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The Bluffs Food & Wine gazette

Event Report:

Dinner at V. Mertz with
All Wines 95 Points or Better

Inside

A Note from the Board:
Why Listen to a Wine Critic?

Wine Quiz Number #4

Upcoming Events



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





Presidents Comments

Whenever we have an event at V. Mertz, the interest level in the Branch picks up. We had great attendance of 50 people, which pretty much filled up the restaurant. Everyone knew the food would be imaginative and outstanding, but with all wines being 95 points or better, the wines would be a tad bit better than usual. Well, David Hayes and his crew did not disappoint. Manager and aspiring Certified Sommelier Matt Brown gave us great background information on the wines and how they interacted with the food. Education is one of the important reasons why people become members of the IWFS, and we received a great deal of it from Matt. We learned about why one wine was named Highwire, why Sauternes gets botrytis, what sun chokes really are, how Syrah can taste of blackberries, but when super ripe can have raspberry notes, and how Orin Swift had changed the mix of grapes in his Mannequinn label towards more Chardonnay. Reading the Event Report will remind you of all the teachable moments you may have forgotten since it is hard to recall everything that was being said that night. Don't miss reading it. Even if you didn't go, you can get filled in about what you missed.

Our Note From The Board article this month comes from Steve Hipple. Steve asks, Why Listen to a Wine Critic? There's a lot of them out there nowadays, with some being easier scorers than others. Steve discusses this and how you can learn from them and develop your own palate. Give it a read.

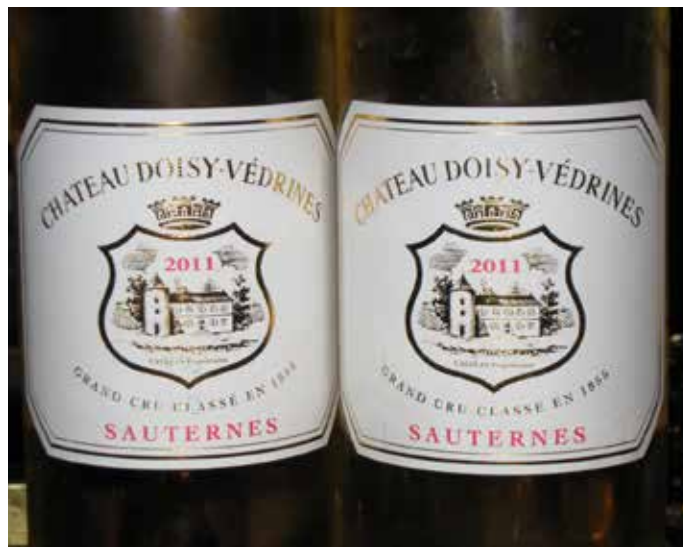
John Fischer has presented us with Wine Quiz number Four. The quizzes, teaching devices designed to get you to think, have been getting progressively harder. Now John addresses what scares a lot of people: wine pairings with food. When we ask if members want to host an event, what gives them pause is the fear of matching the best wine to a menu. But it is not a mystery how this is done. There are principles that guide selection. If you can crack this nut, your enjoyment of food and wine increases enormously. John has written books on the subject, and has one to recommend to those who want to learn the principles behind wine and food pairing. Be sure to take the quiz. Only you will know how you did, but take the opportunity to learn. It gets easier every time you learn a principle.

All the best in Food & Wine,

Tom Murnan

"Poor old fool, thought the well-dressed gentleman as he watched an old man fish in a puddle outside a pub. So he invited the old man inside for a drink. As they sipped their whiskeys, the gentleman thought he'd humor the old man and asked, "So how many have you caught today?" The old man replied, "You're the eighth."

—From: *A Prairie Home Companion*



Event Report: Dinner at V. Mertz with All Wines 95 Points or Better

by Tom Murnan

It's hard to get too much better than this: an IWFS event at one of Omaha's best restaurants with all wines scored at least 95 points by professional wine critics. And from the turnout, 44 members and 6 guests, I think the interest level speaks for itself. Yes, we had a real treat on our hands, and Chef Kyle Lamb did not disappoint. Nor did our wine wait staff, which included three aspiring sommeliers. It all added up to a fabulously fun evening. Patti Hipple spent hours trying to track down our highly rated wines, but the trick is to find wines that we could afford. She did an outstanding job.

