



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

NO
CLIMBING
ON





President's Comments

Our event for July was supposed to be Summertime at the Lake, but ended up being Summertime at the Railcar. The weather was just too hot and uncooperative, so it was the right move to switch venues to the **Railcar Modern American Kitchen** from the Martin's cabin. This was a very imaginative meal that had many gourmet touches. We had house made Kielbasa & Chorizo sausage, and Buratta cheese; we had watermelon as part of our tuna cerviche; we had quail grilled right on the wood charcoal, a first for me; and we had hanger steak with marrow butter. You don't see hanger steak very often, and that was grilled **and** sous vided to make it more tender. I was very proud of our first time producers, the **Martins** and **Wittlers**, who stepped up to craft a first class meal. If you were there, you can refresh your memory with the event report. If you weren't, you can see what you were missing. We are always looking for members who want to put on an event. The more you put into your Branch, the more you'll get out of it. It is a very rewarding sensation to see your job well done, despite the work.

Our Note from the Board has fallen through this month, so I thought I would return to Mary and my 2012 vacation to Portugal and Madeira. It is June 8, 2012 and the weather was gorgeous. We had just finished two marathon tastings of 35 fortified wines, were supposed to have yet another stop at a lodge that fell through. Plus we had wine for lunch. But now it was evening, and we tried dining in an old fort that hailed from 1614. And what did we do? Well, have more wine, of course! Read about this unusual venue.

John Fischer presents this month how to store wine once opened. It is a familiar problem. You have half a bottle leftover at the end of the evening. But wine notoriously does not keep long after it has been opened. Most of the time it will be tasting stale and oxidized in a day or two. You must understand how oxygen affects wine if you are going to try to preserve what is left in that bottle. What most people do not understand that oxygen is like an systemic infection that once started is irreversible. But there are some things you can do. Read John's article to find out.

Cheers,

Tom Murnan

"I drink wine because I don't like to keep things bottled up."

-Anonymous



Event Report: Summertime at the Railcar

by Tom Murnan

The weather was not cooperating. Hot and muggy, first time event producers **Connie & Gary Martin**, and **Kathy & Don Wittler** made the decision to move the originally planned event at the Martin Cabin to the air-conditioned Railcar Modern American Kitchen. It was a prescient move. But that wasn't the only prescient move. Having **Chef Jared Clarke** select and cook the meal was another one. Our first timers did a wonderful job. They were assisted by **Denise Meyers** who provided the watermelon themed green and red table linens and watermelon mat centers as well as other decorative accoutrements. Thirty people attended, including three guests: **Gary Martin Jr.** and **Tabitha and Dan Thrasher**. Chef Jared spoke about all the menu items, and **Matt Burbach**, Railcar's wine guru, gave background on all the wines. All the wines came from the Railcar.

Quaffing consisted of **Heirloom Tomato and house made Burrata**. What's burrata you ask? A form of mozzarella. Whereas fresh mozzarella is a semi-soft Italian cheese made from cow or water buffalo milk, Burrata cheese takes the mozzarella one step further — it's mozzarella that's formed into a pouch and then filled with soft, stringy curd and cream. **The House Made Smoked Kielbasa with mustard greens and port onion** was scrumptious if a bit oily on the fingers. Finger licking and moist, the bread was grilled and smoky while the Kielbasa spiciness played well against the red quaffing wine, a **2015 Marietta Cellars "Cristo,"** a blend with several Rhone varietals. The handmade Kielbasa paired perfectly with the delicate herbs, blackberry and earthy spiciness in the wine. I could have been happy with an entire meal of this Kielbasa bruschetta.

Our white starter, **2014 Graham Beck "The Game Reserve" Chenin Blanc**, hails from South Africa. One of the largest wineries in that country known for sparkling wine, it was 100% Chenin Blanc sporting tropical notes in the nose and ripe pineapple and peach flavors. It was a good thirst quencher on this hot day and paired nicely with the tomatoes. The rabbit on the label is an endangered Riverine Rabbit that the winery takes pains to protect.

