

The Bluffs
Food & Wine
gazette

October 2016

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



Cover Photo: Monarch Butterfly at Creighton University by Tom Murnan



President's Comments

In September, the Branch found itself at Biaggi's Ristorante Italiano. Biaggi's has become one of my go-to Italian restaurants in Omaha. I have never had a bad meal there. So I was excited that John Fischer picked **Aaron King**, Biaggi's Chef Partner to compose our dinner. King loves to go beyond the everyday menu and come up with imaginative fare to surprise and dazzle his diners. I had perhaps the best scallop of my life at the Parade of Chef King's Matchless Culinary Creations event. I was hoping a few more members would have signed up for this one, but September can be a busy month. If you missed, you can read about it within.

Our Note From the Board this month is indirectly from **Todd Lemke**, who convinced **Bailey Brewer** to send us her impression of the IWFS Festival Danube Cruise. Bailey is a freelance reporter at *American Libraries Magazine* but works at the San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center. She was one of the lucky participants of the Danube cruise. Bailey liked the fact that she was able to meet a lot of people. Meal seating at these festivals rotates so you are always sitting next to someone different at every meal. She had some interesting things to say, and interviewed our own Diane and Gary Forristall. It's not often that we have a guest contributor from beyond our Branch, so be sure to read this one. **Wayne Markus** took about 5000 photos and sent me just a portion from Hungary, but I also received photos from **Jill Panzer** and **Diane Forristall**. Don't skip this section.

John Fischer's article this month is about wine fundamentals. This is a nice review for those of you who are familiar with wine, and a good introduction for those of our membership that are new to wine. John speaks of the wine making process, which is a complex affair that encompasses Mother Nature, the soil, the wine maker, the grape varietal and so on. He also touches on sparkling wine, like Champagne, and fortified wines the likes of Port, Sherry and Madeira.

In vino veritas!

Tom Murnan


"Some people have made an art of being slow to pick up the check. You've really got to hand it to them."

-Anonymous



Event Report: A Parade of Chef King's Matchless Culinary Creations

by Tom Murnan



The title John Fischer chose to name his event says it all: Matchless Culinary Creations, by one of the city's best Chefs: **Aaron King**. Anytime you can come to Biaggi's, you can rest assured you will have a wonderful meal. But Chef King enjoys stretching his culinary muscles and loves doing events that stray from his day to day menu. Chef Aaron was joined by longtime employee servers **Robin White** and **Jesse Trombla**. We had the large party room to ourselves. Twenty-three guest attended, including five guests. Most of the wines came from the Branch cellar.

Quaffing began with a combination of wines from the Branch cellar and a few that John acquired. I enjoyed the Guigal Crozes-Hermitage and Côtes du Rhône that John sourced from the Branch cellar. Appetizers were simple: a choice of baguette slices or Biaggi's signature Foccia bread. The latter is so good I could just come to the restaurant sometime and only eat the complimentary Foccia. The only problem with this presentation was that if you wanted to dip the bread in the olive oil/Parmesan mixture, you had to go to your (as of yet unselected) seat to find some. But both are good dry as well.

Once at table, the culinary show began. The **Antipasto Freddo** was a **Duck Pastrami / Rye**. A classic Freddo is an appetizer of cured meats, vegetables and cheese to awaken your palate. In this case we had savory duck slices accompanied by a slice of Rye bread, with a **Bread & Butter pickle, Bourbon Mustard and Fig Balsamic Jam**.

Our wine was a **2013 Palacio de Canedo Spanish white**. This wine was dry, soft, round and fruit dominant with persimmons on the nose. I thought it had a bit of trouble keeping up with the assertive flavors of the smoky duck. The duck was house smoked and cured, a bit too smoky for my taste. I tried it with the different plate combinations. The pickles were fairly vinegary and fought the wine a bit, although I heard some comments that it was enjoyed by others. The **mustard** completely overwhelmed the duck and the wine with its heat. But the **Fig Balsamic Jam** proved to be just the thing to bring out the flavors of the duck, tone down the smokiness and saltiness and bring out the wine from its shell. Fruit always goes well with duck.

