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The Bluffs **Food & Wine** *gazette*

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Cover art: The Harvesters (detail) by Peter Bruegel the Elder circa 1525-1569



Presidents Comments

Please join us for an evening in Southern France!

Last summer, Suzanne & I joined the Forristalls on a winemaker's tour of Provence and Southern France. Led by Washington State University Enology Department, our group was based in Aix-en-Provence just north of Marseille. Each day we visited wineries in nearby wine regions. It was our second trip to this area and we were excited to be back.

So when it was time to plan the President's event there was no question that we wanted to share some of our culinary experiences. Working with Chef Paul at Le Bouillon, we planned a meal with the food influences and wines of Southern France.

Wine has been made in this region for 2,600 years, dating back to the Greeks who founded Marseille in 600 BC. During the evening we will taste wines of Bandol, Châteauneuf du Pape, Crozes Hermitage and the wine that Provence is famous for - rosé. We finish the evening with a dessert wine, a Monbazillac. The highlight of the evening comes from our cellar, a pair of Chateauneuf du Pape wines. We will compare a 2007 Xavier Vins and a 2010 Jean Royer Prestige.

We look forward to celebrating the holiday exploring the wine and food of Southern France with you!

Enjoy!

Bob Kossow

Chef Paul Kulik
named a James Beard Best
Chef Midwest semi-finalist.

"When talking about French food I want to be very clear to distinguish between a stereotype and a much simpler idea," Kulik says. "I'm talking about the food the French as a people put on their table every day. It's not about white tablecloths. It's about getting back to garden cooking—country food that grandma would be proud to put on the table. Fresh. Unpretentious. It's a French Country sensibility, but with our own spin on it," he adds of a menu that reflects the heritage of southwestern France and northern Spain.

**"Wine makes daily living easier, less hurried,
with fewer tensions and more tolerance."**

—Benjamin Franklin





Editor's Corner

Wow, what a great event, our Halloween Progressive Dinner. At least half of the members arrived en costume, and they were really nice costumes! It was a novel idea, doing a walk around using the houses of three member families who live close by in the Sanctuary, off 225th and Center Streets. Unfortunately there was a heat wave that day, with temps in the 90's, making costume wearing a little uncomfortable. Many thanks to our three sacrificial host houses. Doing an event away from the comfort of a restaurant means a lot of logistics: tables, plates and utensils, glasses, table cloths and the like. But, it was all pulled off with aplomb and no glitches. Be sure to read about this fun event in the Gazette.

So, why did you join this club, anyway? Was it to get rip roaring drunk and have a fancy dinner once a month? Was it to meet with friends but then have no idea what you just ate and drank when you had to describe it later? After working on it for about six months, your Board has come up with a **Mission Statement** for the Council Bluffs Branch. The challenge was to succinctly sum up our main goals for the Branch. We carefully considered our most important objectives, which centered on camaraderie, education, good wine and good food in a fun atmosphere. The Mission Statement will find a permanent place on the Gazette back page as well as on the international web site. Here is the statement:

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.

In short, we want to have fun and learn about the infinite topic of food and wine. John Fischer writes this month about wine label terms that can easily cause confusion. Does Reserve or Reserva have a specific meaning or is it a guarantee of quality? What about proprietary names used by a specific winery? What does cuvee mean anyway? Read more about it within.

I continue my series on Mary's and my trip to Portugal and Madeira with another installment. Our tour guides from The Madeira Wine Company took us to lunch at the Atlantic, which had a great view of the Atlantic Ocean. We got to sample more Madeiran food and, of course, wine.

Cheers!

Tom Murnan

"Everybody wants to save the earth.
Nobody wants to help Mom with the dishes."
—P. J. O'Rourke





Event Report: Halloween Progressive Dinner at the Sanctuary

by Tom Murnan

Disclaimer: Any character descriptions that happen to fit a member is purely coincidental.

Ever daydream about having a wine and food event where you could invite some stellar characters from history, super heroes, or famous TV characters, just to spice things up a bit? Well, you should have been at the progressive dinner where we went from lair to lair in this Halloween themed extended party.

