

The Bluffs Food & Wine

September 2013 *gazette*

Event Report:
Indoor Patio Party
at Brix

A WINE AND SPIRITS EXPERIENCE

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

President's Comments

Hi Everyone,

Here is a find from Portugal, the 2009 Portal Douro Reserva from the Douro region. The wine is a blend of 50% Touriga Nacional, 40% Tinta Roriz and 10% Touriga Franca which are grapes from the classic red Douro varietals. This wine is from their best vineyards in Pinhao Valley and aged in French Oak for 9 months.

The wine is aromatic, flavorful, complex, with a nice structure. Find flavors of white pepper, wild plum, dark cherry and mineral notes. Robert Parker recommends drinking this wine from 2013 to 2021, while the Wine Spectator suggests 2013 to 2016, this will be up to you. The wine scores well: Wine Enthusiast 93 pts., Wine Advocate 90 pts., and the Wine Spectator 90 pts. You can purchase this wine at Costco for only \$19.99. Steve and I paired this wine with an Herb Chicken Mediterranean Thin Crust de Lite pizza from Papa Murphy's and were well pleased.

Try this Cabernet Sauvignon from Washington, a 2010 Seven Falls Wahluke Slope. Blackberry

and plum are the fruits along with notes of chocolate. You can drink this wine now through 2017. If you drink it now decant it for about an hour, allowing the wine to open up. Tannins will be noticeable since the wine is young. The Wine Spectator scored this wine 90pts. You may purchase it at Whole Foods for \$14.99, an excellent value for the money. Remember if you purchase six or more you will receive a 10% discount.

Best of wine, food & friends,

Patti Hipple
President



Editor's Corner

We had a wonderful event at the new Brix in Midtown Crossing. The theme was a patio party. Oppressive heat and humidity did not dim our spirit or resolve, and we simply moved inside! We definitely had a Latin theme, with wines and dishes from Argentina and Spain. The food came in the form of tapas, those delightful bite sized bursts of flavor. Read about and check out the photos.

Ever since I joined the Council Bluffs branch of the IWFS, there has not been a French event, and a limited number of others I asked could not recall one either. So I am excited to announce that this dismal state is about to be remedied! Mary and I are planning an all French dinner with all French wines in the old Café de Paris in Omaha's Little Italy. Since time will be short between the Big Sandy event on September

30th and the diner Française on October 18th, I thought I would give it a plug in the next two gazettes. It is a challenge to get highly rated French wines for a low price. To do so, you must avoid the big names in Bordeaux and Burgundy. But France is redolent in overlooked appellations that are affordable. Ever heard of the Costières-de-Nîmes? I thought a little education before the event will pique interest and make you a savvy diner who is in the know before you go.

Speaking of expensive French wines, John Fischer discusses one of the most famous wines in the world: Château Lafite Rothschild. It is considered the First of the First Growths in Bordeaux. Give it a read. Finally, our venue for October 18th is a building with a colorful history. It has been a number of restaurants: Italian Gardens, Café de Paris, Q Consumables, Italian Gardens again, and now Chef Hattam Catering. Give it a glance, and then pencil in October 18th as a can't miss event!

Enjoy!

Tom Murnan



Photo courtesy of hugel.com

Event Report

August 29, 2013

(Indoor) Patio Party at Brix Midtown Crossing

story and photos by Tom Murnan



It was just too miserably hot and humid to have our Brix Midtown event outside, with temps reaching 99° just three hours earlier. The theme was a patio party, so we moved the party inside without the patio! **Shonna Schramm** hosted our August event where she works, and tapas were on tap for our menu. The wines all had a Latin flavor to them as well, coming from Spain and Argentina. Twenty three members and guests were present.



Cheese and charcuterie plates on a sideboard, made more dramatic with a large Lahvosh flatbread wedge and sesame crackers placed in a foundation of house raspberry cheese spread, was a great starter. Mahgo, a Spanish cheese, red wine garlic cured salami, black peppered Gouda, and Chorizo, a spicy Spanish sausage, Papeto, a black pepper studded sheep's milk cheese (Pecorino) from Italy, and hot household grain mustard were all available as we mingled. Wines were pre-poured and measured. Our starter wine was the **2011 Botani Moscatel Seco** from Spain.



Hand-passed citrus ceviche with cucumber foam was passed around the room by servers. This consisted of Halibut and diced tomato, with red pepper, cilantro, herbs and lime juice. The cucumber foam was made by juicing cucumber, removing the pulp, adding soy lethicin (a protein extracted from egg whites that stabilizes the juice) and beating with a stick blender to create foam. The

dish was cool and citrusy, with no fishy flavor, just the thing for a hot day.

