

JULY 2021

# *The Bluffs* *Food & Wine* *gazette*

**EVENT REPORT: THE PRICE IS...RIGHT?  
AT FLEMINGS STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR**



## **ALSO INSIDE**

What's the Difference Between a Wallfish and an Escargot?

Upcoming Events



# PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

**Greetings to all;**

**W**e Need You!

As we strive to offer interesting and informative events for members, we are always looking for new ideas. And, YOU are an invaluable source of new ideas. So, if you have an interest in a particular type of wine or wine region or A venue that you have been wanting to try or a fun group event, please let us know.

We are looking for your ideas and suggestions. Please feel free to talk with a Board member or myself about your ideas. All good ideas begin with only a small snippet of inspiration. Well, and maybe a good glass of wine.

Be safe and be well.

Connie

*Connie Martin*

**Cover Photo:** In the theme of things: Joe Goldstein as **The Price Is Right** host Bob Barker, and Jon Meyers as Chuck Barris, host of **The Gong Show**. Photo by Tom Murnan

***“No matter how much you push  
the envelope, it’ll still be stationery.”  
— Its Time for some Lexophiles***

# EDITOR'S

## CORNER

Well, another challenging wine theme at our Flemings Steakhouse event: Can you pick out the more expensive wine? On the one hand, just because a wine is more expensive doesn't mean it is better. And one of the possible goals of wine connoisseurship is to get the best wine for the cheapest price. But the price is many times set by how much a winery can wring out of consumers. Think Bordeaux First Growths, who gets much more money out of their wines than some other winery just across the road from its more famous neighbor. Château Suduiraut, a Premier Cru, gets many times less money than Château d'Yquem, which is adjacent to Suduiraut, but has the exalted title of Premier Cru Supérieur. It was really a great deal of fun, especially with the old TV game show *The Price Is Right* enhancement. Check out the story.

I never heard the term Wallfish before until I stumbled across it in an Atlas Obscura article. AO specializes in off beat culinary items from unusual places. I do know what an escargot is and have to say that eating of the snail in the American Midwest has gone down from the level it was consumed in the 1970s and 1980s. I just thought the articles listed in the credits were of interest to our readership, so take a peek and discover what a Wallfish is.

Some members have had trouble reading the Gazette on issuu.com, Or, they don't want to sign in, which means you can't even read the Gazette at all. They prefer a PDF since all you have to do is click it open. We have decided to offer it in both formats. In your email, a PDF will be sent along with the issuu.com link. The advantage of issuu.com is that you can see both right and left pages, like a paper magazine. Our PDF only lets you view one page at a time.

You can also access the Branch Recipe file by clicking: [https://issuu.com/omaha-publications/docs/iwfs\\_cb\\_council\\_bluffs\\_recipes](https://issuu.com/omaha-publications/docs/iwfs_cb_council_bluffs_recipes).

Cheers! 🍷

*Tom Murnan*



"NO MATTER HOW  
MUCH CHOCOLATE  
YOU EAT, YOUR  
EARRINGS WILL  
ALWAYS FIT."

— QUOTE DISCOVERED  
BY MARY MURNAN



# EVENT REPORT

## THE PRICE IS...RIGHT? AT FLEMINGS STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR

*Story and Photos by Tom Murnan*

An intriguing idea. If you didn't know, what do you think the cost of a wine might be? In comparing two similar wines, which one would you expect to cost more? This **The Price Is Right** theme was the brainchild of Jill Goldstein and Susan Koesters. Highly rated wines at different price points, is not as easy to pull off as one might think. Wines had to come from the same area, be the same varietal, and as close to the same year as possible. Could we pick out the more expensive wine in a pair of choices? My radar says that it was Joe who decided to exploit the game show theme, but I might be wrong on that. Joe came as **The Price Is Right Host** Bob Barker, while Jon Meyers came as Chuck Barris from **The Gong Show**, complete with curly hair wig and padded red mallet. The event sold out quickly, and Flemings limited the event to 40 people, which was a do-able but snug number considering the limited space in the event room. Of our 40, 6 were guests. Perhaps members are rejoicing as COVID restrictions are lessening. In four days, Omaha will drop its mask mandate. Iowa dropped its mask mandate a few weeks ago.

