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The Bluffs Food & Wine gazette

Event Report:

Valentine's Day "Breaking All the
Old Wine Rules" Dinner & Dance

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





Presidents Comments

Well, if you didn't attend the Valentine's Day dinner and dance you missed a great event. Not only did we go to a new venue, The Field Club, but for the first time we had a dance. Nestled in midtown Omaha, the Field Club was established in 1898 and may be Omaha's first country club. The building itself is modern, and we found ourselves in the grand ball room. Dennis Aliano, long time local disc jockey known as DA the DJ, selected music from the 1960's, 70's and 80's. On top of all that, we had an interesting wine theme: Breaking All the Old Wine Rules. Read the Event Report for this unusual event which featured quite a bit of wine (and for that matter, food) education. This was such a fun event that even the wait staff, who had to stand there and listen to me expound on breaking all the wine rules, was interested. The event coordinator, Caitlin Jones, wrote me afterwards that "I believe everyone enjoyed it, including the staff! They are still saying what a fun event it was!"

In our continuing series of articles written by your Board members, A Note from the Board, Stacie Matz pens a treasured memory of her mother, Alicia, and provides us with her favorite recipe. Years ago, I came across a similar recipe and it was fabulous. So, even though I have never had Champagne Chicken, from the looks of the ingredients and the way it is assembled, I know it will be wonderful. Give it a try yourself.

John Fischer received a number of favorable comments on his Quiz number 1. Now, you have to understand, we contributors to the Gazette typically get almost no comments, so to get a few means that members really liked it! So, brace yourself for Quiz Number 2. As always, with John's articles, you will learn something.

All the best in Food & Wine,

Tom Murnan

**"I don't like whiny and cheesy people, but
I do like wine and cheese people!"**

—Anonymous



Event Report: Valentine's Day "Breaking All the Old Wine Rules" Dinner & Dance

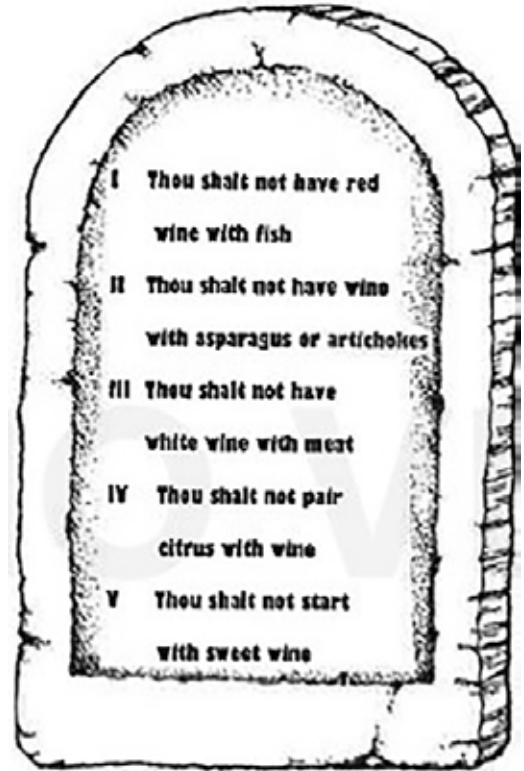
by Tom Murnan

Well, we had a number of firsts with this event. The branch has never been to the **Field Club** that I know of, and this is the first time we had **a dance** following dinner. We were in for a treat. The venue was first class, as was our **Chef, Fortino Gallardo. Dennis Aliano, as DA the DJ**, spun our records, except they are all on the computer now. The wine theme was intriguing: breaking all the old and established wine rules. These haven't been in force for some time, but people can still remember them. This was an adventure for me as well because, when you order wines on line without having actually tasting them beforehand, you don't always know exactly what you are going to get.