When we sat down to small round tables that accommodated four, Brix manager **Justin Halbert** told us that the Botani was a favorite of wine critic Robert Parker, who used it for a niece's wedding. It was a great starter, with perfect acidity and nicely dry. It was a good match to fish, cheese, and charcuterie.



Grape leaf smoked cippolini onions stuffed with mussels and chorizo were passed to each table. This tapas had a prominent smoky flavor. The onions added to the overall smoothness of the texture and taste. No one ingredient dominated (one would think

maybe the mussel might). A nice impression of harmony came through for me. The **2011 Catena Chardonnay** worked well. Only 20% new oak was used. Shonna called it an "oak tease." It was made sur lie, or on the lees, which is somewhat non-typical for a Chardonnay method. This gave it creaminess, a nice structure and balance, and a pleasing roundness. Another good match.

Next, a glass of **2011 Tarima Hill Monastrell** from Spain was brought to table. I had this six months ago, but it seemed much nicer tonight. Monastrell is the name of the grape, not the producer. In France, it is known by its more recognizable name: Mouvédre. Like a big zinfandel, it had a rich berry flavor similar to a Napa zin.



No noticeable tannins were present. **Smoked paprika grilled veal with romesco sauce** was brought out, again in bite sized tapas servings. The wine did not dominate the delicate veal flavors.



Our final tapas arrived next, a **New York strip with chimichurri sauce and Parmesan crisps**. I thought the crisp boosted the overall flavor level. The chimichurri was a kind of Argentinean pesto, made not with basil leaves but cilantro. Hot spicy peppers, olive oil and parmesan cheese completed the pesto (although it was not spicy hot at

all to me). **Chef Brittany Chung** had come out from the kitchen and explained that one doesn't usually see Parmesan cheese in the pesto, but she added it since it went so well. The beef was paired with a **2010 Zolo Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon** from Argentina. Immediately noticeable was a backbone of tannin, which had been missing from the Monastrell. The wine had a complex nose, light mouth feel and was a great food wine. At its price point, it is a great buy at about \$21.00.

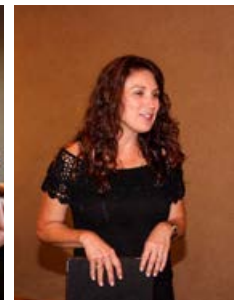
We ended with a light dessert: **Turrón with wildflower honeycomb and prune syrup**. In Spain, Turrón is a traditional Christmas dessert that comes in two forms. One is soft, with creamy nougat, made of sugar, honey and egg whites. The other has harder nougat and looks more like bread. Our



version was like a whipped and airy pudding. Marcona almonds were discovered in the nougat. Prune syrup added flavor and a dark contrasting color. It was sweet, light and airy and tasted of honey. The Alvera Pedro Ximenez Solera 1927 Sherry was a wonderful match. The solera was started in 1927, and today probably has just a small amount of the original wine left. The wine was sweeter than the dessert.

Many thanks to Shonna Schramm and her staff members at Brix for a delightful evening. Chef Brittany Chung did a stellar job, and Justin Halbert made sure things went smoothly and informed us about the wines. Afterwards, some members lingered on the patio, visiting and listening to the concert in Turner Park. Mid Town Crossing, Brix and the other restaurants and shops, and the outdoor concerts, have certainly made this neighborhood a vibrant corner of the city.

The Bluffs
Food & Wine
gazette



More photos of this event on the following page »



Lesser Known French Appellations:

Thumbnail Sketches Part 1 of 2

by Tom Murnan

Our October 18th French dinner with all French wines will feature a mini tour of lesser known French Appellations d'origine Contrôlées (AOC). Keep in mind that less famous does not translate into poor quality wines. There are about 300 French AOC, but the AOC's we will discuss here and sample at the event are the following: Beaujolais, Costières de Nîmes, Côtes du Roussillon, Crozes-Hermitage, and Muscat de Beaumes de Venise. Of these five, the best known is Beaujolais. It will make the event much more interesting if you know about the wines beforehand.

Beaujolais

For our October event, a bottle of red from **Morgon** has been selected. Morgon is a sub part of the Beaujolais appellation system. In ancient times, the Romans grew grapes in this area, at Mount Brouilly and Morgon. In the middle ages, Benedictine Monks raised grapes here. Beaujolais is between Burgundy and the northern part of the Rhône, and historically had ties to the Rhône, but the territory was ceded to the Duchy of Burgundy in the 15th century. Today it is considered more a part of Burgundy, and you will find it on wine inventory searches sometimes under Burgundy. The important thing to remember is that Beaujolais uses the Gamay grape while



Philippe the Bold

Burgundy only allows Pinot Noir. Gamay was considered an inferior grape to Pinot Noir. In fact, historically, the Gamay grape was banned from the Duchy of Burgundy in 1395 by Duke Philippe the Bold, who proclaimed it "a very bad and disloyal plant." Philippe the Good, in 1455, reinforced this by saying that "The Dukes of Burgundy are known as the lords of the best wines in Christendom. We will maintain our reputation" and continued the ban." This forced Gamay out

of Burgundy and into the granite based soil of the Beaujolais areas where it thrived.