Our next course, the **Antipasto Caldo**, was a warm dish. Caldo means hot in Italian. This was nothing short of **Outstanding!** I could have had about 5 of these. Chef King told us this dish was done in a Beef Wellington format. A large scallop was sliced into thirds, seasoned and layered with mushroom duxelle. The scallop was then wrapped in Puff Pastry to form a ball. The dish was finished with white truffle emulsion and placed on a pool of Spinach-Basil Fondue. Chef King later told us that this was a labor intensive recipe, belying the simplicity of the presentation. Fantastic, rich, buttery, and warm, the mushrooms added an earthy flavor, and the puff pastry a touch of mystery (what will this look like inside?) and flavor. The spinach and basil puree added a nice herbal contrast. To die for! Probably the best scallop I have ever had.



Pairing with the scallop was the **2014 Craggy Range Te Muna Road Sauvignon Blanc** from Martinborough in New Zealand. Sharp acidity was immediately noticeable. This was lively, ever so slightly grassy and citrusy, it was an excellent match. The acidity cut through everything and made for a refreshing drink.

Moving right along, we found ourselves being served the **Primo** course: **Cinghiale Brasato**. Translated, this means braised wild boar. The boar is sourced from Texas. This was accompanied by **Homemade Spätzle, Golden Chanterelle, Basil and Parmesan Reggiano cheese**. The boar arrived on a heated plate, nice and warm. The slow braising in red wine and veal demi glace resulted in quite tender meat, rich and just a touch wild, a tad salty. My plate had a very picturesque Chanterelles in its natural trumpet shape. The spätzle was not heavy or leaden, as I have found at other establishments, but a nice, neutral contrast to the savory meat, almost like a pasta. Delicious.

This time we had two wines to compare, one from the Russian River in Sonoma, and the other from Mendoza, Argentina. The **2012 Limerick Lane Zinfandel** was rich, round with great fruit sweetness and ripeness. Fruity and fully vine ripened typically goes well with game. The **2012 Luca Malbec Uco Valley Mendoza** was big and heavy, a bit rustic and gamey, but smooth with no noticeable tannins and just a soupçon of smokiness. Both were good matches. I gave the nod to the zin, while my table companion, **Ed Jelinek**, liked "the sophistication of the malbec."

For our **Intermezzo**, we had a **Limoncello Granita with Candied Lemon & Ginger**. This was unusual. Simultaneously sweet and dry at the same time, the astringency was immediately noticeable. It included fresh lemon zest, and a small amount of mascarpone cheese to give it a creamy feel. Texturally, the granita was composed of individual small clumps. As it melted on the palate, the astringency changed to sweet. Small pieces of candied ginger and lemon peel were placed throughout the granita as well. Quite nice and refreshing.

The **Secondo** course featured **Maple Planked Duck Breast**. This was accompanied by **Apple & Duck Bacon** sitting atop **Peruvian Hash, Maple Cranberry Mostarda and Fried Brussel Sprout** was placed atop the duck. The duck was moist, earthy and savory, perfectly cooked. I found the hash to be uber smoky, however. Smoke was the only thing I could taste on the hash. The duck bacon was house made and salted. The cranberries brought out the natural earthiness and savorness of the duck as a sharp, acidic but sweet fruit goes well with duck. A nice contrast.

Two wines to compare here again. The **2009 Waterstone Cabernet Sauvignon** hails from Napa Valley and is perennially offered by Sokolin on line for a bargain in comparison to its quality. Our second red was the **2010 Two Hands Sexy Beast Cabernet Sauvignon** from McLarenvale Vale, Australia. John Fischer thought the wines were similar in many ways. The Sexy was more aggressive, which with time will settle out and be the better wine. Right now it is a bit rough, with plenty of fruit sweetness and full bodied.

The Waterstone was richer, softer and rounder with cinnamon notes. Both were interesting matches.

