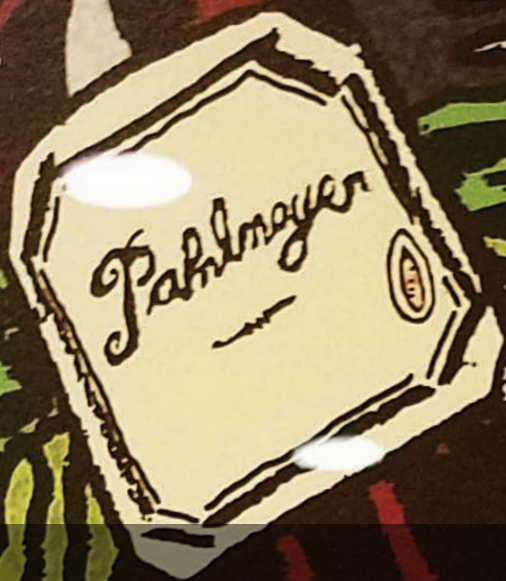


OCTOBER 2018



# The Bluffs Food & Wine *gazette*

## EVENT REPORT:

The Language of Wine at  
The Grey Plume

## INSIDE

- New York Great Weekend Part 4:  
University Club Black Tie Gala Dinner  
with Pahlmeyer Wines
- Julian Symons Recounts His Brother  
AJA Symons Co-Founding the Wine and Food Society



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

Pahlmeyer  
WATERS RANCH  
NAPA VALLEY

2009



# PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

**H**ello Everyone.  
Well the events just keep getting better and better this year. A huge shout out to the Ayoub's, Kossow's, and Hipple's for a terrific event to kick off September. Thanks to the Ayoub's for allowing their home to be used for what is hopefully the first annual White Party.

Attendance continues to be great. Keep supporting the club and the people who make these events possible. It is no small task to put together an event.

There are only three events left this year, and you're not going to want to miss any of them.

October 7th, Jill Panzer, Jill Goldstein, and Suzanne Kossow will be hosting a Women and Wine event. The focus will be on women vintners, and women chefs. There will also be a cooking class that the girls have set up to take place a couple days before the event.

November 18th, Tom Murnan will be putting on a Madeira sit down tasting, featuring a 1932 Verdelho. 1933 is an important year because it is the 85th birthday of the IWFS, which was founded the year after this Madeira was harvested. The theme will be a birthday party.

December 9th, your fearless leader will be putting on the annual President's dinner at V. Mertz.

My guess is that all three of these events will sell out, so start planning now.

Hope everyone is having a great summer, and fall season. Looking forward to seeing everyone soon.

Cheers, 🍷

*Joe Goldstein*



**"THE DISCOVERY OF A NEW DISH CONFERS MORE HAPPINESS ON HUMANITY THAN THE DISCOVERY OF A NEW STAR."**

*- Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, Chef*

Cover photo: Pahlmeyer poster courtesy of Steve and Patti Hipple





# EDITOR'S

## CORNER

It has been a long time since the Council Bluffs Branch has been to **The Grey Plume**. I am guessing we had an event there in about 2011. A recipient of numerous awards and accolades, the restaurant is known for being one of the foremost “green” restaurants in Omaha, with its eco friendly, farm to table approach. They have a fantastic network of providers who supply only the freshest and highest quality of provisions. But that is why you joined this Branch, right? You want to experience the best.

If you have a **favorite recipe** you want to share with the other members of the Council Bluffs Branch, send it to me. Occasionally, we have recipes from the venues we visit, but getting the chef to actually write out the menu is sometimes a difficult process. They are extremely busy, they cook in large quantities but have to translate the recipe into something for 8 or 10, or they don't have a formal recipe at all...they just add what seems right at the time. Send your recipe to [murnantom@gmail.com](mailto:murnantom@gmail.com).

We finish our series on the New York Great Weekend with Wayne Markus' account of the final black tie dinner at the University Club of New York.

If you have been at events lately, you have heard me say that the CB Branch is competing on an international scale for the best event to celebrate the 85th Anniversary of the IWFS. We have a chance to win £500 English pounds. Jill Panzer has paired up with Mary and myself to do the decorative touches. It would be fun if a group of members could come in 1930's attire. Jill has researched this and put it on her Pinterest file. Go to [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com). You have to be a member, but it is free. Then click on the magnifying glass symbol to search for her name: Jill Panzer. Click on the photo of Jill in front of the Taj Mahal. The board is 1933. We will submit photos of 1933 fashioned members to the contest.



is 1933. We will submit photos of 1933 fashioned members to the contest.



