

The Bluffs  
*Food & Wine*  
*gazette*

September 2016



## Event Report:

To Tell The Truth,  
Whose Wine Is It Anyways?

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Refinements in Matching Wine with Food



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





## President's Comments

Wow! What an unusual and fun event we had at Salt 88. A wine game that made you think. No pressure was put on anyone individually... you could hide in the group. No one was put on the spot, but it did test the strength of your wine convictions and showed how easily you could be swayed. **To Tell The Truth, Whose Wine Is It Anyways** had two of three "contestants" trying to sway the audience that the wine they were drinking blind was not what the third person said it was. Trouble was, who was correct? That is where your convictions came in. As one of the contestants, I was in the catbird seat and knew all the answers. My job was to offer mis-direction  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the time, and the truth only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the time. You in the audience had the hard job of identification. This takes practice and confidence in what your senses and palate is telling you, despite the talking heads trying to get you off course. I salute Jill Panzer who followed Jon Meyers' advice to play this game he learned about at an IWFS Festival. It was a great learning experience.

One of the head turning courses we had at Salt 88 was **Chef John Horvatinovich's Buttered Poached Crab Watermelon Tower**. What a gem this was, a perfect, light, summertime course that will impress even jaded palates. I asked the Chef for the recipe, and he graciously provided it, despite his hectic schedule. Use it to wow your own guests. Thank you, Chef John!

Your humble editor takes you back to the island of Madeira on June 9th, 2014, and one of the highlights of Mary and my Portuguese vacation: the **Fajã dos Padres**. This is one of the most historic vineyards on the islands. I thought you should know the significance of the **Fajã**, so I am starting with the history. Fajã is the Portuguese word for a plot of land that has fallen off a cliff. Dos Padres refers to the Jesuits, who planted the first vineyards there.

John Fischer's article this month speaks of "the subtler aspects regarding wine-food pairing." Things like the character of the food, as well as the wine. Ambiance. Presentation. Fine china, sterling silver, white tablecloths. They all play a role. Read more!

Finally, please note that the **President's Holiday dinner** at Le Bouillon has been **moved back one week**. The Omaha Branch had an opportunity to break free of the perpetual Sunday holiday event cycle at the Happy Hollow Club they found themselves in. The demand is so high during the holiday season, they were stuck on Sundays until they had a chance to switch to Friday this year. But then our event was just one day away from theirs. Being a good Branch neighbor, I agreed to move. So our new date is **Saturday December 10th, 2016**. Pencil it in because you won't want to miss it.

Cheers,

*Tom Murnan*

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**"Every time I hear the dirty word 'exercise',  
I wash my mouth out with chocolate."**

**-Charles Schulz**

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## Event Report: To Tell The Truth, Whose Wine Is It Anyways?

by Tom Murnan

Back about four years ago, at the IWFS Festival in France, **Jon & Denise Meyers** made friends with some people from South Africa who told them about some of their IWFS events. It included a neat wine game. It was based on the old 1950's TV show **To Tell The Truth**. But instead of having the audience ask three contestants questions about their profession, one of the contestants would correctly state what wine they were tasting, and the other two would intentionally misdirect the audience away from the correct wine they were being served. Jon told Jill Panzer about the game. Fast forward to August 28th, 2016 and the Branch found itself in the midst of this fun but challenging game of wine identification. Ever one to get the participants into the game theme mode, event hostess Jill Panzer used seven different game boards as center pieces, and Denise Meyers' flower shop provided the flowers. The nametags matched your assigned centerpiece. Thus, we had Monopoly, Clue, Candy Land, Trivial Pursuit, Scrabble, Bingo and The Game of Life game boards to inspire our gaming instincts.

But to back up a bit, we were at Salt 88, a restaurant, by the way, recognized in the August 31, 2016 issue of the **Wine Spectator**, giving them an **Award of Excellence** in the state of NE. And do you know what the 88 means in the restaurant's name? Well, 8 is a lucky number in Japan, and so by extension, 88 would mean double luck! Our Chef, **John Horvatinovich** graciously agreed to host our group on a Sunday, their usual day of rest.