The **Dolce** was our final course, bringing out a small **Key Lime Tart with Mojito Biscotti crust and Blackberry Mint Whip**. The dessert had sharp, lively acidity, was lemony with the biscotti crust moderating the acidity. The Blackberry Mint Whip atop the tart provided a bit of color (purple) and contrasting flavor. The **2012 Pacific Rim Riesling** is made from Organic Grapes comes from the Columbia Valley. It had a wonderful nose, but was not sweeter than the dessert. Your default rule is that the wine should always be sweeter than the dessert.

After the meal, **Chef Aaron King** came out to give comments, which have been included above. John Fischer has been so impressed with Chef's culinary abilities that he applied to the IWFS national Board to provide recognition. Accordingly, King was presented with an **IWFS Certificate of Appreciation** for his culinary accomplishment. Managing Partner **Jeremy Beck** also was going to be presented with the same, but he has just recently moved on to other opportunities. Again, we thank Chef King, Robin White, and Jesse Trombla for a most enjoyable evening. And many thanks to John Fischer who organized the event and came up with the wine pairings.

One more reminder for our membership since everyone does not know: **Biaggi's** is one of only two restaurants that I know of in the Omaha area that **does not charge a corkage fee**. So, come back on your own and don't be shy about bringing a bottle or two with you. 🍷