Reception consisted of just one wine, a sparkler. That's the way they did it in IWFS founder André Simon's time. We began with "Champagne." In this case, since it was made by French Champagne House Roederer, who knows that unless it actually comes from Champagne, France it can't be called Champagne, our sparkling wine was an excellent substitute for Champagne. The **2007 Roederer Estate "L" Ermitage** from Anderson Valley was a great choice for the charcuterie and cheese hors d'oeuvres. The wine's high acidity was able to cut through the richness of the salamis and pork, as well as the cheeses, and not be overwhelmed by them.

There was an amazing selection offered on the V. Mertz **Charcuterie & Small Bites** boards. Pepperoni, Garlic Salami, Spicy Fennel Salami, Pork Pate and Pancetta were all offered. Beer Mustard, Sauerkraut, and Pickled Onions were all house made as was the Carrot Jam and Pickled Fennel. Sliced baguette was also available. Three kinds of cheese were on board. **Leyden** is a cow's milk cheese from the Netherlands; **Paladin** is a cow's milk cheese from France; and **Manchego** is a sheep's milk cheese from Spain. Finally, we had **Verano**, a sheep's milk from Vermont.

After moving to table for the **1st Course**, President Tom Murnan introduced event producer **Steve Hipple** and General Manager **Matt Brown**. Matt was going speak on all the wine and food courses to provide a little education for us. Steve informed everyone that Matt Brown had passed the second portion of his certified sommelier exam. He is the only advanced sommelier in our region currently. He had to taste 6 wines blind. Although they never tell you what you were tasting, he believes they ended up being a Premier Cru Chablis, a Gruner Veltner, a Grand Cru quality Alsatian Gewurztraminer, a Cru Beaujolais from Moulin à Vent, a Merlot from Napa Valley or Rutherford, and an old Amarone.

Our first wine was from producer **Orin Swift** (of Prisoner fame) from northern California. Dave Finney is the winemaker. He typically makes full throttled wines. This wine is a **2013 Mannequinn Proprietary Chardonnay**. It used to be Proprietary White, a mix of Rhone varietals, but this is the first wine he could label as Chardonnay as it has a large proportion of Chardonnay in it, but it still has Rhone varietals from various Russian River Valley producers to balance the wine out. Orin Swift does not own the land but relies on long term relationships with producers to supply the grapes. The richness of the wine and the fruit content would play out against the oiliness of the food component and would bring out different flavors in the wine.

The oil in the **Golden Trout with Radish, Turnip, Buttermilk and Chevril** was coming primarily from the fish, but also a bit of the smoky tasting buttermilk dressing. In addition, this sauce was garlicky and salty. The golden trout looked and tasted like rare salmon. This is not surprising since salmon and trout are closely related. Rounds of radish and turnip sat with the fish, with the sauce beneath. Microgreens enlivened the dish and provided color. The dish was served cold, and went very well with the Mannequinn. The wine was able to stand up to the strong flavors of the dish and tasted better with the food than alone. Imaginative and superb.

The **2nd Course** was a fun entree that found us with **Smoked Pork, Onion and Tomato on Trofie Pasta**. It was served with two very different wines from different continents. Matt told us that the **2012 Hartford Family Winery Zinfandel Highwire Vineyard** was not owned by the Hartford family but friends of theirs. This is a 100 year old vineyard with old vine zinfandel. They have a different trellis system with the grapes being exposed to the full sun at the top of the trellis. They get incredible ripeness with a pretty bright red fruit tone. Zinfandel grapes usually ripens inside its own cluster in varying degrees, so you tend to see ripe grapes and unripe grapes all in the same cluster. Here they don't do that. They let them get super ripe and hand sort them so that they are only using bright examples of zinfandel here. It results in a lot more developed fruit, a bit more jammy, and close to being raisinated. A very intense, fruit driven style with a high percentage of new French oak, which gives it spicy notes and cinnamon tones.