Quaffing was on the patio, which was mentioned in the Omaha World Herald as one of the best restaurant patios in the city, sporting the calming view of open green space of one of the Eagle Run golf holes. Everyone was dressed casually for summer. Forty people attended, five of which were guests. We opened with quaffing wines from the Branch cellar. Appetizers included a nicely appointed **Charcuterie Plate** of cheeses, olives, pecans, prosciutto, and salami; **Salmon** (in the shape of a scallop) **Bruschetta**, house baked **flatbread**, and spoons of **tenderloin** and a variation on sour cream. The meat was smoky and delicious. These were all good enough to devote the whole meal to.

We moved inside, each to their assigned table, to let the game begin! Jill introduced the three contestants and explained the rules. Contestant #1 was **Steve Hipple**; Contestant #2 **Tom Murnan**, and Contestant #3 was **Shaina Meyers**, daughter of Jon and Denise. Shaina is considering whether she wants to put her life through sheer hell and go for a Master Sommelier degree. Right now she works as a bartender in Kansas City. She is quite knowledgeable about wine. On the back of each menu, diners voted whether they believed each contestant and noted what you thought the wine was. At the end of the evening, Jill would add up the votes for the three contestants, then reveal what the correct wine was, showing who told the truth. So, misdirection was the order of the evening, and the participants had to figure out who was telling the truth. All wines had been placed in a paper bag to hide their identity. The wine was pre-poured and brought to the table.

The First Course was **Butter Poached Crab Tower**. It had a wonderful aroma of crabmeat. A Seedless red watermelon square sat on the plate topped with cucumber, avocado, feta cheese, toasted pine nuts, English cucumber and avocado. A second square of watermelon was placed above these ingredients. This was all topped with more of the same ingredients, but then that was topped off with crab that had been poached in butter. This was sooo good, a perfect, refreshing summer time dish. The watermelon provided lightness and sweetness. I asked for the recipe.

A white wine had been brought out before the dish so everyone had time to think about what was in the glass. The wine was a good match for the food, oaky on the palate with crisp apple notes. Then the three contestants came out to do their spin. Steve said this was a Viognier. Tom said it was a Chardonnay, and Shaina stated that it was a stainless steel fermented Chablis.

The wines were then brought out for the second course. House made **Spinach Ravioli with Mediterranean Mushrooms** was brought out. The ravioli was topped with five different kinds of mushrooms. And these were not your supermarket moonbeam mushrooms. We had **Shitake Stick, Maitaki, King Trumpets, White & Brown Beech and Shitake mushrooms**, all in a light cream sauce. Complex earthy aromas from the mushrooms wafted from the plate. Assertive spinach flavors in the ravioli were tamed by the mushrooms. Just a tad salty, it was superb. Our two wine matches were appropriate for the dish as well. **Wine A** had a bouquet of violets and blackcurrants, with dark fruits and spice on the palate. **Wine B** had a nose of dark berries and tobacco. It was full bodied with earthy and mushroom notes.

The wines, whatever they were, proved to be a good match. Steve claimed **wine A** was a Chianti; Tom said it was a California Pinot Noir; and Shaina a Côtes du Rhône. **Wine B** was said to be a Shiraz by Steve; a French Burgundy per Tom; and a Willamette Valley Pinot Noir by Shaina.

**Marinated Lamb Chops with Mint Pesto, Risotto and Gremolata** was the Third Course. The whole restaurant could smell the smoky wonderfulness of the cooking chops as it escaped the kitchen. A double cut of chop with two frenched bones provided a generous portion. The lamb was cooked medium rare and was slightly charred, earthy and delightful. The risotto was perfectly done and seemed to have some cheese in it. The Mint Pesto provided a classic contrast to the meat.