Appetizers were passed by masked servers and were served warm. I enjoyed both of them. The **Beef Filet Skewers with Chimichurri** were great. That chopped pars-

ley had a bit of kick to it, perhaps some red pepper flakes? The **Apple Fig Blue Cheese Flatbread** was also quite tasty, with all the ingredients harmoniously working together. Our quaffers were the **Catena Lunlunta Mendoza Malbec 2018** and the **Smith Madrone Riesling 2016**, which arrived the day of the event with intervention of Mike Wilke, who knows the Smith Madrone boys and got a shipment sent pronto. Thanks Mike.

We all sat down, and Joe explained the object of the game. We would be tasting blind, not knowing which of the two wines was in the glass. But at least you knew what wines were being served. To help keep everything straight, the wine glasses were slightly different for every pair. So, one might get the same shaped glass, but one was taller than the other. Or one glass was rounded and the other the usual elongated shape. Wine Manager **Brad Van de Lune** sketched out all the dinner wines for us.

**Roasted Golden Beet Salad with Pistachio Goat Cheese, Pickled Red Onion and Lemon Balsamic** was served with **Domaine Vacheron Sancerre 2019** and **Henri Bourgeois Sancerre Jadis 2017**. The beets were quite nice, perhaps a bit milder than red beets. All the other ingredients served to enhance the beets. Sancerre is an AOC in France along the Loire River primarily known for its

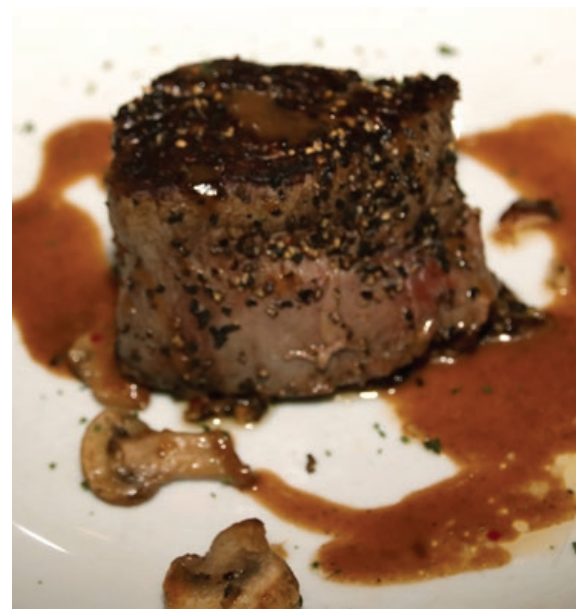
Sauvignon Blanc white wine, although some Sancerre Rouge is also made from Pinot Noir and a rosé from the Gamay grape. You have chalk and clay soil in Sancerre, which gives the wine a smoky after taste with a touch of salinity. So, we had two Sauvignon Blancs to compare. These are both storied producers. The Bourgeois is in its 10th generation of wine making. The Vacheron is also a family business, and they went biodynamic in 2005. Known for their Sancerre Blanc, they also make Pinot Noir.

One wine had a forward grassy nose and taste, with noticeable acidity. The other wine was more harmonious and balanced with only a soupçon of grassiness. I got the answer wrong on which was the most expensive. I knew the Bourgeois would be the most expensive, but never have had either of these wines before, I guessed the wrong way on which was which, assuming the Bourgeois would be the more elegant of the two. Sometimes a little bit of knowledge will trip you up. So, the Bourgeois was the more expensive of the two by \$11.00. \$47.00 compared to \$36.00 for the Vacheron.

**Pan Seared Duck with Shiitake Mushroom Risotto and Cherry Demi Glaze** was next. Our two battling wines were the **Ken Wright Cellars Pinot Noir 2017** and **Domaine Serene Evenstad Reserve 2014**. ▶





























Both wines hailed from the Willamette Valley. Both wines are famous. Ken Wright came from Kentucky to start his winery in 1986, establishing Panzer Creek. Then he began making vineyard specific wines. In 1994, he started Ken Wright Cellars. The Wine Enthusiast awarded him #1 Wine of the Year in 2012 for his Abbot Claim Vineyard Pinot Noir. Their wines are all distinctive as are the labels. Domaine Serene was started by Ken and Grace Evenstad and named after their daughter Serene. They have been expanding with a new visitor center and a white wine facility. The winery has won numerous awards for their elegant style.