Featured were such luminaries as Anthony and Cleopatra, Viking Shieldmaiden, Lagertha Lothbrok, and her love interest, an English knight, as well as the extended Addams Family, complete with Morticia and Gomez, Wednesday, Lurch and Pugsley. I kept looking for Thing but it never materialized. Then there was Captain Jack Sparrow with his Wench. Captain Jack had a costume malfunction and just couldn't keep his moustache and beard on. The Wench, a comely bit of femininity, brought her father, a shiftless drifter who was in desperate need of a dentist, or better yet, an orthodontist. Alas, one never materialized. Wonder Woman arrived just to keep things orderly and polite, bringing with her a hapless basketball player from Indiana. Clark Kent came incognito to add support, but I detected his logo under his mild mannered reporter's suit. For some reason, Spider woman was stalking Clark all night long.

His grace, the Cardinal, and his attentive altar girl (or was it an altar boy?), arrived to bring religion to this unruly bunch but he succumbed instead to the general jocularity of the event. Two skeletons were clanking about all evening. One could not complain. They brought the wine but had trouble holding their liquor. It went right through them. There was a second Cleopatra. Why her serene highness, a stunning beauty, would be cavorting with biggest loser Ian Poulter, the world's worst professional golfer (known for his trademark plaid slacks), was one of those inexplicable mysteries of the sexes. Two Jumanji styled big game hunters arrived and began shooting things up. It just got better from there as everyone began enjoying the wine. All in all, 38 persons attended, which included one guest who also had to work for her supper (Maureen Panzer). Cinderella, perhaps? I never got her stage name.

Quaffing and hors d'oeuvres began at the **Panzer lair. Bloody Mary Shrimp, Stuffed Toadstools** (mushrooms) **Goblin Goo** (guacamole) and chips, and **Spider Cheese** (cheddar with Guinness Stout) all whetted our appetite. **Candied eyeballs** were also available if you dared. The wines all followed the Halloween theme as well. **2012 Ritual Casablanca Valley Sauvignon Blanc, 2011 Phantom by Bogel, 2012 Hanging Snake Shiraz Voiginer by Langmeil, 2012 Freakshow Cabernet Sauvignon, and a 2012 Seven Deadly Zins** rounded out the wines. **Sangria** was also available on this hot, 90° day.



We next began our trek to **Nate & Liz Farmer's** den. This was where the meat and potatoes were to be found, as prepared by caterer **John Benker**. There was plenty of sunlight for this hike (although some rode), causing some beads of perspiration to appear. The Farmers immediately put us all in their deep dungeon, where tables had been set up. For each course, we were allowed a brief reprise out of the dungeon to go upstairs to get our food.

We started with **To Die For Headless Pumpkin Soup**. The pumpkin was seasoned with soy and red chili toasted pumpkin seeds and fresh pear and ginger salsa. The ginger was fresh, and a pear balsamic vinegar was used in the salsa. My only quibble was that the pumpkin seeds needed to be roasted longer. The **2012 Sleepy Hollow Chardonnay** was a great match.

Next was **First Flesh Chicken Goulash** (a wonderfully ghoulish name) with Smoked Paprika and Buttered Noodles, French

Bread and butter. Chicken, paprika, onions, red and yellow peppers were cooked in homemade chicken stock and topped with sour cream. I thought perhaps that the large letter E on the label of the **Orin Swift E** stood for evil, but discovered it was only for España as this non vintage wine was sourced from Spain. This was very good wine and should be sought out when you see it at the wine shop or grocery store.

R.I.P Braised Short Ribs with Blood Red Bordelaise sauce, roasted autumn vegetables and Eyes of Brussels Sprouts was our final course in the dungeon. The ribs were braised four and a half hours in red wine, which had been flavored with a mirepoix of carrots, celery and onions, and finished with a pan sauce of shallots and more red wine. Delish. Probably the best wine of the evening was the **2013 The Prisoner**, which went seamlessly with the meat.

