five years.

Dr. Skinner organized the Miami Branch of the International Wine and Food Society in 1982, and founded the Miami Chapter of the Commanderie de Bordeaux in 1982. He is an Officier-Commandeur in the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin, and Chargé de Missions in the Confrérie de la Chaine des Rôtisseurs. In 1985 he was awarded the medal of Officier in the Ordre du Mérite Agricole by the French Government, and in 1982 he was elected to the exclusive (one member a year) Society of Bacchus America and was named "Mr. Gourmet" for that year.

PROLOGUE

Dr. Louis Cotten Skinner, Jr., by training a Dermatologist, by inclination and dedication a connoisseur of wine and food who has traveled the world over enjoying the best of the best, has always had a special affinity for France, especially its crowning jewel, Paris.

Ever since student days at the University of North Carolina, and post-graduate work at Johns Hopkins, he has explored the gastronomic resources of Paris, from the grubbiest to the most brilliant cafes, bistrots, and brasseries, and from the lowest to the highest-rated restaurants — the mighty temples of nouvelle and haute cuisine. Always judgements were his own, uninfluenced by the opinions of others.

Lou Skinner's credentials are unique: Officier-Commandeur of the Chevaliers du Tastevin, Chargé de Missions of the Confrérie de la Chaîne des Rôtisseurs, founder and ex-President of the Miami branch of the International Wine and Food Society, founder and Maître of the Miami Chapter of the Commanderie de Bordeaux. He has been named Officier de l'Ordre de Merite Agricole by the French government, and awarded the Medal of Honor by the French Academie des Vins. The exclusive Society of Bacchus America

(one new member a year) elected him, "Mr. Gourmet" for 1982.

Few combine his knowledge of both wine and food. It has been my privilege to dine with him on numerous occasions, including many of the restaurants he examines in this text, and almost invariably he is able not only to analyze the basic ingredients, but later can usually describe the dish so accurately that a qualified chef can virtually re-create the original for one of his Commanderie de Bordeaux dinners.

His cellar contains an extraordinary assemblage of great bottles, especially clarets. Generous with his treasures, in 1981 and again five years later, he was host at tastings in Miami attended by French chateau owners and other international wine cognoscenti. During two day sessions, fifty-five different Chateau-bottled classified Bordeaux reds of the increasingly rare and fabled 1961 vintage were brought out. The late, well-known authority, Alexis Lichine, commented: "I do not think there is a cave in France which could present such a collection."

But his greatest compliment as a connoisseur came from Michael Broadbent, Master of Wine, head of Christie's fine wine department, and also President of the London-based International Wine and Food Society. "Lou Skinner," he has written, "is better than anyone I know at putting wine and food together." This talent and long experience enables him to judge a restaurant competently, always with scrupulous honesty, never on anyone's payroll, and beyond a scintilla of doubt, without a hint of sycophancy, Lou puts it on the line and tells it like it is.

— Carleton Mitchell
1991

EPILOGUE

I imagine that some readers of this Guide to Paris Dining wonder just how the author goes about a two-week stint of 28 meals and comes home to greet his dismayed friends without having gained a pound.

For me, it is simple — knowing how to order, walking miles every day and drinking large amounts of good Parisien tap water are the basic factors. I also sleep late, usually having had dinner around 9:30 P.M., and have only a roll and a glass of milk for breakfast. Knowing how to order is hardest in that it takes a good amount of restraint as well as some experience in planning your meal. As mentioned in the text, I use the selection of two entrées (appetizers) and a salad, cheese or dessert...usually the latter after having discussed with the Maitre d' the various items on the menu that look interesting. Also, I seldom order the same dish more than once, which keeps my curiosity and appetite alive. Most restaurants have a three-course fixed price luncheon, which will often be satisfying and within reason price-wise. I do splurge sometimes and order an extra course that seems particularly attractive, and I always inquire whether any dishes I order have garlic in them and, if so, I change to something else, avoiding an afternoon of misery.

I always ask if there is a dégustation menu and look at that carefully, since you can determine quickly what new ideas the chef may have up his sleeve. If you overeat, you have no one but yourself to blame. If you do overindulge at luncheon, by all means have your evening meal at a brasserie and go for some of the low-calorie seafood available until 2:00 A.M.

If you restrain yourself at luncheon, you can have a nicer evening meal and go for somewhat more substantial fare. Avoid the silver carts that the waiters push around to serve table-side. These are usually large high-calorie sections of beef, lamb, veal, etc. that are no better than you can get at home and, to me, are uninteresting and a complete waste of time in a dining paradise like Paris. Anyhow, choose what you find appealing with discretion, but remember — à la carte servings are usually very large, and it is perfectly all right to share some of these rich dishes. Avoid bread and butter, ice cream desserts, and reduce your intake of wine a bit.

Finally, don't order too much food, and ask the Maitre d' about the size of portions before you are over your head in calories.

Now you have some idea how to eat in Paris without gaining too much, and before you ask what are my favorites among the plethora of fine Parisien dining places, I will detail them for you below — just enough for two weeks.

The Editor's Tasting Notes from the 25th Anniversary Dinner

Vinton's

March 25, 1987

Les Vins

Alfred Gratien Cremant Brut 1979 (Champagne) Fresh, flowery and citrus bouquet – quite unusual for Champagne. Cremants have less petillance than Champagne. Refreshing on the palate. [Purchased through I.E.C.]

Ch. De Rozay Condrieu 1983 (Northern Rhone) Elegant, full, peachy bouquet; silky taste, explosive finish. Almost as good as a Ch. Grillet, THE copybook viognier of the Appellation.

J. Vidal-Fleurie Condrieu 1985 Peppery, pungent bouquet; powerful in the mouth, but not yet together. Food helped to tame it.

Les Loges Montagny 1983 A white Burgundy from the Maconnais. Bashful and initially closed bouquet; moderately weighty in the mouth and a rich, complex finish. Montagnies are one of the best of the second-tier white Burgundies. [I.E.C. bottling]

Jos. Drouhin Chambolle-Musigny 1979 Bouquet of berries; atypically soft on the palate but superbly balanced. 'A pointe' now; not a great vintage, but very drinkable.

Jos. Drouhin Beaune Clos de Mouches 1979 A Beaune, but with backbone! Bright color, bouquet not as pronounced as the Chambolle-Musigny. Excellent balance; an interesting mix of mouth-pleasing fullness with a 'finesse' finish.

Ch. Latour (Pauillac) 1964 and 1966 Cassis leaps out of the glasses! Both possessing beautiful, darkish color but not quite brick / umber. Both exhibit an elegant and silky bouquet; no difference in either vintage. The tastes are 'blissful elegance'. The '64 is slightly more refined, while the '66 is bigger/fleshier/fuller. Both vintages are weighty in the mouth and perfectly balanced. Finishes are superb.

