

*The Bluffs*

# *Food & Wine*

*August 2012*

*gazette*

**Saigon** Surface

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

## Event Report

July 12, 2012

# Saigon Surface

by Tom Murnan



Ngoc Nguyen Joe Dewey Mary Murnan Be Lam Tom Murnan



Many wine lovers are uneasy when it comes to pairing wine with Asian cuisine. One of my new favorite cuisines has become Vietnamese. So I thought I would take the occasion of my event turn to show the Branch how great Vietnamese food is, and some principles of pairing wine with that cuisine. In a perfect case of serendipity, the day I walked into Saigon Surface to discuss my plans with manager and owner **Ngoc Nguyen**, she happened to be

talking with **Joe Dewey**, wine rep from Republic National Distributing Co., Eagle Division. Both were eager to help, and Joe volunteered to select all the wine as well as provide education on wine pairings with the various courses, while **Ngoc** selected the food. Hosts were Tom and Mary Murnan. Two thirds of the Branch, or 21 members, attended, a great turnout!

Saigon Surface has garnered a great review from the Omaha World Herald in their Friday restaurant reviews in the Living section. **Ngoc's** mother, **Be Lam**, is the owner of the Saigon on 122 and Center. She helps Saigon Surface with preparing sauces and other items, and has them transported downtown. We were fortunate to have **Be Lam** as our Executive Chef on the night of the event. Our server, dedicated to our group, was **Kevin Vilmont**, a veteran of M's Pub and other local venues.

As we mingled, we opened with **Egg Rolls** made of Kurobuta pork, shrimp, glass noodles, carrots and mushrooms. To jumpstart the flavors, simply dip them in the provided Fish Sauce (which does not taste fishy). **Toasted Masago Baguettes** was our other hors d'oeuvre. I could have eaten the whole tray! I Probably liked it so much



Egg rolls with bowl of Fish Sauce in bottom left





Toasted Masago Baguettes

since it contained shredded shrimp and imitation crabmeat on mayonnaise, one of my favorite food groups! The quaffing wine pairings included 2010 Chateau Sainte Michelle Riesling “Cold

Creek Vineyard” and 2009 Kendall Jackson Syrah “Vintner’s Reserve.”

We made our way to table to try the first course, Rice Congee Soup. This was perfectly paired with the 2009 Treana Marsanne Viognier Blend, Central Coast, California. Joe taught us a trick in pairing Asian food with wine. Don’t use oaky wines with spicy food. Also, a slight sweetness cancels the extremes out of the saltiness in the dish. The Congee had a pronounced saltiness, and lots of spiciness

with cilantro and ginger playing prominent roles. The Marsanne and Viognier had a touch of sweetness to it. So, the salty, spicy soup was tamed by a slightly sweet wine. It was one of the best matches of the evening. Bravo Joe!



Wokked Ginger Chicken

The second course was a personal favorite of mine: Wokked Ginger Chicken. If you thought the ginger was a bit too prominent, blame me. I asked that Ngoc boost the ginger flavor. Broccoli, onions, sweet red pepper enlivened the chicken. It was topped with a festively sliced green onion. Joe matched the dish with the 2010 Duckhorn Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley, CA. This is a Sauvignon Blanc / Semillon blend, like in Bordeaux. His rationale for this pairing was that the Sauvignon Blanc’s overwhelming citrus, tangerine, lemon peel and grapefruit flavors could stand up to the ginger, while the Semillon elevated the acidity. But two surprises were also in store. Since no Gewurztraminers were on the wine list, two wines were taken from personal cellars. I brought a 1995 Zind Humbrecht Gewürztraminer “Clos Windsbuhl,” while Joe brought a 2001 Trimbach Gewürztraminer “Cuvée de Seigneurs” given to him by the Trimbach rep. There are no better spicy wines than Alsatian Gewürztraminers. Most American Gewürztraminers pale in the spice department by comparison. These were no exception. ZH wines are known



for their thick, unctuous glycerin texture. Here, the spice in the wine and the unctuousness melded perfectly with the ginger. The Trimbach displayed its usual house style, which is extremely dry, with a medium spiciness. Joe told us that this wine was something he wanted to share with others. We thank him for sharing it with us. It too was a great match with its spiciness.