Again we had a duo of mystery wines to compare. **Wine A** was a tangy rich red with dried plum and berry character with a touch of herbs. **Wine B** was bold, rich and very fruity with a core of blackberry, black cherry and minerals with moderate tannins.

**Wine A** Steve declared was an Australian Cabernet Sauvignon. Tom poo poed this and said it obviously was a California Cab because it was so rich. Shaina said it was a Super Tuscan (which usually has Cabernet Sauvignon in its mix).

About this time, Jill took up a vote and Tom was ahead 4 to nothing. **Wine B** was said to be a Shiraz by Steve, a California Merlot by Tom and a California Pinot Noir by Shaina.

Our final course was a **Chocolate Cake with Layered Dark Chocolate and Smooth Chocolate Ganache**. A nicely presented wedge of very moist dark chocolate cake was crisscrossed with the ganache, making for a very appealing presentation. The flavors were sweet and assertive and required a strong wine to stand up to them. Our mystery wine did not disappoint. Alcoholic and port-like, it was lush, grapy, raisin-y, with cocoa and coffee notes.

Steve arose and declared the wine to be a Zinfandel Port. Tom said he had been to Portugal and it was obviously a Portuguese Vintage Port. Shaina said, no, it was a 10 year old Tawny Port. It was time to do the final reckoning. Who was the chief liar? How many participants got correct answers? All was about to be revealed. Everyone voted and Steve and Shaina picked up one vote apiece.

- **Wine #1** was a 2014 Scott Family Arroyo Seco Chardonnay. Tom was correct.
- **Wine #2** was a 2013 Château Beauchene Côte du Rhône. Shaina was right.
- **Wine #3** was a 2002 Maison de Partage Gevrey-Chambertin 1er Cru Vieille Vigne Burgundy. Tom was correct.
- **Wine #4** was a 2013 Ringbolt Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River Australia. Steve was right.
- **Wine #5** was a 2012 VML Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley limited release. Shaina was right.
- **Wine #6** was a NV Terra d'Oro Zinfandel Port from Amador County, CA. Steve was correct.

Tom emerged as the great deceiver and won a bottle of Smith Madrone cab for his persuasiveness. The main benefit of the game was to test your tasting skills and get to the point that you become confident in what your own palate is telling you. No more than 20% of the audience got 3 correct answers. You know what this means, of course. Practice and more practice. Learning. That's why we target wine education in our gazettes, and you need only to go so far as this gazette to read John Fischer's fantastic articles on wine education. John is short and succinct, and knows how to go straight to the point. You need to get to the place that you have confidence in your palate, informed by education. In short, it was a very enjoyable exercise and a fun game you could try on your own.

Many thanks to **Jill Panzer**, whose first plan fell through and left her scrambling to come up with a different idea. Thanks as well to **Michelle Hyder** who managed the sign up. And a big round of applause for **Chef John Horvatinovich** and his talented staff who sacrificed their day off to craft a wonderful meal. We appreciate your efforts! 🍷









I'm having fruit salad for dinner. Well, it's mostly grapes actually. Ok, all grapes. Fermented grapes. I'm having wine for dinner.



# Buttered Poached Crab Watermelon Tower from Salt 88

by Chef John  
Horvatinovich

This dish is a fun way to add height and dimension to your food offerings at a dinner party. If you are pressed for time or have a heavy hand, these ingredients can just be layered into a bowl. Instead of cutting the watermelon into square “tiles” you can just cube them into ½ inch pieces like the cucumber and avocado.

Each layer will receive all of the ingredients. This recipe is for two layers of ingredients, divide the ingredients evenly to achieve a balanced tower.