Chs. Gruaud-Larose and Talbot (St. Julien) 1978 Both typical St. Juliens, sweetness of fruit. Initially, the Talbot was 'equally showy' in bouquet, mouthfeel and taste to its' higher classified sibling. Over time, 'class wins out' (to use a Michael Broadbent expression) and the Gruaud-Larose outdistanced the Talbot. Both wines put forth bouquets of berries and fruit, along with beautiful, garnet colors and extremely pleasant finishes. Nice blends of tannins-fruit-acid. Talbot is a sprinter, whilst the Gruaud-Larose is at least a middle-distance runner.

Ch. La Tour Blanche (1er Sauternes) 1975 Not a luscious wine, but possessing a fine balance of some lean sweetness and acidity. Anything fuller bodied would not have stood up to the fresh, local strawberries in the dessert.

The Editor's Tasting Notes from the 25th Anniversary Dinner

Vinton's

March 25, 1987

Le Diner

Sea Scallops with Caviar – Joel Robuchon (Jamin, Paris, * * *)⁴ Barely poached scallops topped with Sevruga Caviar. Five, small scallops were plated, interspersed with sprigs of fresh watercress, around a center pool of watercress/beurre blanc. An outstanding course; deliciously paired with the Condrieus (viognier).

Poached Egg with Oysters in Puff Pastry and Curry Sauce – Paul Haeberlin (dec'd) (Auberge d'Ill, Alsace * * *) My notes indicate "THE outstanding egg dish of all time!" The lightest of touches with the curry, and included very finely minced leeks for body. [This is before we found Henri Faugeron's (Paris * *) poached egg with truffles and toasted brioche with truffled butter – created for the Albertville Winter Olympics of 1992 - which is equal, in my opinion, to Chef Haeberlin's creation.]

Duck Consomme with 'Pearls of Japan' (large tapiocas) A double reduction of duck and vegetable stock to achieve Lou Skinner's standard, i.e. one must have 'sticky lips' after enjoying a properly reduced consommé or sauce. Amontillado sherry is a classic accompaniment, and the Tio Diego was an old favorite of our Branch at that time.

Quail in a Crepe with its Giblets, with a reduced, Brown Sauce finished with Marc (Brandy) de Bourgogne Note the attention to detail, using the Burgundian brandy to finish the sauce for the course which was paired with two red Burgundies. An outstanding dish and an outstanding match with the wines served.

Orange Frappe with Vodka In any Lou Skinner menu, there was bound to be at least two pauses (consommé and a sorbet / frappe) and hints of other alcoholic beverages as restoratives for the palate. Dinners were very long, but usually very pleasant affairs, i.e. 'an affair of the table'. Aperitifs were at least 45 minutes, with seating for dinner at 8pm sharp. An early evening wound up after 11pm; more likely closer to midnight. The heartier souls then repaired to Café Louis or 915 Castile Ave – Chez Skinner – for digestifs and cigars. This particular frappe was partially, frozen, icy bits of oranges, laced with pink-colored vodka, and served in a cocktail glass with a pink frosted rim and a sprig of mint for color contrast. To open 'Le Trou Normande', n'est pas?

**Lamb Medallions in Cisteron (Provence) style, with Spinach leaves
Potatoes Macaire (mashed with chives and nutmeg), Green Asparagus Mousse
timbale surrounded by tips of White Asparagus, Courgette Squash stuffed with
chopped, seeded Tomatoes and Braised Hearts of Celery** Lou designed every plating to include small servings of numbers of interesting vegetables to accent the main

⁴ Chef Robuchon 'retired' in 1996 and sold Jamin to his sous-chef Benoit Guichard. In 2008, it is no longer a starred establishment nor listed in the Michelin Guide Rouge. Chef Robuchon has two, two-starred restaurants in Paris in 2008, La Table de Joel Robuchon (16th arr.) and L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon (7th).

course. In this case, the style of the village of Cisteron in Provence provided the inspiration (without, of course, any hint of his hated garlic and also without eggplant). My menu notes include a diagram of the plating for future reference.

Warm Cheese Flan, with Belgian Endive spears Lou did not much care for cold, cut cheese and hated the ritual of passing a cheeseboard at a formal dinner. Further, he did not have much use for nor cared for salad in a menu degustation (but, being a Doctor, did acknowledge some salad ingredients as necessary in one's diet).

He discovered this ingenious combination of cheese and salad on one of his many trips, and it proved to be a hit that was used numerous times in dinners. A small portion of warm, cheese flan, with crunchy top and unctuous middle, was centered on a plate. Five spears / leaves of Belgian endive radiated out from the center in a star pattern. Halves of cherry tomatoes interspersed between the leaves added color contrast.

Strawberry Souffle with Strawberry Coulis Fresh, local strawberries (sourced that morning from Burr's Berry Farm in South Dade by Jim Redford especially for this dinner) were included in the excellent, cloud-like soufflé and also provided the basis for the outstanding strawberry sauce / coulis (with just a hint of Alsatian eau de vie des fraises for interest) surrounding the soufflé.

Tea (or Coffee) Usually an after-thought to the dinner; however, Dr. Skinner was a tea connoisseur and most assuredly as much thought went into the tea selection as to any other aspect of the event. His tea collection was world-class, and for this dinner, he wanted to end on a 'peach' note – the counterpoint to the peach aromas in the Condrieu first wine of the evening. Oolong Peach Blossom from Fortnum & Mason (London) filled the bill admirably.

Mignardises This is the only place for a bit of chocolate in a formal menu, as chocolate does not pair well with most wines (there are very few exceptions).

Cigars Ramar These were hand-rolled in Miami, from Dominican tobacco grown from Cuban seed.

SUMMARY: The Members who host dinners should carefully read these notes to better understand Lou's ideals and practices in crafting an event. It's more difficult to have restaurants create the labor-intensive courses today; however, hosts are encouraged to challenge establishments to work 'outside the box' to hone their creativities in preparing unforgettable events for our Branch. Dear Lou – self-described as the consummate, fatuous foodie and flatulent feinschmecker – would heartily approve. A votre santé!

'61 Bordeaux:

By Chip Cassidy and Fred Barger

For one long weekend, Miami was the wine capital of the world. For two days, with various gourmet functions before, after and in between, three dozen men and women — including many of the world's wine elite — paid homage to the great 1961 Bordeaux and to Dr. Louis C. Skinner, the Coral Gables dermatologist whose wine we tasted.

As he had done five years ago, Skinner, a soft-spoken, courtly wine-and-food lover with the best collection of the legendary '61 clarets in the world, gathered a few of his friends to see how the wines were doing.

Many of the lucky tasters also had attended the tasting in 1981. Besides your authors, the local contingent included Metro Commissioner Jim Redford, wine collector Doug Erickson, wine sales executive Mel Dick, owner Hans Eichmann and sommelier Alan Yue of Vinton's restaurant, wine lovers Dr. Steve Mandy, Bob Shackleford and Carleton Mitchell, cruise line executive Bob Dickenson and banker Jose Ramon Garrigo.

Michael Broadbent, Master of Wine and head of the wine department at Christie's, the London auction house, led us through the wines, two each of a remarkable 52 classified growths.

