



MAY 2023

The Bluffs Food & Wine *gazette*

Event Report:

Using the Sommelier Grid to Blind Taste.

Upcoming Events.

What's New

Every wine taster dreams of being able to blind taste and identify a mighty number of wines. How many times do you get a tutorial on how a Sommelier analyzes a wine? Not many, I suspect. Well, you had your chance at V. Mertz on 3/23/2023. Third degree candidate Matt Brown showed us how the professionals determine what wine is in that glass. If that didn't grab you, an additional hook was the Morgan Ranch Wagyu Cheeseburger, only offered during holiday lunches at the restaurant. Our president, Dave Thrasher, boldly stated that he had the best cheeseburger of his life during the December lunches, right before Christmas. So, just for our group, a rare exception was made to put this as the pièce de résistance for our main course.

The entire menu consisted of Chef Jonathan Miller's take on high end (read gourmet) comfort food. A Wedge Salad was not a slice of iceberg lettuce but Belgian endive, bleu cheese, pork lardon, tomato jam and chive. There was a Drive Through Breakfast, which turned out to be potato rosti instead of hash browns, topped by rillettes instead of bacon, and a quail egg drizzled with house made aioli. I've never seen a quail egg served at McDonalds, ever. Frito Pie with Shallot Ring was next. Cumin Braised Lamb with mole and cheddar with breaded shallot "onion" ring followed. Our Cheeseburger was made of the afore mentioned Morgan Ranch Wagyu beef from Nebraska, topped with gruyère cheese and caramelized onions with a side of thinly sliced sweet potato fries. Dessert was a Root Beer Float with Churro Ice Cream. Sarsaparilla caramel and V Mertz root beer was poured on yeast ice cream. Better than vanilla ice cream! It was a playful culinary tour de force with serious wine education beforehand.



On top of all that was great wines from our, and V Mertz's cellar, precisely paired with Matthew Brown precision. It was a delightful evening of education and unusual tastes.

Money talks...but all mine ever says is good-bye.

- **The Cynical Philosopher.**

Event Report: Using the Sommelier Grid to Blind Taste.

Written by Tom Murnan, Photos by Tom Murnan.

You came to the right event if you wanted to find out the method professional sommeliers use to identify a wine in a blind wine tasting. Third level Sommelier Matthew Brown was our guide. We were provided with The Court of Master Sommeliers Americas Deductive Tasting Method Format handout as well as their Advanced Sommelier-Level Red and White Wine Grape Varieties & Regions handout which I will send as an attachment to the Gazette email. The professional candidates have to check every box in the format page when doing an assessment.

We sat down for our blind tasting. All our four blind-served wines were from classic areas, all red, all from the Branch cellar. Matt told us to look for characteristics that jump out. Some of Matt's rules: 1. Don't be afraid of being wrong. The more you analyze in an organized way, the better you get. You have good tasting days, but you will also have bad days where you can't identify anything. You may be lucky or unlucky. Just keep trying. 2. Be honest with yourself. 3. The Method Format chart has three main sections.

Sight On red wines, can you see through it? If so, it gives you clues to the grape varietal. Is this a **thin skinned grape**, like Pinot Noir, Gamay, Grenache, Sangiovese, or Nebbiolo? You can't see through the glass? Then you have a **thick skinned grape** like Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Syrah, Merlot or Zinfandel. Look for clarity, color, secondary colors and extract, for example.

Nose Is the smell clean or faulty (man-made chemicals)? Intense, delicate, or powerful? Fruity, like **White Fruits** of citrus, apple, pear, stone, tropical, melon? Or **Dark Fruits** that are red, black or blue? **Non-Fruits** aromas like floral, vegetal, herbal, spicy, animal, barn, petrol? **Earthy**, like forest floor, mushroom, compost, potting soil? **Mineral**, such as wet stone, limestone, chalk, slate or flint?

Palate How much tannin, acid or alcohol? Is the body light, medium or full? Is the **Texture** creamy, round, or lean? Is the wine **Balanced** or off balance? Is the **Finish** bitter? It might be Italian or French. Is the finish fruity and alcoholic? It might be Napa Valley. Is it New World or Old World? Old World wines are more austere.

All was revealed at the end. No one got all 4 wines correct. Joe Goldstein was the only one who got number 4 correct. Yea Joe! 1. Viña Ardanze Reserva Rioja 2010. 2. Raymond Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2014. 3. Clos Saint Jean Vieille Vignes Châteauneuf-du-Pape. 4. Serra Barbaresco 2010.

Matt analyzed number 4, the Barbaresco. **SIGHT** Red ruby core, transparent in the middle, some pink, no gas, viscosity medium. **NOSE** clean, developing, fruits red and black, stewed black plum and dried cranberry. Savory tone, dill and toasted coconut- vanilla (new American oak), red clay. **PALATE** dry, full bodied, medium acid & tannin balanced towards sweeter, alcoholic. Red and black fruit, old world wine, say France or Italy. 8 to 10 years old. Tempranillo grape, a Rioja Reserva.

A hearty thank you, Matthew, for being our tutor and wine guide.





UPCOMING COUNCIL BLUFFS BRANCH EVENTS

MAY
24

OMAHA FIELD CLUB

How Well Do You Know Your White Wines?

Producers: Amanda Harrington & John Matthews

JUNE
14

AU COURANT

Burgundy vs. Pinot Noir

Joint event with the Omaha Branch

Producer: Tom Murnan

JULY
TBD

TBD

TBD

Producer: Jill & Joe Goldstein

HOSTING AN EVENT?

Let us know when, where and a little bit about what's going on!

We would love to include YOUR event on the calendar!

Email details to: iwfs.councilbluffs@yahoo.com