My duck breast was surprisingly thick and so tasty. But all the sides helped enhance the Pinot Noir experience. Mushrooms and mushroom risotto pair with the natural affinity of Pinot Noir for earthy flavors, and the cherry demi glaze is like the cherry on top for affinity of Pinot Noir flavors. My dish came out a bit tepid, especially the rice. I got both wines correct. The Serene at \$52.16 was much more expensive than the Wright which cost \$22.50. The Serene was also deeper, earthier, and a bit more complex than the Wright.

Moving right along, we were served the **Peppercorn Crusted Filet with Mushroom Conserva and Peppercorn Sauce**. Sides included **Southwestern Style Corn with Cojita Cheese, Cilantro, Mexican Spices and Roasted Broccolini**. My filet was expertly grilled with a red center. The Peppercorn sauce brought out the flavor of the beef. I didn't think the corn particularly enhanced the meat though. The broccolini was nice and tender.

Our wine contestants were the **Freemark Abbey Cabernet Sauvignon 2012** and the **Joseph Phelps Cabernet Sauvignon 2018**, both from Napa Valley. This classic steakhouse pairing was going with two California wine legends. Freemark Abbey was started in 1886 under the name Tychson Cellars by Josephine Tychson, after her husband committed suicide. The winery changed hands a number of times until getting the name Freemark Abbey in 1939, which it has kept ever since. Freemark was one of five American wineries that bested the French in the famous **Judgement of Paris** contest in 1976. [Check out the May Bluffs Gazette for the full story.] Joseph Phelps is best known for their Insignia label.

This pairing really threw me because the more elegant, harmonious, and well-balanced wine in the tall glass (the Phelps 2018) seemed to me to be the older vintage, while the tannic, powerful, and younger seeming wine turned out

to be the 2012 Freemark Abbey, the older wine. Maybe my notes were in error. The Phelps cost \$65.00 compared to the Freemark \$37.50, a \$27.50 difference. I did know the Phelps would be the more expensive wine, but not that it would taste more mature than the Freemark Abbey which was 6 years its senior. So, although I knew the Phelps was more expensive, and hence got that right, I misidentified which one was the Phelps. I'm still shaking my head in disbelief that the Phelps would taste more mature when generally it takes 8 or 10 years to really come together.

Dessert was **Orange Olive Cake with Key Lime Curd, Macerated Blueberries and Chantilly Cream**. Like a pound cake, it was moist and enlivened by blueberries and cream sauce. Our **Château Guiraud Sauternes 2005** was a spot-on good choice.

There is a way to make this even way more difficult. I hesitate to say because we may find ourselves in that situation when we experience **The Price is...Right?** 2. If you truly made everything blind with no clues from the invitation or the menu card, it would be a purer way to decide on what wine you think should be the more expensive. I admit I used clues as to what wines had the best reputation, highest price and the like based on what was given us, even if I couldn't identify them. But if you had no clues, you would just have to rely on what you thought the better wine was. The question is, would

you sign up if you had all the wines redacted from the invitation and the table menu card. That would mean we would all have to trust Joe G, a known jokester! Could be risky, right? LOL. But I would be willing to go in totally blind, not knowing anything about the wine's identity, just for the sheer challenge. He would have to reveal all at the end. If it were revealed we were comparing Two Buck Chuck to Kirkland, we would just have to run Joe out of town on a rail!

Thanks so much to our event producers **Susan & Jim Koesters** and **Jill & Joe Goldstein** for an interesting twist on thinking about the price of a wine relative to its quality. The game show theme was an added bonus and a source of quite a few laughs. Many thanks as well to the Flemings staff, particularly to **Brad Van de Lune** who helped organize the wine selection, and to Chef Partner **Rafael Ponce** and Executive Sous Chef **Jose Velasco** for crafting a very tasty meal. The service was attentive as well. Thanks as well to Zanita, Eli, Ashley, Katie, Danielle, Brian and a few others just helping out. 🍷

**“My duck breast was surprisingly thick and so tasty. But all the sides helped enhance the Pinot Noir experience. Mushrooms and mushroom risotto pair with the natural affinity of Pinot Noir for earthy flavors, and the cherry demi glaze is like the cherry on top for affinity of Pinot Noir flavors.”**