When Lou Skinner calls a tasting, people respond.

Dr. Max Lake came from Sydney, Australia; Thomas Whelehan from Dublin, Ireland; and Dr. Nils Sternby from Malmo, Sweden.

From Bordeaux came Anthony Barton (Leoville-Barton and Longoa Barton), Mme. Herve Lencquesaing (Pichon-Lalande), Jean-Michel Cazes (Lynch-Bages and also president of the Pauillac Wine Growers Association), Bruno Prats (Cos d'Estoumel) and Pierre Tari (Gisours).

The Marquis Robert de Goulaine

The Americans came from seven states and Puerto Rico.

"I doubt if any of us will ever have the opportunity of tasting this vintage like this again," said Broadbent. "We're also paying homage to Lou."

It is the opinion of most wine experts that 1929, 1945 and 1961 produced the best red Bordeaux wines of the century. The jury is still out on the highly acclaimed '82s, which are still such young wines.

So, '61 was the last *really* great year, and to see how 52 of these wines are

more for some.

Dr. Skinner's attention to detail included the social aspects of the weekend. It began with a Friday night champagne reception at "Cafe Louis," a guest house at the rear of Skinner's home furnished for entertaining.

The celebrants sipped Louis Roederer Brut and munched appetizers from Vinton's as they discussed what lay ahead. At about 8:30 p.m., a huge Deluxe Motor Coach pulled up, and the tasters were driven to Casa Juancho, a fun, beautiful Spanish restaurant of Calle Ocho.

At 10 a.m. Saturday, we gathered in the ballroom of the Grand Bay Hotel to begin the tasting.

St. Emilion was tasted first, seven of them, followed by seven Pomerol and four Graves. Then came review and discussion, a light lunch in the hotel, and a brief rest before resuming at 2:30.

Saturday's final two-hour session had 10 St. Julien and eight Margaux.

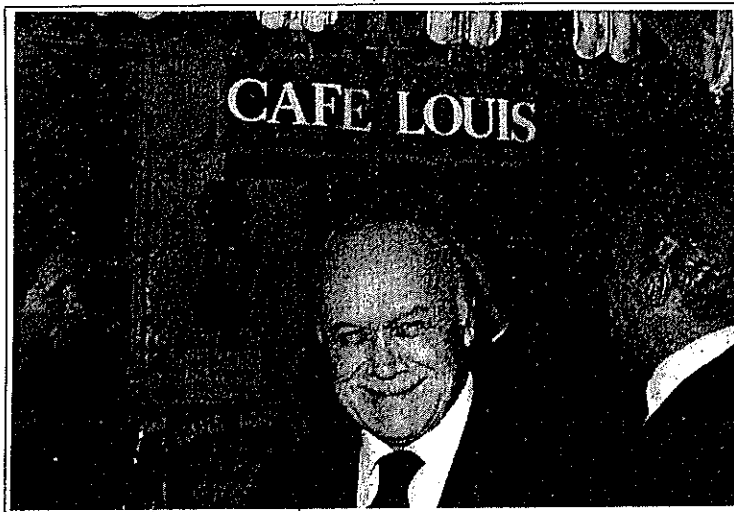
Saturday night, some of the tasters attended an elegant Commanderie de Bordeaux dinner at Vinton's that featured '70 Bordeaux.

We gathered for the final two-hour session Sunday morning, a mind-boggling trip through five St. Estephe and 16 Pauillac. Lunch followed at the home of Dr. Skinner's sister, Mrs. Cotten Shepherd.

As a whole, the wines were in wonderful shape. We only found six of the 52 wines on the down side.

As a group, the Pauillac were most impressive. On a 20-point scale, your authors scored all of them at 15 or better.

Here are some of our favorites:



Lou Skinner in his famed "Cafe Louis"

was there, and so were wine writer Terry Robards; John Avery of Bristol, England; Tawfig Khoury of San Diego; and Julius Wile.

Somebody figured out that of the 35, 13 guests had attended five years ago.

doing as they approach 25 years of age is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The wines have virtually disappeared from wine lists, and to purchase them from an auction house would take \$125 to \$800 a bottle for most, much

Pauillac

Latour (Cassidy 19½, Barger 20): Very dark color, expansive bouquet, great taste, a rich wine, quite complete.

Mouton-Rothschild (19, 19½): Very dark color, nose subdued but wanting to break out, big and rich, great concentration of fruit and tannin.

Lynch-Bages (19, 18½): Deep color, fantastic nose, good concentration of fruit and tannin, beautiful. (Broadbent noted cinnamon.)

Pichon-Lalande (19, 18½): Very dark, deep spirit on the nose, great concentration, rich taste, delicious.

Lafite-Rothschild (17½, 18): Pale ruby-red color, aromatic nose, slender after the Mouton and Latour, but great style, lingers on the palate.

St. Estephe

Cos d'Estoumel (18½, 18): Deep, ruby-red color, beautiful nose, still a little closed.

Montrose (18, 16): Bright red, young color, fine nose, subdued, lovely, rich.

Pomerol

Petrus (17½, 18): Dark, nose not as developed as Trotanoy, still needs time.

Trotanoy (18½, 17½): Velvety robe, very fat, rich taste, good tannin, fantastic.

Latour-Pomerol (18, 18½): Dark, rich, packed with fruit, delicious.

L'Evangile (18, 18): Deep red, fat, rich, spicy, great complexity, long finish.

Margaux

Palmer (19½, 19½): Deep color

fantastic bouquet, rich and complex, a delicious wine, still young.

Margaux (19, 19): Very dark color, cigar-box nose, rich, firm, delicious.

St. Emilion

Cheval Blanc (19, 18): Darkest of the flight, rich, plenty of extract, oodles of fruit, a great future.

Figeac (18, 18): Deep color, very scented, fat and chewy.

Graves

La Mission-Haut-Brion (18, 19): Almost black, rich, plenty of tannins, long finish, needs a lot of time.

Haut-Brion (17½, 17½): Beautiful red color, nose still closed, rich taste, plenty of tannin for a long life.

St. Julien

Leoville-Las Cases (18½, 18): Great

ty of tannins, simply lovely.

Ducru-Beaucaillou (19, 17): Very dark; loaded with fruit, bouquet explodes from the glass, will live for many years.

Gruaud-Larose (17½, 17): Very dark, nose closed, very tannic, needs ten years, lots of promise.

Beychevelle (18, 16): Deep crimson, cigar-box nose, silky and rich, good tannins.

In closing, our distinguished tutor paid a tribute to the group and the occasion. "I don't think I've ever had the privilege of tasting with so many fine palates, professional and amateur, anywhere in my life," said Broadbent.