## Serves 4

16 oz. Seedless Watermelon  
(cut 3 x 3 x ½ inch, think the size of a post it package)  
Pinch Salt  
Pinch Fresh Cracked Black Pepper  
4 Tbl. Feta Cheese Finely Crumbled  
4 Tbl. Toasted Pine nuts  
4 oz. Avocado ½ inch dice  
4 oz. English Cucumber ½ inch dice  
4 oz. Unsalted Butter Melted  
(pour melted butter over the crab, place in refrigerator for 1 hour)  
8 oz. Lump Crab Meat  
8 tsp. Basil Oil  
(optional, see additional recipe)

## Basil Oil

### Makes ½ cup

½ cup Olive Oil  
¼ cup Basil Stems/Basil Leaves or Buds

To make a basil infused olive oil the key is reserving the stems and buds of basil. If you do not have them, the leaves will be just fine it will become more expensive to make as a larger batch though.

The key to a flavorful oil is either a long period of time to steep the ingredients, or a lot of basil to infuse more flavor if you are pressed for time. For us, we take the stems and buds only, rough chopped and placed into a stock pot with olive oil. The oil is brought up over a low heat for 10 minutes and then placed into the refrigerator for 4 hours. We then strain the oil and discard the basil pieces. 🍷







The Fajã dos Padres seen from the sea. Note funicular lift up the side of the cliff and restaurant on the right.

## Tom & Mary Murnan Portuguese Wine Vacation Vol. 21 June 9, 2014: The History of the Fajã dos Padres

by Tom Murnan

This was the last day of our For The Love Of Port trip, and boy was it jam packed. We started the day by going to the marina at Funchal and boarding an inflatable type craft with individual seats. Hopefully, we were going to sail with the dolphins. You never know... sometimes you can't find them, but the boat had contacts that told them where to go that day, and we were able to locate them. The dolphins are so much fun to watch, and they are not afraid of humans. I took a lot of photos. It was also interesting to view the island's southern coast from the sea. This is one large volcanic formation, of hill after steep hill that borders on the mountainous. No flat, sandy beaches in Madeira. On our way to the Fajã, we passed Cabo Girão, just west of the famous vineyard growing area called the Câmara de Lobos. The Cabo Girão is the 5th highest cliff over the sea in Europe, at 1,840 feet tall. There are only two ways to get to the Fajã: by sea, or by a single road that takes you to the top of the 900 foot cliff. Fortunately, they have a funicular that takes you to the bottom.

This is not for the claustrophobic! In the old days, people risked life and limb to climb up and down the vertical drop on a mere trail that crisscrossed the face. Most people nowadays seem to arrive by sea. So, now a little history. Starting at this point, this article first appeared in **Wine Food & Friends, Issue 103, Fall 2012.**

One of the most famous vineyards in the world has slipped into obscurity, but recent events have given hope that it may be coming back. It was well known by the 18th century. It was renowned for the quality of its Malvasia, or Malmsey wine, the scarcest and sweetest of the various Madeira styles.

It is rare in Madeira to have a vineyard-designated wine. Typically, small plots of land are laboriously hewn out of the steep mountainsides here. Grapes come from hundreds of farmers, who take their crop to the Lodges for crushing. The biggest vineyard currently belongs to H&H, and it is only 10 hectares, small by any standard. One named vineyard in Madeira is the Fajã dos Padres. Its history is fascinating.

When Madeira was discovered in 1419 by João Gonçalves Zarco and his two other captains, the Portuguese crown granted them the land under the Sesmaria system whereby they had to settle and develop the land, and in return, they became the landowners. The island was divided, and Zarco's portion included the Fajã. Fajã is Portuguese for a piece of land that has fallen off a cliff and formed a base at the bottom. It is the only vineyard in Madeira that is mere feet higher than the Atlantic Ocean. It was early on recognized as a good microclimate for growing grapes, especially Malvasia, which thrives in warmer areas. The spectacular 900 foot sheer wall behind it reflects the sun back onto the grapes. Malvasia is a finicky grape that requires a lot of sunlight and a sheltered position at 150 to 200 meters above sea level. The Fajã provides just this perfect microclimate. In addition, the soil is volcanic and fertile.



The funicular at Fajã dos Padres climbs 900 feet to the top.

