

The Bluffs Food & Wine January 2013 gazette

President's Holiday Dinner at Omaha Press Club

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Sherry Mini-Series Begins

Tom and Mary Murnan 2012

Wine Vacation Vol. 5



A publication of the Council Bluffs Branch of the International Wine and Food Society

President's Comments

2011 Meiomi Pinot Noir by Belle Glos



It is difficult to find a Pinot Noir at a reasonable price that is worth drinking. The Meiomi Pinot Noir fills the bill. It is a blend of pinot noir from Monterey County 51%, Santa Barbara County 23% and Sonoma County 26%. This ready to drink now wine can be purchased at Costco for only \$17.95. We have drunk this wine with wine connoisseurs and novices and everyone loves it. Belle Glos makes wonderful wines. This is their second label and a real sleeper for the money.

I made pheasant in the crock pot with 2 cans cream of celery soup 1 can of milk, onions and fresh mushrooms, I used shitake, cooked on low for 10 hours. A little trick so you do not have so much clean up is to use a cooking bag. This worked great. If you are not fond of pheasant any poultry will do.

Best of wine, food & friends,

Patti Hipple
President

Editor's Corner

As we start a new year, I, as a relatively new member, have to comment that this Branch seems to be going from strength to strength in the quality and diversity of our events. The President's Holiday Dinner at the Omaha Press Club was a delight. A complete description follows if you were unable to attend, or even if you did attend and wish to recall some of the details. A longer termed member told me that this was the first year that we had an event for every month. That is because we have a solid core of members who love food and wine, and are willing to explore and try different things. Think of what we did last year. One of Omaha's newer restaurants, the **Zin Room** started us off last year. We had a Valentine dinner at one of Omaha's premier venues (and most romantic, I might add): **V. Mertz**, that was outstanding. The 12-21-12 Omaha World Herald just anointed it as their best of the Top Ten restaurants of 2012. We had a Titanic themed event and one of the best meals of the year at the **Council Bluffs Country Club**. We went to Vietnam in Omaha and had a most unusual and delicious dinner at **Saigon Surface**. Our private venues were outstanding and included **Dean Dougherty's** cabin at Big Sandy, **Mary and Jerry Sorensen's** all lamb dinner in Harlan, IA, and to little Spain in Council Bluffs when we attended the all Tapas dinner planned by the Kossows and executed by **Bob and Elaine Fenner**. **Johnny's**

Cafe gave us traditional Omaha beef and young south of the equator wines. And our clubs and country clubs have quality chefs and food. If you are one of the readers who have not decided on joining our IWFS branch, please read on and be converted. We are having a great time and wish you would join. If you are a member, make a New Year's Resolution to attend more branch activities. Thanks to everyone who has volunteered to put on an event. They take a lot of time and planning, so these individuals deserve our thanks and gratitude.

In addition to this issue's **Event Report** at the **Omaha Press Club**, we are starting a **new mini-series** to prepare you for the March event, which will be held at the Council Bluffs Country Club. Part of the reason you joined the Branch was to get some wine **education**. Something we have not done much before is to provide an educational tasting before the meal. Our theme will be **Sherry**, something about which most people know very little. Stephen Hipple has purchased some dynamite Sherries with very high Parker ratings that beg to be shared, but it helps immensely if you know what to expect when you are drinking them. Mark your calendar, plan on attending, and Read on! Finally, I feel like Charles Dickens in my serialized account of Mary and my Portuguese wine trip up the Douro River (recall that many Dickens' novels began life as serialized stories in a London newspaper). So here comes Part 5 of the Murnan Wine Trip. Please send me your wine adventures with photos so you can brag and we can all enjoy!

Tom Murnan



Photo courtesy of hugel.com

Event Report

December 1, 2012

President's Holiday Dinner

by Tom Murnan



Saturday December first found our group dining in the clouds...or at least in the fog, as we ascended the 22 floors to the Omaha Press Club and its commanding view of the city. President Patti Hipple, with the help of co-host and OPC member Todd Lemke, chose this outstanding venue for our holiday party. Although we were at the same location last year, this time we had a different twist: violinist

Richard L. Ness was there to serenade us and dazzle us with his violin techniques. We also had the advantage of NOT watching the Nebraska football game and it's resounding rout (although the staff did keep us posted). During the day, Richard is a mild mannered financial services rep for MetLife, but by night, his real passion breaks through: playing the violin. He has been playing since age eight. With various electronic enhancements, this one man show sounded like a small orchestra. I personally was impressed, and thank Todd Lemke for coming up with the idea of inviting Richard and his wife Gail.