The Zinfandel is contrasted to Tempranillo in our other pairing, a **2006 Bodegas Muga Gran Reserva Prado Enea** which hails from Rioja. It is their top end wine, not made in every vintage. Being a Gran Reserva it gets extended aging, so 2006 is the current vintage available. It was aged in oak for 3 years, then in bottle for another 3 years. Muga held it back even further. Mostly Tempranillo, they also blend Garnacha and Graciano grapes into it. Matt loves Tempranillo with smoked pork. There is a mix of oak here, and Muga gets away from the old fashioned, oxidized style with a more modern take on the wine. With smoked pork, you need a wine with intensity. These two wines go after the smoked pork in different ways. The dish consisted of House smoked pork butts, smoked for a long time under low temperatures, then cut into small pieces and served with a tomato based sauce and Trofie Pasta. The results were delicious. Intensely smoky and a bit too salty, the meat looked like pulled pork. The pasta was dense and a bit heavy. Our table asked for some bread to help neutralize the salt (it worked!). Overall, a delicious course.

Our 3rd Course was **New York Strip with Sun Chokes Multiple Ways and Berries**. Again, we had a pair of wines to compare, this time with Rhone varietals. Black angus steak was prepared in a traditional way. This was accompanied by some local sun chokes done in two different ways. One was cooked au confit and used for the sauce on the bottom. There was also a dehydrated sun choke chip that was deep fried. **Sun choke** is also known as a Jerusalem Artichoke, essentially the root of a sun flower, kind of nutty and slightly sweet. It grows well in areas like Nebraska. It is earthy with a nutty sweetness to it.

Our local purveyor tonight is Squeaky Green Organics. The second sauce was a berry sauce, but it was not overly sweet. Blackberries and raspberries were reduced down with the House beef jus. So it was a rich sauce with a bit of sweetness. The berry sauce was selected because both our wines have Syrah, which will have a lot of berry tones in the wine. Syrah has a lot of blackberry and darker fruit tones to it. When Syrah is very ripe, it can have a lot of red fruit components, like raspberry.

The **2012 Yalumba "The Signature" Cabernet Shiraz Barossa** is cabernet and shiraz blended together and comes from one of Australia's most heralded producers, Yalumba. The Signature is one of their top wines, Yalumba's answer to Penfold's Grange. Yalumba sold Penfolds their vines for Grange, so they have been around longer than Penfolds. Cabernet leads the way in this vintage with a healthy amount of Shiraz. A big and bold wine with a lot of dark fruit. The Signature has been made since 1962, but only in good years. French, American and Hungarian oak were all used here. Yalumba makes their own barrels.

Our second wine was an American Syrah. The **2012 Foxen Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard Santa Maria Valley** in Santa Barbara County in Southern California. The Santa Maria Valley has different microclimates where one area might grow Syrah and another nearby grow Pinot Noir. One hundred percent Syrah, this wine is aged in French and Hungarian barrels. This is a traditional Southern California Syrah. Both wines are big and bold.

The steak was quite beefy in flavor and just a bit chewy. The sun choke sauce provided a bit of smoke flavor. The berry sauce brought the flavors out of the wines. Of the two, The Foxen Syrah was rich and acidic, while the Yalumba was more earthy and Bordeaux like. I preferred the Cab-Shiraz just a bit better than the straight Syrah.

The **4th Course** found us with **Pistachio Cake with Elderflower Foam and Ginger** paired with a **2011 Château Doisy Vedrines Sauternes** from France. This is a highly regarded wine from southern Bordeaux. Sauternes has its own microclimate. They have enough humidity for botrytis to form on the grape. Botrytis, or Noble Rot, dehydrates the grape and intensifies the level of sugar and acidity so you get this sweet wine that has lower levels of water but still has good levels of acid. In addition, botrytis itself will add ginger, saffron, earthy and spicy flavors to the wine which would play off of the flavors in the dessert. The Pistachio cake had an elder flower foam and a little bit of ginger. Matt stated that what they were trying to do is to take away some of the floral and some of the ginger in the wine by putting it in the food, so the flavors cancel out and hopefully you will see some of the mineral tones of the Sauternes. The vineyard is a gravelly, well drained area, but the mineral flavors can be hidden by sweetness. In other words, Matt was trying to take away some of the sweetness and botrytis flavors so we could taste the other parts of the wine.

