

The Bluffs Food & Wine

April 2014 *gazette*

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

President's Comments



Dear Members,

Until now my messages have focused on wine, with this issue I would like to provide a commentary-

Last night our club held an event that could well be unique to International Wine and Food Society. We not only had a wonderful dinner with fine French wines but had a chance to glimpse into the life of a man who was one of the most important leaders in the development of modern French cuisine, Auguste Escoffier. Marty Skomal's Auguste Escoffier was engaging as he portrayed the chef in his 70's looking back over his career. It was a wonderful way to learn and understand Escoffier's life and the impact it had on cuisine and restaurants.

Our meal consisted of some of Escoffier's most famous recipes (thighs of nymphs at dawn, to name one) accompanied by superb French wines from some of the best wine regions. The recipes were exquisitely prepared by Jeremy Buthe, Executive Chef of the Council Bluffs Country Club.

I want to thank Tom Murnan for bringing this idea to the branch and for working tirelessly to make this event a success. I would also like to thank David Tritsch for his assistance in working with the Council Bluffs Country Club to host it.

It is only through the efforts of fellow branch members that we are able to offer these fun and unique events. I challenge you to look for restaurants that the branch might enjoy or a theme that an event might be built around. Let us know your idea and maybe even host the event.

Enjoy,

Bob Kossow
President

“Always carry a corkscrew and the wine shall provide itself..”

— *Basil Bunting- British Poet*

Editor's Corner



Dear Members,

After a series of articles for three months on **Auguste Escoffier**, the one man play and dinner came together at the Council Bluffs Country Club. All the recipes chosen by Chef Jeremy Buthe were from Escoffier, and it is not every day that one gets to go to the theater on such a closely interwoven subject: Escoffier's life. Read the Event Report for more details on this elegant (with historically accurate recipes) Saturday evening affair. I could not resist one more Escoffier related article on the colorful names behind the chef's recipes. Be sure to glance over **What's in a Name** to learn more about how these recipes got their names. Our regular contributor and educator, **John Fischer**, writes about **Spanish wines** this month. One of the goals of getting an education in the field of wine is to learn how to get the best wine for the lowest price. Check out John's article on this great source of great wine values. Finally, on a tight deadline, world traveler **Bob Kossow** just returned from Argentina on the afternoon of the Escoffier event. He was able to meet our publishing deadline and write a story about visiting the **Veramonte Winery**. Be sure to give it a read. I discovered Veramonte years ago. It was and still is a bargain for the quality you receive.

Tom Murnan

“Well may it be said that a good hors d'oeuvre artist is a man to be prized in any kitchen, for, although his duties do not by any means rank first in importance, they nevertheless demand of the chef the possession of such qualities as are rarely found united in one person: reliable and experienced taste, originality, keen artistic sense, and professional knowledge.”

— *Auguste Escoffier, Le Guide Culinaire*



Photo courtesy of hugel.com

Event Report

Escoffier Theater & Dinner

A Triumph Deluxe

by Tom Murnan



This had to be one of the premier events in the history of the Council Bluffs Branch: a one man play about an important French chef who modernized the way food was presented and served. I heard nothing but superlatives from everyone, and the person who inspired these comments was our actor, **Marty Skomal**, who brought history alive in a relaxed, fun and informative way. Marty is a native of Omaha who has been active in the arts for 25 years. The script he used was adapted for contemporary audiences by his stage director, Barbee Davis. Together they have been spreading the word about Auguste Escoffier throughout the Omaha area. I first saw the production at the Institute for the Culinary Arts and thought it was a perfect match with the goals and ideals of the International Wine & Food Society. From the reaction of our members and guests, my instincts were correct.

Nineteen members and three guests met at the Council Bluffs Country Club on the shore of Lake Manawa to experience an all French dinner with all French wines, and where only Escoffier recipes were used. At the Quaffing phase of the evening, we enjoyed Nicholas Feuillatte Brut Champagne

with Melba Toast Canapés topped with goat cheese and tomato rosemary jam. The jam brought a sweet component to the more pungent goat cheese, and both went well with the Champagne. Three other red quaffers were also available, all from Bordeaux and its surrounds (e.g., Côtes de Blaye).