# What's the Difference Between a Wallfish & an Escargot?

BY TOM MURNAN

*Snail farmer  
Lyn Paxman,  
photo by SWNS*



**F**ifty years ago, in the Omaha / Council Bluffs area, any French restaurant worth its salt listed Escargot on its menu. The Old Market icon, The French Café had escargot artwork on its menu covers. But foods, like wines, go in and out of fashion. It is not yet extinct from the Omaha restaurant scene. You can find escargot at Le Voltaire, M's Pub and Taxi's Grille and Bar, but they are not in the shell, where you need special tongs to hold the shell and dig out the mollusk with a small fork. They are served many times in an ovenproof crock with 6 dips to hold escargot and butter and covered with cheese. Baguette slices traditionally accompany this rich dish, the better to soak up the extra garlicky butter.

I came across an article about raising escargot in England. **Somerset Escargot** began in 2019 in the southwest of England

in Somerset County, also known as the West Country. Proprietors, Lyn and Rob Paxman, raise 80,000 **Helix Aspersa Muller snails**, also known as Petit Gris, annually. They are the preferred snail variety because of their great flavor and tender meat. Snails are also a very healthy source of protein. They are low fat, high in Omega 3 and magnesium, and have more iron than red meat. But whereas we in the USA are used to getting escargot in a can, these beauties are shipped fresh in Britain, cleansed and in hibernation. Fresh is better, although preparing them is more trouble. It must be worth it. The web site, however, does not say how far away they will ship. England to Council Bluffs?

But what about the Wallfish you just read in the title? Well, that takes a bit of history-telling. I often wonder about who the first brave person to eat such and such

was. The first snail eater must have been an ancient Roman. The Romans were the first recorded people to have snail ranches where the little darlings feasted on wine and milk, becoming fat in the process. As the empire expanded, the Romans brought snails to Britain and raised them in enclosures. The Romans were eventually driven out, but the English held onto this culinary tradition. In the Catholic centuries, to get by the Lenten prohibition against meat, the English did what the French did with frog legs: they associated them to water, since fish was allowed in Lent, but not meat. A wallfish was a Somerset description the snail's ability to climb walls. Besides, they were slimy like fish. The moniker "fish" was also a way to get past the Church's prohibition against meat eating in Lent. ►



◀ The Somerset tradition was to cook the live snails in cider, herbs, vegetables and seasonings. Once simmered in this mixture, the shells are then filled with cheese, butter and herbs. Somerset's last pub to serve wallfish, the Miner's Arms, was owned by a former rocket engineer, Paul Leyton. But Leyton closed up shop in 1990 as the last gastro-pub selling wallfish. Lyn Paxman came across an old 1960s newsreel on how the snails were prepared in the Somerset Mendip Hills, which inspired her snail raising efforts. [youtube.com/watch?v=XQMIQypdS2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQMIQypdS2s).

Here's the recipe for Wallfish from the website:

## MENDIP WALLFISH

*Recipe courtesy of Somerset Escargot*

*Ingredients to Serve 4*

24 pre-cooked escargot (instead of cooking in court bouillon, use cider, carrot and onion)

24 clean and empty snail shells

325g butter

1 tbsp fresh chervil, finely chopped.

1 tbsp fresh chives, chopped.

1 tbsp fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped.

1 tsp fresh thyme

Pinch of cayenne pepper

Salt to taste

We are so used to getting escargot from a can, we don't even realize what preparation is required for fresh snails. Somerset Escargot sends their snails hibernated, which means they are refrigerated. You keep them that way until they are ready to be consumed. Canned escargot have been cooked under great pressure, which can make them tough. Courtesy of the web site:

## PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

- Have a large pan of water on the boil – it must be boiling before the escargot are added.
- Take the escargot straight from the fridge and tip into the boiling water, leave for 5 mins.
- Plunge into cold water and when cool enough remove from shells.
- Using a cocktail stick, or tweezers remove each escargot from its shell.
- Twist the snail meat out, following the shape of the shell.
- Have a hot pan of brine with 10% salt dissolved into it.
- Boil snails in brine for 15 mins, agitating gently to assist with slime removal.
- Rinse several times with cold water. The escargot are now ready to be cooked.
- If you want to use the escargot shells, first

*Paxman in the snails' hibernation attic.*  
*Photo by Richard Collett.*



wash them with bicarbonate of soda, rinse several times and boil them to sterilise.