Once at table, the Chef spoke of the upcoming **Seared Albacore Tuna Cerviche**. Cured with a light citrus vinaigrette and basil, a layered method of Cerviche was used, resulting in a light and bright fish, perfect for a hot summer's day. This sat over a slice of watermelon, cilantro, basil, shaved Vidalia onion, avocado to the side and citrus vinaigrette. Deliciously cured, the tuna was contrasted with the watermelon, which provided refreshing lightness, and the avocado, which gave a heavier richness, all in a wine friendly vinaigrette, which provided some lively acidity. Our chosen wine was the **2014 Adelsheim Pinot Gris** from the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Matt Burbach explained how the 100% Pinot Gris, with its white peach, pear and minerality would marry quite well with the dish flavors just described. He was correct. It was a good match. Adelsheim was one of the first producers not only in the Willamette Valley but in the USA as well to bring in Pinot Gris from Europe. It is an important grape notably in Alsace.

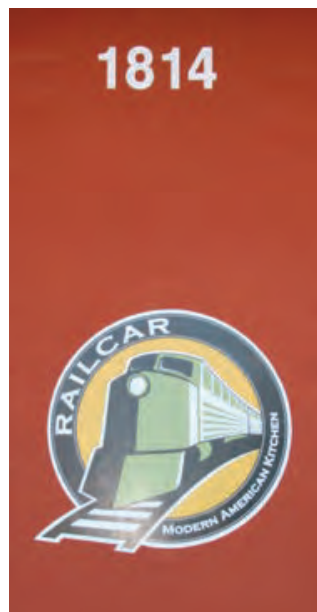
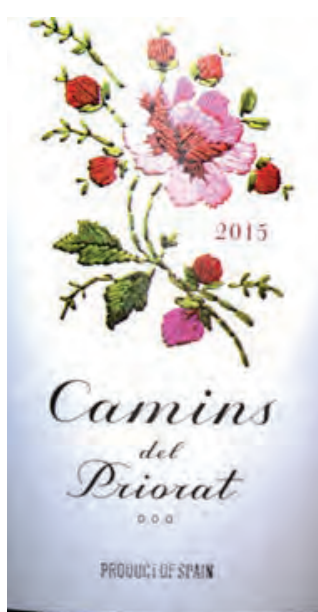
Charcoal Quail with Blueberry & Rosemary Syrup, Grilled Lemon and Summer Vegetable Relish was our first meat course. The quail is literally grilled right on top of the charcoal. But it is not your Kingsford charcoal. All natural wood charcoal was used. The result is a nice char that goes with the flavors of the wine. The key here is attentiveness. You must be very careful not to overcook the birds. It only takes about 3 minutes per side. The result: Outstanding! I have to say it was the best quail I ever ate. Incredibly moist and tender, it only had a light char, with the legs having a deeper char, probably because they are so small and thin. I kept tasting and thinking maple syrup with the Blueberry & Rosemary Syrup, and Chef confirmed my palate suspicions. Maple syrup was used as a base, providing sweetness to the quail flesh. Roasted baby squash relish provided color and small rounds of chorizo sausage gave spice. A true gourmet dish. ▶



◀ To accompany this culinary masterpiece we had a **2015 Alvaro Camins del Priorat** from northern Spain, known for its elegant and complex red wines. The blend was 50% Grenache, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Carignano, 10% Syrah and 5% Merlot. The winemaker's vision was a wine that was powerful but elegant, approachable but restrained, ripe, juicy but silky and elegant, like an aged, high quality balsamic. It reminded me of a Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape and matched the delicateness of the quail but also stood up to the char and fruit (blackberry) flavors. Nice wine choice, one I would not have chosen on my own being less familiar with Spanish wines. Bravo!