Co-host **Jill Panzer** was in charge of recruiting and decorations. She delved right into the Valentine's Day theme with heart shaped candles, red, white and pink table linens (including a delightful rose colored napkin rolled into the shape of a rose bud, and a freshly cut rose for each of the ladies. The Valentine's day theme continued on the nametags where, instead of a table number, there were various symbols of the kiss: XO, red lip stick type lip marks, red glitter lips, a heart with Cupid's arrow through it, etc. All the guest had to do was crack Jill's Enigma Code to figure out where the corresponding symbol was on the table. Turns out, it was on the centerpiece glass/candle holder, if only you could find it. Thirty three persons attended, including four guests.

The event began with, what else but, French Champagne. The **Charles de Cazanove Brut Champagne** was new to me, but was a great festive starter. Other quaffing wines came from the Oregon Wine Country event and included Pinot Noirs, Les Chevaux Horse Heaven Red Blend and one Elk Cove Pinot Gris. The chef prepared a nicely presented cheese plate, which continued the heart theme on one of the soft cheeses. Ingredients to make your own bruschetta was available: diced tomatoes and small toasted bread rounds. Crackers, dried apricots and cranberries, pumpkin seeds and grapes completed the available condiments. Dennis Aliano, our DJ, softly played music from the 1960's to the 1980's.

Once at table, our wine theme unfolded. Yours truly first presented the arbitrarily numbered five wine commandments we were going to cover. Here they are, etched in stone:



- I Thou Shalt NOT have red wine with fish
- II Thou Shalt NOT have wine with asparagus or artichokes
- III Thou Shalt NOT have white wine with meat
- IV Thou Shalt NOT pair citrus with wine
- V Thou Shalt NOT start with sweet wine

We started with **Commandment V, Thou Shalt Not Start with Sweet Wine**. This is a relatively new commandment, because in the 19th Century, dinners frequently began with a sticky, usually a Sauternes. It is almost never done now because, some say, it destroys the appetite, almost like beginning a dinner with dessert. This definitely did not happen here. We started with a classic, and I might add, magical combination of Foie Gras Torchon with a 2011 Doisy-Verdrines Sauternes.



Foie Gras **Torchon** is one of the culinary highlights of France. Torchon means dishtowel in French, and because the foie gras was wrapped in a dishtowel, it was called fattened liver dishtowel (not so elegant in brutal English). So, a French culinary highlight is named after the lowly dishtowel! This recipe has about a four day preparation period that involves deveining, seasoning, rolling in cloth, poaching, rerolling again to make sure it's tight, chilling, and finally slicing.

We had a generous portion of foie gras sitting atop a **Brioche Crouton** with artistically positioned **Tomato Jam** on the plate, seasoned with **Sea Salt**. A homemade potato chip added flair to a dramatic presentation. This was all umami unctuousness, where the wine and liver melted into each other. A perfect marriage of wine and food, a match made in heaven. I wish all wine and food pairings were this delicious. The wine enhanced the food and the food the wine. Perfection.

The Second Course broke our **First Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Pair Red Wine with Fish**. Selection of a wine here depends on a number of factors, such as cooking method (sauté, grille, bake, etc.) as well as the kind and texture of your fish. Before the event, I was skeptical that shrimp and scallops would work, so the chef made us a practice dish that we tried with a Pinot Noir. I was thinking more along the lines of using salmon. But the test was successful, so we went with what Chef Gallardo selected.

Your guiding principal here is to avoid red wines that are oaky or tannic. You also pair the weight of the wine to the texture and weight of the seafood. A Pinot Noir works admirably, so the **2013 Greg's Peak (Greystone) from Waipara, New Zealand** was selected. For comparison, I thought an online description of the **2013 Casa Castillo El Molar Garnacha** from Spain might work as well.

The **Shrimp Scallops** presented were visually delightful. A large shrimp was sliced down the middle but not at the two ends. The scallop was placed in the slice, and the shrimp's tail rose above it like a small pennant. The seafood sat atop **Creamy Rice**, which in turn sat in a pool of **Roasted Red Pepper Beurre Blanc Sauce**. The presentation was superb and the seafood perfectly cooked. The only quibble was that the dish was served tepid, which may have been our fault for lingering too long at quaffing.