We began with an outstanding quaffing wine. The non vintage **Gruet Blanc de Noirs** is really a surprisingly good, toasty, minerally and dry sparkling wine that comes from, of



all places, New Mexico. Now, NM is not a place typically associated with wine, let alone a sparkling wine, let alone good wine, but at this price point (about \$ 15.00) the price/quality ratio makes it a tremendous bargain.

In 2011 the Wine Spectator made it #43 in their Top 100. The Gruet was a great match for our two hors d'oeuvres, especially the **Mini Crab Cake with Cajun Remoulade**. My notes say that the mini cake was densely packed in texture with good crab flavor. The other appetizer was a **Seared Beef Tenderloin Onion Marmalade on Maytag Blue Cheese Rosemary Crostini**. Nicely rare and melt in your mouth tender, this loin was moistened by the red onion marmalade and topped by the blue cheese. The brown, red and white colors



on the baguette slice made for an attractive starter.



We had small place name cards which had a color code so the staff would know what entree we had chosen, but actually, this was also an elegant way to claim your spot at one of the tables. Much better than draping a napkin on the chair, or tipping the chair. Maybe we

should use this system more often. Twenty members and four guests were present.



Our co-hosts spoke to us after we sat down. **Richard Ness** and his wife were introduced and Richard spoke a few words. Then our newest member, **Lorrie Burdeny**, was presented with her official acknowledgment. Finally, Treasurer **Diane Forristall** was awarded with a Certificate of Appreciation for her long time work as Treasurer and Membership Chairperson for the Bluffs Branch. Thank you, Diane, for all your years of hard work. **Stephen Hipple** then pointed out that we were having pairs of wines with each course and that we should be thinking about which one we liked best and why.

Our first sit down course was the restaurant's signature dish, their **Famous Thunderbird Salad**. Set attractively in a Parmesan cup, made by baking grated parmesan cheese and



cooling it in a bowl shape, a Thunderbird consists of iceberg and romaine lettuce, chives, real chopped bacon, shredded mozzarella, blue cheese crumble, diced tomato and home style croutons all tossed in patented Thunderbird Salad Dressing. Off to the side was one **roasted garlic sea scallop**. Our two wines compared two French areas: Pouilly

Fumé and a Vin de Pays from Oc. The **2010 Château Pouilly Fumé Les Chailloux Silex** is a Sauvignon Blanc wine from the Loire (not to be confused with a Pouilly-Fuissé from Mâcon, near Burgundy, which uses Chardonnay grapes). This wine was dry, minerally and well balanced.

The comparison wine hails from the **Languedoc** (which translates literally to "the language of Occitan", a descendant of Latin) in southern France: the **2011 Lafage Novellum Chardonnay**.



It is unusual to see the grape variety listed on a French label, but they will do this for lesser known appellations to help the American consumer. This wine I found to have a

“Wine is the most civilized thing in the world.”

—Ernest Hemingway

bit of oak and sharp acidity, and a taste of pears. Steve asked the group which wine they preferred. Only nine gave the nod to the Chardonnay, the rest overwhelmingly voted for the Pouilly-Fumé.

Classic Russian Borscht was next. Deep, dark reddish brown in color, this beet soup was deep and rich. The small soup bowl may obscure how much work went into this course. A classic Borscht uses quite a bit of beef and a marrow bone for the broth. Beets are roasted (or boiled) then shredded, root veges



like onion, carrots, celeriac, parsnips or turnips are grated and sautéed, shredded cabbage is added to the beets and allowed to simmer in the broth. It takes time to make a good Borscht, and I thought we had a very nice soup. Dark in the bowl but red in the spoon, it had deep earthy flavors. For the life of me,

it seemed like it had some lamb in it, but I forgot to confirm that with the service staff. Two Pinots were selected for this course. Pinot is usually a good match for earthy flavors. The **2010 Melville Verna's Pinot Noir** hails from Santa Barbara,



a wonderful California Pinot Noir area. It had bright cherry flavors that brought out the flavors of the Borscht. The other wine was a **2008 Arbor Brook Pinot Noir** from Oregon, another good Pinot area. This wine was more earthy, with good balance and a hint of mushrooms on the palate. It brought out the earthy flavors of the soup. When Steve asked for a show of hands, most voted for the Arbor Brook.

