

February 2016

The Bluffs
Food & Wine
gazette

SPENCER'S

FOR STEAKS AND CHOPS

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





Presidents Comments

We are finally paying for all of that mild weather we had last winter with some bitter cold and snow, but we are keeping warm with planning and attending some great events. I had never been to Spencer's for Steaks and Chops before, but just the facility itself was wonderful. Our private party room was paneled in dark wood and was very elegant. But most importantly, the food was great. This was **Michelle and Hasan Hyder's** first event as a producer, where they joined the **Tritschs** for a cozy and delicious dinner on a cold Omaha winter evening. Read all about it within.

If you have never volunteered to help produce an event, you should seriously consider doing so. Your enjoyment of all events increases exponentially once you get more involved and get into the fun of planning and executing an event. You must team up with a Board Member, but that is a good thing as they can guide you through the process.

The Board has proposed a **year of mercy** for your President and Editor by volunteering to write an article apiece for 2016. The articles can be on any subject that deals with food and wine, with the strong likelihood that there could be travel injected into the narrative as well. The first of this series was written by **Gary Forristall**, who details the Forristalls' and Kossows' trip to Provence, France. I don't know about you, but I am going to look forward to reading what the Board Members can conjure up! Read the beginning article today.

John Fischer has issued a challenge! Can you answer the wine questions he poses? He made up a short quiz for you to test your knowledge wine characteristics as well as wine pairings. Take the challenge and test yourself. Quizzes are just a learning device, and no one except yourself will know how you did.

Somehow, I developed a blind spot on the last Gazette and inexplicably forgot to include **Suzanne Kossow** in my list of Board Members. She did inform me of the error of my ways, and I want to apologize in print. Suzanne is a faithful attendee at our meetings, and for four years did what no one else wanted to do: take detailed minutes of the meeting. Currently she is the third backup for note taking as we now have Jill and Joe Goldstein to help at this task. My apologies again, Suzanne. You are a valuable member of the team.

Cheers!

Tom Murnan

**"When life throws you lemons,
have a glass of wine"**

—Wine Ponder





Event Report: Spencer's For Steaks and Chops

by Tom Murnan

It has been about four years since the Branch had an event at Spencer's, and I regretted to be unable to attend at that time. I was able to make it this year, and I was glad that I did. Not knowing what to expect, I discovered a richly appointed restaurant with elegant dark paneled wood, Telluride stone veneer and cherry hardwood floor. With parking a problem in the Old Market area, I was pleased to have a parking structure adjoining the Hilton Garden Inn which houses Spencer's. **Hasan & Michelle Hyder** put on their first event with the help of Board Members **Debbie and David Tritsch**. Twenty one people attended, all members, the perfect amount for our private room.

Diners chose between one of four possible entrees, with an assigned wine for each choice. Beef choices included a **6 ounce Beef Tenderloin filet with two seared Sea Scallops and Sauce au Poivre**. The 2009 Waterstone Blend was the assigned red. The second beef choice was a **14 oz. Prime New York Strip Steak with Black Truffle Butter** and the assigned wine was a 2008 Hall Cabernet Sauvignon, also from the Branch Cellar. Choice number three was a **7 oz. Scottish Salmon Filet with Lemon/Thyme Cream**. Spencer's supplied the 2014 Duckhorn Sauvignon Blanc. The final choice was **Seared Sea Scallops, again with Lemon/Thyme Cream**. The preselected 2014 Hendry Unoaked Chardonnay was again supplied by Spencer's.

All entrees had Kumquat Risotto and a m el e of vegetables topped with Hollandaise Sauce.

Quaffing began with remnant wines from the Branch cellar: 2013 Kung Fu Girl Riesling from Washington state, and reds 2009 Naoussa from Boutari and 2009 C armine by Monastrelle, a Spanish wine from Jumilla. The appetizer plate consisted of a heavy, salty **herbed cracker and cheese plate** consisting of three varieties of cheese.

General Manager **Jim Fabron**, an affable and loquacious Irishman was introduced by David Tritsch. Jim informed us that Spencer's just celebrated its 8th anniversary a few days ago. He got his start in wine at a celebrated restaurant named La Reserve, where a very tightly wound chef manager, Serge Roundelay, introduced him to the wonderful journey into wine, mostly French, California and some German. His demanding job currently has him tasting all manner of wine samples from wholesalers: a tough job, but someone has to do it! Spencer's has 335 wine selections on hand and has **won four Wine Spectator Award of Excellence** commendations. It was voted best overall restaurant in Nebraska in 2014. Executive Chef Glen Wheeler has overall control, but tonight **Chef de Cuisine Dan Watts** was cooking our supper.