Turning to Dr. Skinner, he led our heartfelt applause. "You are a man of tremendous taste. modest wish"



Commanderie de Bordeaux à Miami

A Tasting of Fifty-Five Classified Growths from the 1961 Vintage
Red Bordeaux

Miami, FL, USA; February 21-23, 1992:

Miami was the center of the wine universe this weekend, as Chapter Founder and Maitre Emeritus Dr. Louis C. Skinner, Jr. hosted his third tasting of the legendary '61 vintage of classified Bordeaux. Michael Broadbent, MW, was the guest commentator, providing his able insight and wry wit to pace the 31 member tasting panel through three tasting sessions spanning two days. The jury was comprised of professional as well as serious amateur tasters and members of the wine press. They were Europeans, including six Bordelais chateau owners, and Americans, including eleven Commandeurs. Broadbent commented that this event was extraordinary and probably without duplication anywhere in the world, as Lou Skinner has the most complete collection of this vintage. All but 13 of the wines tasted came from Lou's cellar; the remainder coming from others on the tasting panel.

The festivities began with an elegant Parlement at Cafe Chauveron on Friday evening. This event, the 26th for the Miami chapter, also marked the Tenth Anniversary of the chapter's founding by our weekend host, Lou Skinner. Lou was Maitre through 1990, when he passed the robe to your correspondent, while remaining active in the group as Maitre Emeritus. Fifty-five diners, including Commandeurs a Miami, their ladies and guests, including the tasters, experienced a sumptuous, nine course, menu degustation dinner prepared by Chef de Cuisine Jean-Claude Plihon, one of South Florida's finest chefs. Dr. Skinner has long held the belief that fine dining is best epitomized by numerous, small, artfully prepared and presented courses, accompanied by a few sips of a properly matched wine. Each course builds expectations for those yet to follow. At the end of the meal, one is pleasantly satisfied and happy, yet not stuffed beyond satiety.

Cafe Chauveron had long been held as one of South Florida's bastions of classical French haute cuisine, following in the tradition of its Manhattan namesake's origins. With changing lifestyles of younger people and the "graying" of its loyal followers, the Cafe had not been faring well in recent years. Under new ownership, and with General Manager Patrick Pauzat and Chef Plihon in charge, refreshing winds of change are wafting through this lovely establishment on the water in Bay Harbour Islands, which is close to Bal Harbour and Miami Beach, and convenient to Miami and Coral Gables. Jean Claude Plihon is very adept at lightening sauces and presentations while maintaining the essence of classical flavours and combinations.

During the reception, the Chef presented pissaladiere oblongs and escargot on spoons, utilizing Pernod for a marvelous flavour, without the dreaded "G" condiment (garlic - Dr. Skinner is allergic to it!). The aperitif of choice among the guests was the Perrier Jouet Grand Brut over the Blason de France.

Dinner began with an outstanding presentation of foie gras en gelee, with a truffle diamond within the timbale, and bedded on diced artichoke and creme fraiche. The centerpiece was surrounded by dots of gelee for an artful presentation. The Saint Croix du Mont, Chateau Pascaud, 1988, was delightful with the dish, providing the unctuousness to compliment the foie with a youthful hint of crisp acidity. This wine will be outstanding with bottle age, as it has lovely honeyed flavors and the right amount of botrytis to provide an excellent beverage for a fruit tart or fruit-based dessert.

Jean-Claude Plihon presented a signature dish, a timbale of stone crab, utilizing egg whites and scallops for a cloud-like binding, robed in a brilliant green romaine leaf and napped by a coral-hued, lobster bisque-like sauce. The Chateau Carbonnieux blanc 1986 provided a clean, crisp counterpoint. The wine retained a youthful appearance and its presence on the menu was appreciated by the chateau owners, Anthony and Marie Claude Perrin, who were among the guests.

The roulade of yellowtail snapper with mushrooms, and the accompanying buerre blanc with truffles, was a poissonier's tour de force, in this writer's opinion. Yellowtail is a small, young member of the red snapper family indigenous to South Florida waters. It was chosen, along with the stone crab, to present local foods to our out of town guests. The sweetness of the fish, the ethereal, delicate mushroom filling and the truffle-perfumed sauce was pure bliss. Chateau La Louviere 1978, specially purchased from IEC in England for this event, proved to be a suitable match for the course to most of the diners. During the white wine discussion, led by Commandeur and Maitre Peter Sichel of New York, one of the tables thought the wine to be past its' prime, while the majority of others experienced a sound, mature, yet youthful coloured beverage which they enjoyed and thought went well with the food. We attributed the difference to bottle variation.

At this point, the first of the red wines, a 1966 Ducru-Beaucaillou in Magnum, was paired with the lightly roasted quail. One-half of the bird was presented, partially deboned, nested on lentils and sauced with a reduction of pan juices which had been deglazed with Bordeaux wine. The juicy succulence of the quail was perfectly paired with the mid-colored, cedary fragrant, silkily dry Ducru.

As a restorative for the palate, the Chef suggested, and we agreed, that a lovely, vegetal celery consomme would be appropriate. It was much more than that - aromatic, perfectly seasoned, not a trace of

heaviness nor bitterness. The dinner hosts decided not to pair it with a customary sherry and risk detracting attention from the upcoming best of the '66 vintage with the entree.

In Miami, we plan our Commanderie events around a menu of the Chef's origination. The dinner hosts work with the Chef to suggest changes to the presentations and order of courses. After this, a taste dinner is arranged so that the hosts can properly match the perfect wine with the food, rather than otherwise. Lou Skinner and Commandeur Bob Dickinson pored over their notes and collective memories for the "right" wines for the Parlement. One hallmark was to present a '61 with food as a focal point before the tasting began. The challenge was to provide the correct progression leading up to the star of the show. Dr. Skinner and the writer sampled numerous '75's and '70's and while acceptable, they weren't "right". Lou is known for attention to every detail, and nothing except perfection was his goal for this event and his guests. He graciously provided the Ducru from his cellar, as well as the La Mission-Haut-Brion 1966, which accompanied the entree.

The entree, medallions of lamb loin with a reduction sauce infused with a hint of fresh rosemary, was presented with couscous, eggplant and pureed zucchini. The food provided a flavorful palette for the delicious La Mission, which was a full-bodied, sweet concentration of fruit, and a long finish with a clean, gravel tang characteristic of Graves.

The way was now prepared to bring up the truly big gun, a jereboam of 1961 Pichon Comtesse Lalande, courtesy of Commandeur Bob Dickinson and much to the delight of Madame May de Lenguesaing, who was among the guests. The wine was decanted at home by Bob prior to the dinner and returned to the cleansed jereboam for serving. Sommelier Jean Valentin, a fixture at Cafe Chauveron since its beginning, said that this was the first time that a jereboam was served in the restaurant. He and his assistant ably metered the precious nectar from the big bottle to all of the diners. The wine was dark garnet in color, with elegant, fruity, feminine aromas, a soft, rich, nicely balanced flavor, and a lengthy finish - an outstanding drink of wine! Paired with it was a Florida artisan-made chevre, rolled in a crepe and presented in round slices, with a tiny salad of endives and lettuces as a garnish. Michael Broadbent, the discussant for the red wines, stated that he had hoped that the diners had tasted the wine before trying the cheese. In his opinion, the cheese was a bit too much for the wine. He was particularly appreciative of the opportunity to gauge the excellent '66's with food and found both to be marvelous. The '61 Pichon Comtesse Lalande continued to be deserving of the high marks garnered during Dr. Skinner's 1986 tasting of the '61's and established high expectations for the weekend's judgement of the vintage.