We all took a glass of red into the “theater” to enjoy our production of **Escoffier: Master of the Kitchen**. A small set had been set up with a writing desk replete with antique phone, chair, and an easel with a painting of César Ritz, the Swiss born hotel entrepreneur that sought out Escoffier and his cooking expertise. Twenty-two chairs were arranged in a semi-circle for the audience. After a short introduction by yours truly in period costume of white tie and tails, kid gloves, opera cape, ebony and sterling walking stick and top hat, the show began. We learned so many things in the next 50 minutes that it would be beyond the scope of this article to enumerate them. But a few points are in order. The action is set during the end of Escoffier’s career, in the early 1930’s. Auguste Escoffier started at an early age in his uncle’s restaurant, which was not a high class place





◀ at all. It was hot and dangerous, and all the workers smoked and drank alcohol to excess. He got the idea of reorganizing kitchens during his stint in the military during the Franco Prussian War in the 1870's. When César Ritz recruited him, he went to London. Soon, his hotel restaurant became the destination place of the British Empire, attracting the rich and famous, such as the Divine Sarah Bernhardt, opera singer Nellie Melba and British royalty, such as King Edward VII and the Prince of Wales, the future George the V. Recipes were developed after these superstars' requests that bear their names or influence. Escoffier wrote around 10,000 recipes which can be found in his several books still in print today. As the facts and historical figures rolled off Marty's tongue, our group sat in rapt attention. For example, did you know that César Ritz was a workaholic and perfectionist? That aristocratic ladies did not dine outside the home before Escoffier transformed dining in London society? Taking pictures from the back, I noticed nothing but smiles on many a face as they absorbed it all. After the play, Marty told me that this was the first group he's played to who understood the reference to the famous Château d'Yquem.

Comments from our audience after the performance centered on how the play served to remind us of our

culinary roots, where we started from and how we got to where we are today. In short, it was just plain fun.

After the performance, we moved to table in the large dining room. The cover of this Gazette was also the cover of our menu card and set the theme of turn of the century elegance. All the bon ton of London would flock to César's Ritz's hotel, drawn by the superb food served in the restaurant.

We began with the enigmatically named **Cuisses de Nymphs à l'Aurore**, or Thighs of the Dawn Nymphs. I had not had frog legs for a very long time, but they were presented with three to a plate with small blocks of gelatin made from Champagne, chicken stock and tarragon, which gave it its green color. It was topped with a small square of sweet red pepper. I thought the frog legs vaguely tasted of fish and had the consistency of chicken flesh. The **2010 Ballard Simon Chablis Mont de Milieu Vieille Vigne** was fabulous with this dish. Our highest rated wine of the evening, this dry and minerally Chardonnay had breeding and oozed quality. It was my favorite wine of the event.

Potage Crème de Chanterelle Champignon was an old fashioned bowl of cream of Chanterelle



◀ mushroom, heavy on the cream. Quite rich, I found the Chanterelles delicate and unassertive. Its sweet body required a similarly lightly sweet wine. One of my favorites that I knew would be a good match was the **2011 Zind Humbrecht Pinot Gris**. This wine was sold out in Omaha, forcing me to get it out of town.

The **Salade Irma** came next, and consisted of cauliflower, asparagus spears, radish, dill, diced cucumbers and a wine friendly dressing. A light mayonnaise served as the dressing. Sauvignon Blanc usually goes well with salad, so the **2012 Pascal et Nicholas Reverdy Sancerre les Coutes** fit the bill nicely. The trouble with French wines is that the appellation does not reveal the grape varieties in the bottle, so a little research may be in order to know what the grape varieties in the bottle are.

The famous **Tournedos Rossini** was our main course. A small mountain of buttered and toasted crouton or bread was the base for a tenderloin of beef, topped by seared foie gras (fattened goose liver) and a Madeira wine demi glace with thin slices of black truffle. Two kinds of potatoes


finished the dish: fingerling and Peruvian purple. This was an absolutely authentic rendition of Tournedos Rossini and delicious too, I might add. The crowning glory was the foie gras which transformed the fine grain of the tenderloin by further smoothing it out with an unami of richness and decadence. Two red Bordeaux from prestigious appellations were served. The **2010 Château Lalande Borie** from St. Julian and the **2008 Château Lafleur de Bouard Lalande de Pomerol** were both classic accompaniments to the savory beef, liver and truffle flavors.