Our second meat entree was **Hanger Steak Curassco, Chimichurri, Marrow Butter and Pappa Bravas**. All natural hanger steak, it is also known as the butcher's cut, is right below the diaphragm. There's only one cut per cow, and he would take it home for himself. It is probably the richest, most flavorful cut on the cow. It was char grilled, then thrown in a vacuum pouch to cook Sous Vide 124° F for six hours. The purpose was to bring out the flavor and make it more tender. All cuts were cooked medium rare. This was served with Chimichurri with fresh oregano, a bit of vinegar, and a smattering of red chili flakes to add bite. Vinegar really helps to cut through the richness of beef. Chimichurri brightens red meat up. This was served with Pappa Bravas [also known as Patatas Bravas, a white potato cut into irregular shapes, fried in oil, and served in the tapas bars in Spain. In this case they were cut like French Fries]. These had paprika and saffron thrown on top. The steak was topped with whipped bone marrow butter. The marrow adds a whole other level of beefiness to the dish.

For such a forceful dish, a strong wine was required. The **2013 Orin Swift D66 Grenache** was chosen. Usually we expect Orin Swift to have fruit from the USA, but in this case it comes from his vineyards in France. The wine hails from about as far south in France as you can go. Why is this



important? Location, location, location! The sun beats down on these grapes and the yields are very small. Just a look at the 15.2% alcohol level alone will tell you how rich the wine is. 75% Grenache, 15% Syrah and 10% Carignan. The sun evaporates the grapes naturally, removing water and leaving flavor. Deep blackberry, plum, violet and pepper flavors remain. So this is Orin Swift's tip of the hat to France, a kind of monster Grenache.

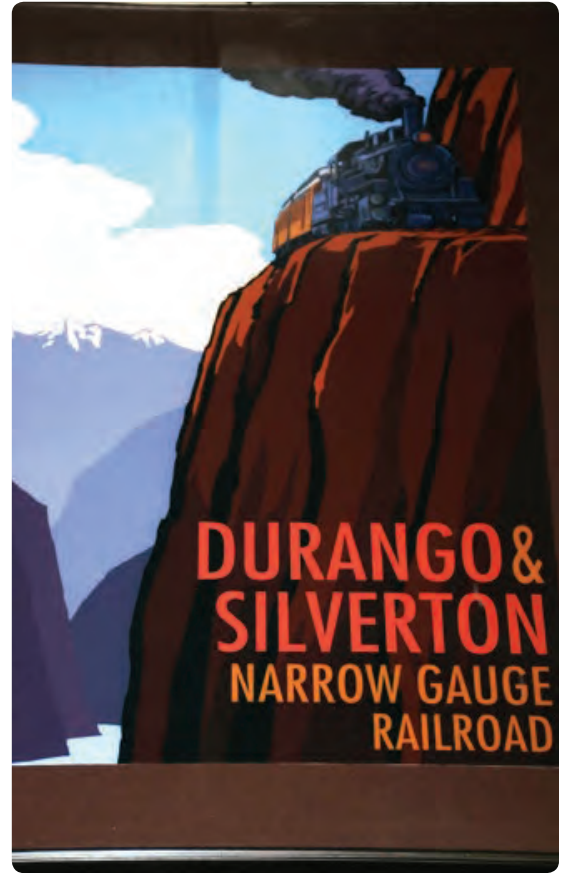
Dessert rounded things up with **Charred White Peach, Mascarpone, local honey and Mint**. White Michigan peaches were used and were at about their peak right now. Chef thought they tasted like gummy rings, very sweet and peach-like. My peach was somewhat muted and not all that sweet. The Mascarpone cheese added sweetness and lightness, as did the honey. The mint sprig was very assertive. Matt Burbach spoke of the **Niepoort 10 Year Old Tawny**. Niepoort is a Dutch family that established their port lodge in 1842. He noted the clearness and bright shiny color. That was because it was only 10 years old. Unlike vintage port, which is only aged in the wood for 2 years, tawnies can age in cask for up to 40 years, and get darker and more cloudy as they age. They are quite sweet with low tannin and good acidity. This was the only wine that I thought did not match all that well. Although it was wonderful on its own, and sweeter than the dessert, and the tannins light, the weight of the wine was far too heavy for its subject. This is a fortified, strong wine that easily overwhelmed the delicate fruit and cheese of the dessert.