It turned out, though, that the Garnacha was a bit too weighty, tannic and a touch spicy. That is the drawback of getting wines online: you can't taste them until you commit with an order. The Pinot was well balance with very light tannins with a lighter body than the Garnacha. When asked for a show of hands, most people preferred the Pinot. So, in my opinion, only one of the reds worked well.

The Third Course was our palate cleanser, a **Raspberry Sorbet**. A small ball of sorbet rested on a Chinese type porcelain spoon, topped with a single raspberry. It was a piquant and refreshing amuse bouche.

Moving on to the most challenging wine pairing course, we were served the **Duo Asparagus Salad**. White and green asparagus crossed each other, topped by micro greens and surrounded by wine's other nemesis: artichoke chunks. Roasted Garlic Balsamic Dressing and small diced tomatoes completed the dish.

So we were about to violate **Commandment II: Thou Shalt Not Have Wine with Asparagus or Artichokes**. Of the two, artichokes may be the easier to pair with wine. Artichokes contain **cynarin**, a compound that makes everything taste sweeter, especially wine. A white wine is in order here, one with crisp acidity to counter the cynarin's sweet

influence. As for asparagus, this is the harder of the two vegetables. Asparagus contains **sulphur**, and when mixed with the wrong wine (read a tannic, oaky red like a Cabernet Sauvignon) will make the wine taste tinny and metallic. Quite unpleasant. Interestingly enough, the sulphur taste increases if you cook asparagus in water (by boiling or steaming), but when you grille, broil or bake it, the sulphur content goes down. Again, a white wine is in order to break this taboo, again one with a high acidity.

One of my favorite producers, **Zind Humbrecht** from Alsace, makes a nice **Muscat d'Alsace**. It is limited and somewhat hard to find. I chose one from 2012. The comparison wine was a **2013 Chateau St. Jean Sonoma County Fumé Blanc**. Both wines worked, but I liked the Sauvignon Blanc better. It enhanced the taste of the artichoke but was fairly neutral with the asparagus, while the Muscat was fairly neutral on the whole dish. The Sauvignon Blanc had a tinge of green taste as well. So overall, the match was more neutral than enhancing, but you could drink it without wincing.

Moving along to our Fifth Course we were about to violate the **Third Commandment: Thou Shalt NOT have white wine with meat**. This one is somewhat silly because the Germans have pork all the time with the wine they excel at raising: Riesling. I thought it would be interesting to try a dry Riesling from Alsace to a lightly sweet one from Germany. Accordingly, I paired a **2012 Trimbach Riesling** with a **2013 Willi Schaefer Graacher Himmelreich Riesling**.



The Alsations do not regulate how sweet to make Rieslings, and so it runs the gamut from dry to dessert sweet, but usually the regular wines are fairly dry. Trimbach is renowned for its dry style. The fruit is so rich you do not realize that the wine has been fermented to dryness. Only when you get into the very sweet categories do the Alsations inform you of the sweetness level on the label by calling it Vendange Tardive and Selection de Grains Noble. For the regular wines, they don't indicate a sweetness label, but that is starting to change. The Germans always tell you how sweet their Rieslings are. They go from Trocken (dry), to Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Berreenauslese to finally Trockenberreenauslese, the sweetest.

Our **Kurubata Pork Loin Medallion** was sliced into three pieces which sat on a bed of **Brie Mashed Potatoes**. It was flanked on either side with one carrot and one zucchini spear. Kurubata is the choicest cut of the pork loin. The pork was ribboned with a **horseradish raspberry sauce**. The pork was nicely done and not overly dry, and the Brie potatoes were rich and very tasty. As for the wine pairings, I thought the Kabinett was the better match. Pork loves fruity and sweet, and the slight sweetness of the Kabinett style incorporated better than the dry style of the Trimbach. In addition, the sauce seemed to enhance the Kabinett the most. Neither wine clashed, it is just that the slightly sweeter did better with the pork.

