



The International Wine & Food Society

From the Chairman

Dear Prospective Wine and Food Member,

If you ask any member of The International Wine & Food Society what that membership means, I am confident their answer would include warm friendships, incredible food experiences, exquisite wine tastings and more. You would also hear descriptions of life enriching activities and memories most individuals cannot achieve on their own. Your membership in The IW&FS can bring this incredible experience to your own life.



“The object of the Society is to bring together and serve all who believe that a right understanding of good food and wine is an essential part of personal contentment and health; and that an intelligent approach to the pleasures and problems of the table offers far greater rewards than a mere satisfaction of the appetite.”

**André Simon
Founder**

This guide, that has been prepared for you, is just that – a guide. Each of the more than 80 Branches of The IW&FS in the Americas is autonomous. You will find great diversity – some of which comes of age, as in the Chicago Branch, now more than 75 years old – and some comes from youthful enthusiasm, which you will find in the new Dallas, Nashua and Tucson Branches. Each Branch develops its own personality and set its own path in pursuit of the pleasures of the table.

The IW&FS Board of Governors of the Americas welcomes your interest, enthusiastically encourages your participation and looks forward to having you and your prospective new Branch join in the Wine, Food, & Friends of our venerable old organization.

I look forward to personally meeting you and welcoming your Branch into The International Wine & Food Society.

**Dave Felton
Chairman
Board of Governors
of the Americas**



New Branch Formation Guidelines

IWFS.org Version



Introduction

The International Wine & Food Society was founded in 1933 in London by André Simon. At the time, Simon was actively involved in the wine world of both England and France, gathered together a group of friends to find camaraderie during those dismal years of the depression. Their goal was to “make the very best fare out of whatever was available, to enjoy wine as an integral part of the meal, and to experience the pleasures of the table in a happy civilized way.”

After the war years, the Society grew quickly throughout England and as Prohibition ended in the States, moved across the Atlantic. In December of 1934, Andre traveled to the United States where he founded the New York, Boston and Chicago Branches. He founded Branches in San Francisco, Los Angeles and New Orleans early in 1935. Today, there are more than 6,000 members in more than 125 Branches around the world, with almost 4,500 of those members in the Americas.

The Society endeavors to bring together like-minded people to explore the pleasures of fine food and good wine in an educational and entertaining environment. To that end, each Branch organizes and governs itself in keeping with its local requirements and the provisions of its Charter, as granted by the Board of Governors of the Americas. A Branch produces its own educational events – tastings, dinners, cooking classes, etc. that best serve the membership, taking advantage of its area’s venues and geographic uniqueness.

It is the intent of this handbook to assist those who might have an interest in forming a Branch in their area with the simple procedures that make that path a little easier. It includes:

- The benefits of membership in The IW&FS
- Finding prospective members
- Branch management and organization
- Suggestions for Branch activities
- Sources of further information and assistance



Why The IW&FS?

Before even examining the particulars that are involved in forming a new Branch, it is important to address the individual question “Why should I belong to a Branch of The IW&FS?”

There is an immediate and very obvious reason – the association with a prestigious, world-wide organization whose members have been recognized leaders in the fields of wine and food for almost a century.



Included in the scope of this international organization are area committees (the Asia/Pacific Zone, the Europe/Africa Zone and the Americas Zone) that hold festivals and host regional food and wine experiences and tours on a regular basis such as the International Festivals in South Africa in 2009 and Vancouver in 2012. In addition to the unique food and wine focus of the festivals, life-long friendships across the globe have been formed through these enriching experiences.

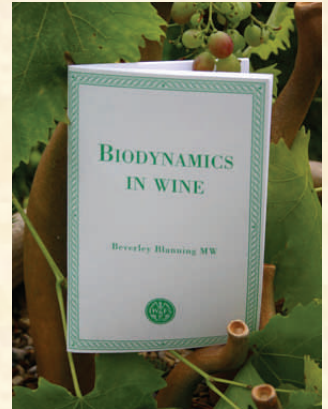


The Board of Governors of the Americas has organized cruises in the recent past which are open to all IW&FS members.

On a more regional basis, each Branch has a 'Branch Contact' who provides traveling members with a ready reference and very personal contact for the many cities and venues around the world. It is like having a friend in that city. Oftentimes various Branches plan inter-Branch functions as well – visiting a Branch in another area as part of a food and wine exchange.

Membership also includes a quarterly newsletter, *Wine, Food & Friends*, which has timely articles on food and wine, as well as reports of various Branch activities and upcoming travels and events. Periodically, monographs relating to wine and food are made available to members, such as two recent offerings, *Biodynamics in Wine*, by Beverly Blanning MW and *Icewine* by John Schreiner.

But perhaps the most compelling reason to belong to The IW&FS and the source of the greatest reward lies within the individual Branches on a very local and personal level. There you will find the opportunity to come together with like-minded people who share an interest in both food and wine. By planning and participating in events that capitalize on the venues of your geographic area, members are able to participate in experiences that they could not do as individuals. Cooking classes, wine tastings, dinners in members' homes, ethnic dining, food and wine experiences in unique venues – the possibilities are limitless and the enthusiasm is contagious. Venues and merchants become familiar with the organization and recognize the interest level of its members often resulting in a more unique experience. It is this camaraderie, beginning at the local level that carries on to national and international activities and gives the organization its uniqueness.