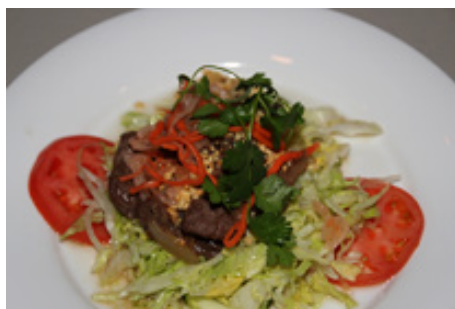


Pineapple Fried Rice

Pineapple Fried Rice was our next course. Usually, this is presented in a hollowed out half of pineapple, but due to the large group, not at the event. This consisted of grilled wild prawns, chicken, pork, Vietnamese sausage, egg, bell peppers and green onions. Pieces of pineapple permeated the rice. The dish was paired with **2010 Chateau Sainte Michelle-Dr. Loosen Eroica Riesling, Columbia Valley, Washington**. The wine is a collaborative effort between the famous German estate and Ste Michelle. Here was a different style of Riesling. Off dry, lighter, less tart, with stone fruits. Joe didn't want to overpower the food. One slight criticism: my food was lukewarm.



**Vietnamese Shaken Beef** was our third entrée. Sweet onions, cilantro, tomato, Frenel butter, cognac, cucumber, peanuts, roasted onions were used to flavor the beef, which sat on a bed of shredded



Vietnamese Shaken Beef

lettuce. Just in case you were thinking that all Vietnamese food had to be paired with a white wine, Joe introduced a red: **The 2010 Seghesio Sonoma Zinfandel, Sonoma California**. Lush and smooth, with black raspberry flavors, but without a big oak profile, this was a good match with the spicy beef. I found you had to be careful with the lettuce on the beef. Eating too much of this, then taking a sip of wine, would dilute the intensity of the wine flavors. My only critique was that the plate was again a bit cool.




Seghesio Sonoma Zinfandel

Finally, we enjoyed **Mango Sticky Rice**, a dessert rice, with **2010 Quady Essencia Orange Muscat**. The orange, citrus character was heavier than the mango and tropical flavors in this sweet rice dish. You always want the wine to be able to stand up to the intensity of the food, and the Quady did this beautifully.

I asked Ngoc what she would want to communicate to the group about Vietnamese food. Preferring to write rather than stand up and talk before a crowd, she wrote instead:

"As far as your newsletter, it might be a good idea to mention that Vietnamese food is usually prepared with very fresh ingredients and hardly any processed foods. It is known to have a great balance of sweet, salty, sour, and bitter flavors and often contains fresh herbs such as cilantro, ginger root, basil, mint, and lemongrass, among others. On a hot day our Vermicelli bowl would be a great choice and on a cold day, our hot soup, Pho (pronounced like the word "fun" without the "n") is the perfect dish to warm you up. Also, as a side note, it would be worth mentioning that Saigon Surface doesn't use any MSG."

I received rave reviews from our members afterwards. The service was good, and the food flavors stunning. This is a good example of why we joined the International Wine & Food Society: to try new things, to experience different and exciting flavors and imaginative wine pairings. We had it all at this event!

Ngoc also provided a **recipe** for the Mango Sticky Rice. Which can be found on the following page. 

## Sticky Rice with Mango

from Ngoc Nguyen, owner/manager, Saigon Surface



### Ingredients

1½ cups glutinous (sweet) rice  
1½ cups well-stirred canned  
unsweetened coconut milk  
⅓ cup plus 3 Tbsp sugar

¼ tsp salt  
1 Tbsp sesame seeds, toasted lightly  
1 large mango, peeled, pitted, and cut  
into thin slices (at least 24)

In a bowl wash rice well in several changes of cold water until water is clear. Soak rice in cold water to cover overnight.