Many thanks to all involved for this delightful event. **Chef Jared Clarke** crafted a very imaginative dinner. **Matt Burbach** was not planning to present the wines, but when the wine wholesaler bombed out for personal reasons, Matt jumped right in and researched the wines. The wait staff provided attentive service. Finally, thanks to all the event producers, first timers all: **Connie & Gary Martin**, and **Kathy & Don Wittler**, as well as **Denise Meyers** who provided the decoration. 🍷



*Gary Martin , Connie Martin, Leigh McGranaghan Barassi,
Heather Myers, President Tom Murnan, Chef Jared Clark, Matt Burbach (behind),
Kathy Wittler & Don Wittler*







Tom & Mary Murnan Portuguese Wine Vacation Vol. 20 June 8, 2014: Restaurant do Forte

by Tom Murnan

When last we carried the story of Mary and my wine vacation to Portugal and Madeira (Bluffs Gazette, December 2015), we had just finished a marathon day of Madeira tasting at two of the most interesting and important lodges on the island: **The Madeira Wine Company**, headed by Chris Blandy, and **Pereira D'Oliveria**. The Madeira Wine Company has a wonderful museum of winemaking on the island, while D'Oliveria has the largest selection of older Madeiras still for sale, going all the way back to their founding year of 1850. We tasted 15 Madeiras at the Madeira Wine Company and 20 at D'Oliviers, high alcoholic wines all. We were supposed to have gone to another lodge before D'Oliviera, the Barros e Sousa, but those arrangements failed to occur. Palate Fatigue was setting in!

It was time to relax and get some food in our stomach. On our itinerary was a place new to our tour guides: the **Restaurant do Forte**. It came highly recommended as one of the best on this island of forests.

A brass plaque on the fort's walls read: "The Fort of Saint Tiago. Built in 1614 and garrisoned for 3 centuries by various artillery batteries of the Madeira garrison, it was the headquarters of the Funchal lancers Squadron, from 1974 until the handover to the Madeira Regional Government on July 18, 1992". [Thanks to Ed Jelinek for the translation.]

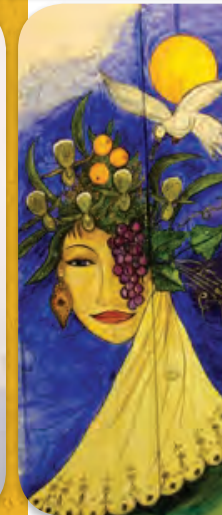
Situated in the 1614 Forte de São Tiago guarding Funchal, the fort's courtyard had an unrelated demonstration of traditional Madeiran dancing with dancers in costume. Inside the walls was the restaurant.

The place turned out to have great food, with funky artwork on the dining room walls. Instead of having a group meal, we each ordered à la carte. The wines were all the same for everyone, however. We started with a NV **Santero Spumante Dolce**, an Italian sparkler. We quickly moved on to the house wine. From the Portuguese Dão region on the mainland, where we had a **Meia Encosta Branco** (white) wine. It was tart and mineral, an OK starter.

I ordered **Fresh Garden Mushrooms** and then **Duck Breast in Citrus Sauce**. Others had **Seafood Trilogy**, and then **Beef with paté and Sauce Béarnaise**. Two red table wines were brought out, both from the Port House of **Niepoort**. These must have come straight from the winery because it did not have a proper wine label, just hand written ones. We tasted a **2009 Charme**, and a **2010 Charme**. The current release on the market was 2008, so this was sort of an advanced billing of wines to come. Charme is Niepoort's best still red table wine. I have never seen it outside Portugal. They were like Pinot Noirs. The 2009 was soft and Burgundian, but the younger 2010 was not at the same quality level and a bit rough.