Once at table, a very flavorful **New England Clam Chowder** was delivered. Rich and creamy, with potato pieces, clam bits, carrots for color, and perfectly salted and seasoned, it was a impressive start. The wine, a **2012 Beringer Private Reserve Chardonnay** was the perfect foil for the soup, buttery itself with nice oak aged notes. David got up to tell us that another vintage of the Beringer PR Chardonnay was included on the sommelier test in the movie **Somm**. None of the three applicants the movie was followed identified this wine, which was served blind, correct. So you could say they were blindsided. One applicant got it so wrong that he didn't think it came from California or that it was oak aged. If you haven't seen **Somm**, you need to put it on your Netflix queue. The intensity of preparation and study for the exam was unbelievable, and the guy who you thought would easily ace the test in fact failed and had to try again.

Next was a bit of a treat: **Roasted Beet Salad with Goat Cheese, Baby Greens and Orange/Thyme vinaigrette**. I like beets, but they are seldom served at restaurants. These were nicely roasted with just a bit of natural sweetness. The vinaigrette was lightly done and wine friendly. The goat cheese was a nice contrast to the beets.

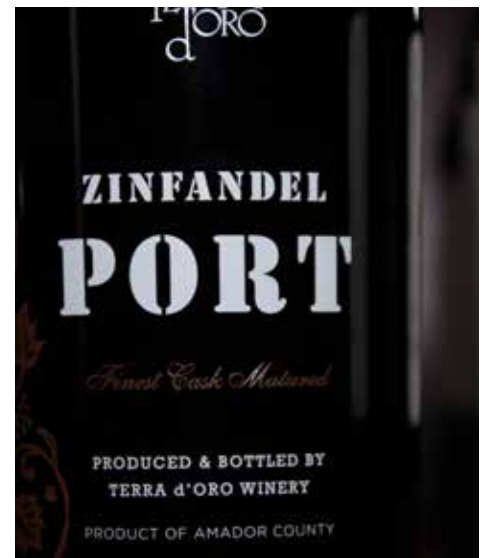
Spencer's supplied the **Twomey 2010 Merlot**, which was forceful enough to stand up to the strong flavors of the beets and goat cheese. Most white wines would have been obliterated by this dish. Light to moderate ripe tannins, the Merlot was dry with a touch of minerality, but not too heavy. Sensual and rich.

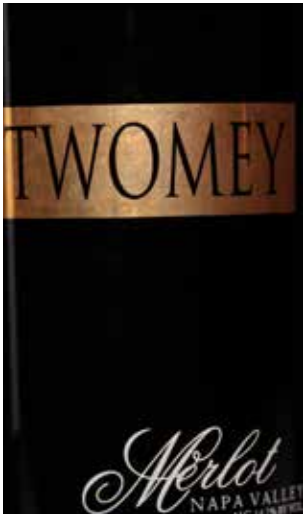
Jim Fabron came out for the last time to tell us about Twomey. Since its founding in 1972, owner and founder Ray Duncan was notorious for only making 100% Cabernet. Seems that the two sons of Ray had an opportunity to work with more than 100% Cabernet Sauvignon when the Duncan family purchased the Soda Canyon Ranch in 1999. But getting dad to change was a struggle, as he labeled his wayward sons heretics for even thinking of a blend. Eventually, he relented, partly because the vineyard had mature, high class French Merlot clones growing. They gave the winery a different name to keep it distinct from Silver Oak. The name Twomey comes from Ray Duncan's mother's maiden name. They have since added Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc. The two boys produced their first Merlot, which was given 92 points by Robert Parker and they haven't looked back since.