Dessert consisted of the famed, as well as flamed, **Bombe Nero**. Sponge cake topped with vanilla ice cream infused with swirls of caramel, and covered by meringue made for a visually appealing dish. The trick was to add the flaming rum without burning the meringue. The camera had a hard time photographing the alcohol flames, but I did succeed in getting a few pictures. Hot rum was ladled over the meringue at the work station. Unfortunately, it would not stay lit the few feet it took to walk it to the table. One of Escoffier's signature touches was a **candied violet flower**, and our Bombe had two grace each plate.

Our final wine was France's answer to Portuguese Vintage Port: the **2006 Domain La Tour Vieille Banyuls Rimage**. Rimage means "vintage" in the local dialect. Not quite as sweet or complex as a Vintage Port, it was selected because, in my trials, a more traditional Sauternes did not handle ice cream or caramel well. It also only had 16% alcohol compared to about 20% for Port. I thought it did a fine job, although a few other diners had a dissenting opinion. But they had not experimented beforehand either.

Guest and prospective member **Martin Mueller** got up and proposed a toast with these words:

If you must lie, lie to protect a friend;
If you must steal, steal the heart of a
beautiful lady;
If you must cheat, cheat death;
If you must drink, drink with me!

I would like to thank Chef Jeremy Buthe, chief of staff Roni, and all the support staff for an outstanding dinner. Thanks as well to David Tritsch for his help and support whose membership we used to hold the event at CBCC. And above all, our most gracious Merci Beaucoup to actor Marty Skomal and Barbee Davis who supported him for an evening that will long live in our memories. 

What's in a Name?

Artistic Names for Food

by Tom Murnan

In my impecunious salad days, I was backpacking through Europe, staying at Youth Hostels and pensiones, having the time of my life. On this occasion, I was at a bargain restaurant in Brittany examining the menu. One item intrigued me: “**Pommes Anglaise.**” Hmmm, I thought to myself, English Potatoes. The price was right (cheap), so I decided to take the leap to this obviously wonderful culinary experience. After all, it was French. When the plate was brought to table, I discovered that what I ordered was stinking lousy boiled potatoes! Was this potato sobriquet a scathing Gallic indictment of English cooking? Boiled potatoes indeed. A child of six could do it. This taught me to be a little more discriminating when examining floridly written menu items with exotic French names.

Having just completed our Escoffier event, it would be hard not to notice that most courses had a fanciful name. We learned in our one man play how Escoffier named two different items for the opera singer Nellie Melba: **Melba Toast** and **Peach Melba**. I thought I would run through the menu for the benefit of those who were not there, as well as to remind those that were, to learn more about how these foods got their names.



Cuisses de Nymphes à l'Aurore is perhaps Escoffier's most mysterious dish name. Nowhere does the name give a clue to what is in the dish. This subterfuge was purposely done. Thighs of the Nymphs of Dawn was euphemistically named to trick 600 guests at a soirée held in 1908 at the London Savoy for the Prince of Wales (the future King George V) into eating a food that was not popular with the English. The French, however, had been eating frog legs since prehistoric times. In fact, in the Tenth Century, French monks got frog legs classified as a fish to get around Lenten prohibitions on meat, and this classification has stuck in the culinary world to the present time. In some accounts, it is said that the prince was partial to frog legs, so he was in on the hoax. In other accounts he did not know of the deception and was

not partial to frog legs either. The dish was served in a buffet with the above name so as not to disturb the delicate sensibilities of the diners, but really, Escoffier was miffed that the English would not eat a favorite French national dish. The dish was a sensation, and so Cuisses became a great hit that London social season. Imagine that. Setting your prejudices aside, through sleight of hand or just an iron will, could result in a wonderfully tasty dish.



Melba Toast. If I told you that toast had been named after Helen Porter Mitchell, you would not recognize the significance. But if I told you that same toast was named after opera singer Dame Nellie Melba, you might remember that. Escoffier came up with

this innovation in toast after the singer became

ill in 1897 and wanted something light and simple to eat. **César Ritz** supposedly gave the toast its name after a conversation with Escoffier. It is simplicity itself. Lightly toast slices of bread, remove from heat source, trim off crust and split the bread in half, then toast the untoasted sides again. Melba toast is used even today in dieting, and for hors d'oeuvres as a base for spreadable toppings.