My mushrooms came out. Deep fat fried, they were stuffed with a pureed meat, and topped with a very thinly sliced pineapple and carrot. A swan carved from an apple functioned as a garnish. Next was a Passion Fruit Sorbet on a leaf and a frozen stone. The duck was delicious and sat on a tomato based citrus sauce. The restaurant was definitely worth seeking out.

On our way back out the fort and through a neighborhood to our vehicle, we passed some doors that had all been painted with whimsical scenes, like a bass player playing his instrument. Well, it was a long day and my liver, along with the rest of my body, was crying out for sleep. All I have to say was that I was glad that the tour of Barros e Sousa had fallen through. It might have been a bridge too far! Tomorrow was going to be another special day. We were going to visit the famous **Fajã dos Padres** by water, and maybe see some dolphins in the process. 🐬



Storing Leftover Opened Bottles of Wines

by John Fischer




What do you do with leftover opened bottles of wine? How long will they last? Can some opened wines last longer than others? What is the best way to store partially consumed wine? These are all legitimate questions, and I will supply you with answers.

Wine starts to change as soon as the bottle is opened. Initially, as it sits and “breaths,” the wine improves, but after this initial bump-up, the wine gradually starts to decline (time varies depending on the wine).

The number one enemy of wine is oxidation. Oxygen in the air can react with wine to speed up its maturation, and after it hits its peak, it begins to decline; what’s more, the flavorful extracts in a wine are volatile and continue to escape into the open space above the wine’s surface—the more open space, the greater the loss of flavors. For example, a re-corked wine 3/4th full will preserve better than one that is 1/2 full—less space and less oxygen.

It is quite apparent that if we can enclose the wine, i.e. remove it from contact with oxygen, we have moved in the right direction. There are several devices in the market that claim to assuage the effects of oxygen on wine in a partially consumed bottle; none of them affect a profound solution to the problem.

A dark wine bottle is the central focus, positioned vertically on a light-colored wooden surface. Several cork corks are scattered around the bottle, some lying horizontally and others at an angle. A corkscrew with a wooden handle and a metal spiral is also visible on the right side of the frame. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the wood and the bottle's surface.

The pumps that create a partial vacuum (removes oxygen) in the space above the wine helps to keep it from oxidizing but do nothing to prevent the flavorful extracts in the wine from escaping into the space above the wine's surface. The commercial devices that fill the open space in the bottle with an inert gas (such as nitrogen) have the same problem. These devices are commonly found in wine bars and fancy restaurants. They help preserve the integrity of the wine a little—but only a little.

The type of wine you are attempting to store makes a big difference in regard to its longevity. Young, immature, tannic wines will store the best. Older wines are sometimes impossible to store as the wine gives all that it has within minutes after it is opened. Red wines store better than white wines, as tannins protect the wine from oxidation. Robust, masculine styled wines (like Chambertin) store better than delicate, highly perfumed, feminine styled wines (like Volnay).

The best way to preserve left over wines is to pour the unused portion of the wine, as soon as possible after opening, into a smaller container, leaving space only for the cork, and close it up as fast as possible. For example, if you plan on drinking a half bottle of wine, pour half the bottle into a split (375ml) immediately on opening the bottle, cork it, and place it in the refrigerator. Most wines treated in this manner will hold up well for a week or two and often longer. Make sure to bring the wine up to temperature before drinking. 🍷

Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!



August 28, 2016

Whose Wine is it Anyway?

Salt 88

Producers: Jill Panzer and Michelle Heyder



November 18, 2016

Council Bluffs Country Club

Producers: Tom & Jeanette Schierbrock



September 16, 2016 NOTE DATE CHANGE

Biaggi's

Producer: John Fischer



December 3, 2016

President's Holiday Dinner at Le Bouillon

Theme: French Comfort Food

Producers: Tom & Mary Murnan



October 7, 2016

Cornerstone Mansion

Producers: Patti & Steve Hipple

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!

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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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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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