The Sauternes was intense, concentrated with honeyed flavors and a touch of ginger. Personally, I did not notice the mineral component of the wine that Matt was hoping to bring out, which may be because the wine is just so powerful and sweet. The dessert was way less sweet, which is what you always want, and did bring out the botrytis flavors of the wine.

This event report was a bit longer than usual, but it is not every day that we have comments from someone who is so close to having his certified sommelier certificate. During the event, everything is happening so quickly, so it is nice to be able to return to that time to read all the nuances and strategies that went into this extraordinary dinner. Many thanks to hosts **Patti and Steve Hipple** for coming up with our 95 point and better theme and all the work it entails to actually find the wines. Thanks as well to Co-Hosts and proprietors **David and Diane Hayes** who provided such a superb venue. Congratulations and thanks to **Matt Brown** for his commentary, and to all the wine and wait staff. Kudos as well to the kitchen, and **Chef Kyle Lamb** who created such an imaginative menu, closely coordinated to the wines. The Council Bluffs Branch truly appreciates the work of all the staff who gave up their day off to provide us with such a lovely dining experience. The reason members join the International Wine & Food Society is to have outstanding culinary experiences such as this.







A Note from the Board: Why Listen to a Wine Critic?

by Stephen Hipple

Wikipedia defines Wine Critic as “a person who evaluates wine and describes it either with a numerical rating, a tasting note, or combination of both.”

Why do so many consumers listen to wine critics?

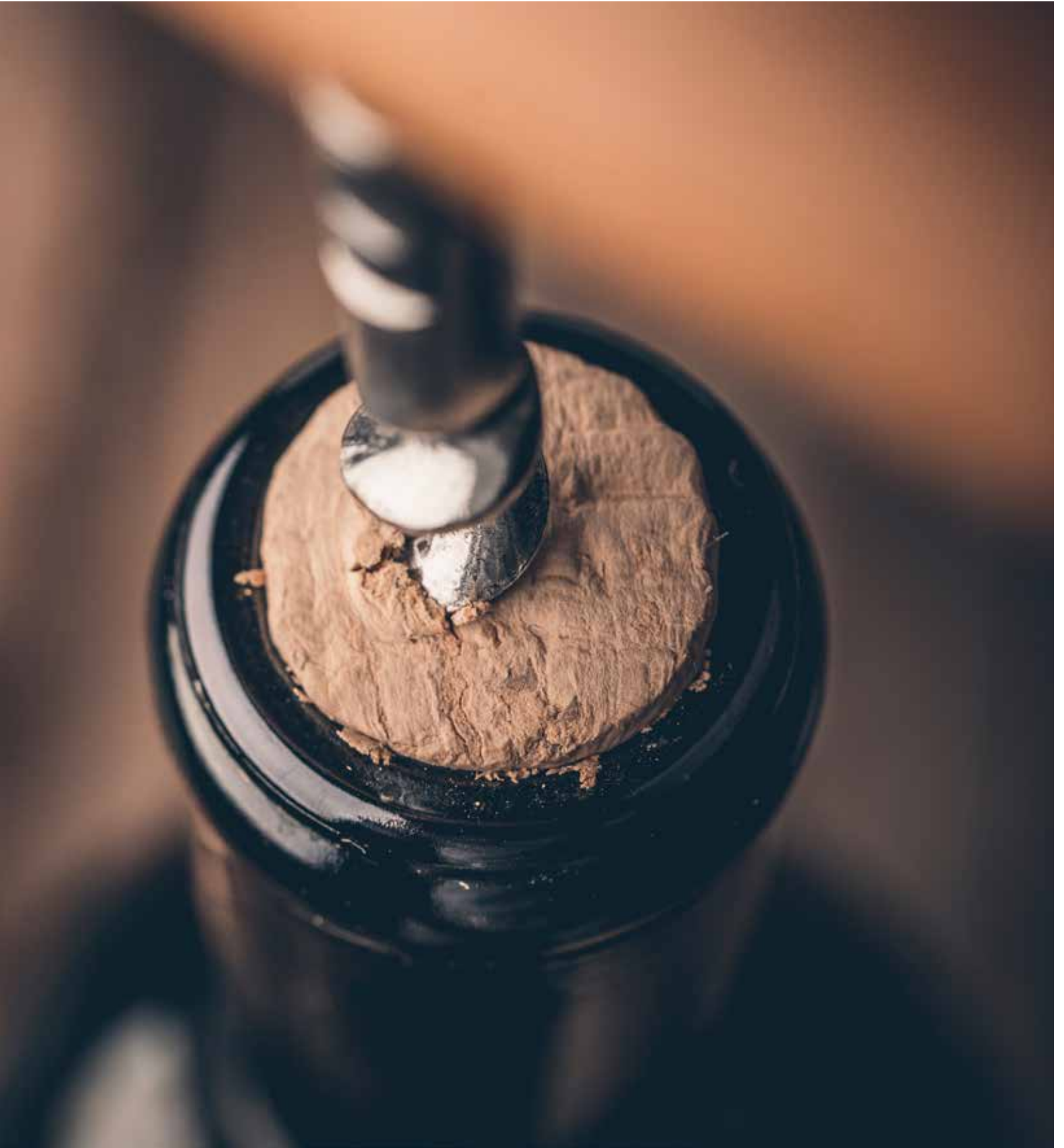
The answer to this question for most of us is for guidance. I am an amateur wine drinker and collector. There are thousands of wines for sale in the world today. How do I know which bottle of wine to purchase with my hard earned money? Obviously, it is impossible to sample every wine in the market today and decide which wines I should add to my cellar. Therefore, I look to professionals for guidance.