With a colorful **Passion Fruit Sorbet** (yellow ball of sorbet atop red slices of strawberry) to pause and clean our palates, we headed for the entrée. Two were served and we all had to choose



between **Pan Seared Duck** presented with blackberry gastrique and Vidalia onion confit, or **Roasted Beef Tenderloin with Classic Béarnaise Sauce**. I chose the duck, which was smartly presented. A half, nicely rare duck breast was sliced into medallions, topped with the onion confit, sauced with blackberry gastrique, with a small hill of garlic mashed potatoes nicely piped to the side, and sitting surtout was a bundle of three asparagus spears tied by a carrot ribbon. It was quite delightful. The tenderloin was similarly presented, but with Béarnaise Sauce instead of gastrique.



Mary was very pleased with her beef. Our last pair of wines of the evening were two Bordeaux from an excellent year: 2000. The **Château La Louvière** is an unclassified wine from Léognan (near Graves), a undervalued wine that still gives great flavor. A blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot, it had an oaky nose, and oak on the palate was my first impression as well. Good structure, rich, not too tannic, it went well with either meat. This was contrasted to the **Château**



Grand-Pontet, a Grand Cru Classé from St. Émilion. Formerly owned by Barton & Guestier, it is a blend of 75% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. I found it to be more tannic than the Louvière

but a bit more complex. With the duck, oaky flavors emerged. Slightly more members voted for the Pontet than the Louvière reflecting its more lofty appellation station.

We ended our repast with **Gâteau Riche Chocolate Mousse Framboise with Signature Press Club Truffle**. This proved to be a chocolate lovers delight, with the mousse piped onto a



boat of deep fried toffee latticework, a dark chocolate triangle impaled in the mousse, a strawberry to provide color and flavor, a round truffle, and a bit of white chocolate drizzled over the mousse. *Delicieux!* The **Taylor 10 Year Tawny Port** was a great wine pairing. Aged for ten years in the wood, it had smooth, slightly oxidized light woody flavors of mature fruit.



I congratulate Patti and Todd for a wonderful menu, a gourmet meal, and smart but affordable selections on truly great wines. Bravo. What a way to end our IWFS year. *The Bluffs Food & Wine*



More photos of this event on the following page »



More photos of this event on the following page »



A warm thanks to Patti Hipple and Todd Lemke for hosting this great end of the year event!

Jerez Xeres Sherry

by Tom Murnan

It is fascinating to me to watch how wines can fall in and out of fashion. One of the great wines in the world that seems to have fallen out of fashion is Sherry, at least in the United States. While still very popular in the United Kingdom, and in its birthplace, Spain, Sherry doesn't have much traction here at home. Perhaps this is because it is somewhat of a cipher. I dare say very few of our IWFS Omaha members know much about Sherry, or could identify the different styles. Tom Schierbrock and Tom Murnan are about to change this at the March event. One of the reasons you joined this club was to learn something about wine. So, let's de-mystify Sherry with a few articles before the event.

Sherry is the Anglicized name for wines coming from Jerez de la Frontera, a small town in the south of Spain about 100 miles north of Gibraltar, and 15 miles west of Cadiz and the Atlantic Ocean. It is a fortified wine, just as Madeira and Port are fortified wines. They all add grape brandy to the wine to fortify it. Sherry has a range of alcohol levels of between 16 to 20 percent depending on the style. Like Madeira, it has styles that range from dry to sweet. Sherry is also like Champagne in that it comes from an area that has chalk in the soil, and is usually drunk as an aperitif. It is made only from white grapes, and it has the current additional virtue that it is relatively inexpensive, due no doubt to the fact that it is somewhat out of fashion.

Most Sherry comes from the Palomino grape, which accounts for 90% of the commercial bottling. Other varieties include the Pedro Ximénez, Mantúo, Moscatel, and Albillo. The big thing to remember with Sherry is that it comes in two different styles that are based on a mystery. The wines are either influenced by **flor**, a microscopic yeasty flower that forms a kind of scum over the wine and changes its flavor, or the wine does not develop flor. It is unknown why one barrel will develop flor while the one right next to it will not. This mysterious process happens naturally, without human

intervention. But it is a crucial event that changes the life path of the wine.

If the cask develops flor, it becomes a **Fino**. If it does not develop flor, it becomes an **Oloroso**. It is at this point, about in February after the harvest, that the wines take different developmental paths. If it is a Fino, the desired alcohol level is 16%. If it is destined to be an Oloroso, the winemaker makes sure that the alcohol level is between 17 and 18 percent. This higher alcohol level kills off any slight amount of flor that may be in the cask.