Beaujolais is a wine to be drunk young. Only the best cru village Beaujolais are capable of aging, and even then for only a short time. Much hype and hoopla is made when the new harvest is bottled only a short time after being fermented, a

marketing scheme for Beaujolais Nouveau, the young wine of every harvest. Beaujolais is made using the **carbonic maceration** method. There are different techniques used, but they all capture carbon dioxide. In one method, a large stainless steel tank is loaded with whole bunches of Gamay grapes and the tank is sealed. The weight of the grapes crushes the lower third of the fruit and it begins to ferment due to the natural yeast on the skins. Carbon dioxide is produced during this fermentation, but since it cannot escape in the sealed tank, it penetrates the skins of the other grapes at a intracellular level, and fermentation is started on the remainder of the grapes. The end result is a soft, very fruity wine without much tannin, although with extended fermentation tannin can be increased.

The hierarchy of Beaujolais appellations is as follows: Beaujolais Nouveaux, Beaujolais AOC, Beaujolais-Villages AOC, and Cru Beaujolais. White and Rosé is also made. The most interesting wines come from ten cru areas.

In ascending order of full bodiedness, these are: **Brouilly, Régnié, Chiroubles, Côte de Brouilly, Fleurie, Saint-Amour, Chénas, Juliéna, Morgon and Moulin-à-Vent**. These last four wines can age from four to ten years and are considered the top crus. The term morgon means "decayed soil" and refers to the schist falling easily apart. The soil, composed of this crumbling schist and mica, gives the wine its character and relatively longevity. Better producers, like the small producer we will pour in October, will age their wine in foudres, or large oak containers which do not impart the flavor of the oak to the wine.

Source: *Wikipedia*; www.drouhin.com/en/wines/morgon

Costières de Nîmes

The Costières de Nîmes AOC is a relatively recent appellation, although grapes were cultivated by the Greeks in pre-Roman times, and as such, are some of the oldest wine growing areas in Europe. In 19 BC Roman soldiers discharged from Julius Caesar's Egyptian campaign established the village of Nemausus, present day Nîmes, and their symbol,



COSTIÈRES DE NÎMES
Vignoble de la vallée du Rhône

a crocodile chained to a palm tree, is still used on bottles of wine from this area. In Mediaeval times, the Knights Hospitaller of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem developed viticulture in the area. During the Papal exile from Rome to Avignon, France, in the 14th century, Nîmes provided wine to the Papal court, about 28 miles away. In modern times, the area was under the Languedoc-Roussillon AOC and was called the Costières de Gard, but the growers felt that their wines were more similar to the Rhône, and successfully petitioned the government to place them under AOC control of the Rhône. In 1989 the AOC was changed to its present name.

Geographically, the area is in the Rhône River delta, making it the southernmost area of the Rhône AOC. Like Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the soil has an abundance of galets, or small stones, sandy soil and red shale. The climate is Mediterranean. The soil drains quickly because there is an underlying bed of gravel 5 to 15 meters under ground. Like the rest of the Rhône River valley, it is subject to the Mistral, or hot winds coming from

Africa in the summer, but also the moderating winds coming from the Mediterranean sea. The galets collect heat during the day and release it at night, helping to ripen the grapes. Grape varieties for red wines include Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache, Carignan and Cinsault, all Rhône varieties. The best white wines are composed of the following grape varieties:

Marsanne, Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Rolle, Clairette Blanc, Bourboulenc and some Viognier. Again, these are Rhône varieties. Most wines from the area are red, but 35% are rosé and 10% white. Robert Parker in his Wine Advocate has long touted the top wines from this area. He stated that the wine we will be having for our event “reminded me of the famous white Châteauneuf du Pape made by Beaucastel, which sells for three or more times the price.”



Source: rhone-wines.com and Wikipedia

Knowledge is knowing a
tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is
not putting it in a fruit salad.

Château Lafite Rothschild

by John Fischer



This great estate has a history that dates back to 1234. At that time the estate was the property of Gombard de Lafite. The name Lafite is a Gascon term that means “small hill.” The present day manor house, a photo of which is printed on the estate’s wine labels, dates to the 16 century when the estate was under the proprietorship of the Ségur family who planted the majority of the vineyard.

The French Revolution of 1794 brought about the Reign of Terror and an end to private ownership, and the estate suddenly became public property. Eventually the property was purchased by Baron James Mayer Rothschild and it officially became known as Château Lafite Rothschild on August 8, 1868.