Since most of the emphasis of the IWFS focuses on the prolific writer of gastronomy and wine, André Simon, but not so much on the Co-Founder, **AJA Symons**, I thought you would enjoy discovering more about him than the short article we had in last month's gazette. He died young at the age of 41, but fortunately his brother Julian has written a biography which includes a chapter on the Wine and Food Society. Symons brought many members into the Society. This was acknowledged by André Simon when he wrote:

“These first three Meetings, as we called our functions, were entirely my own work, not too bad work, you may think, but I can tell you without any false modesty that what my friend and partner did was ever so much better. He had good friends in Fleet Street, youngish men of about his own age.... AJA Symons, not the Society, invited his friends, sat with them at table, talked to them intelligently and amusingly, and the next morning the Society had the most wonderful free publicity....”

From *In the Twilight*, by André Simon



**WHEN WE NO LONGER HAVE GOOD COOKING IN THE WORLD, WE WILL HAVE NO LITERATURE, NOR HIGH AND SHARP INTELLIGENCE, NOR FRIENDLY GATHERINGS, NOR SOCIAL HARMONY.**

—Chef Marie-Antoine Carême, to Kings and Emperors



THE GREY PLUME

# EVENT REPORT:

## THE LANGUAGE OF WINE AT THE GREY PLUME

Written By Tom Murnan / Photos by Tom Murnan



The first and only time the Council Bluffs Branch has ever been to the Grey Plume was around 2010 or 2011. Since that time, the restaurant has gone on to garner numerous honors. In 2015, *Omaha Magazine* wrote a story on Grey Plume. Here is the link: [Omahamagazine.com/articles/the-grey-plume](http://Omahamagazine.com/articles/the-grey-plume). Chef-owner Clayton Chapman has been a James Beard nominee numerous times, and a semifinalist in 2012. Grey Plume is in the top three for greenest restaurants in the nation. It is also Nebraska's greenest restaurant, sourcing seasonal food from a network of farmers, ranchers and other providers throughout Nebraska, the region, and the country. A large map of Nebraska on the wall of the restaurant is flagged for the various providers in the state. Following the green theme, even the floorboards are recycled. Chapman has begun selling take home food products at **Provisions by The Grey Plume**, his new shop located across the street from the restaurant. I was excited that event producer Dave Thrasher made arrangements to close the restaurant to the public so we could have a private event and experience Chapman's cuisine once again. 41 people signed up, including four guests. Most of the wines were sourced from the restaurant to meet our dollar commitment for closing the restaurant, but Dave provided three wines himself.



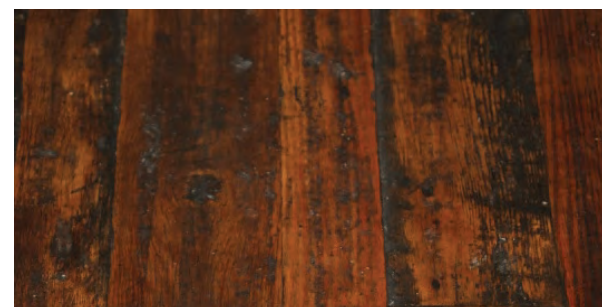
Nebraska map of providers for The Grey Plume

We enjoyed a Vouvray from **Domaine Le Peu de la Moriette**, the 2016 **Finca Decero Malbec** from **Argentina**, and a 2016 **Barbara** from **Casa Smith Northridge Vineyard Wahluke Slope, Washington**. Appetizers consisted of platters of **Charcuterie Canapes**. Sitting atop a slice of baguette was either Salami or Beef Bresaola, and one of three cheeses: Chèvre, Rosa Maria, and Dirt Lover. The latter was sourced from Green Dirt Farm in Missouri, a Grey Plume provider. A dollop of raspberry preserve or whole grain mustard was also added, depending on which assembly you picked up.

We proceeded to our assigned tables, guided by place settings cards. Dave explained the theme: the Language of Wine. Many people have trouble explaining what they think of a wine. But one of the reasons you joined the IWFS was to learn how to describe a wine beyond "it was really good" or "it was red (or white)." Our mission, should we accept it, was to break our thoughts into categories and think of the body, the nose or bouquet, tannin, acidity, oak, finish and the like. A handy Wine Descriptions page was also provided. All wines would come in pairs: one French, one American. We were to try the wines without food, with food, and then save a little for after the food.

The **First Course** was **Baker River Sockeye Tartare**. Nicely presented, the dish consisted of top quality sockeye salmon, melon, cucumber, egg yolk and lime. The salmon was sushi grade and melted in your mouth without a bone in sight. It was nicely salted and seasoned. Ribbons of zucchini offered a cooling contrast. In the center was egg yolk, which acted as a umami sauce. The cantaloupe was colorful and deliciously ripe. ▶





◀ The cucumber provided a cool, neutral taste. Warm bread with butter was also brought out, but unfortunately there was just one slice per person and no extras for my table mate who asked for more.