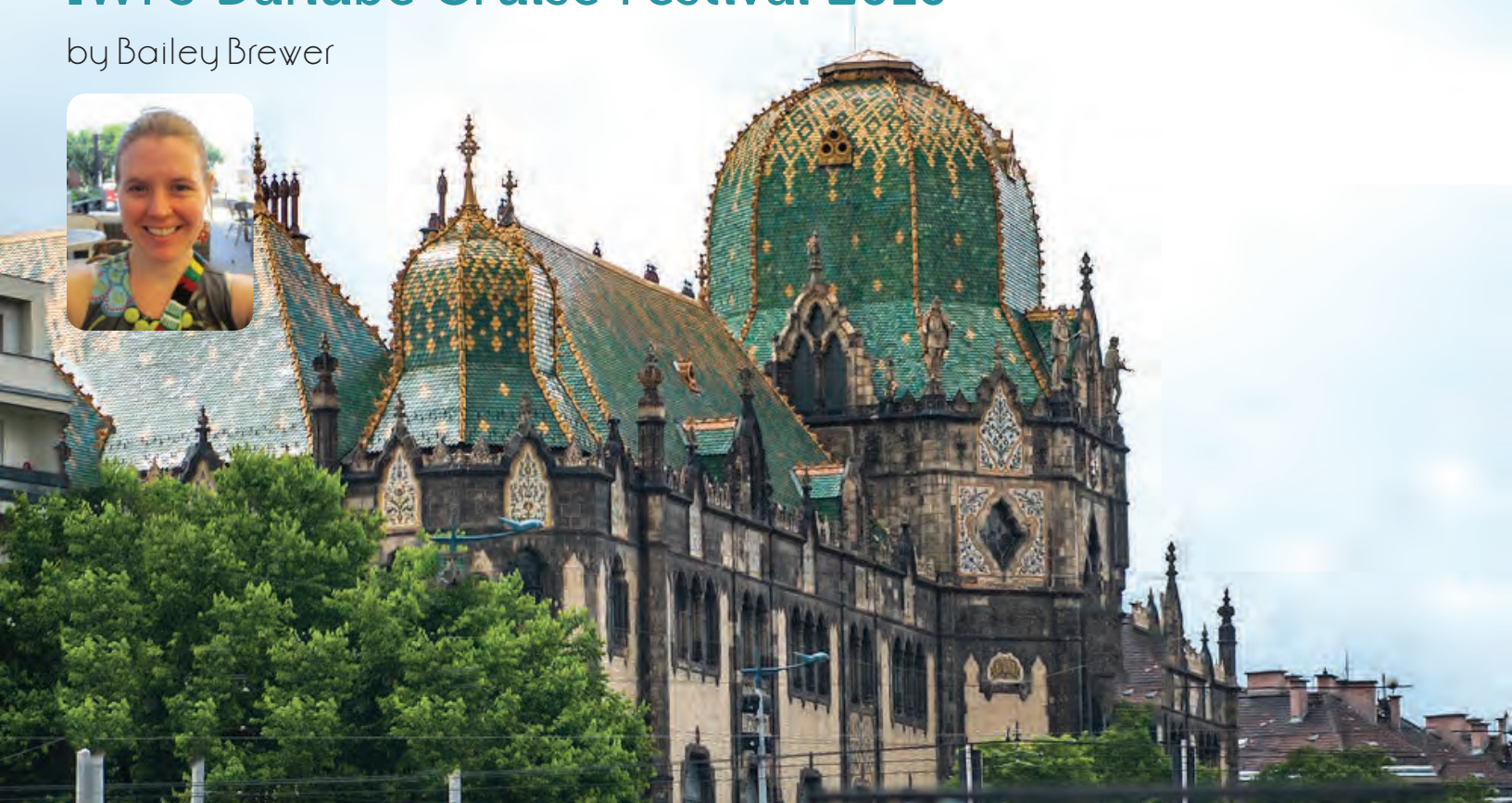






A Note from the Board: IWFS Danube Cruise Festival 2016

by Bailey Brewer



Diane and Gary Forristall recently sat on their Iowa farm, drinking Hungarian wine, “watching corn grow.”

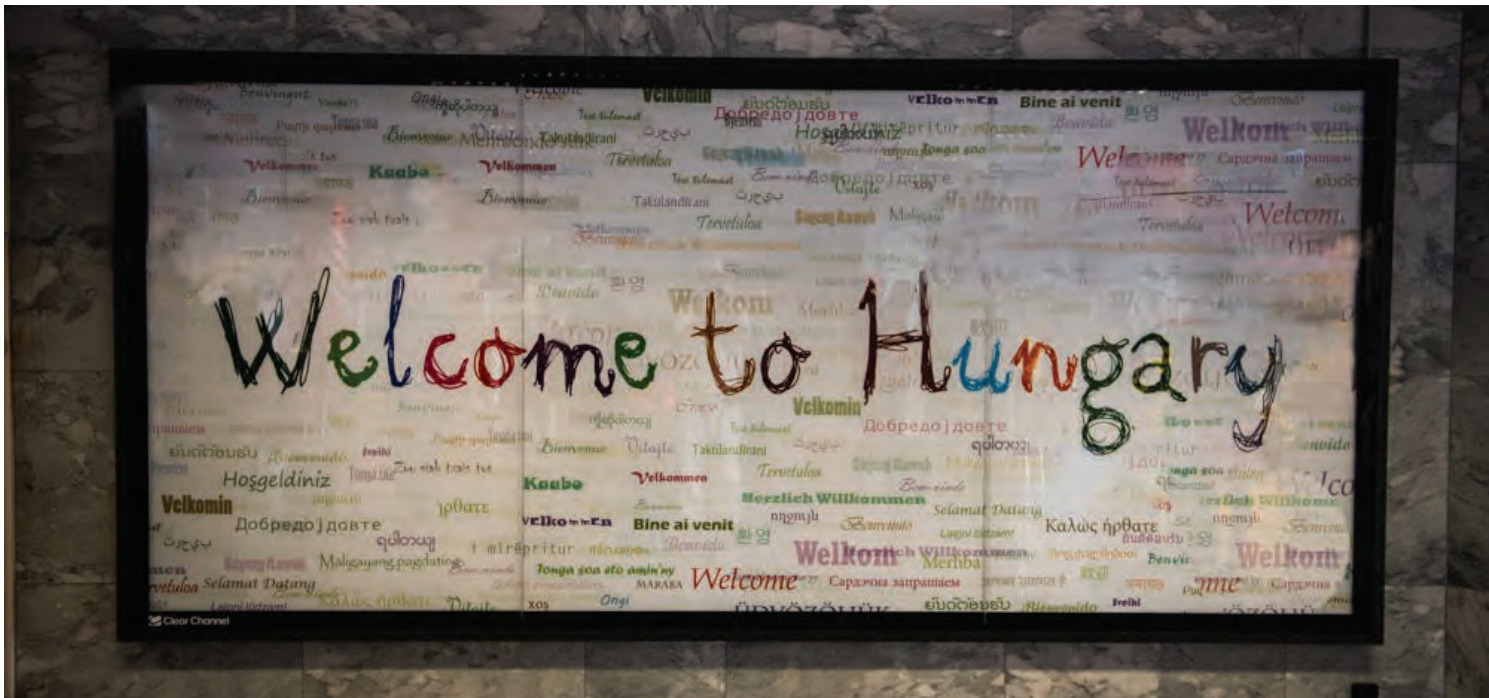
The couple reminisced about their latest cruise aboard a Uniworld Boutique ship, with fellow members of the International Wine & Food Society, comparing memories as they sipped. From bicycling through Budapest to trying foie gras for the first time, the two were quick to say they had an experience of a lifetime.