Dessert was layered rounds of crispy phyllo-like pastry with chunks of Turkish apricots, surrounded by a lovely sauced laced with Apry liqueur. The 1983 Laufaurie-Peyraguey sauterne, with its full body and hints of pineapple and apricot on the nose, was an able companion to the sweet.

The Chef and his team entered the dining room to accolades of praise from the Commandeurs and guests. Jean Claude was presented a Compagnon de Bordeaux certificate for his many dinners for our group. He had been Chef at Vinton's of Coral Gables for five years, which had been the venue of numerous Parlements .

The Tasting

The event was the third time Dr. Skinner has hosted a tasting of the 1961 vintage in Miami. The first session, in 1981, coincided with the twentieth year of the wine's evolution. The second judging, held in 1986, like the current session, was conducted at the Grand Bay Hotel in Coconut Grove. The tasters assembled in the top floor Regine's Club which, during the day, is blessed with ample sunlight for guaging coloration of the wines. Commentator Michael Broadbent and his able alter-palate, scribe and wife, Daphne, were at the head of the room. The tasters, four or five to a table, were arrayed classroom style. Each taster was equipped with twenty numbered glasses to be better able to assess developments in the glass over time of each session. In most cases, two single bottles were served, alternatively, so that one's neighbor would have a pour from a different bottle. This proved to be fortuitous, as there was distinct bottle variation in a number of the wines over the three sessions. Accordingly, table mates could share the better glass to more fully appreciate the comparison.

The wines were decanted before each session, the bottles rinsed and the wine returned to its vessel and stoppered until presentation. Chip Cassidy, wine director for Crown Wine Shops in South Florida and Commandeur Hans Eichmann were responsible for sommelier duties, ably assisted by members of the Crown staff and Bob Radziewicz, a wine-loving friend of Chip's. Unused wine and the remains from decanting, as well as the empty bottles, were carefully saved according to Lou's instructions. He makes the most marvelous vinegar from the leavings and a gift of such is as prized as a drink of the precious wine!

Session One

Session One began at 10 a.m. on Saturday with a flight of ten St. Juliens. Michael Broadbent explained that he placed St. Julien first, as it is the fulcrum of Bordeaux - a reference point for the entire tasting. Before describing the wines, the writer cautions that these impressions are his, unless attributed to another within the text. Furthermore, those wanting more typical press impressions of the tasting are urged to read sure to come articles in The Wine

Spectator, New York Times, East Side Wine News, Decanter, the Miami Herald and El Nuevo Herald, all ably represented by their esteemed chroniclers.

The St. Juliens are all fairly light colored, except for Gruaud-Larose and Leoville Les Cases. I thought Gruaud-Larose was the best of the flight, followed closely by Leoville Las Cases and Ducru-Beaucaillou. Leoville Poyferre was a pleasant surprise to me: in fact, Dr. Bob Maliner placed it ahead of all others.

Next, two Bourgeois crus, Fourcas-Hosten (Listrac) and Gressier-Grand Poujeaux (Moulis) were inserted, "just for kicks", according to Lou Skinner. Several weeks prior to the tasting, Lou was impressed with the showing of Fourcas-Hosten with food at a dinner. Both the bourgeois crus showed on a par with the more modest of the St. Juliens. "While we can be critical of the lesser wines against the top classified growths in the tasting, the fact remains that almost all of these wines would be good or great with food," Dr. Skinner commented.

St. Estephe was the final flight in the first session. Of the five wines tasted, Cos d'Estornel or Montrose were favored by roughly equal numbers of tasters as the best of flight. It is noted that the Montrose was in magnum and retained a deeper color. There were mixed opinions on the other three, with your writer finding the Calon-Segur surprisingly good.

Luncheon

The group took advantage of the balmy sunshine for an invigorating walk to downtown Coconut Grove to the new "in" spot on the Miami dining scene - Brasserie Le Coze - for lunch. Lou and the tasters were warmly greeted by Maguey and Gilbert Le Coze. Gilbert, who spends most of his time looking after Le Bernadin in Manhattan, was in town especially for this event.

Before lunch, Dr. Skinner had waiters pour mystery double magnums of champagne for his guests. One could tell it was Mumm Cordon Rouge from the neckband, but napkins hid the label. A taste of the nutty, toasty amber liquid and the soft bubbles suggested an older vintage champagne. When unveiled, the wine was 1961 vintage, from the firm's cellars in Reims, much to everyone's delight to match the beaming smile of Lou Skinner!

In December, Fred Tasker, wine writer for the Miami Herald and a taster, wrote a feature article on Lou and featured a picture of him in his beloved Cafe Louis, the former garage of his home which has been recreated into an authentic French bistro, complete with many empty, large Cordon Rouge bottles for decorative effect. Lou has always considered Mumm Cordon Rouge as his signature and house champagne. Several weeks ago, he was a guest of Mumm at a dinner wherein they learned of his upcoming '61 tasting. Arrangements were

made to serve the vintage champagne as an extra added attraction, which was warmly received by all and was the luncheon beverage.

For starters, we dined on a crabmeat salad atop a bed of marinated seaweed which had been dressed with soy ginger vinaigrette with sesame oil. The entree was grilled red snapper- crispy on the outside, yet moist and flaky within- on sauteed zucchini, crowned with tomato coulis. The dish was presented with a light film of basil-infused extra virgin olive oil on the plate. Dessert was a souffle-like chocolate "cake", with a moist, almost molten middle that was even more delicious when combined with the whipped cream garnish. These are three signature dishes available on the Brasserie's menu and they are fine, worthwhile dining at any time.

Session Two

Five Graves reds kicked off the second tasting session at 3 p.m. The first wine, Carbonnieux, was surprisingly red in color, due to its recorking at the chateau. Recorked bottles exhibit a redder color, according to Broadbent. To my taste, the Carbonnieux showed much better than the Domaine de Chevalier. Also, I felt that the Haut Brion was the best wine of the day - dark, ruby color, fragrant, tobacco nose, very sweet flavour with full, yet supple tannins and a lingering, satisfying finish. As of 4:30 p.m., the nose continued to be elegant, accompanying an outstanding taste and finish. I must not overlook La Mission-Haut-Brion, which was, in Broadbent's opinion, "a copybook claret with good grip". Forced to make a tough decision, the Haut Brion's finesse won my vote.

The second flight of the session, nine Pomerols, presented a most significant challenge. Four of the nine vied for top honors in my list, including the rare Lafleur, from Commandeur Doug Erickson's cellar, Trotanoy in half-bottles, Latour-a-Pomerol and Petrus. They all exhibited fine color, rich, spicy aromas, great fruit and flesh, with extensive finishes. Five tasters felt Petrus was the best wine of the entire tasting. A lovely surprise was the minty, gingery nose and lovely taste and finish of L'Evangile.