An escape plot was devised shortly after Chef Benker and the principals of the event were diverted by their introduction and photograph. We snuck out an unlocked basement door and made our way down the back yard following the Glow Stick Way. It was night. **Wednesday Addams**, our accomplice, had marked our path at dusk with a hundred glowing glow sticks, aiding our escape. We made our way to the **Hipple cavern** to finish the evening with sweets. Slices of Death by Chocolate awaited us, topped off by **2008 Fonseca Late Bottled Port**. Port and chocolate go together like blood and a scream. A great finish.

Many thanks to our three couples who provided the sacrificial homes: **Jill & Jon Panzer, Liz & Nate Farmer, and Patti & Steve Hipple**. Thanks as well to **John Benker** for a very tasty dinner. And thanks to all who dug up a costume. It was a unique and enjoyable way to start the Halloween season.





Confusing Wine Labeling Terms

by John Fischer



Are the words *cuvée*, *reserve*, and *meritage* rather vague terms in your wine vocabulary? Many astute wine lovers find these words somewhat confusing. Being able to fully comprehend the full scope of a wine label is more difficult than you may think. In this short article, it is impossible to fully cover the intricacies of the labeling systems used around the world, so we will limit our discussion to a few essentials, but common terms.

Most wine bottles have a front and a back label. The front label is often colorful and eye-catching, and its essential purpose is to market the wine. It may give you no information about the varietals used in making the wine. Terms like “red table wine” tell you very little of what is in the bottle. Sometimes you will find the grape varietals on the back label, other times you won’t.

The United States requires specific information to appear on all wine bottles. These include the alcohol content, type of wine (red or white table wine), country of origin, brand identification, volume, and whether or not it contains sulfites. Nevertheless, other than these basics, there are other terms that are not required but often poorly understood.

The term, “Reserve,” creates much confusion as most people are led to believe that it indicates a higher quality wine than the regular bottling. Often this is true, especially when used by high quality producers, such as Caymus and Robert Mondavi. Most people are not aware that in the U.S. the term is not regulated. In an attempt to increase sales, some producers place this moniker on all of their bottles. For example, Kendal Jackson bottles its basic Chardonnay as *Vintage Reserve*. Their top quality Chardonnay bottling is labeled *Grand Reserve*.

In Spain and Italy the “Reserve” designation is regulated by law. In Spain, the term *Reserva* means that the wine was aged for at least three years in the cask or bottle, but at least one year aged in the cask. *Grand Reserva* means the wine was aged for five years, two in cask, three in bottle.

The Italian term, “Reserva,” indicates a wine that has been aged for a period before being released. The length of time varies by location. It is 3 years for Chianti and 5 years for Barolo or Brunello. Nevertheless quality is not guaranteed by the term in either country.

The term “cuvée” is another term that is fraught with confusion, as it has several different meanings. In its literal translation it means tank or barrel. This term is unregulated in the U.S. and only designates a wine of a specific batch or blend. It has no absolute guarantee of superior quality, and in that sense it has the same meaning as *reserve*. Nevertheless, in the hands of discerning producers, the term indicates a special wine of higher quality or a unique blend. The term “cuvée speciale” or “tête de cuvée” are especially indicative of a wine of higher quality.

Another word that creates confusion is “*Meritage*.” The word “*Meritage*” (pronounced to rhyme with heritage) is a registered U.S. trademark that wineries must pay a fee to use. It is a combination of the words “Merit” and “Heritage.” The term was devised in 1989 in an attempt to get a handle on the various blends that wineries were using. The purpose of the word is to define a “Bordeaux blend” of grapes that were not grown on French soil.

There are several restrictions governing the use of the word. The wine cannot be mass-marketed and the release must be under 20,000 cases. It must be a high quality wine whose price reflects its quality. There are two types. Red *meritage* must be made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc. White *meritage* is much more uncommon. It is produced using Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, and Muscadelle.

Much of the confusion arises from the fact that, in the U.S., a wine varietal needs to contain only 75% of the labeled grape. Indeed, there are many wines that could qualify to be called meritage that are named by the grape varietal or simply labeled red table wine.