Though they like to travel, Diane admits she and her husband are very busy in the summertime, managing their nearly 500 acres of sweet corn and grapevines. Their responsibilities at home along with the price tag on the cruise were enough to keep them at home in Council Bluffs this year – almost.

Stephen Hipple, a director of the IW&FS and chairman of the Festivals and Events Committee, twisted their arms, they said, to join the group going on the cruise along the Danube river in Europe, which sailed for eight days in June, making stops at ports in Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, and Germany.

“It was his influence that talked us into it,” says Diane. “And we’re glad he did.”

The cruise that the Forristalls participated in was one of six vacations organized each year by the Wine & Food Society, an organization made up of more than 6,000 members who represent 80 countries. Society members who were a part of the trip sailed with wine enthusiasts from Canada, England, South Africa, and Malaysia, to name but a few of the nations represented onboard.



During the Wine & Food Society’s cruise along the Danube, regional wines and foods were paired perfectly – not to mention plated beautifully – to align with each region that the ship was passing through. From paprika soup in Budapest to wiener schnitzel in Vienna, passengers were able to experience a wide range of wonderfully selected international fare.

It was a neck-and-neck race between the caliber of the food and wine and the service rendered on Uniworld’s five star ship, the River Beatrice. Cruise goers who experienced the Danube’s charms all agreed that IW&FS’ choice to sail with Uniworld was one of their best decisions regarding the international excursion.

Between making new friends from the Wine & Food Society, attending a private orchestra concert in Vienna, and soaking up plenty of rich history, the Forristalls had a difficult time selecting their favorite portion of the trip, which began in Budapest, Hungary and concluded in Passau, Germany. They were quick to share their highlights, however, speaking excitedly and fondly of their vacation.

Something of a history buff herself, Diane did a lot of preparatory reading for the trip, including a book about Austria’s famous empress, Elisabeth, who sat on the throne in the late nineteenth century and was better known as “Sisi.” During an excursion in Vienna, cruise-goers were able to see a statue of Sisi in Volksgarten – or, the People’s Garden.



“I like to read the history of someplace I’m going to travel to, and then to see all the stuff I read about,” she says. “I read a book about Sisi before we left, and I’m glad I did.”

When they weren’t busily absorbing historical facts and cultural anecdotes in various European cities, the Forristalls really enjoyed getting to know their fellow travelers on the ship.

“The boat and all of the excursions were great,” Gary says. “But what I thought was really interesting was that we had dinner with people from all over the world. Talking to them intimately over dinner, I just thought was really cool.”

The company only enhanced the delicious meals served up each night. With superior chefs creating each meal and wine expert **Ben Howkins** accompanying the group, it’s no surprise that, several weeks later, those who went on the trip are still raving about the items that were set before them at dinner.

“We were so impressed with all the fancy champagnes every night, and of course all the specially selected menus,” says Diane.

The food and wine served during the Wine & Food Society’s cruise was top notch in **Trish Deford’s** book, as well. Deford, of Baltimore, says that a highlight for her on the trip was not only the caliber of the food, but each meal’s nod to the local taste of each port stop.

“One of the reasons I was never crazy about cruising was because I wanted to eat the local food,” she says. “I think on this cruise they really made an effort to show us the local cuisine. It seemed like they were trying to theme the food to the region where we were.”