Dessert found us testing the **Fourth Commandment: Thou Shalt NOT pair citrus with wine**. That's what we humans do, isn't it? Test and rebel and innovate. Lord knows we have been testing and throwing out, much to our own peril, the original Ten Commandments for millennia. Dessert was **Lemon Mousse** presented in a martini glass and topped with candied ginger sticks, maraschino cherry and mint leaf. Well before

this event I had asked the Honorary President of the IWFS, Sid Cross, a Master of Wine, what wine rules remained that could be broken, and he suggested the prohibition of wine with citrus. Sid recommended a medium dry Sherry. Our **Sandeman Royal Corregidor VSO Olorosa Aged 20 Years** was not a match made in heaven. Not with a light and airy mousse. First, the textures did not mesh. Then the wine was far too heavy for the light dessert. So, although they didn't clash, neither did they harmonize. To use a human analogy, this was a shotgun marriage where you could expect a divorce in a few months. It wasn't immediately off putting, but it wasn't going to work for long either. An Albariño, Asti, or Pinot Grigio might have done better since these wines are much lighter in body with sufficient acid to counter the lemon. So, the lesson here is that you can learn even from your mistakes. The **texture and weight of the food is important** too.

After dinner the dance started. DA the DJ was taking requests. The music, of course, was a blast from the past, stuff we grew up hearing. Not on the invite or the menu card was a bonus red wine. I figured the reds got pushed out a bit by our wine theme, so a **2013 Domaine Lafage Tessellae Old Vines from the Côtes du Roussillon** was placed on each table. This wine received a 94 from the Wine Advocate and is a bargain you should search out. It contains 50% Grenache Noir, 40% Syrah and 10% Mouvèdre.

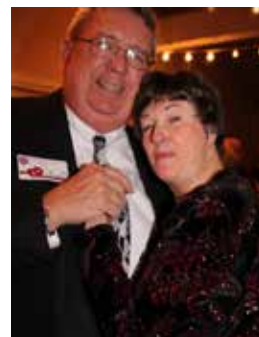
Many thanks to **Caitlin Jones**, the Director of Events & Catering who guided us through the booking process, and **Connor McNeely** the Banquet Captain. Thanks also goes to **Jill Panzer** who did all the artistic decorating, and **Mary Murnan** who has to put up with me! **Chef Fortino Gallardo** did an amazing job. The meal was nicely timed, and the wait staff did a great job of wine and food service. It was an unusually educational event.











A Note from the Board: Remembering Mom Through a Recipe

by Stacie Matz





While going through some recipes the other day, I found something that made me smile. It was a handwritten recipe from my mother for Champagne Chicken. Mom would lovingly prepare this dish special just for me every year on my birthday. The creation she made was elegant enough for a dinner party, but easy enough to make any day of the week. Mom usually served this over mashed potatoes or rice with some sort of vegetable on the side.

I wanted to share this personal treasure with my IW&FS friends. However, sharing Mother's recipe was not as easy as one might think. You see, Mom had a creative way of cooking and never used exact measurements. I would ask her how to make something, and she would reply: "I just add a little bit of this and a little bit of that." Mom tasted the food as she went along to decide what it needed. As my cooking skills developed, I found myself replicating her technique.

I believe cooking is an art, and each chef has their own personality. I am sharing the recipe as it was written by my mother. I am encouraging you to use your imagination and unique taste to create your own masterpiece. Trust me, this recipe is very hard to mess up. I plan on making Mom's Champagne Chicken in April when my birthday rolls around. I will enjoy it in memory of my beautiful mother, and I will toast to her with a nice glass of Champagne or perhaps my favorite Pinot Noir—maybe both!



Champagne Chicken:

- "Hammer chicken breast* so it is the same thickness.
- Cut into bite sized pieces.
- Put chicken in plastic zippered bag with flour, salt, and pepper Shake.
- Fry in butter until golden. Remove.
- Add sliced mushrooms and mix and cook about 10 minutes.
- Add 1 carton cream.
- Cook about 10 minutes.
- Add ½ cup or so of Champagne and cook a little longer.
- Add chicken and warm through."