Our two wines were a 2014 Tamber Bey Unoaked Chardonnay from Napa (which Dave provided), and a 2015 Domaine Chanson Viré-Clessé from Burgundy, France. Viré-Clessé means the wine comes from the AOC of Mâcon, a sub district of Burgundy. A newer appellation created in 1999, it replaces the older white wine appellations Mâcon Viré and Mâcon Clessé. So how did they do? The Tamber Bey was rich, rounded, nicely balanced and buttery, while the Chanson was dryer, minerally, and sharper in acidity. To me, it was better with the fish because the high acid cut through the fatty salmon and reduced the richness. In contrast, the Tamber seemed harsh with the delicate sockeye. As refreshing as they were, the cucumber and melon seemed to dilute the intensity of the wine, however.

Our Second Course was a bowl of Heirloom Sweet Corn Soup. This was accompanied by popcorn, grits, and raspberry. The dry ingredients were brought to table in a bowl, and the warm cream based soup was poured over it tableside. I am sure the corn soup was selected because corn is in season. It was wonderfully ripe and sweet. The grits were in a small lump at the bottom. The popcorn was probably intended as a texture contrast, but it tended to get stuck in one's teeth and didn't add any flavor. The grits were neutral as one would expect, but provided structure. The blueberry added interest and a ribbon of color.

Our assigned wines were 2014 Fullerton "Five Faces" Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley in Oregon. This was contrasted with the 2014 Domaine Chanson Marsannay Rouge, another Pinot Noir from Burgundy. Marsannay is a sub district in the Côte de Nuits area of Burgundy and is the only appellation that makes red, white and rosé. The 5 Faces was full and rich, with the fruit balanced nicely by acidity, tasting of dark fruits. The Chanson in contrast was lean, slightly acidic, with raspberry

notes. With the food, the Willamette Pinot Noir was clearly the winner. The richness of the soup matched the generous nature of the Pinot, while the Marsannay seemed sharp and angular, clashing with the soup.

After a bit of a delay, the Third Course found us with a plate of Heartland Guest Ranch Elk, with accompanying zucchini, potato and summer pepper. There were two cuts of elk: a tenderloin and a leg. My leg piece was overdone, the char giving a premonition of interior dryness. The tenderloin was perfect. A potato puree with house demi glace moistened the naturally lean meat. There seemed to be a citrus note in the sauce.

2010 Paloma Spring Mountain Merlot from Napa Valley was compared to a 2010 Château Clos des Jacobins Saint-Émilion Grand Cru Classé. Both reds were supplied by Dave Thrasher. Tasted without food, the Paloma was rounded and just a touch sweet with all the fully ripe Merlot. Very well balanced. The Bordeaux was structured, with dark fruits, oaky and mildly tannic. It consisted of 75% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Franc while the Paloma was mostly Merlot with a small amount of Cabernet Sauvignon. With the elk, I found the French wine had even more depth of flavor than just drinking the wine alone. It was deep, complex and the food smoothed out the tannins. By contrast, the Paloma did not reach the depths of flavor that the Bordeaux did. I gave the nod to Bordeaux.

Dessert was a Basil Semifreddo with white chocolate and honey. An Italian dish that means half (semi) cold (freddo), a semifreddo is typically made of eggs, sugar and cream and has the texture of a half frozen mousse. A sponge cake formed the base on which the frozen mousse sat. In our case it was gelée not mousse. There was two kinds of scoups: watermelon and basil. It was colorfully surrounded by alternating red and green dots of watermelon and candied melon gelée. I thought the most interesting thing about the dessert was the basil flavored powder which just evaporated in your mouth on contact. Ephemeral in texture but intensely basil flavored, it was unique. I asked Heather Smith,

General Manager, about it. The Basil Powder "is made by first making a basil oil and then adding a substance called maltodextrin that soaks up lipids/fats and leaves only the flavor essence in a powder form." Maltodextrin is a polysaccharide that is used as a food additive. It is produced from starch by partial hydrolysis and is usually found as a white hygroscopic spray-dried powder. It is commonly used in soft drinks or candy.

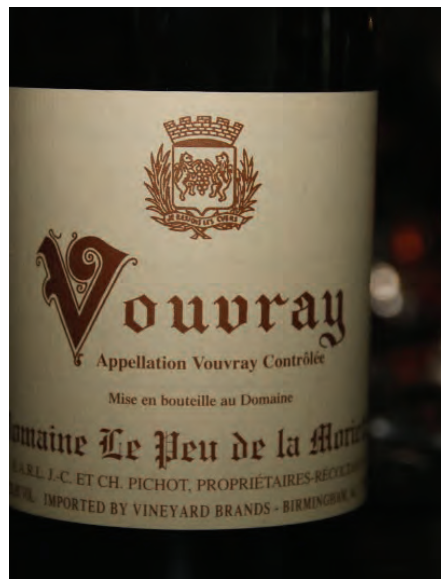
Our wine was a 2010 Château Chantegril Sauternes from Bordeaux. Actually from Barsac, a Sauternes sub district, this sticky was not included in the 1855 official ranking. I found it not quite as full bodied and unctuous as other sweet wines from this area. It went well with the dessert, however.