After returning to the States following the cruise, the couple went to a Four Seasons hotel for a special occasion, and they were less than pleased with the service they received, at least compared to how they were treated by the team aboard their ship in central Europe. John says he felt that the Uniworld staff were eager to make each day fun and happy for all the passengers.

"The Uniworld people were fabulous," says John. "The service was just extraordinary." The premier-level service on the cruise didn't go unnoticed by **Susan Blue**, either. Blue, of Fort Worth, Texas, says the ship's staff really enhanced the trip. "I was so pleased with the service staff. Every one of them was very professional," she says. "They made you feel so welcome."

Blue's busy work schedule makes it difficult for her to travel too often, but she has no regrets about joining the Wine & Food Society for a cruise along the blue Danube.

"The tours were just unbelievably good," she says. "The guides were very good, very well informed. And the things we saw in a short period of time were just wonderful. I loved the history and getting to know the places and meeting the people. It was great fun."

Regarding the delicious food and drink on the cruise, Blue had a difficult time pinning down which menu item she enjoyed the best. "The wine and the food were great," she says. "I couldn't begin to pick out my favorite meal."

For Blue, the Defords, and the Forristalls, as well as another approximately hundred cruisers on board with them, the memories are still enough to stir up smiles on their faces, as they swirl a glass of wine and remember good times.



Additionally, this trip gave her a chance to expand her palette for fine wines.

"We loved the wine, and the introductions to wines from so many different countries we never would have tried wine from," she says, making a special note of those from Hungary.

Trish's husband, **John**, noted how much he enjoyed sitting with different people every evening as the couple dined in luxury.

"We really liked the changing of the assigned seating each night at dinner," he says. "One of the greatest parts of the trip for me was meeting a lot of interesting people from different parts of the world. That was really very fun, and we never had a bad pairing. We always enjoyed the folks that we were with. There were a lot of really fun people from different countries and that was really satisfying."

As seasoned travelers, the Defords have found themselves somewhat disappointed on previous journeys about the world, as they wished during those journeys they had been able to rub elbows with a more diverse group of travelers. For them, it was a treat to cruise along the Danube with people from so many countries, as well as various cities across the United States.

"We just loved the idea that this was going to be a really broad, cultured, educated, literate group of people to travel with," says Trish. "It definitely met our expectations in that regard, and it was fabulous."

In addition to their enjoyment of great food, wine, and company, as well as a bicycle ride through the lush Wachau Valley of Austria, the Defords found the service on the ship to be top notch.



“ The tours were just unbelievably good, the guides were very good, very well informed. And the things we saw in a short period of time were just wonderful. I loved the history and getting to know the places and meeting the people. It was great fun. ”

Gilly Fraser, of Isle of Mann, United Kingdom, says that the cruise was one her all-time favorite trips she’s ever taken.

“From one well organized day filled with delicious and beautifully presented food, amazing wines and great locations seamlessly blending to the next in a bed more snugly than any cloud, watched over by a staff that will do anything for you,” she says. “This is No. 1 on our list.”

Whether it be dancing in the ship’s lounge as the shore slowly passed by, grabbing a wurst sausage from a street vendor in Vienna, or taking in breathtakingly old architecture, many agree they would once again cruise with the Wine & Food Society, in the time it takes to pour a fresh glass of red.

Gary Forristall, for one, doesn’t plan to retire his traveling lifestyle on the Danube.

“As soon as Steve announces that Sonoma trip, we’re signing up,” he says. 🍷





Wine Fundamentals

by John Fischer

Wine can be defined as the product of fermented grape juice. However, I hasten to add that wine is more elaborate than this definition so bluntly states. In high quality wines, there is an associated artistry, sophistication, and hedonism that sets it apart from any other beverage. Wine is the aristocrat of social beverages, and artistically prepared food is wine's soul mate and inseparable companion.


There are many different types of grapes and each one of these has their own name. Names such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are known as grape varietals. Although there are many different varietals, high quality wines can only be made from a selected group of grape types called the "noble" varietals. These varietals set themselves apart because they are genetically gifted with extraordinary wine-making ability. Mother Nature provides the grapes; however, the winemaker, no matter how talented he is, cannot make good quality wines out of undistinguished grapes.