Drain rice well in a sieve. Set sieve over a large deep saucepan of simmering water (sieve should not touch water) and steam rice, covered with a kitchen towel and a lid, 30 to 40 minutes, or until tender (check water level in pan occasionally, adding more water if necessary).

While rice is cooking, in a small saucepan bring 1 cup coconut milk to a boil with 1/3 cup sugar and salt, stirring until sugar is dissolved, and remove from heat. Keep mixture warm.

Transfer cooked rice to a bowl and

stir in coconut-milk mixture. Let rice stand, covered, 30 minutes, or until coconut-milk mixture is absorbed. Rice may be prepared up to this point 2 hours ahead and kept covered at room temperature.

While rice is standing, in cleaned small pan slowly boil remaining 1/3 cup coconut milk with remaining 3 tablespoons sugar, stirring occasionally, 1 minute. Transfer sauce to a small bowl and chill until cool and thickened slightly.

To serve, mold 1/4 cup servings of sticky rice on dessert plates. Drizzle desserts with sauce and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Divide mango slices among plates.

# Summer Wines and Outdoor Cooking

by John Fischer, MD

There is nothing better than sipping a cool refreshing glass of German Riesling while lounging about on a hot summer day. Indeed, light bodied white wines are the beverages of choice on such occasions.

The gentle sweetness and clean, fresh acidity of a Riesling Kabinett are uplifting and energizing. What's more, you are not likely to get tipsy, as the alcohol content is low, usually between 7-10%. This is in contrast to the alcohol content of most red wines, which range between 12 -16%.

Tart, light-bodied wines, such as Riesling, Pinot Grigio, Chablis, and Pinot Blanc are great accompaniments for cheeses, hors d'oeuvres, or mid afternoon snacks. Their light unencumbered character and flavor supporting acidity are ideal for such fare. Nonetheless, there is a definite place for big, rich reds. For most outdoor cooking, especially barbecuing, big hearty red wines have a clear-cut place. Indeed, they are the perfect match for most barbecue dishes.

There is a little bit of confusion in regards to the terms grilling and barbecuing, so let's first start by defining our terms. Barbecuing is a cooking method that employs indirect heat and smoke from wood or charcoal in a barbecue pit or smoker. It is a method for slow cooking and smoking of tough cuts of meats. This process also usually entails steeping the meat in a rich flavorful marinade prior to cooking which further tenderizes the meat and enhances its flavors.

Grilling is used for cooking hamburgers, sausages, and more tender cuts of meats, as well as fish and vegetables. In this method the food product is placed on a grill directly over the heat. The cooking time is quicker and the item is stamped with characteristic grill marks. For example, you would employ grilling when cooking a filet of beef, but for a brisket or ribs, the method of choice would be barbecuing.

Both of these cooking methods will enhance and fortify food products making them heavier and richer. The full-bodied nature of such foods call for a similar styled wine. Wines such as Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and wines from the Rhône Valley (such as Châteauneuf du Pape, Côtes du Rhône) might seem a little heavy for summer, but in the environment of such rich foods, certainly have their place. Many of these wines have smoky, peppery, meaty flavors that pair beautifully with similar flavors in the food.

Malbec, a grape variety from Argentina, is beginning to become popular in this country. It is a food friendly wine that is a great match for barbecue, but also works well with grilled meats. Beef reigns supreme in Argentina. The classic method of cooking beef is called asado, which translates to barbecue. The meat is lightly

seasoned and slow cooked over an open pit fire fueled with wood. In addition to a complex variety of fruity savors, the wine has good flavor supporting acidity and a smoky, meaty flavor which reflects back to similar flavors in the meat.

Barbecuing usually imparts a more casual ambiance than grilling and calls for less formal wines, especially when such foods are served in a "picnic" styled environment. However, the matching wine also depends on the character of the food product. Barbecued chicken or ribs are informal foods; however, barbecued shrimp can be served in more sophisticated surroundings.