The last flight of the day, St. Emilion, provided the most consistency. Of the six wines, two of them, Cheval-Blanc and Magdelaine were in my first rank, followed closely by Canon, Figeac and Pavie. Canon had the best color, Magdelaine the aroma, Cheval-Blanc had the top flavour and joined Magdelaine as the best finishes. Michael Broadbent commented that Cheval-Blanc was almost too sweet, rather rich, thick, port-like.

On Saturday evening, the tasting panel joined with members and spouses of the Miami Branch of the International Wine and Food Society for a gala reception and gourmet dinner prepared by the Grand Bay's renowned chef, Katsuo "Suki" Sugiura. The event, attended by 100 persons, featured Rhone wines throughout the meal, including Marc de Cote Rotie as a digestif.

Session Three

Indeed, Sunday was a day of reverence. The tasters gathered at 10:30 a.m. in eager anticipation of the offerings from Margaux and Pauillac. Nine Margaux offerings led the way, including a recorked Cantemerle. My notes reflect three pairs on three distinct tiers, which are discussed in reverse order. Lascombes was a very pleasant surprise, fully developed with a cedary bouquet. I enjoyed the Brane Cantenac in magnum, finding it surprisingly good; however, there were varying comments with the consensus to drink it up now.

The middle tier produced two opposite styles, the light, fragrant Cantemerle and the big, full Giscours - both lovely drinks of wine. Pierre Tari commented that in '61 they produced very little wine from the relatively young vineyard, which was replanted when the Tari purchased the property in the mid-Fifties. They exercised very strict selection and frost had hit the merlot hard; therefore, the wine has a pronounced cabernet flavour. John Avery mentioned that the '61 Cantemerle was the last vintage produced by M. Debos, who thought it to be one of his best. Broadbent offered that the wine had a rich, old-fashioned style (with stems).

The top tier was Palmer and Margaux, Margaux and Palmer, etc. etc. My notes indicate no fewer than four "lead changes" in the 2-1/2 hours of analyzing these wines. Should careful readers pick up a certain auto racing vernacular in this paragraph, be aware that the Grand Prix of Miami was held this same weekend. Both were super silky and elegant, the Palmer's nose showing hints of mint and citrus, while the Margaux is plummy and cedary. The Margaux was a bit weightier in the mouth and sweeter, but I personally preferred the balance and finish of the Palmer. Such decisions!

Eleven Pauillacs afforded a performance equal to the closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics. In the opinion of several of the jury, Pauillac was the show. Again, the flight was one of good consistency. My lesser tier selections were Pichon-Baron, Mouton-Baron-Phillippe in Magnum and Grand Puy Lacoste, which is seemingly out of place with the two previously robust wines. All are lovely food wines.

The middle tier has Lynch-Bages slightly beneath Pichon Comtesse Lalande. Lynch was big, fruity and chewy, with a cabernet finish that held up well and rounded out nicely with time - a classy drink right up to the end of the program. There was bottle variation with the Comtesse, but the good bottle was elegant and very similar to the jereboam notes. May de Lenquesaing commented that her brother had made this wine and the Palmer, which was one year after her father had passed away. It is an exceptional wine.

As one might expect, the discussion livened up considerably as Lafite, Mouton and Latour took up positions. In a show of hands, the best of show poll produced 12 votes for Mouton, 9 for Latour

and your correspondent led with his nose and produced the lone vote for Lafite. The color is mid-garnet, not deep. The fragrance cedary and elegantly fruity. The silken, balanced flavor gives way to a long and lingering finish. "A perfect beverage," stated Michael Broadbent; "very good wine, but not the spectacular Petrus, Mouton or Latour rank". Mouton was everything you want from it, and probably more at its peak now than Latour. Latour was dark, colored to the rim, a closed-in nose and a massive, tannic first taste, with good fruit and a lingering, tingling finish. Perhaps it will be ready in another 20 years - it was that youthful. Again, sniffing these beauties over a 2 hour period produced many changes and subtleties. My preference for the Lafite was driven by its approachability and current perfection. By 1:30 p.m., the Mouton was softening beautifully, while Latour's nose had finally come forth full bloom, but it was still a lean, elegant, balanced cabernet-dominated ,tannic wine.

There was a mystery wine, supplied courtesy of Commandeur and Co-Maitre Barney Rhodes. The wine's cork stated one vintage, while the label was from another! Several of the chateau owners present said it is better to rely on the vintage branded into the cork as the more reliable indicator, as labelling can take place several years after bottling. The wine was Lafite, with a '62 cork and a '61 label. There was no question that the wine was '62, as the aroma was different than the '61 and the taste and finish were more astringent.

At the close of the session, everyone was in agreement that this event and series of tastings were unique and historical in the annals of wine events. Dr. Skinner was roundly applauded and praised for his hospitality and graciousness in sharing these treasures with the group. When asked the inevitable question of would there be another tasting in five years hence, Lou remarked, "probably not, as I'm almost out of wine!" He had the contented smile of a happy man as he boarded his car, "Moby Dick", for the ride home to Coral Gables. In case you're curious, the car is a white Rolls Royce - 1961 - what else!

Scott A. Barley
Maitre

Compliments
of your Host

LOUIS C. SKINNER, JR., M.D.

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1961 BORDEAUX TASTING

FEBRUARY 21-23, 1992

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May de Lencquesaing	Ch. Pichon-Lalande 33250 Pauillac, France
Anthony Perrin	Ch. Carbonnieux 33850 Leognan, France
Bruno Prats	Ch. Cos d'Estournel 33250 Pauillac, France
Nils Sternby	Kolbacksgatan 10 S-216 20 Malmo, Sweden
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FOOD