Many thanks to Chef Clayton Chapman who crafted a delicious meal using fresh, seasonal ingredients and marvelous providers to give us a top drawer dining experience. Arrangements were made through General Manager Heather Smith, who is also a certified sommelier. We had attentive service throughout the night. Thanks as well to David and Tabitha Thrasher for hosting, along with Todd Lemke who provided a Board Member's presence. Translated, that means Dave and Tabitha did all the work!

**I THOUGHT THE MOST INTERESTING THING ABOUT THE DESSERT WAS THE BASIL FLAVORED POWDER WHICH JUST EVAPORATED IN YOUR MOUTH ON CONTACT. EPHEMERAL IN TEXTURE BUT INTENSELY BASIL FLAVORED, IT WAS UNIQUE.**

All were given a small bag of sugar cookies upon leaving, a nice way to remember the restaurant the next morning at breakfast. 🍪







# IWFS NEW YORK GREAT WEEKEND:

PART 4

## UNIVERSITY CLUB BLACK TIE GALA DINNER WITH PAHLMMEYER WINES

WRITTEN BY WAYNE MARKUS / PHOTOS BY WAYNE MARKUS

Saturday April 14th, 2018. This was the last event for the Great Weekend in New York. It was fitting to hold a formal black-tie event at the University Club of New York. The evening began with a bus ride from the JW Marriott Essex House to The University Club. We were able to enjoy this venue because one of the members of the New York branch is a member. We were met at a Champagne reception at the Club by several members of the New York branch. Served were **Gosset Champagne Brut Grand Rosé** and **Brut Grand Reserve** and passed hors d'oeuvres.

The **University Club of New York**, or U Club, according to Wikipedia is a private social club that dates back to 1861 when a group of college friends, principally Yale alumni, founded the club to extend their collegial ties. An addi-

tional purpose was for the “promotion of Literature and Art” by establishing a Library, Reading Room and Gallery of Art. It contains a large collection of art with many great American painters’ works. The Mediterranean Revival Italian Renaissance Palazzo-Styled building was erected in 1899. It is a nine-story building behind a three-story façade. The Reading room has ceiling murals by H. Siddons Mowbray modeled after the Vatican Apartments.

If you learn that there is a California Bordeaux blend wine that has scored 95-99 points on 13 of 25 vintages, a Pinot Noir that has scored 91-96 on all vintages, and a Chardonnay that has scored 95+ points on 12 of 29 wines and vintages it would get your attention, wouldn’t it? That is exactly what we had with dinner.

Arnold “Arnie” Reiter represented the

New York Branch, the oldest in the United States. He welcomed the guests and thanked them for attending. Arnie has a special fondness for Pahlmeyer wines having served them at his son’s wedding and will be serving them at the upcoming marriage of his daughter.

The wines were from the from Pahlmeyer winery and their Wayfarer winery. The Wayfarer wines were donated by Pahlmeyer. Holly Kapica from the local wholesaler spoke of Pahlmeyer.



Jason Pahlmeyer was a successful trial attorney who developed a thirst for wine. He partnered with the owner of a 55-acre site in south-east Napa Valley and they had a dream of creating a “California Mouton.” Jason and his friend John Caldwell went to the University of Bordeaux where the Professors analyzed his soil and the weather conditions at the site and recommended planting corn, not vines! After three years, in 1981, selected clones of the Bordeaux varietals were planted on Caldwell Mountain. There are interesting stories about the smuggling of the “suitcase clones” from and through Canada by John Caldwell. Look it up on Google.

Pahlmeyer has had a succession of winemakers over 32 years, each lasting five to six years or less, including, in historical chronology, Randy Dunn, Robert Levy, Helen Turley, Erin Green, Kale Anderson, Bibiana González Rabe, Todd Kohn, and now Jennifer Williams. These are some well-known winemakers.

Randy Dunn was the winemaker for the first release, the 1986 Pahlmeyer Proprietary Blend, scoring 94 points by Robert Parker. The 1991 Chardonnay made by Robert Levy was reluctantly provided for the blockbuster film Disclosure. In the scene depicting the Pahlmeyer Chardonnay Demi Moore’s character made a now famous statement to Michael Douglas’s character. You will have to Google that scene. This obviously increased the exposure to Pahlmeyer wines. Levy eventually became winemaker at the cult Harlan Estates. Vineyard land in the Atlas Creek appellation was purchased in 1998.

Jason Pahlmeyer developed a love for the great Burgundies. He attempted to purchase an estate in Burgundy with the plan the Helen Turley would be the winemaker and consult with a Burgundian wine maker. At the last minute there was a higher bid and the plan never came to fruition. Helen Turley, knowing that Pahlmeyer wanted to produce world-class Chardonnay and Burgundian style Pinot Noir wines, recommended that he purchase the Wayfarer Farm on the extreme Sonoma coast in what is now the Fort Ross-Seaview sub-appellation. Helen thought it could be the La Tâche of California. It was near her Marcassin Vineyard so she knew the area. Martinelli and Peter Michael also have wineries in the area.