You certainly would not consider grilled hamburgers or hotdogs formal, but a grilled filet mignon can sit with ease at a formal dinner party and demands high quality rich wines such as Cabernet Sauvignon or red Bordeaux.

Although barbecued fish and shellfish are cooked by the classic slow indirect method, cooking time is much shorter than for meats. These items have more smoke and a bit more flavors than grilled seafood. White wines are the best options for smoked seafood. Try these items with a good Brut Champagne, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, or Riesling Kabinett. If there is any accompanying sweetness, such as a sweet fruity barbecue sauce, a German Riesling is a wonderful choice.

Pulled pork, barbecued chicken, brisket, and ribs by their very nature are informal. Bring on the beer, or less formal wines such as Zinfandel, Australian Shiraz, Malbec, Beaujolais, or Côtes-du-Rhône. That is not to say that Cabernet or Bordeaux would not match with such foods; however, the finer nuances that these up-scaled wines have would be somewhat obfuscated by the powerful flavors in the food.

There is little doubt that foods grilled or barbecued outdoor have their flavor enhanced by the cooking process. They are more flavorful than foods cooked in the oven or in a fry pan and require similar styled wines: rich, flavorful, and full-bodied.


Summer is in full swing, and my mouth is watering for some untroubled outdoor cooking. There is nothing better than the appealing flavors of dishes prepared from the grill and barbe. Nevertheless, these cooking methods are a yearlong attraction and never go out of style. It's just a little more challenging to fire up the coals on a cold winter day. The Bluffs Food & Wine gazette



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 teaches a course on wine and matching wine with food at the Institute for the Culinary Arts in Omaha, NE and is author of two books: *The Evaluation of Wine* and *Wine and Food - 101*.

# Changing of the Guard

Beginning with this issue, the Gazette has a new editor. Tom Murnan has agreed to assume the editor's mantle that Sandy Lemke wore. Sandy Lemke is stepping down. I would like to thank Sandy for her work. It is no easy task to supply an endless stream of interesting material for a discriminating readership. It took a lot of work and dedication. We all thank you for your efforts. Todd Lemke has graciously allowed the club to use the services of Omaha Magazine to professionally format and finish my scribbings. As before, the Gazette will be on-line only. Upcoming events, reviews of events, club news, members activities are all the province of this publication. Please feel free to send me wine or food related photos, vacation experiences, written accounts and the like to me for inclusion in the Gazette. This is your Gazette too. Let's make it interesting and educational. Send photos and information to [murnantom@gmail.com](mailto:murnantom@gmail.com).

As before, these newsletters will be posted on the international web site ([www.IWFS.org](http://www.IWFS.org)). I will try to have most news posted in the Gazette as it is easier to find later. I have only recently become a member of the Council Bluffs branch, but I am here to tell you, that the events I have attended are second to none. These are quality meals that deserve to be promulgated. I am so proud of this branch, and just wish we could increase attendance. You are really missing something special when you don't attend. 

## 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: [stephenhipple@hotmail.com](mailto:stephenhipple@hotmail.com)

## Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events! Mark Your Calendars!

**August 23** • Todd and Sandy Lemke will host two vintners who will present their wines at Johnny's Café 4702 S 27th St in Omaha.

**September 23** • The Sorensens will host the event at their home in Harlan, Iowa. Lamb dinner. Limited to 20 people.

**December 1** • Will be the President's Event again at the Omaha Press Club. Mark this one on your calendars now. You know how hectic the Christmas season becomes.

**February 25 - March 4, 2013** • Steve Hipple asks that we join him for an 8 day wine and food extravaganza, featuring a 3 night/3 day Miami culinary adventure followed by a quiet and relaxing Caribbean Cruise. You may choose one or both. If you didn't get an email, already, contact Steve.

## *The International Wine & Food Society of London, England Council Bluffs, Iowa Branch - Executive Committee*

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## KEEPING In Touch!

Please notify Club Membership Chairman Diane Forristall at [Diane@Forristall.us](mailto:Diane@Forristall.us) to let him 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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