Nevertheless, there is more to the winemaking equation than just the grapes. There are many variables that go into the production of a quality wine. They must be planted in the correct soil type, in a favorable climate, picked at the right time, and vinified by the hand of a talented winemaker. When you go to the wine country you will see that high quality winemakers are celebrities; they are artists in their own right.

The cultivation the grapes is known as viticulture; the winemaking process starts here. Grape farmers vigilantly nurture and carefully pick the grapes at optimal ripeness. The grapes are then crushed and the placed into large vats. The conversion of grape juice into wine is done via the process of fermentation. During fermentation, yeast converts grape sugars into alcohol. There are many factors involved in this conversion, such as temperature control, yeast selection, and filtration that are beyond the scope of this article.

The winemaking process does not stop here. There are critical decisions that must be made regarding the blending of the newly-made wine with other varietals. In the process of blending, the wine is modified by adding varietals that have different characteristics. For example, if the newly made wine is too tart, it will be blended with a varietal with less tartness; if it is too rough, it will be blended with a softer, rounder varietal; if it lacks aroma, it will be blended with a varietal that has high aromatics.

In spite of all the above diligent efforts of the grape farmer and the winemaker, some wines will still be ordinary spirit lifting table wines. It takes great skill and sometimes a bit of luck to create the magnificently complex and artistic wines sought out by wine connoisseurs worldwide. It should not be too surprising that many of these ultra-



premium wines will have a shockingly high price tag. Nevertheless, many high quality wines being produced both in this country and abroad can be very affordable.

There are six major kinds of wine: red, white, rosé (including blush wines), sparkling wines, fortified wines, and dessert wines. The color of the wine comes from the grape skin. Indeed, if the skins are immediately removed from the grape juice, the color of the juice will be white. Many white champagnes (called Blanc de Noirs) are made from Pinot Noir—a red grape.

During the fermentation process a gas called carbon dioxide is produced. If fermentation is allowed to take place in a sealed bottle, the gas is dissolved in the wine, and the resultant wine is Champagne. The complete process is more involved than this, and involves the removal of the yeast sediment, but that is a topic on another essay.

In blush wines, the white juice is allowed to remain in contact with the red grape skins for a period of time so only a portion of pigment is extracted. White Zinfandel and similar blushes are created this way. The famous rosé wines from the Loire valley (France) are made in this fashion from the Grenache grape.

Nevertheless, white wines are almost always made from white grapes. The yellow and green pigments in the skins of white wines give white wine its characteristic color. Chablis is often green tinted, and Gewurztraminer can have a deep golden color. German Rieslings are almost completely colorless, because their skins have a low concentration of pigment. White wines are usually lighter and tarter than the red varieties and because of a lack of tannin, invariably have a significantly shorter life span. Chardonnay, Chablis Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, white Bordeaux, white Burgundy and Riesling wines are typical examples of white wines.

In fortified wines, alcohol content is increased by the addition of alcohol usually in the form of grape brandy. The alcoholic content in unfortified wines range from 7%—16%. An alcohol level more than 16% usually kills the yeast that ferments the must. Port is fortified with grape brandy to a range of 19%—21%, Sherry to 16%—20% and Madeira to 18%—20%. Sherry and Madeira can be dry or sweet; Port is invariably sweet.

In quality dessert wines, nearly all of the sweetness in the wine comes from residual amounts of grape sugars, or by the addition sweet unfermented grape juice (called süss reserve in Germany).

Wine is a spirit-lifting, sybaritic, and intellectually stimulating beverage. Drinking in moderation also bestows many health-giving benefits. I will end this accolade with a quote from Andre Simon, founder of the International Wine and Food Society: “Wine makes every meal an occasion, every table more elegant, and every day more civilized.” 🍷

Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!



November 18, 2016

Council Bluffs Country Club

A Taste of Germany Wine Dinner

Producers: Tom & Jeanette Schierbrock



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

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