Tournedos Rossini. There is a dispute as to which chef invented this dish: Marie-Antonin Carême or Auguste Escoffier. In

Escoffier's cooking bible, *Le Guide Culinaire*, numerous recipes are named after **Gioachino Rossini**, enough to create a whole menu.

But my guess is that it was actually Carême who invented it, since Carême and Rossini were great friends. According to legend, the dish was named at the Café Anglais in Paris. Rossini insisted on overseeing the preparation of this dish near his table. The chef finally became fed up with his constant interference, whereupon the Maestro told him "So, turn your back." There are other versions on how the dish received its name, so we may never know for sure. But it is true that the combination pan fried tenderloin, served over a crouton topped with fresh foie gras, and garnished with demi-glace or Madeira sauce and topped with truffles is a classic gastronomic opus worthy of the maestro.



Bombe Nero was named after the **Roman Emperor Nero**, who began his reign in 54 A.D. after his uncle Emperor Claudius died. Legend has it that Nero fiddled as Rome burned during the Great Fire of 64 A.D. This was impossible since the fiddle would not be invented for

another 1500 years, but Suetonius, in his *The Lives of Twelve Caesars*, mentions that Nero played the lyre. Despite being out of town during the fire, many of his enemies suggested that he set the fire to make room for an imperial palace.

A **bombe** is a French frozen dessert made in a spherical mold. Layers of ice cream or sherbet would be spread on the mold and successively frozen before another layer was added. Finally, the mold was closed and frozen as a whole. In Escoffier's **Bombe Nero** a mold of vanilla ice cream, caramel and chocolate truffles was opened on to a punch biscuit. Meringue was piped over the ice cream and placed briefly in an oven to lightly brown the meringue. Once removed from the oven, flaming rum was ignited and the dessert was served immediately. It is the flaming rum that reminds us of Emperor Nero and his fiddling about while Rome burned.

So, the question remains: What's in a name? Apparently, a lot. An elegant name enhances a menu card. It can be used to disarm your prejudices and get someone to try something if only their narrow-mindedness would get out of the way (think of your kids...they won't eat pheasant but will eat "chicken."), and you can use a famous celebrity to entice someone to be adventurous. The next time you think that oysters are not indigenous to the Rocky Mountains, be aware and think what's in a name! *Wine & Food*







Spanish Wines—Great Values

by Dr. John Fischer



Spain produces an eclectic selection of superior wines at very reasonable prices—wines that taste like those often costing twice as much. You can find many such examples scattered throughout the Wine Spectators Top 100 list. Not only are these wines great bargains, they are also perfectly fitted to the American palate: supple, suave, well-balanced wines gifted with a complex variety of savory scents and flavors that finish with a lush and lingering aftertaste.

The grape varieties from Spain are not all that foreign to the American lexicon. Tempranillo is the most widely grown red varietal. Other major grapes are Garnacha (Grenache), Cariñena (Carignan), Monastrell (Mourvèdre) and Graciano.



John Fischer is a member and two-time president of the Omaha Branch of the IW&FS, past director of the Nebraska Chapter of LADV, and founding member of the Council Bluffs Branch of the IWFS. He is the author of two books: *The Evaluation of Wine* and *Wine and Food – 101*.

Granted, there are many others, but these are the common ones. Cabernet and Syrah are also starting to become popular red wine varietals.

Spanish wines have wonderful flavor extraction because yields/acre is low. This is due both to the advanced age of many vineyards (old vines), as well as to the relatively arid conditions in many wine regions. In fact, Spain is home to more vines than any other country on earth. Of course, lower yields usually mean better wines. Nevertheless, in spite of this lower yield, Spain is third in wine production, behind France and Italy, but ahead of the United States (fourth in production).