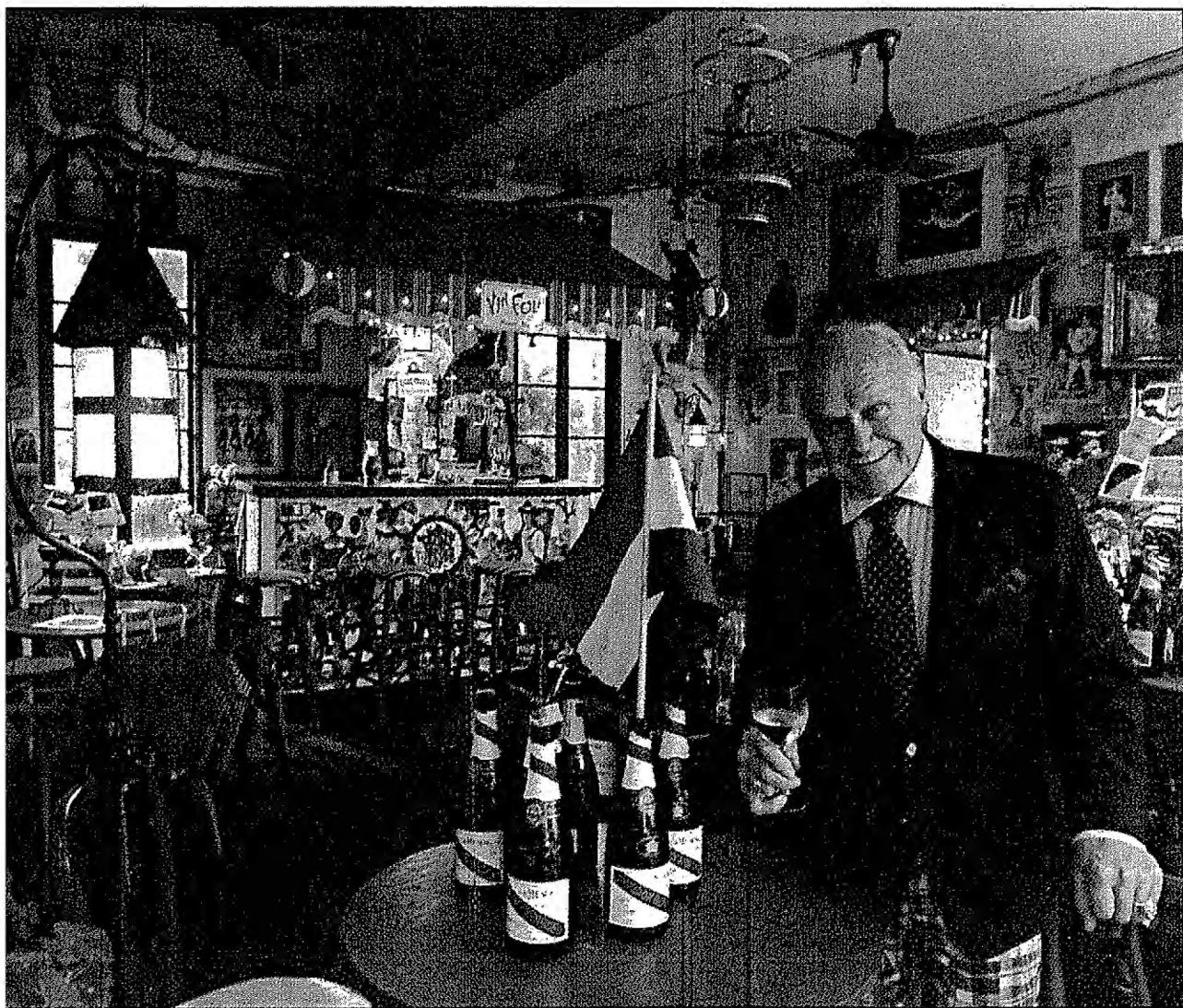
The Miami Herald



SECTION
THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 26, 1991



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CAFE LOUIS:
Lou Skinner
turned his
two-car
garage into a
credible
reproduction
of a Parisian
cafe.

IN FEBRUARY,
30 OF THE
WORLD'S TOP
WINE EXPERTS
WILL GATHER
AT A GABLES
COLLECTOR'S
HOME TO
TASTE '61
BORDEAUX

ALVIN / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

MIAMI'S French Connection

By FRED TASKER
Herald Staff Columnist

Walk into Lou Skinner's wine cellar and the first thing you notice is a large bottle of Mogen David MD 20 — good old "Mad Dog," the scourge of fine-wine drinkers everywhere.

It is Skinner's little joke.

"A patient gave it to me," says the retired Coral Gables dermatologist.

Turn left then and walk to the back wall, and your opinion of Skinner's collection picks up a bit when you see the 50 cases of 1961 Bordeaux. The '61 is arguably the best vintage of the century, and Skinner's is probably the most complete collection of it in America,

if not the world.

"It might be," he says.

Skinner can make his little jokes because he has paid his dues. At 76, he is considered Miami's dean of fine wine and dining. He was a wine drinker in Miami when drinking wine here wasn't cool. He's a good part of the reason for the sophistication in wine that Miami has achieved today.

And for three days in February, Skinner will make Miami the center of world interest in wine. For 30 of the world's top wine experts — from Michael Broadbent of Christie's auction house to Bruno Prats, director of Bordeaux's Chateau Cos D'Estournel — he

PLEASE SEE WINE, 9E

Is '61 vintage the century's best?

Collector invites world's top experts to tasting at Coral Gables home

WINE, FROM 1E

will host a tasting of two bottles each of those 50 different 1961 Bordeaux wines.

Twice before, in 1981 and 1986, Skinner has hosted 1961 Bordeaux tastings. Both times, many of the wines were not ready to drink. This time, they should be at their peak.

It should be the world's best — and maybe final — chance to know whether the top vintage of the 20th Century is 1945 or 1961. And whether the Chateau Latour or the Chateau Mouton-Rothschild, which more or less tied at the 1986 tasting, has benefited most from another five years of aging.

"This tasting will come up with some of the answers," he says.

Gaining notoriety

In a way, Skinner will be scooping himself. His picture is in all the American wine magazines these days because he has just published a new book, *Guide to Paris Dining* (Bouchard Publications, \$8.95), an idiosyncratic and no-punches-pulled look at 150 of that city's bistros, brasseries and restaurants.

As friends marvel at his stamina, Skinner has sampled each of those 150 restaurants at least twice in the past three years. His book groups them by the ratings they achieved in 1991's vaunted Michelin Guide, and, as often as not, gives his arguments for why those ratings are wrong.

The three-star Tour d'Argent, he writes, is a "sucker's paradise... filled with philistines." He calls Maxim's, which Michelin has downgraded from three stars to none, "still an elegant, glamorous restaurant, and the food is quite good."

Skinner, clearly, answers to no one's tastes but his own.

"He likes what he likes," says Chip Cassidy, wine expert for the huge Crown Wines and Liquors chain and a long-time admirer of Skinner. "He likes things that aren't popular. He's not influenced by magazines or experts."

And even when Parisian owners learn that Skinner is reviewing their restaurants, he refuses to accept free meals or gifts. He still feels awkward about the time a restaurateur talked him into taking away a free bottle of extra-virgin olive oil.

Wine discoverer

Skinner for decades has been



Herald File Photo

HIGH HONOR: Coral Gables' Lou Skinner, right, has for a long time been well-known in Bordeaux for his vast knowledge of wine. He's shown here in 1965 with wine shipper Jean Cruse in a colorful ceremony of new wine gathering where he was honored by the Commanderie du Bon Temps du Medoc et de Graves.

some of the best escargots and foie gras in Paris."

■ **Chez Pauline:** "Pleasant, satisfying repast that almost any food lover would enjoy."

Under brasseries:

■ **Marbeuf Baumann:** "Just another overcrowded brasserie without any special charm."

book is his advice on how to get good service in French restaurants, which often can seem intimidating to Americans.

Before you even see the wine list, he says, ask the waiter to bring a good but inexpensive bottle of Sancerre or Muscadet or an Alsatian Riesling.

55 different chateaux.

He bought the Chateau Petrus for \$86 a case, just over \$7 a bottle. It sells today for \$2,500 a bottle, if one can persuade anybody to sell a bottle.