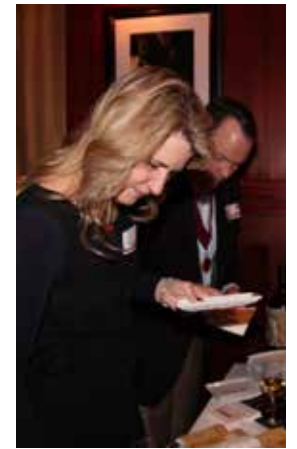
The chosen entrees were next. Mine was the tenderloin and scallops. Unfortunately, mine was done medium, while one plate over, my neighbor's steak was rare, which I would have preferred since additional time on the grill makes for dryer, less succulent meat. Still, it was a tasty piece of beef, and the risotto and vegetables harmonized nicely. I could have used a bit more of that **Sauce au Poivre**. The **2009 Waterstone** was ready to drink. A Bordeaux blend of red varieties, its tannins were mostly resolved. It had a medium body and was quite Bordeaux-like. Later I tried the **2008 Hall Cab**, which was much fuller and more masculine compared to the Waterstone. Still tannic, it sported rich, ripe fruit. I didn't get an opportunity to taste the other two white wines supplied by Spencer's.

Dessert was an unusual **Chocolate Chile Crème Brûlée**. Chef Wheeler constructed this dessert when he was chef at the old Bomba Dia restaurant in Dundee. It presented with a nice crusty top that was difficult to see since the chocolate below was so dark. But the unusual thing about it was the chili kick. Ten seconds after my first spoonful, the peppers kicked in, supplying a mild heat. But the non vintage **Zinfandel Port by Terra d'Oro Winery** was just the thing to quench those assertive hot and spicy flavors. The sweetness of the Port harmonized with the sweet desert, and the Zinfandel roundness made it a great match.

Many thanks to Chefs **Glen Wheeler** and **Dan Watts** along with general manager **Jim Fabron** and assistant manager **Chad Howard Clark** and server **Kyle Walpus** for as great experience. Thanks also to our event producers, the Tritschs and Hyders for organizing and coordinating the event.









Provence, French Wine Country

by Gary Forristall



This article was instigated after the recent spectacular President's Christmas Gala Dinner featuring Provence wine and food at our December event. The Forristalls and Kossows had the pleasure last April, 2015 to spend 2 weeks discovering Provence with a wine makers group from Washington State University. Many of the wines that President Bob served at his event this past December came from the regions we visited.

We headquartered at **Aix en Provence** which was originally settled by the Greeks and then taken over by the Romans around 100 BC. We also visited Marseilles just south on the French Riviera which was originally settled by the Greeks in 600 BC. Grapes and wine have defined this culture ever since. There is virtually no topsoil in this mountainous region, so only grapes and olives really thrive. We will hit just a few wine area highlights of the trip.

The **Hermitage** area in the Northern Rhone is a mountainous area as are most areas we visited. Besides wines at **Cave de Tain** winery in Tain l'Hermitage we visited the chocolate factory in town. The **Valrhona Chocolates** are world renowned (many free samples).

The next day we toured **Bandol**. The small winery and olive grove visited was **Domaine Souviou** in Bandol. This was our favorite visit on the trip. This small winery gave us an excellent tour and a wonderful tasting. They also had 2000 year old olive trees which were impressive to see. This is the only winery we have found in France that will ship directly to us without going through a distributor. We have ordered twice and received our order with a week. Excellent wine! If club members want to try this wine come out to our wine cellar and we will be glad to share a taste. The order from Souviou is a minimum of two cases and price is very reasonable.

A trip to Provence would not be complete without a visit to **Chateauneuf du Pape**. We didn't think President Kossow was going to be able to contain himself. Several fine tastings were experienced plus an excellent lunch. A stop and tasting at the Perrin Store featuring their **Miraval Rosé**, a cooperative effort between the Perrin family and Angeline Jolie & Brad Pitt, was a must (WS 90).



The **Cassis Appellation Contrôlée** on the Mediterranean Coast is extremely mountainous and spectacular. We visited the small **Cos Sainte Madeleine** winery in the town of Cassis. The view of a vineyard on a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean Sea was amazing. The only problem was it rained practically the whole time we were there. We enjoyed a wonderful tour and tasting at the winery. But afterward we found the bus had left us and we had to walk across town to the **Restaurant Le Bonaparte** in a heavy rain with our umbrellas on the bus! We were not happy campers but generous amount of fine Cassis wine soon calmed us down.