“Proprietary” labels are another source of confusion. Wines labeled in the U.S. traditionally state the grape varietal on the label. However, not infrequently, you will find a name that was created by the winery and owned as a trademark of the brand. The purpose is to create a wine that is unique in the marketplace.

Probably the best known proprietary name is *Meritage*. However an individual winery can create its own name. For example, the Mondavi-Rothschild partnership created a wine they call “*Opus One*.” The content of the blend is under direct control of the winery. Owners of these brands hope to engender your trust in the product so labeled. Some other examples of common proprietary labels include Joseph Phelps Insignia, Clos du Bois Marlstone, and Franciscan Magnificat.



Tom & Mary Murnan Portuguese Wine Vacation

Vol. 18 June 8, 2012

Lunch at Atlantic Restaurant

by Tom Murnan



After sampling all those Madeiras at the **Madeira Wine Company**, it was time for lunch. **Ana Soares** and **Chris Bandy**, along with assistant wine maker **Filipe Azevedo** and head wine maker Francisco Albuquerque joined our group. We headed for **Atlantic**, which appropriately enough, was right on the island's shore with a great view of the Atlantic Ocean.

We started with an **Atlantis Vinho Rosé**. The main culinary idea behind the rosé was that Madeira is an island with fruity wine with good acidity and very economic. A Tinta Negra table wine was also presented. Balanced and fruity, with notes of cranberries and red berries, it was a nice warm weather wine.

Our appetizer course, a **Bruschetta**, consisted of eggs, asparagus, and ham & cheese on bread with olive oil. This was paired to a **2000 Quinta da Falorca**, a Vinho Branco (white wine). The winery also makes very good red and rosé. Our white was made with Encruzado e Malvasia Fina grapes. Smooth body and fresh and floral aromas, it was minerally and dry on the palate and full of fruit.



The Santa Maria Columbo a replica of the types of ship typical during the Portuguese discovery, built by craftsmen from Madeira.



Ana Soares, guide and owner Chris Blandy of the Madeira Wine Company

Steak pieces in wine sauce with risotto was next served. My notes do not say what wine accompanied this course, but it was a red.

Tuna on Potatoes and Spinach Atum followed. Grilled Tuna, sautéed spinach, pine nuts, tomatoes and little red hot peppers (only mildly hot) made for an interesting dish. Again I failed to record the red wine that was served.

For dessert we had **Chocolate Delight**. Dense chocolate, almost like fudge, with raspberry purée (including the seeds) sauce regaled and soothed our palates. But so did the **Bual** we had for dessert wine. Darker than usual, it was richer and more mellow, with honey notes on the palate. It was not made in the 19th century (à la the color) but from the 21st. We also had a **2004 Malvasia Madeira**. Very soft, light bodied, and dark color for such a young wine, it was more common, easy to drink and understand.

We said goodbye to our hosts, Ana and Chris. But it wasn't goodbye forever: Chris has an active blog that you can follow on Facebook.

Next time: One of the great Lodges on the island, especially for ancient Madeiras: Pereira D'Oliveira (Vinhos), Lda.





Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!



December 5, 2015

President's Holiday Event at Le Bouillon in the Old Market.

Four course French dinner with 9 French wines, including 2 Châteauneuf -du-Papes from the Branch cellar. RSVP by 11-30-15.

Producer: President Bob Kossow



January 23, 2016

NOTE DATE CHANGE FROM LAST GAZETTE

Spencer's at Hilton Garden Inn with cuisine by Chef Glenn Wheeler

Producer: David Tritsch



February 5, 2015

Field Club. To be announced.

Producers: Tom & Mary Murnan, Jill Panzer

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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President: Bob Kossow

Vice President & Gazette: Tom Murnan

Treasurer/Membership: Diane Forristall

Secretary: Sandy & Todd Lemke

Cellar Master: John Fischer & Patti Hipple

bob.kossow@cox.net

murnantom@gmail.com

Diane@Forristall.us

ssahls@mac.com

jrudyf@cox.net | stephenhipple@hotmail.com



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PUBLISHER: Todd Lemke

EDITOR: Tom Murnan

GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Matt Wieczorek

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.

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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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