The total Fajã area is small, about 9 hectares. This unique microclimate particularly suits Malvasia, which does best at lower altitudes. You can't get much lower than just a few meters above sea level.

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The Malvasia Cândida was introduced to Madeira from Crete around 1450. Prince Henry the Navigator is said to have wanted a sweet wine that could compete with wine from Venice, and Malvasia was just the grape. The descendants of Zarco owned the plot until it was donated to the Jesuits, who arrived in 1595 to found schools and do parish work. They had a small colony on the Fajã, a series of buildings, and a chapel. They planted Malvasia, Sercial and Terrantez. The Jesuits made their Malvasia famous due to its quality, and were accused of cornering the Malvasia market. Having visited Madeira as a Chaplain in the Royal Navy, Sir John Ovington, in his *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689*, wrote that the Jesuits had a monopoly:

A  
**VOYAGE**  
TO  
**SURATT,**  
In the Year, 1689.

Giving a large Account of that City, and its Inhabitants, and of the *English* Factory there.

Likewise a Description of *Madaira, St. Jago, Annobon, Cabenda* and *Malemba* (upon the Coast of Africa) *St. Helena, Johanna, Bombay*, the City of *Muscatt*, and its Inhabitants in *Arabia Felix, Mocha*, and other Maritime Towns upon the *Red-Sea*, the *Cape of good Hope*, and the *Island Ascention*.

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To which is added an Appendix, containing  
I. The History of a late Revolution in the Kingdom of *Gilenda*. II. A description of the Kingdoms of *Aracan* and *Pegu*. III. An Account of the Coins of the Kingdoms of *India, Persia, Gelanda*, &c. IV. Observations concerning the *Silk-worms*.

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By *J. Ovington*, M.A. Chaplain to his Majesty.

*Qui mores Hominum multarum vidit & urbes. Horat.*  
*Orbisque novis trans aequora pandit. Geor.*

---

LONDON, Printed for *Jacob Tonson*, at the *Judges Head* in *Fleet-street*, near the *Inner-Temple-Gate*. 1690

"The Product of the Vine is equally divided between the Proprietor and him that gathers and presses the Grapes; and yet for the most part the Merchant is Thriving and Rich, whilst the Grape-gatherer, employ'd by him is but poor. Among the Merchants, the Jesuits are none of the meanest, who every where contend for precedence in Fortune, as well as in place; and have here secured the Monopoly of Malmsey, of which there is but one good Vineyard in the whole Island, which is entirely in their possession."

It is highly unlikely that the Jesuits cornered the market, but Ovington mentioned that the best Malvasia was coming from the Fajã, which was under Jesuit control. More likely, the production was so limited that the price went up.

In the mid 18th century, the effort to eliminate the Jesuits came to a head. The order was hated by certain ruling houses in Europe (notably Portugal, Spain, and France) for their independence, their loyalty to the pope, and for papal privileges granted them.

The Product of the Vine is equally divided between the Proprietor and him that gathers and presses the Grapes; and yet for the most part the Merchant is Thriving and Rich, whilst the Grape-gatherer, employ'd by him, is but Poor. Among the Merchants, the Jesuits are none of the meanest, who every where contend for precedence in Fortune, as well as in place; and have here secured the Monopoly of Malmsey, of which there is but one good Vineyard in the whole Island; which is entirely in their possession.

*The Jesuits Monopoly of Malmsey.*



In 1759, The Marquês de Pombal, the defacto head of government in Portugal, struck first, despite the support of Pope Clement XIII. All Jesuit properties were confiscated and auctioned off in Portugal and Madeira. By 1769, the Society of Jesus was suppressed throughout Europe by the newly elected Clement XIV, who succumbed to pressure from the crowns of the afore mentioned countries. The order survived in Protestant countries, like England, and in Russia, who received the protection of Catherine the Great. Even though the Jesuits no longer owned the property, the Fajã's name stuck, and even to this day the Fajã of the Priests is remembered.