Fino is the lightest style of Sherry. It has a very pale golden color and a nose reminiscent of apples and almonds. It is fermented to dryness, so it is not a dessert wine. As it ages, Fino is covered by its cap of white flor. To taste the wine, the winemaker must penetrate this layer of flor with a *venencia*, or sherry dipper with a narrow cup at the end of a flexible rod made of whalebone in the old days. The cap of flor increases in the spring and autumn. Early on, the flowering is spotty and thin, but eventually becomes like the skin on old cream. It can last for years, but eventually it dies and falls to the bottom of the barrel. Fino can stay and improve in the barrel for quite a number of years, but once bottled, it should be drunk within two years. There are sub categories of Finos (Manzanilla, Palma and Amontillado), but I will address this in another article.

Oloroso is the second path the wine can take. As stated above, it receives a higher alcohol dosage from brandy than Fino. It is a more full-bodied kind of wine than Fino. The color tends to be golden, indicating its aging in the wood.



Sherry barrel with transparent front so visitors can see the natural development of *flor*.

Photo courtesy of El Pantera: wikipedia.org

Long cask aging can also increase the alcohol strength to 24 or 25 percent. It has a nutty bouquet and a richness on the palate. Originally dry (recall that Sherries are fermented to dryness, with no residual sugar left over), Olorosos can be sweetened with grapes from sweet wines, such as Pedro Ximénez (PX) or Moscatel varieties. Cream Sherry is many times made from inferior Oloroso. Other classifications are Amorooso (sweet Sherries which includes East India and PX) and Palo Cortado. These will be discussed in a different article.

Sherries are always blended from different years and aged using the solera system. A solera is a progressive system where young wines in barrels at the top of a pyramid of barrels are used to top off older, evaporating casks below them. The older wines tame, or educate, the younger wines, and the wine assumes a uniform taste by the time it gets to the solera, or final cask. See the September, 2012 Food & Wine Gazette for a fuller explanation.

Sherry bodegas or aging rooms, are designed to encourage the circulation of air. Where oxygen is the enemy of most wine, in the case of Sherry, well circulated barrel aging rooms actually improve the wine. Sherry, like Madeira or Cognac, does not improve once taken from the wood cask. Oloroso can remain for years in the bottle, but Fino should be drunk soon, no more than two years after bottling is optimal. Finos are typically enjoyed with Tapas and sea food. The sweeter varieties of Oloroso are drunk at the end of a meal. The Bluffs Food & Wine January 2013 gazette

The Branch's two Toms, Schierbrock and Murnan, are planning a Spanish dinner with an educational tasting on Sherry before the meal. Here is your chance to learn about an area of wine that most people know very little. The event will take place at the Council Bluffs Country Club—the same venue that had such a stupendous Titanic dinner last year, with Chef Jeremy Butby designing the menu. Mark your calendars in ink now and plan on attending this Friday March 8th 2013 event.



Three levels of Sherry solera

Photo courtesy of El Pantera: wikipedia.org

Please Note: Change of Event Date

Our Saturday February 16th event has been changed to **Sunday February 17th, 2013**. Change your calendars! The December Bluffs Gazette had it listed as the 16th. Billed as a **Belated Valentine's Day All Zinfandel Dinner**, take your Honey to this event and experience all Zin at the Zin Room in downtown Omaha. Remember, Sunday February 17th.

Tom and Mary Murnan 2012 Wine Vacation

Vol. 5: DOC Restaurante Rui Paula

by Tom Murnan



It is still Monday, the 4th of June, it is lunch time, and we are about to go to one of the most famous Douro restaurants in Portugal. Chef Rui Paula built DOC in a stunningly beautiful spot right on the Douro River near Folgosa Armamar, on the road between Regula and Pinhão. The restaurant itself is built on stilts over the river in a stunningly modern style by Architect Michael Scott. One can linger above the water on the deck, and eat al fresco, but we went inside. Unfortunately, the celebrity chef was not in the kitchen today, but his wife was at the helm. We were privileged to meet Sandra Tavares da Silva, our winemaker hostess. Sandra is a multi-talented woman who, along with husband Jorge Serôdio Borges, made one of the top reds in the



Sandra also oversees the cellar at Quinta do Vale Doña Maria, and Jorge Quinta do Passadouro, both of which specialize in Port. As a winemaker, Sandra was able to give us a unique perspective on the wines that she brought. The couple also makes olive oil, which we also sampled.