The vineyard is above the fog line at 1100 feet elevation so there is ample sunshine and cool wind from the coast perfect for grapes to ripen and retain natural acidity. The soil is Goldridge, that is the decomposition product of an ancient seabed, similar to parts of Sonoma. The vineyard is comprised of 30 blocks, each with a single clone of Chardonnay or Pinot Noir. The winemaker uses the blocks and clones to bring out certain features of their wines. These cool weather naturally acidic Chardonnay and Pinot Noir wines are not second wines by any means and have been outstanding.

The **first course** was Feuilleté de Shrimp and Scallops with lobster sauce. The shrimp and scallops were between two biscuits at the edge of a pool of lobster sauce. It was paired with two Pahlmeyer Chardonnays, both outstanding and complementing the dish. The **2013 Pahlmeyer “Savoir Faire” Chardonnay** Napa Valley (Robert Parker, The Wine Advocate 96 points) is named for the French phrase meaning “knowing how to do something well.” The finest barrels of Chardonnay are selected for this cuvée. Robert Parker states “It is a tour de force in winemaking and a profound Chardonnay.” The **2013 Pahlmeyer Chardonnay** Napa Valley (Robert Parker, The Wine Advocate 94) was outstanding. Choosing one over the other would be very difficult, especially if tasting blind.

The **second course** was Glazed Chilean Sea Bass with Vegetable “Spaghetti.” The two Wayfarer Pinot Noir wines matched the sea bass very well. Sea bass are mildly meaty and marries well with bigger, richer, rounder wines including Pinot Noir, but not with the bolder tannic Cabernet Sauvignon. The **2012 Wayfarer Pinot Noir, Golden Mean**, (Wine Advocate 95 points) is a cuvée of 3 of 30 clones from as many blocks. Two Pommard clones provide structure and depth while the Swan clone provides floral and spicy notes. The **2012 Wayfarer Pinot Noir, Wayfarer Vineyard** (Wine Advocate 94 points) is a cuvée containing 12 of their 30 clones from 25 of their 30 blocks and has a variety of red fruit aromas and bright acidity and soft tannins. The winemaker, Bibiana González Rave, recommends tasting this wine first if studying their Pinot Noirs because it brings the contributions of multiple clones to the wine. ▶







PART 2

◀ The third course was Herb Crusted Rack of Lamb with Natural Jus, Egg-plant Gratin and Rissolé Potatoes. This dish calls for a big red wine and the two Pahlmeyers met the match. The flagship 2006 Pahlmeyer Proprietary Red (Robert Parker, Wine Advocate 95 points) is a full-bodied concentrated wine with firm tannins, dark fruit aromas and long aftertaste. The 2006 Pahlmeyer Merlot (Robert Parker, Wine Advocate 94 points) as stated by Parker is an example of just how great a Merlot can be in Napa. This is not a Sideways Merlot.



The desert course was Panna Cotta with Caramelized Pears, Carmel Sauce and a Balsamic Vinegar Reduction. There are many dessert wines that could have paired with it. The wine selected was one that most wine drinkers have probably never heard of, a 2015 Domaine Huet Vouvray, Le Mont Vineyard, Moelleux (Wine Advocate 96 points). This winery has been the standard-bearer for age-worthy Chenin Blanc since 1928. Domaine Huet may make a sparkling Pétillant, sec (dry), demi-sec (half-dry) or Moelleux (sweet) wine based on the conditions of that year and by stopping fermentation with sulfur dioxide. Depending on the year, they may make some or all of the styles. All are age-worthy. According to The Rare Wine Company, the American importer, the wines are nearly immortal. Le Mont is the best of the three vineyards. They wines are produced with biodynamic practice. In 2005 Decanter Magazine created a list of the 100 Greatest Wines ever made. A 1947 Domaine Huet was ranked number 6! That is impressive for a Vouvray or Chenin Blanc. Who would have thought?



After a bus ride back to the Essex House and a night's sleep many flew home, others met family and friends, and others spent the day in the Big Apple visiting a few more sites. Karen and I went down town and visited the Fraunces Tavern, a historic house with an interesting history. On December 4, 1783, nine days after the last British soldiers left American soil George Washington bade farewell to the officers of the Continental Army in the Fraunces Tavern. There is far more history and today it is a museum and a tavern. There is an interesting display of old flags including a five-star American flag. We had a craft beer in the Tavern where a traditional Irish band was playing. 🍷