Most wine critics score wines on a 100 point scale with 100 representing the perfect wine. Other critics use a variety of other systems, but for all practical purposes they are being phased out and replaced with the 100 point scale. Some critics only provide a description of the wine and give the optimal time for drinking, but most also give a score. A description of the characteristics of the wine such as its flavors, acidity, sweetness, tannins etc. are most helpful when pairing a wine with food.

How do I pick a wine critic?

There are many wine critics today. Most work for a magazine. Some of the more prominent wine critics include Robert Parker publisher of the Wine Advocate, James Laube of the Wine Spectator, Stephen Tanzer, from International Wine Cellar, and Janis Robinson, British Master of Wine and writer for the Financial Times. All of the above are well respected and deserve your consideration. Just pick a critic with a good reputation. There is frequently a disparity of a few points when comparing a critic's scores, but that is to be expected in such an inexact undertaking. Wide variances in the score do occur, but this is relatively uncommon and you can usually get the concurrent opinion of another critic to bolster an opinion. Over time, you will find a wine critic or two who you agree with most of the time. This is the critic who is best for you.

Drinking and scoring the aristocrat of social beverages, wine, is a very enjoyable experience, especially when doing so with fun-loving, and easy going people who want to indulge in the better things in life. You, get to savor many wonderful wines while comparing your pallet with the professionals. At the end of the bottle, the only score that matters is yours.





Wine Quiz Number Four

by John Fischer

Quiz #4

1. Sweet and sour foods go best with

- (a) a sweet wine
- (b) a tart wine
- (c) a sweet and tart wine
- (d) a wine like Viognier

2. You are serving tuna sushi for appetizers.

The best wine choice would be:

- (a) Zinfandel
- (b) Brut Champagne
- (c) Chardonnay
- (d) Alsatian Riesling

3. Shrimp Tempura will best pair with

- (a) Chardonnay
- (b) Brut (dry) Champagne
- (c) Sauvignon Blanc
- (d) white Hermitage

4. Serve pot roast & root vegetables with

- (a) Côtes du Rhone
- (b) Sancerre
- (c) high quality Red Burgundy
- (d) Heitz Martha's Vineyard Cabernet

5. Osso Buco (braised veal shank)

- (a) Cabernet Sauvignon
- (b) California Pinot Noir
- (c) red Burgundy
- (d) Brunello de Montalcino

6. Baked ham topped with a sweet cherry/pineapple glaze and decorated with pineapple chunks, cloves, and cherries matches best with