Skinner's Coral Gables house is a tiled, Spanish-style structure with a porte cochere that shields his

And even when Parisian owners learn that Skinner is reviewing their restaurants, he refuses to accept free meals or gifts. He still feels awkward about the time a restaurateur talked him into taking away a free bottle of extra-virgin olive oil.

Wine discoverer

Skinner for decades has been Miami's French Connection, bringing through Customs thick notebooks crammed with details about his latest culinary and oenological discoveries.

He is the reason some of Miami's best wine shops stock some of their best wines, and why some of Miami's restaurants serve some of their best dishes. One of his favorite restaurants here was always Vinton's, and he delighted in bringing back recipes for its owner, Hans Eichmann.

"When I first went to Vinton's," Skinner kids, "Hans had garlic bread on the tables when diners arrived. I said, 'My God, Hans. This isn't a bistro.'"

After another trip to France, Skinner persuaded Cassidy to import a few cases of a \$6 dessert wine Cassidy had never heard of. In more than a decade since, the Beaumes de Venise, now \$12.99, has been one of Cassidy's favorites and best-sellers.

Food, wine teacher

Skinner founded the Miami chapters of the International Wine and Food Society and the Commanderie de Bordeaux, both devoted to, as he puts it, "teaching guys what good wine and food are all about."

His two rules for such groups: No speeches, and small servings.

"We might have eight courses and eight wines," he says, "but only two ounces each. That way nobody gets drunk."

Skinner travels to Paris at least twice a year, once leading a group that visited all 21 of France's three-star restaurants in 28 days. Half of the group dropped out halfway through, he chuckles.

His new book rates 150 eateries from simple bistros to middle-of-the-road brasseries to the finest, most expensive restaurants:

Under bistros:

■ **L'Ami Louis:** "Seedy ...

some of the best escargots and foie gras in Paris."

■ **Chez Pauline:** "Pleasant, satisfying repast that almost any food lover would enjoy."

Under brasseries:

■ **Marbeuf Baumann:** "Just another overcrowded brasserie without any special charm."

■ **Brasserie Lipp:** "Highly overrated, with poor food and a crowded, less-than-cheery atmosphere."

■ **Chez Jenny:** "Take the choucroute garni, a fairly low-calorie dish which is one of the finest I have encountered anywhere."

Under restaurants:

■ **Les Chants du Piano:** "After I luxuriated in this little corner of gastronomic paradise, I was so overjoyed that I gave Valerie, the little jewel of a hostess, a big kiss on the cheek and a little tweak on the fanny, along with a large gratuity, alien to my rather diffident nature."

■ **Guy Savoy:** "A civilized place to dine."

■ **Carre des Feuillants:** "A chocolate soufflé with nothing inside except a brown blob at the bottom, inattentive waiters ... insulting wine service."

But he reserves his strongest criticism for the famous, astronomically priced Tour d'Argent:

"This restaurant has always been a disappointment to me — overpriced, less than friendly service and food lacking in the quality it should have for a three-star Michelin establishment."

He calls it "a sucker's paradise, full of Americans and Japanese gawking at Notre Dame. Why Michelin's didn't, long ago, have the guts to cut this pompous palace down to size [about one star] is a mystery to me."

Skinner's favorite Parisian restaurant is Jamin, on rue de Longchamp.

"Its chef," he writes, "is a master of modified nouvelle French cooking, but still retains his use of the classical techniques ... on the light side, innovative and stylish ... the wine service is impeccable."

Key to good service

Part of the charm of Skinner's

book is his advice on how to get good service in French restaurants, which often can seem intimidating to Americans.

Before you even see the wine list, he says, ask the waiter to bring a good but inexpensive bottle of Sancerre or Muscadet or an Alsatian Riesling.

"That lets them know you know what you're doing," he says.

And when the waiter brings it, praise him for his choice.

"That makes him your friend." And you can safely leave it up to him to advise you what to drink when your meal arrives.

Then, Skinner usually eats two appetizers and a dessert but no entree.

First, he says, "the chef's real genius is in the appetizers, not the entrees. How much more can you do with a piece of steak?"

Second, it is part of his secret for dining twice daily in Paris without filling out the waistline and emptying out the wallet.

No fancy wines

And Skinner, despite his superb personal wine cellar at home, never orders fancy, expensive wine in restaurants.

"Why pay \$100 for a bottle of something you have at home that you bought for \$6?" he asks.

In any case, he is incensed at Parisian wine prices.

"On your trip to Paris," he writes, "expect outrageous prices for the wine almost everywhere, but always worse at the one-, two-, and three-star restaurants who charge anything the traffic will bear."

Following his own advice, Skinner returns to his Coral Gables home to drink fine wine. He calls his 3,500-bottle collection "a working cellar, not a monument to somebody's enormous ego."

Lucky trip

He came into his incredible collection of 1961 Bordeaux partly through luck — traveling through Bordeaux in the early 1960s and meeting on a bus the daughter of a wine broker who had the wines for sale. He bought one case each from

55 different chateaux.

He bought the Chateau Petrus for \$86 a case, just over \$7 a bottle. It sells today for \$2,500 a bottle, if one can persuade anybody to sell a bottle.

Skinner's Coral Gables house is a tiled, Spanish-style structure with a porte cochere that shields his trusty 1961 Rolls Royce.

It is only coincidence, he insists, that his Rolls is the same vintage as his finest group of wines.

Inside Skinner's house the tall, open-beamed living room is alive with gilt mirrors, a Gothic bust of Madonna and his extensive collection of Italian art, including some original 1700s oils, and a collection of Oriental brass.

His kitchen is cluttered with old wine-drinking paraphernalia, cork-pullers and posters — clearly the abode of a man whose collecting sensibilities are untamed by wifely moderation. Skinner is a life-long bachelor.

Paris in Coral Gables

Skinner has removed the doors of the two-car garage behind the house and turned it into Cafe Louis, a credible reproduction of a Parisian cafe, with walls lined by Folies Bergere posters (not all of them nudes), a brick patio covered with wrought-iron cafe tables and chairs and 100 or more empty bottles from Mumm's Cordon Rouge Champagne — "my signature Champagne," he says.

He has no trouble explaining why, come February, he will give away free 100 bottles of wine that would retail for \$20,000 or more.

"It's just for fun. I'm not out to make any money."

"I've got me a hobby."

SKINNER'S VIEWS

Skinner's book, *Guide to Paris Dining*, published by Buchan Publications, is available at Crown Wine and Liquor shops and by mail from The Wine Spectator Collection at (800) 622-2062. It is \$8.95 plus \$1.50 postage.



LOU SKINNER (left) with MICHAEL BROADBENT, MW and our Society's President, at Vinton's in Coral Gables, prior to a Miami Branch dinner.



(Seated L to R) LOU SKINNER, JIM REDFORD and SCOTT BAILEY at the '61 Tasting in 1992. [Background: Geoff Koons and Chip Cassidy, Sommeliers]