# JULIAN SYMONS RECOUNTS HIS BROTHER AJA SYMONS CO-FOUNDING THE WINE AND FOOD SOCIETY

WRITTEN BY TOM MURNAN

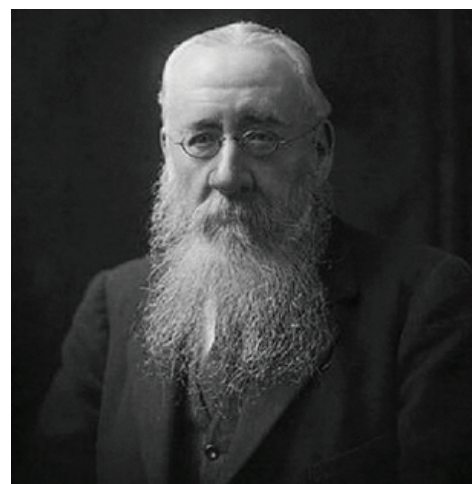


was impressed with André's astonishing knowledge of wine and gastronomy with his encyclopedic knowledge of chefs, culinary dishes and wine. "He was an admirable dinner speaker, with a surprising gift of metaphor; the dignity of his personal appearance was enhanced by the crown of thick white hair... above his smiling face." Probably André "was impressed by AJ's youth, wit and assurance. In a later meeting, AJ, the founder of the First Edition Club, showed André's book *The Art of Good Living* to his book loving members. For his part, André helped elevate AJ's culinary education so that AJ "learned to appraise the 'demure self-confidence' of *Domaine Chevalier* 1920 and the 'majestic finality' of *Château Margaux* 1870, and to speak severely of English cooking."

In early winter of 1931, AJ, André, and three other guests came up with an idea of honoring Professor George

**Saintsbury** by creating the **Saintsbury Club**. **Saintsbury** was famous for his *Notes on a Cellar Book* documenting many great wines he had in his younger years. The idea was for an exclusive club, limited to 50 persons. Due to the success of this club, the idea germinated in André's mind for "forming a Society of Gastronomes, and by this time he was sufficiently friendly with AJ, and had sufficient respect for his alert intellect, to talk over the idea with him. AJ glowed with optimism and enthusiasm, as he

always did when a new and romantic idea was put before him. At first they thought of launching a Wine Society analogous to the Book Society, in which members received one wine a month, selected by a committee of experts, for one guinea a year. This proved impracticable: and the partners finally decided to found a Wine and Food Society, whose primary declared object was to raise the standards of cooking throughout the country. Membership cost one guinea a year, and the chief inducement offered to join the Society was the "practical demonstrations of the art of the table" promised to members in the form of lunches, dinners and wine-tastings. Simon was able to make the necessary arrangements with wine-merchants for these functions.



George Saintsbury, English historian and literary scholar.

"Neither of the partners were anxious to risk more than the minimum of financial outlay on such a speculative venture. The office address of the Society was 6, Little Russell Street, so that its

office was in fact that of the First Edition Club. It was agreed that AJ should handle all the correspondence. With no office expenses, therefore, and a simple arrangement between partners regarding the sharing of profits, the Wine and Food Society was launched in October, 1933, with André Simon as President and AJA Symonds as Secretary."

The Manchester Guardian printed a story about the new club and wrote about its first, upcoming event. "Weaned from the crudities of roast beef and roly-poly pudding, their first demonstration of the higher life will be 'a luncheon with an Alsatian menu' where all the food and wines will come from Alsace and the cost will be only ten shillings." But the newspaper could not resist adding "Only the incurably insular will be inclined to reflect that many a housewife could do the whole family rather well on ten shillings and without going any nearer Alsace than the village shops which she ordinarily frequents." In fact, throughout its existence, the Society the society has been criticized that while it shows by example what the good life should be, it does not give the practical means of how to improve cooking.

"Within a month of the first announcement the Society had 230 members. Within three months it had 500—more than the First Edition Club had obtained during the whole course of its existence." The early success encouraged the partners, and AJ felt that his fortune had been made. AJ was dreaming of a membership of ten thousand in a few years. Unfortunately, this would prove not to be the case. AJ threw himself into the job as Secretary, recruiting new members, attempting to know them personally, and attending almost daily luncheons and private weekend parties. He transformed himself from neophyte to an authority on food and wine.

"Certainly the Society's first function, the Alsatian lunch, was a great success, and the tasting of Madeira and Malmsey wines which followed was also approved by the members, who had the opportunity of tasting ten different wines, including an 1808 Malmsey and a 1790 Reserve, at the small cost of half a crown. "More than 300 people attended both the Society's third and

WINE AND FOOD  
EDITED BY ANDRÉ L. SIMON  
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distributed free of charge to all members. Its frequent editorial implication that spiritual satisfaction need not await the Kingdom of Heaven, but can be attained by the fortunate upon this earth through the pleasures of the table. The magazine was edited by André Simon, who was responsible for obtaining most of the contributions.

AJ did most of the production work, saw the magazine through the press, wrote occasional articles, and was responsible for some of the editorial notes. The advertisements in this excellently-produced magazine were almost as interesting as the editorial notes." The magazine also had articles on 'J. Pierpont Morgan's Cellar Book,' on the virtues and defects of the 1933 vintage, and recipes for 'chicken with tarragon' and Duckling à la Bordelaise and members accounts of memorable meals. AJ was convinced his fortune had been made when after the end of the first year there were 1,000 members.