Spanish winemakers characteristically age their red wines much longer to assure they are ready to drink when purchased. However, this can be a benefit as well as a quandary: too much oak. There are three categories in regard to oak and aging: Those labeled Crianza (aged for 2 years with a minimum of 6 months in oak), next

◀ is Reserva (aged 3 years with a minimum of 12 months in oak), and Gran Reserva (aged 5 years with a minimum of 24 months in oak). The Gran Reserva category is usually the most expensive and indeed can be exceptional, but a sizeable number may be over-oaked, deficient in acidity, and lacking panache, while others simply start to pall because of age. Too much oak makes a wine ponderous, woody, and actually decreases complexity; what's more, such wines can be difficult to match with food.

Nevertheless, there is a movement in Spain to produce more vibrant wines that have higher acidity, less oak, and are designed to pair better with food. This style of wines is lighter, less dense, fresher, and more complex than the traditional style.

Consumers who generally want a red wine they can enjoy directly after bringing it home can depend on Spanish reds, especially at the Reserva and Gran Reserva levels. The life span of Spanish reds is variable depending on grape variety and location; however, the better Rioja wines have an amazing ability to age.

Spain is recognized by consumers worldwide as producers of superior high-value wines.

Favourable climate and soil, skilful winemakers, and modern winemaking techniques allow Spain to produce a great deal of wine and bring them to market at a very reasonable price. There is a tendency to consider Spanish reds as cheap in both quality and price. Don't appraise the quality of a wine by its price tag. I have tasted many good but not great wines that carry a very high sticker price; likewise, I've experienced relatively inexpensive wines that were exceptional. Kudos to those who find great value at a bargain price. *Wine & Food*



A Taste of Chile

by Bob Kossov

On a recent vacation Suzanne and I had an opportunity to visit Veramonte Winery in the Casablanca Valley northwest of Santiago, Chile. We were introduced to Veramonte through a wine club we belonged to in 2005 and were looking forward to visiting the winery. Veramonte is located between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Coast, the vineyard possesses a unique diversity of climate and soil.

We were going to a private tasting of their Sauvignon Blanc, Ritual Pinot Noir and Cruz Andina Malbec. The latter wine was in a partnership with the Pulenta family of Mendoza, Argentina.

Veramonte was founded by Agustin Huneeus who started his career with Concha y Toro, Chile's largest winery. In 1989 he built Quintessa Estate in Napa Valley. Since then, Agustin expanded his brand portfolio beyond Quintessa to also include Faust, Illumination, Flowers Vineyard & Winery, The Prisoner and Saldo, under the company name, Huneeus Vintners.

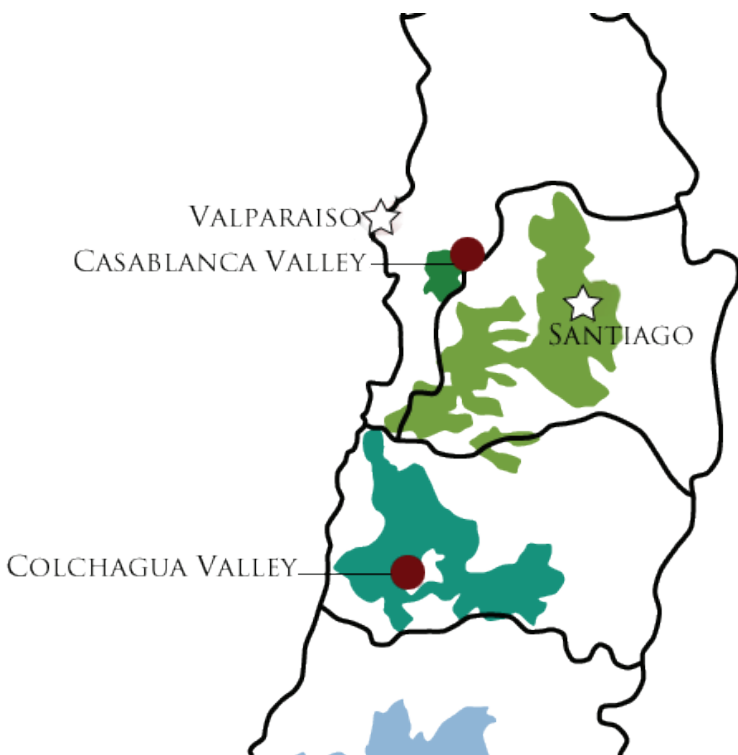


In the early 1990s, he turned to Chile, identifying potential in Casablanca Valley. He recognized its climate, soil composition and topography as ideal for grape growing. Opening in 1998, Veramonte is a striking, modern facility designed by one of Chile's leading architects, Jorge Swinburn. It houses the latest technology in gravity-based fermentors, ultra-modern stainless steel tanks and high efficiency bottling lines. Built for small-lot wine production, the facility ensures individual vineyard blocks can be fermented and aged separately prior to final blending.