Thereafter, there was a series of owners, and the double viticultural disasters of Oidium in the 1850's and Phylloxera in the 1870's. The government nationalized the land but asked a high price. Fewer grapes were grown, and the crop switched to bananas and fruit trees.



Author Alex Liddel in his book Madeira writes that the Fajã was finally purchased in 1919 by Joaquim Carlos de Mendonça, the paternal grandfather of the wife of the present owner, Mario Eugénio Jardim Fernandez. At the time, there were Malvasia and Terrantez vines. By the mid 1940's, there was only one Malvasia Cândida vine left on the Fajã. The owner at the time had cuttings made and planted. But by the late 1970's, those replanted Malvasia vines were mostly gone, again except for one vine. Again, cuttings were made and the Malvasia was replanted using the traditional training method. Modern production of Malvasia is about 1500 to 3000 liters. Currently, this spit of land is undergoing a renovation. There is a nice restaurant and facilities for swimmers. The Internet is full of advertisements for vacationing in the cottages. Next Time: How we found The Fajã in 2014. 🍷





## Refinements in Matching Wine with Food

by John Fischer

The key to matching wine with food is to link the wine with the food along as many facets as you can. This article delves into some of the subtler aspects regarding wine-food pairing. Let's begin with makeup of a food.

Character is a quality found in both wine and food. Foods that are soft, tender, refined, and chic require similar styled wines—wines that are mature, polished, and sophisticated. For example, a prime filet of beef would be a great match with a classy Bordeaux or top quality Cabernet. Contrast that with a pot-roast of beef, which might be better suited with a younger, somewhat more aggressive, and bolder wine such as a Zinfandel, Malbec or Cotes du Rhone.

Your considerations do not end just with the character of the food; another deliberation is how the food is presented. Is it thrown on the plate cafeteria style or is it presented with an air of class and artistry? The plate itself can make a strong visual impression: A fine china plate sets the stage for what is on the plate. Food should be carefully placed so as to avoid crowding and concern should be taken to keep the plate edges and space between food items on the plate clean and free from droppings. The addition of colorful food items and artistic garnishes provides the final touch. Of course, the food quality must be high; no amount of visual artistry can cover over bad food. Elegant visual artistry in presenting the food is a strong factor in selecting a wine; it upgrades the quality of wine being served.





Ambiance is another important consideration. An outdoors fish fry, picnic style, calls for totally different wines than what you would serve at an elegant dinner party. If you served the same food as was served at the picnic, but in an stylish environment—white table cloth, soft background music, candle lighting, flowers on the table—it seems quite obvious that an upscaled wine would be in order. I have drunk expensive, high quality wines at a tail-gate party that I thoroughly enjoyed, but I must admit, they seemed a little out of place.

You should always try to serve a wine with the same ethnicity as the food being served. Although a Beaujolais may pair very well with spaghetti and meatballs, a Chianti would be a better choice. Both wine and food have the same ethnicity—the eye sees the label and pairs it to the food. This may seem a mute point; however, it is usually easy to do. But not always. For example, if you are looking for a red wine to serve with a German dish, you may be quite challenged to find a good one. There are few quality German red wines. You are therefore forced to pick a wine from elsewhere.

The few considerations listed above may seem obvious but are easy to do. They will add the final touches to your wine-food pairings. After all, carefully thought-out pairings increase both enjoyment of the wine and the food. 🍷

# Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!



## September 16, 2016

Biaggi's  
Chef Aaron King's Matchless Culinary Creations  
Producer: John Fischer



## November 18, 2016

Council Bluffs Country Club  
Producers: Tom & Jeanette Schierbrock



## October 7, 2016

Cornerstone Mansion  
Murder Mystery play with audience participation  
Producers: Patti & Steve Hipple



## December 10, 2016 NOTE CHANGE OF DATE!

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

### 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:

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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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**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](http://www.iwfs.org/americas/council-bluffs)**

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