ENJOY!

* [Although part of the charm of the story is the complete lack of specificity, I asked Stacie if we could have at least an idea of how much chicken to use. She suggested about two pounds. Editor]





Wine Quiz Number Two

by John Fischer

Quiz 2 is a general topic quiz.

Next month will deal with information derived from the visual appearance of wine.

Drop me a line if you like the quiz format-- jrudyf@cox.net

Quiz # 2

1. Gewürztraminer Is...

- (a) a low acid wine with flavors of rose petals and lychee
- (b) a highly acidic wine
- (c) easy to match with a wide variety of foods
- (d) a Rhone white wine

2. Pinot Noir is...

- (a) a thick skinned grape low in tannin
- (b) a good wine to match with salmon
- (c) a tannic wine high in acidity
- (d) difficult to grow

3. Cabernet Sauvignon is...

- (a) a good match with sushi
- (b) high in acids and low in tannin
- (c) found in the blend in Bordeaux wines
- (d) difficult to grow

4. Barolo is made from the same grape as

- (a) Chianti
- (b) Barbaresco
- (c) Frascati
- (d) Bardolino

5. The Sangiovese grape is found in

- (a) Chianti
- (b) Barbaresco
- (c) Frascati
- (d) Bardolino

6. Which wine does not fit in the group?

- (a) Pommard
- (b) Beaune
- (c) Volnay
- (d) Vouvray

7. Chinon is a Loire Valley wine made from which grape?

- (a) Merlot
- (b) Cabernet Franc
- (c) Chenin Blanc
- (d) Gamay
- (e) Syrah

8. German Riesling wines are...

- (a) always sweet
- (b) usually dry
- (c) never sweetened
- (d) sweeter than Alsatian Riesling

9. Bordeaux red wines...

- (a) always have some Cabernet Sauvignon in the blend
- (b) never contain Merlot
- (c) have greater longevity than California Cabernet Sauvignon
- (d) are very approachable in their youth

10. Chateau Grillet...

- (a) is a red wine
- (b) contains Cabernet Sauvignon
- (c) is made from the Viognier Grape
- (d) is a dessert styled wine
- (e) comes from the Southern Rhone
- (f) is a Bordeaux wine



Answers:

1. (a) This is a classic wine from Alsace that, because of its low acidity and unique flavors (bacon, lychee, rose petals, cold cream, ginger) is somewhat difficult to match with food.
2. (b) at maturity, this wine is relatively low in acids and tannins and can be matched with rich oily fish and lighter styled meats and poultry.
3. (c) Cabernet is relatively high in acids and tannins and commonly has flavors of black currents (cassis).
4. (b) Barolo and Barbaresco are the great wines made from the Nebbiolo grape from the Piedmont region in Italy. Many consider them as Italy's finest. Barolo is considered the better of the two, but they are usually very difficult to tell apart.
5. (a) Sangiovese is the principal grape in Chianti.
6. (d) Vouvray is from the Loire valley; the other 3 are Burgundy wines.
7. (b) Cabernet Franc—this is a lighter styled, berry flavored wine that best drunk young. Quality is average.
8. (d) Alsatian Rieslings are dry except for dessert styled varieties.
9. (c) Bordeaux wines can have great longevity – often lasting for tens of years.
10. (c) Don't let the word "Chateau" throw you off. This is a dry, white, delicate, rather short lived, Northern Rhone wine made from the Viognier grape. There are several wines with "Chateau" in their name that are not from Bordeaux.

Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!



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



June 26, 2016

Corkscrew Wine & Cheese (Blackstone District). Dinner on the Patio.

Producers: Jill and Joe Goldstein



July 23, 2016

Connie & Gary Martin open the Martin Cabin

Theme to be announced

Producers: Connie and Gary Martin

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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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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