Rodrigo Soto recently joined Veramonte as Chief Winemaker. Born in Chile, he spent the last 6 years as head winemaker at the well-known Benziger Winery in Sonoma.

The Casablanca Valley is a broad area on the western side of Chile's coastal range less than 20 miles from the Pacific Ocean, Northwest of Santiago. With around 10,000 acres planted to vines, it is noted for its gentle Pacific breezes and early morning fog making it the ideal climate for producing cool climate varietals such as Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir.

Our first tasting was their 2013 Sauvignon Blanc. This Estate grown wine comes from 47 vineyard blocks consisting of 100% Sauvignon Blanc. That is fermented in stainless steel to 13.5% alcohol content. It has a light straw color with tropical aromas of melon, papaya and guava mingle with





◀ subtle floral and herbal notes. It is fresh and juicy, with bright citrus notes of white grapefruit and balanced acidity. Sauvignon Blanc is a favorite white wine to pair with salads, lighter meals, sushi and Asian foods.

One interesting note about the Sauvignon Blanc vines; they are trellised with an interior tunnel to increase air flow so the grapes do not overheat and retain freshness, aromatics and flavor.

Next we tasted the Ritual Pinot Noir. This wine is the result of a partnership with American winemaker, Paul Hobbs. Fruit for this wine is 100% Pinot Noir and is selected from 3 distinct vineyard sites within the Casablanca Valley estate. The wine is fermented with 100% wild yeast and is aged for 12 months in 100% oak barrels (40% new). The wine is rated 90 points from Wine Enthusiast.

“Spicy and dusty smelling, with full-force plum and berry aromas matched by equally potent smoky barrel scents.

“Thorough in feel, with vivid, oak-accented flavors of wild berry and plum. Round and full on the finish, with lasting resinous flavors that remain after all else has faded away.” – Wine Enthusiast

Our last tasting was the Cruz Andina Malbec which was rated 90 points by Wine Enthusiast. Fruit for Cruz Andina Malbec comes from the Pulenta’s 130 acre estate vineyards in Mendoza’s Lujan de Cuyo appellation. At about 3200 ft., the vineyards sit at the highest altitude in Lujan de

Cuyo and planted in 1948, are some of the oldest vines in Mendoza.

This 2009 vintage is 81% Malbec, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 9% Syrah. It is aged 14 months in 100% French (30% new) Oak barrels. 15.2% alcohol.

Tasting notes: A deep violet purple color with aromas of dark plum, blackberry and violet. Raspberry, plum and blueberry flavors merge with floral notes of violet, subtle black pepper and tobacco. Full and structured with well integrated tannins and a lengthy finish.

We then retired to the lower level of the winery to blend our own wine using Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Carmenere. A popular grape in Chile, Carmenere is the acclaimed “lost noble grape”. Thought to have died off in France it was rediscovered in Chile when a French winemaker was exploring Chile wineries and winemaking techniques. The Carménère (or Carmenère or Carmenere) grape is a wine grape variety originally planted in the Médoc region of Bordeaux, France, where it was used to produce deep red wines. It is a wine with intense red and black fruit aromas, juicy ripe fruit flavors and mature tannins with balanced acidity. A fun experiment since we could enjoy the final results with dinner that night.

Our day came to a close but our memories remain. To celebrate our trip we had a Chilean Carmenere with our dinner tonight.



Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events


Mark Your Calendars!


Sunday, May 18, 2014

Patti Hipple hosts a Spring Fling at one of Omaha's best restaurants: V. Mertz in the Old Market.

Sunday, June 29, 2014

Alan Fisher & Deb Tritsch host a wine and all appetizer event at Vine & Branch in the Old Market.

MAY						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
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 18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
 29	30					

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: bob.kossow@cox.net



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Keep 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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