The Society celebrated its first birthday with a banquet the likes of which had not been seen in England for a hundred years. 1934 was the centenary of Marie-Antoine Carême, the great chef for emperors and kings, like Napoleon and the future George IV when he was the Prince Regent. Due to this last fact, it was decided to hold the banquet at Brighton Royal Pavilion, George's seaside retreat from London. ▶



The Royal Pavilion at Brighton



The richly decorated Banqueting Room at the Royal Pavilion, from John Nash's Views of the Royal Pavilion (1826).



Marie-Antoine Carême

◀ The Prince Regent told his chef a hundred years earlier ‘Carême, you will be the death of me; you send in such appetizing fare that I cannot help over-eating’ to which Carême replied ‘Sir, my duty is to tempt your appetite; yours, to control it.’ André Simon observed that Carême ‘was a true apostle. Apostles cannot be beaten.’ A number of *Wine and Food* issues focused on Carême’s life.

“At the Royal Pavilion, then, AJ delivered his cheerful Report on the Society’s first year of working; other speeches were made; and then the members visited the kitchens and saw a few of the dishes

which they were to taste in preparation on the great revolving spits, before the fire which had not been lighted for half a century. Two hundred people, who had paid two guineas each, sat down to eat in the vast E shaped Chinese dining-room, lighted by thousands of tallow candles in eighty great candelabra. They found in front of them twelve knives and forks, and an equal number of glasses; the menu for their meal had been modelled with great care on dishes served by Carême to the Prince Regent. The Forty-two courses, with their sixteen specially chosen wines and liqueurs, were provided in two services, in the custom of an earlier day. Some, like the boar’s head and the two models in iced sugar of ‘La Temple de l’Amour’ and ‘Le Frégate La Gourmande’ were designed for admiration rather than consumption. The service of the dinner took two hours and a half. Afterwards a concert of chamber music by Arne, Boyce, Handel and Vivaldi was given in the Music Room. ‘The lateness of the hour,’ said the decorous report in *Wine and Food*, ‘Made it necessary for a number of the diners to forgo the final pleasure of the concert, but those who remained were richly rewarded.’”

“When the Prohibition Act was repealed by Congress the partners decided that it was time for Simon to go to the United States, to spread the gospel of good living. A farewell banquet was given to him at the Savoy Hotel, which was attended by the Ambassadors of Spain and Portugal, and the Rumanian Minister. On this, the first of several visits to America, Simon organized Branches in some of the larger cities, branches which materially increased the revenue of the Society, and the circulation of its magazine. In his absence, AJ was left in sole control. He arranged functions and tastings, in addition to handling all administrative work, and the business of the Society occupied more and more of his time.” This was all to the detriment to his First Edition Club activities and obligations.

AJ dealt with the rising number of members. “He arranged that functions should be held in duplicate [and eventually in quadruplicate], to avoid overcrowding; he tried, as far as possible, to reach a personal relationship with every member; his life became more and more nearly a solid block of social engagements. The joy with which he yielded to new facets of life was unending, and he became an expert in gastronomy. The gravity of his manner grew, and his announcements on the merits of food and drink were made as those of one conscious of the care that must be exercised in pronouncing a judgment which was final, and from which there could be no appeal. Mornings and evenings were filled with engagements. ‘I have hardly time,’ he said, ‘to dress in the mornings or undress at night.’ His wife saw him only at weekends, and his family hardly at all.

“Some of his friends viewed his gastronomic career with distaste. He said that these vast meals, however enjoyable in themselves, were regarded by him quite rationally as a means to an end—and that end was making his fortune. He never, at this or any other time, made a fortune: and the *Wine and Food* Society, although its success in the first years of its life exceeded the most sanguine hopes of either partner, never provided him with that fairly considerable settled income which seemed certain in the flush of its first remarkable success. The membership did not greatly increase, during AJ’s lifetime, beyond that obtained at the end of the first year.

“The Society’s impartial view of the English catering trade was partly responsible for the moderation of its success. A scathing attack delivered by one of the members in a speech at the first General Meeting annoyed the Hotel and Restaurant Association; the support of the trade was never given fully to the Society’s activities, and the project of blessing certain hotels with the Society’s approval could not be carried out.” The hotel world viewed the Society as attacking their whole foundation with its requests for better prepared food and better and more reasonably priced wines.