There were also side trips to **Monaco** and **Monte Carlo**. The coast is quite spectacular with the toll highway going from tunnel to bridge and back as it follows the coast. A high speed train ride is a must. It is amazing how smooth the ride is. One of the best parts of travel like this is meeting the people and discovering their culture and system of government. When we visited France 21 months ago the exchange rate was 1.35 \$/€. The Euro has weakened and was 1.08 \$/€ this trip making everything much cheaper. There is

a mandatory maximum work week of 35 hours per week strictly enforced. A 6 week per year vacation allowance is normal. This supposedly cuts down on the unemployment rate. However, unemployment is 16 % and 25% for 25 year olds and under. Most people use the time to walk and exercise and are very fit. We learned from a winery owner that we met in Burgundy you are not allowed to disinherit a child in France. And all children must inherit equally. He was buying the family winery from his siblings and it was very expensive.

Another fine day was visiting **St. Remy** in central Provence. From there most of the day was spent in Arles. We had never heard of this city but it was the most important center in Roman in antiquity. The Romans made this their capital before the millennium. It had the largest Roman Theater and one of the largest coliseums in the Roman Empire and still largely standing. Arles was also the home of Vincent Van Gogh. A cruise and lunch on the Rhone River was very nice. But next June 2016 we expect much better wine on Steve Hipple's cruise on the Danube River starting from Budapest!



Wine Quiz Number One

by John Fischer

For the next few issues of the Gazette I have decided to check out your wine knowledge by giving you a series of quizzes. All questions will be followed by answers and explanations if indicated. (Don't cheat!)

Quiz # 1

1. Typically, which wine has the greater acidity:

- (a) Pinot Noir
- (b) Trebbiano
- (c) Vitognier
- (d) Gewurztraminer

2. Wines with a solid level of acidity:

- (a) generally make good matches with food
- (b) make your mouth feel dry
- (c) usually have red wine flavors
- (d) lack a prolonged after-taste.

3. Tannic wines

- (a) accentuate flavor
- (b) make your mouth feel dry
- (c) go best with delicate foods
- (d) are frequently low in alcohol

4. This wine has a deep purple color with emerging brown tones at the rim of the glass. It is most likely:

- (a) past its prime
- (b) at or approaching maturity
- (c) unbalanced
- (d) from Bordeaux

5. Dishes containing goat cheese:

- (a) usually make a great match with Sauvignon Blanc
- (b) pair well with a soft red wine
- (c) need wine with low acidity
- (d) are difficult to match to any wine style

6. You are serving classic Crème Brûlée.

Which wine would match the best:

- (a) Beaumes-de-Venise
- (b) Sauternes
- (c) Eiswein
- (d) Fino Sherry

Answers

1. (b) Trebbiano: This is a very tart Italian varietal that is lacking in flavor and complexity. It is ubiquitous in Italy. Acidity is typically moderate to low in the other three choices.
2. (a) Tart wines generally pair best with foods: It is the low acid wines that are difficult to match with food. Acidity supports the flavor in wine (brings out flavors); it does the same for the food it is paired with. As wine ages its level of acidity declines and the wine becomes dull and flavorless.
3. (c) Tannic wines make your mouth feel dry: Tannins cover over flavors; you therefore need big flavorful dishes to pair with such wines. Tannic wines will stamp out flavors in delicate dishes.
4. (b) are at or approaching maturity.
5. (a) Goat cheese with Sauvignon Blanc is a natural match: The saltiness of the cheese calls for a high acid wine and the flavor in the wine make a wonderful match with those in the cheese. Any dish with goat cheese is likely to make a great match with a Sauvignon Blanc.
6. (b) Sauternes: The dessert and wine are very rich and regal, and the dish makes a great match with this king of dessert wines. Crème Brûlée is a very frequent flavor found in Sauternes. This provides a one to one correspondence with wine and food. There is not a better choice.

Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!

March 12, 2016

Jackson Street Tavern in the Old Market.

Theme: Saturday Night Special

Producer: Todd Lemke

April 17, 2016

V. Mertz.

95 Points or Better for all wines!

Producers: Patti & Steve Hipple

May 13, 2016

Happy Hollow Club

Lucky Friday the 13th.

Producers: Stacie Matz and Jill 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



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The mission of the Council Bluffs Branch of the International Wine and Food Society is to develop a profound understanding and appreciation of both wine and the culinary arts and to enjoy this experience in the camaraderie of friends. Our task is to educate our membership about wine and to develop the skill of matching wine with food. We strive to drink high quality wines and to experience an eclectic array of foods prepared by the area's top chefs.

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Council Bluffs, Iowa Branch - Executive Committee*

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To access past Gazettes and other features about our Branch, go to the international website following this link: www.iwfs.org/americas/council-bluffs

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