- (a) Gewürztraminer
- (b) Chardonnay
- (c) Riesling Spätlese
- (d) red Burgundy

7. Prosciutto wrapped melon balls makes a great match with

- (a) Riesling Kabinett
- (b) Soave
- (c) Viognier
- (d) Chardonnay

8. Match Pepper Steak green beans, potatoes with best wine choice

- (a). Zinfandel
- (b) Pinot Noir
- (c) Valpocella (light Italian red)
- (d) red Bordeaux

9. Filet of Sole crusted with almonds and lemon zest pairs best with

- (a) Oregon Pinot Noir
- (b) Soave
- (c) Alsatian Riesling
- (d) Australian Chardonnay

10. What wine would you serve with batter fried Oysters—select the best choice:

- (a) Chablis
- (b) Champagne
- (c) Chardonnay
- (d) Riesling Spätlese

11. What wine would you serve with poached egg on toast.

- (a) Chardonnay
- (b) Champagne
- (c) dry German Riesling
- (d) Riesling Spätlese

12. Oaked wine go best with

- (a) light- bodied dishes
- (b) full-bodied dishes
- (c) sweet dishes
- (d) salty dishes

**Answer key on page 14*

Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!



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



August TBA

Producers: Jill Panzer and Michelle Heyder



September 17, 2016

Biaggi's
Producer: John Fischer



October TBA

Producers: Hipples



November 18, 2016

Council Bluffs Country Club
Producers: Tom & Jeanette Schierbrock



December 3, 2016

President's Holiday Dinner at Le Bouillon
Theme: French Comfort Food
Producers: Tom & Mary Murnan

Quiz #4 Answers:

1. (c) sweet and tart wine—the best would be a German Riesling. Reason: The character of the wine matches that of the food.

2. (b) Brut Champagne. This is a cold, light-bodied food. Cold foods are always lighter than heated foods. Champagne is a very light-bodied tart wine. Always try to match the weight of the food with that of the wine. I have devised a simple test I call the “squeeze of lemon test.” –If in your mind’s eye a squeeze of lemon will enhance the food then match it with a tart wine. Tuna is enhanced by a squeeze of lemon.

3. (b) Brut Champagne: squeeze of lemon test. Both wine and food are light bodied.

4. (a): This is a simple country styled dish which needs a similar styled red wine. The Burgundy and Heitz are too fancy and out of character. The Cotes du Rhone is the best choice.

5. (d) Brunello de Montalcino: Always try to stay ethnic. Remember, the eye sees the label which further ties the wine to the food. This is a full-bodied Italian dish; serve it with a full- bodied Italian wine.

6. (c) Riesling Spätlese: This is a sweet, salty, and fruit flavored dish. Serve it with a tart, sweet, fruity wine. Salty foods call for acidic wines. In wine pairing, salt acts in a manner similar to an acid. Riesling is fruity and acidic making it a great choice.

7. (a) Riesling Kabinett: This is a light- bodied, sweet fruity dish. Serve it with a similar styled wine.

8. (a) Zinfandel: One of the commonest flavors in Zinfandel is black pepper. This is a black pepper flavored, full-bodied dish. Serve it with wine with similar characteristics.

9. (b) Soave: This is a light-bodied dish that calls for a light-bodied wine. Soave is a light- bodied Italian wine. Common flavors in Soave (and indeed many Italian white wines) include lemon and almonds which would tie the wine to the food. All other wine choices are too full-bodied for this dish.

10. (b) Champagne: Both Chablis and Champagne would work, but Champagne would pair best. Champagne marries best with light-bodied dishes that are crispy, crunchy, puffed-up, or creamy. The “scrubbing bubbles” in Champagne also serve to clean the palate of thick creamy dishes. The batter in this light-bodied dish gives it a crispy character which ties best with Champagne

11. (b) Champagne: You have thick creamy egg yolk, crunchy toast, light bodied dish—need I say more?

12. (b) full-bodied dishes: Oak makes wine richer, more complex, and fuller bodied. Although light-bodied wines pair best with light weight dishes, in certain circumstances they can work with full-bodied dishes. Always try to match wine with food weigh for weight.

If you have difficulty with these quizzes or you wish to learn more, you can purchase my book *Wine and Food-101* by John R. Fischer, which is available on Amazon or for a signed copy contact me at jrudyf@cox.net

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.

*The International Wine & Food Society of London, England
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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.

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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