The 20th century saw two major crises affect the estate. The first was coping with post-phylloxera vines, and the second was the occupation and plundering of the property by the German army during WWII. Some of the plundered wine consumed by the Germans was cheap plonk that the winery bottled surreptitiously under their official label in an attempt to salvage as much of their cellar as possible. Ironically the beer-drinking Germans’ untrained palates were not able to distinguish the difference. After the war, the estate continued to prosper, and upon the death of his uncle in 1974, Eric de Rothschild took control of the property and has been the proprietor of the estate ever since.

Over the modern period, the estate has produced outstanding wines and is truly deserving of its classification as a first growth. Indeed, when it was first classified in 1855 it was designated a “Premier des Premiers Crus”: first of the first growths. It is one of the three Pauillac wines to attain the status of a first growth.

This aristocratic wine has had some variation in style over the years, so we will concentrate on the features of the wine through the past dozen or so years. During this period, wine pundits have awarded this estate very high scores including a couple if perfect 100 point scores.

Typically this is a rich, dense wine with a sophisticated and noble structure. Soft, powdery tannins give the wine a sleek, soft, suave feeling on the palate, and controlled levels of acidity bless the wine with meticulous balance. Its elegant nature is engendered with a unique and extremely complex flavor profile. At the heart of it is a mosaic of characteristic savors that include minerals (especially graphite), black currants, tobacco, licorice, and cedar, all sprinkled with seasonings of flowers, dark berries, chocolate, and coconut. Some of these wines are approachable early, and most have an exceptionally prolonged longevity.

When compared to the other great growths, Lafite is usually the lightest in color, yet in great years, the most complex and exotic; however, its relatively high acidity decreases its weight making it the least full-bodied wine of the group. The wine is noted for its austere elegance, and it takes a little introspection to be fully appreciated

Lafite is composed of approximately 80% Cabernet, 20% Merlot, with smatterings of Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Percentages can vary from year to year. The Bluffs Food & Wine



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*.

A Venue with a Colorful History



Our October 18th event will be held in a building with a colorful history. At one point, it housed one of the finest restaurants in Omaha at the time, the Café de Paris, but for most of its life, it had an Italian connection. This is not surprising since it is in the heart of Omaha's Little Italy. In an August 10, 2012 *Omaha World Herald* story, Sarah Baker Hansen wrote that the 1934 building was going to be a post-Prohibition speakeasy, but that someone planted a bomb before the club opened and blew up the front façade in retaliation for the murder of a bootlegger. You can still see the cracked terrazzo tile floor. A few months later, Louise Salerno opened the first **Italian Gardens** as a restaurant. I recently watched the new video **Devoti**, which details the history of the Santa Lucia festival in Omaha, and they had a photo of the Italian Gardens, probably in the late 1940s. Louise closed the restaurant in 1969.

Ivan Konsul completely changed the theme and interior of the restaurant when, in December 1969, he reopened the venue as **The Café de Paris**. Here he reigned as one of Omaha's best, and I might add, expensive, restaurants in Omaha. Many a physician was wined and dined by drug companies hoping to get more business, as well as potential Mutual of Omaha fund investors, dazzled by French cuisine and good wine. If my memory

serves, it was the first restaurant in town to achieve the prestigious DiRoNA (Distinguished Restaurants of North America). When Monsieur Konsul's long time chef Freddy Hiltbrunner retired in September 2006, The Café closed.

The building was unoccupied until September 2010 when **Q Consumables** opened a bistro, but it closed in 2011. Jeff Camp then opened a second **Italian Gardens** in February of 2012. They featured an Italian menu, but were not open regularly. That venture closed in 2013. The latest resurrection of the venue came in July of 2013 when Chef John Hattam moved his catering business from 4963 Center Street down to 1228 So. 6th. In addition to going to different sites, John now has his own place to host events. John attended California Culinary Academy (San Francisco) and then his first job in Omaha was working at the French Café (1986) as a Sous Chef (three years) and then as the Executive Chef (five years). Next, he had the opportunity to work at the Joslyn Museum as an Executive Chef (for ten years). John next started a catering business, and now, with the purchase of the 6th street location, **Chef Hattam Catering** can accommodate private parties like our October event. The building does not have regular restaurant hours.

I know one thing. I am going to look for that cracked floor when I return on October 18th!

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Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events! Mark Your Calendars!

September 29 • Dean Dougherty hosts this Reprise of last year's event at Big Sandy at his cabin north of Ashland, NE. Early start & early finish: 3:00 to 7:00 pm

October 18 • A Taste of France in the Heart of Little Italy. Tom & Mary Murnan host a French meal at Chef Hattam Catering in the old Café de Paris, 1228 S 6th St., Omaha not far from the Old Market.

November 1 • The Kossows combine with the Fenners for another great event

December 8 • President's Event at the Omaha Press Club

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

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KEEPING 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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