Sounds like a lot of trouble to me, but I really enjoy escargot, and I have to say, I've never had them fresh from their refrigerated slumber. Then there are various methods to cook them. You can use Court Bouillon, or the Cider recipe.

## PRE-COOKING

For some recipes escargot will be pan fried along with other flavours. Or they can be pre-cooked to create a tender meat. This is the method I use to pre-cook:

Cook in a vegetable stock or court bouillon [or the cider recipe, editor] on a very low heat for 45 to 60 minutes.

A slow cooker works really well.

Or a pan on the stove top on a very low simmer.

It's the slow and low which makes the escargot meat tender.

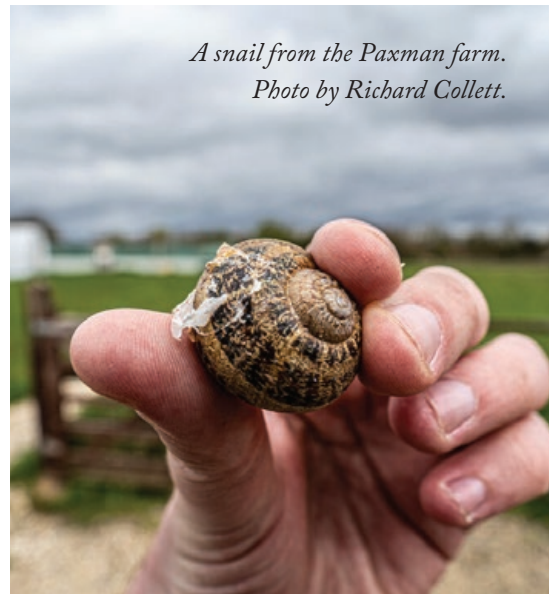
One recipe sounds intriguing: **Snail Bombs**. Lyn Paxman says it is for "escargot virgins." Basically, the escargot are breaded with lightly ground corn flour, deep fat fried, then dipped in garlic mayonnaise. Sounds interesting. 🍷

**Sources:** [www.atlasobscura.com/articles/cooked-snail-recipe](http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/cooked-snail-recipe); [www.somersetescargot.co.uk/](http://www.somersetescargot.co.uk/); [www.somersetescargot.co.uk/preparation-and-pre-cooking-instructions/](http://www.somersetescargot.co.uk/preparation-and-pre-cooking-instructions/); [www.somersetescargot.co.uk/snail-bombs-great-for-escargot-virgins/](http://www.somersetescargot.co.uk/snail-bombs-great-for-escargot-virgins/); [www.somersetescargot.co.uk/a-traditional-somerset-escargot-dish-mendip-wallfish/](http://www.somersetescargot.co.uk/a-traditional-somerset-escargot-dish-mendip-wallfish/); [www.somersetescargot.co.uk/escargot-a-somerset-delicacy/](http://www.somersetescargot.co.uk/escargot-a-somerset-delicacy/); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQMIQypdS2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQMIQypdS2s)



*Snail Bombs*

*A snail from the Paxman farm.*  
*Photo by Richard Collett.*





# UPCOMING COUNCIL BLUFFS



## BRANCH EVENTS

### *Mark Your Calendars!*

JUL  
**26**

### **BRUSHI EUROPEAN AMERICAN CUISINE**

Producers: Wilkes, Goldsteins & Hayes

AUG  
**22**

### **OAK HILLS COUNTRY CLUB**

Theme TBD

Producers: Susan Rauth & Brent Rasmussen,  
Amanda Harrington & John Matthews

SEP  
**19**

### **HAPPY HOLLOW CLUB**

Red vs. White wines

Producers: David & Diane Hayes,  
Patti & Steve Hipple

OCT  
TBD

### **402 EAT + DRINK IN VILLAGE POINTE**

Theme TBD

Producers: Tabitha & Dave Thrasher

NOV  
**13**

### **CHAMPIONS RUN**

Pinot Noir Theme

Producers: Murnan & Klemkes

DEC  
**5**

### **AU COURANT**

President's Holiday Celebration

Producer: Martins

#### **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](mailto:iwfs.councilbluffs@yahoo.com)





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Please notify Club Membership Chairman Diane Forristall at [DIANE@FORRISTALL.US](mailto: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](http://www.iwfs.org/americas/council-bluffs)**

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