Where will I find Prospective members?

Your interest in forming a Branch already reveals a core group from which to begin – your friends or colleagues that share an interest in food and wine. These need not be experts by any means as the object is to gather together to enjoy and to learn on many levels. Begin assembling a mailing list (forget that friend who puts an ice cube in his/her Cabernet or the fellow that says "I hate fish." These are not good prospects).

It is suggested that a beginning level group of ten persons will get you going nicely, however, a more sizeable group might offer an opportunity to do bigger and better things as well as providing a broader base of participation to allow for schedule conflicts or attrition.

To expand upon your base to get the group established, you might consider:

- Invite ten people that you know who have an interest, have each one invite one or two other interested people.
- Contact a wine merchant with whom you have a good relationship, he might recommend others that might be interested.
- Talk with a local cooking school, if available, to solicit the names of potentially interested persons.
- Depending upon the size of your community, you may place an article in a local publication, soliciting interested individuals, at least for introductory purposes.

Remember, it is advantageous to have a diverse group. Membership is to be open to single males and females or couples.



What is the first step in founding a branch?

Once you have established a mailing list, invite your prospective members to an informational founding event. The first impression is a very lasting one. A wine and cheese open house or a champagne reception with appetizers at an interesting venue would be appealing activities. Name tags and designated hosts who meet and greet will generate interest and help people become acquainted.

A short program by two or three of the founding core group could give information on The IW&FS and lay out the plans for the new Branch in the months ahead. Address issues, costs and answer questions. Have guests fill out guest cards with pertinent information and level of interest. It would also be a good idea to assemble a display of IW&FS materials including brochures, newsletters, sample medallions and membership certificates.



It would be very beneficial to be able to announce at this first session an overall plan for the Branch for the upcoming year – but at least tell participants what the next planned event will be, the date and indicate that an invitation will follow. Capitalize on your audience's interest and you are off and running!

How should the branch leadership be set up?

This is probably the most important element in a successful Branch. Our experience teaches us that leadership should be multiple, not just a single person. During the start-up phase of the Branch, a Chairman and Board of Directors might be an effective organizational structure. Within the Board, a Secretary, Treasurer and Branch Contact should be designated. Sample Branch by-laws are available for your consideration when you reach that point.



After your Branch has moved from its formation stage to a more permanent position, you will develop by-laws for its management and establish a pattern of elections and positions of the Board. It is suggested that Branches hold elections annually and that while Board positions can change according to by-law provisions, the BGA would prefer a relatively permanent Branch Contact. This Branch Contact becomes the official correspondent between the BGA and the Branch on membership matters as well as international issues out of London.

Must our branch be like others?

It is important to remember that each Branch is autonomous and should be set up to reflect the interests and diversity of its own members. Within the Americas, there are very large Branches with more than 50 events a year. There are Branches that bill for an entire year's events at the beginning of the year and are thus ensured a constant amount of money for planning. There are Branches that only do black tie events – others never have one. Several Branches have been sustained over the years with less than 20 members and meet only in members' homes. Some Branches have found it comfortable to limit memberships to a certain number, while others number in the 100s. Your Branch and its members will be one of a kind.





Where do we go from here??

Once you have a viable roster of interested persons, it is imperative to keep up the momentum by scheduling a follow-up event. You will need to decide if you want to offer memberships before proceeding with the first event or gather interested parties for the event and then sign them up for membership.

It would be a big advantage to have the dates and activities for the full year established from the beginning. This requires a bit of advance planning on the part of your core group, but would provide the prospective members an indication of the Branch's organization and stability and let them know what dates they need to set aside for Branch functions. While the required number of events per year is a minimum of four, at least two of which shall be luncheons or dinners, a minimum of four will keep the Branch viable, with six an even better number to consider.



What kind of activities are most successful?

Events that address the particular interests of your members are the obvious answer. However, those events that stretch their interests, increase their knowledge and experience level and open up new avenues in the wine and food world are those that keep members active and involved.



A great source of event ideas can be found by reading recent copies of *Wine, Food & Friends* to see what other Branches around the country are doing. While it may not be applicable to your area, it could be adapted to your Branch. (*You may not be able to have Marcella Hazan teach a cooking class to your group, but you may have someone in your area who could teach a lesson on the*

preparation of a particular dish in a member's kitchen!)

Activities that members could not do on their own are the best. For example, dinner at a particular restaurant is available to anyone. A special dinner created by the Chef, with different wines paired to each course, becomes an IW&FS event.

Branches that have a successful schedule of events have given attention to balancing types and themes of functions so that no one geographic or ethnic area predominates in either wine or food selections and that the emphasis of experiences of the table are evenly balanced between wine and food.

Who is available for help?

There are always questions that arise in this process. Please contact Christy Marsh, our Executive Director of the BGA, at pegleg47@aol.com. The BGA Co-Chairmen of New Branch Development are also a ready source of counsel. Christy will put you in contact with them.

To further facilitate a close contact in establishing a new Branch, the New Branch Development Committee may assign a specific BGA member to each emerging Branch. All along the way, you are encouraged to reach out for assistance. There is no need to "reinvent" when so many resources are available.