Douro: the Wine & Soul Douro Pintas 2009. The July 31, 2012 Wine Spectator mentioned the oenologist couple's work in their story on the Douro Evolution. Besides Wine & Soul,

We mingled on the riverside deck with a refreshing aperitif, tonic water and white Port garnished with a bit of lemon, a grape and a mint leaf on a skewer. As we entered the restaurant, we were greeted by Rui Paula's wife, Christina Canelas, and led to table.

Everything was very modern, immaculately clean and polished. We started with mackerel marinated in citrus



sauce with parmesan and polenta. It was a small portion, but just the right size for a starter. The mackerel was very light, not at all heavy and oily as it can sometimes be. The wine was a 2010 Passadouro Vinho Branco. Vinho branco means white wine. We also sampled olive oil from Quinta do Passadouro and Pintas. We moved on to a 2011 Guru, Wine and Soul's white wine made from a field blend of different white grapes and fermented in new French oak for five months and bottled just two weeks before. You could taste the oak in this minerally wine. This was paired with codfish in cream. We moved on to Sea Bass with Gnocchi and Cream of Crayfish, Broccoli puree and Fennel. At this point, we moved from white to red wines with the 2009 Pintas Character, a field blend of 60 year old vines that you can enjoy earlier than the flagship Pintas. Sandra made this wine with her husband, bottling it two weeks before our lunch. It was surprisingly ready to drink.



After an intermezzo of **Lemon Ice Cream** with a bit of Vodka, cinnamon stick and mint leaf, we were served the entrée: **Crisp Suckling Pig with Potato Galette and Turned Vegetables** (leek, zucchini and carrots). Sandra continued



to educate us about Douro wines. We had two big red (vinhos tinta) wines with the pig. Both the **2009 Pintas Douro Vinhos Tinta** and the **2009 Passadouro Douro Tinta Reserva** are fermented in lagars (open, shallow swimming pool-like concrete vessels). Both have a filed blend of different grape varieties. The old timers

mixed the grape varieties to protect against diseases. If one variety fell victim to disease, another variety might not. It was safer than losing the whole crop. Now days, they plant all the same variety in a field.

The Passadouro used 70 year old vines, while the Pintas has 80 year old. The Pintas is also **foot trodden** in the lagar. It was not as approachable as the Passadouro, more tannic and in need of another five years aging. The Wine Spectator gave it a 94. It costs \$100.00 in the US. We also learned that Pintas means “spot”



in Portuguese, and that Pintas is named after their pointer, a very energetic dog. Their biggest challenge is to achieve balance and elegance. Balance is of the first importance, and you have to be gentle in your winemaking. If you aren't careful, these reds will become rustic.

The essence of Mango and Strawberries were our **Pre-Dessert**. This was really amazing, just a mouth full on a spoon. It consisted of a small

sphere made of very thin skinned chocolate with a liquid center, that exploded with fruit flavor on the palate. Extraordinary! A **Wine and Soul Porto 10 year old**



Tawny accompanied this. Dessert was baked apples, goat cheese and jam. With this we had their **Pintas Porto 2009**, full bodied but very young and tannic Vintage Port. Actually,

the Tawny went better with both desserts, with its flavors of nuts and wood.



Wow, that was a power lunch if there ever was one! This was true gourmet.

Absolutely stuffed, and a little tipsy, we waddled out the riverside door of the restaurant to our next adventure up river, wondering if we would have an appetite by dinner time. *The Bluffs Food & Wine gazette*

Next time: Quinta do Crasto.





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Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events! Mark Your Calendars!

January 19 • David Tritsch and Barry Kricsfeld host this event at Harrah's 360 Steakhouse at the top floor of the Casino

February 17 • The Zin Room. Patti and Stephen Hipple have an all Zinfandel dinner planned. Take your sweetheart to the Zin Room for your Belated Valentine's day night out.

February 25 - March 4, 2013 • Steve Hipple asks that we join him for an 8 day wine and food extravaganza, featuring a 3 night/3 day Miami culinary adventure followed by a quiet and relaxing Caribbean Cruise. You may choose one or both. If you didn't get an email, already, contact Steve.

March 8 • The Two Toms, Schierbrock and Murnan, host a Sherry Tasting and Spanish dinner at Council Bluffs Country Club.

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: stephenhipple@hotmail.com

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KEEPING In Touch!

Please notify Club Membership Chairman Diane Forristall at Diane@Forristall.us to let her know if you are interested in hosting an IWFS event.

PURPOSE: To meet communication and service needs, to broaden participation and understand and to be an information exchange for the membership of The International Wine & Food Society in the Americas.

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