Another reason for the lack of a large membership was the attitude of the founders themselves. “The taste of the President was too good for him to

make the necessary concessions to popular vulgarity; and the taste of the Secretary had been educated by the taste of the President.” An editorial in *Wine and Food* (written in the Society’s fourth year of life) at last recognized this fact. “Disarming criticism is difficult when one set of critics accuse us of having ceased to be an *élite* and become a mob, whilst others blame us for being too highbrow and ignoring the masses. To those that think that our doors are open too wide, our answer is that an *élite* is not a *clique*, and that we cannot hope to achieve what our Society was founded to achieve unless we have the power of numbers at

**“TO THOSE THAT THINK THAT OUR DOORS ARE OPEN TOO WIDE, OUR ANSWER IS THAT AN ÉLETE IS NOT A CLIQUE, AND THAT WE CANNOT HOPE TO ACHIEVE WHAT OUR SOCIETY WAS FOUNDED TO ACHIEVE UNLESS WE HAVE THE POWER OF NUMBERS AT THE BACK OF US.”**

the back of us. To those who tell us that our bounden duty is to the masses, and that we could be certain of an immense volume of support did we but address ourselves to them, we can but confess that we do not feel equal to the task...

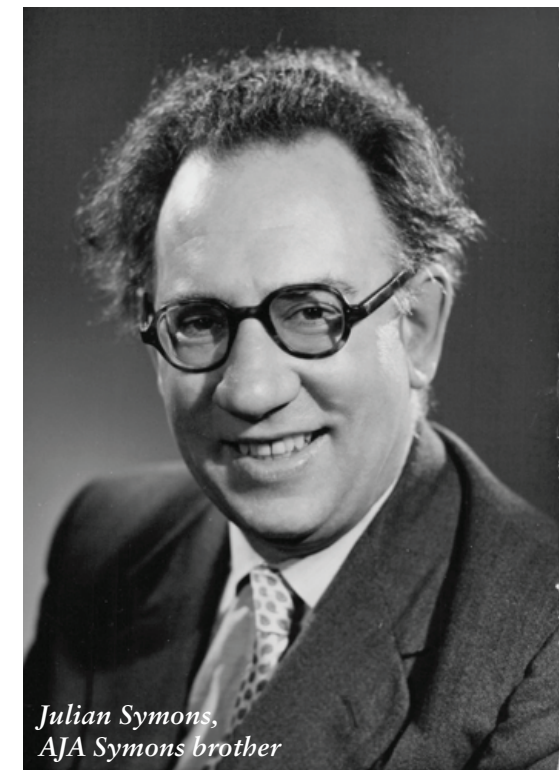
“Our helplessness with the brainless majority, both rich and poor, does not mean that we have no, or but little, interest in questions of nutrition for the poorer classes of the community. On the contrary. We fully realize that the poorer the home the more essential it is to avoid waste in cooking, and that it is very important to teach the humbler housewife how to make the best use possible of the food-stuffs within their means. We are also fully aware that, when it is good, plain food is best, and that English food

can be both plain and best. But if we go to the trouble of importing out-of-the-way wines and staging exotic meals, it is not merely to give our Members and their friends opportunities, nowhere else to be had, of appraising the cooking and wines of different countries; it is also, and we may say chiefly, to introduce just an element of novelty likely to rouse more interest in and attract more attention to our Society, its aims and its work.’

“As President and Secretary recognized this parting of the ways, the articles in *Wine and Food* were written more and more, not merely for a minority, but for a very small minority of the membership, conscious of its own gastronomic culture; the recondite nature of many of the subjects, and the tone of airy superiority in which they were treated must have frightened away more prospective members than it attracted. Lunches and dinners gradually became fewer, better, and—more costly.”



Neither the Secretary or the President ever desired success if it meant catering to popular culture and compromising their standards. Interestingly enough, after World War II, membership grew like it did at the Society’s inception. AJ predicted in a 1940 note to André, that the Society would rebound. After all the austerity that the war brought, people were again attracted to well prepared food, something they took for granted or just ignored in the 1930’s. Only one of



Julian Symons, AJA Symons brother

the founders would live to see the Society’s late blooming as AJ Symons died on August 26, 1941 before witnessing it. 🍷

**Sources:**

*A.J.A. Symons His Life and Speculations* by Julian Symons. Published 1950 by Eyre & Spottiswoode, London; Wikipedia for Brighton Pavilion and Marie-Antoine Carême photos.



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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.*

## *The International Wine & Food Society of London, England*

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## **KEEP IN TOUCH!**

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# UPCOMING COUNCIL BLUFFS BRANCH EVENTS

## *Mark Your Calendars!*

OCT.  
**07**



### J. COCO 52<sup>ND</sup> AND LEAVENWORTH

Theme: #HerWine:  
Women wine makers  
Producers: Jill Goldstein and Jill Panzer

NOV.  
**18**



### LE BOUILLON

Theme: An 85th Birthday Party  
Madeira Sit Down Wine Tasting  
featuring a 1932 Verdelho  
Producers: Tom & Mary Murnan

DEC.  
**09**



### V. MERTZ

Theme: President's Holiday Dinner  
Producers: Joe & Jill Goldstein



### 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: [iwfs.councilbluffs@yahoo.com](mailto:iwfs.councilbluffs@yahoo.com)**