

Food & Wine



International Wine & Food Society Europe & Africa Committee - issue 101

December 2009

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The Forgotten Sparkle

David Everitt-Matthias Talks to F&W

The Story of Brisbourne Geese



CHAIRMAN'S

MESSAGE

Dear Members

I took over as Chairman of the EAC (European & African Committee) on the 1st October leaving Chris Bonsall to concentrate on his duties as Chair of Council. Three days later I flew to Philadelphia to represent members in Europe and Africa at my first Council meeting. Although our Society was founded by a Frenchman in London there are now more members in America than in the rest of the world.

Council has the job of implementing the strategic plan and after you decipher the 'management speak' this means making the Society relevant for the 21st Century. They have already reduced costs on the secretariat by replacing a full time Executive Director with a part time Administrator. The money saved is being used to redevelop the computer website and this will be used to communicate with both new and potential members never forgetting that some members do not have access to new technology. The new website project is on schedule and we expect to see some of the benefits next year.

I was very pleased to be able to welcome Chris and Doug Holding from Lusaka branch to the North West of England whilst they were on holiday. They were then travelling down to Sussex to attend an IW&FS event there. When my wife and I travel abroad we often try to contact the local branch representative and have been well received particularly in America. The new Website should enable members when travelling away from their home branch to discover other events being organised and be able to apply to participate.

Council also decided that we should be emphasising the educational benefits of membership. We plan to publish more material on food & wine and want to encourage more cooperation between branches and their local catering colleges. We will be looking to festivals and other smaller events to include an opportunity to learn more about wine and food. This could be as simple as an opportunity to discuss the food & wine matching at a meal or bringing in expert speakers. My own wine background includes running wine tours and wine competition judging and I hope that the EAC will be able to assist branches to run trips and to co-ordinate the visits of winemakers. Many of these events are only viable if branches cooperate together to get the required numbers. Bath & Bristol branch have just returned from Le Marche in Italy. Merseyside have organised a trip to New Zealand in early March 2010 and still have vacancies. After the successful Sherry & Tapas on the Thames the EAC is organising an overnight event in the Cotswolds based around Asparagus following on after the Annual Branch Representative Meeting in May. Our African members are planning a weekend event at Victoria Falls.

By the time you read this I will have attended the 25th Anniversary of Wessex Branch, the 15th Anniversary of St. James Branch and the 75th Anniversary of Merseyside Branch. My own branch (Blackpool) and a couple of others are coming close to their Diamond (60th) Anniversaries. All of this emphasises the need to recruit some new younger members either by expanding existing branches or by setting up new ones.

I wish all members a Happy Christmas and an enjoyable New Year.

Ron Barker

CONTRIBUTORS



James Crowden was born in Plymouth and brought up on the western edge of Dartmoor. He has had a varied career as army officer, sheep shearer, cider maker & poet. Having travelled widely in the Middle East, Iran and Afghanistan he now lives in Somerset.



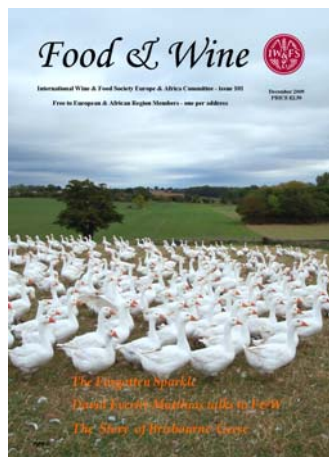
David Everitt-Matthias started cooking at a young age encouraged by his Aunt Pat who was a very gifted hedgerow cook. He began his career as an apprentice at the Inn on the Park in Mayfair, now called the Four Seasons and while there attended Ealing College. Today he is chef/proprietor of Le Champignon Sauvage.



Derek Hawes is a retired academic and author. He has been a member of the St James's branch for about ten years and spent many years trying to improve the cellar of Bristol University. His favourite tippie is vintage *Pol Roger* but, "a chilled Chablis and smoked salmon in the Ritz will do equally well!"



William Brisbane, one of three brothers and a sister, his family have farmed at Nesscliffe for over 80 years. William kept geese as a school boy hobby and on leaving school in 1979 it evolved into a farming enterprise.



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Editorial

As we reach the end of another year I feel the need to look forward rather than back at a year of financial gloom and governmental chaos. Never has the old Chinese Proverb/Curse, 'May you live in interesting times', seemed more applicable.

The initiatives Council have been working on, are now coming to fruition as you will read in our 'Society Affairs'.

We have a bumper magazine with four extra pages and still I have had to disappoint several by leaving their articles/reports until next March. Thank you all for your contributions, we have some excellent examples of educational events that have been organised throughout the area. It is good to see so many members involved in informative meetings where the aim is not only to enjoy oneself but also to further one's knowledge of food and wine. A lot of these events are being held in member's homes. This is obviously becoming a popular idea as the saving on room cost and high food and wine mark-ups means events can be much more diverse and affordable. It is a principle that the EAC are trying to adopt, to alleviate the high cost of room hire, for their meetings.

We have articles from four members with subjects as diverse as 'wine speak' and 'garnishes'. I have been delving into the history of some of our top chefs and, with Christmas around the corner, seeking out one of our noblest of birds, the only one in my mind, fit to grace a Christmas table. If you fancy a change from Champagne for the celebrations, why not try a different kind of fizz, see our André Simon Book Award winner's story of The Hidden Sparkle. We also have an 'Indian Odyssey', not the only 'odyssey' I have been offered this time but more of the Italian one next March.

Looking ahead there are many interesting topics I wish to include in future issues. Have you heard of the research being done to blow the myth of only white wine with fish? Or, with a world water shortage looming, of the groundbreaking work being carried out in Canada on desalinisation at a minimal cost? There are numerous fascinating projects going on around us today. Scientists and agronomists are breaking boundaries in an effort to alleviate hunger and thirst throughout the world.

If you have any food and drink related subjects you would like investigated or if you have some specific knowledge you would like to impart to members don't hesitate to contact me. Copy date is, as usual, the beginning of the month prior to publication but remember, after that date I only have ten days to put everything together which would be an impossible task if I didn't start months beforehand. Please don't wait for copy date send your reports in as soon as possible after the event.

Looking forward, may I wish you Seasons Greetings and an interesting 2010.

Pam Brunning

A MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL - CHRIS BONSALE

Dear Members,

Last year, having taken over the Chair of The International Council of Management at the Society's 75th Anniversary celebrations one of my aims, in my two year term as Chairman, was to conclude the Society's strategic plan and begin circulating it to members. This process has now begun, thanks to the enormous amount of work put in by all involved over the past thirty six months, leading to the agreement by Council of the plan and the Society's Mission Statement at the recent Council meeting in Philadelphia in October 2009.

Our Mission today is to be the international, independent organisation of choice for:

- sharing, improving and disseminating knowledge of the pleasures of wine and food
- gathering with like minded people for the civilized and healthy enjoyment of wine and food
- being involved with others in a branch based society with worldwide influence in matters of wine and food

Objectives:

1. Reinforce and communicate our Competitive Advantages:

Reinforce the educational focus of the Society at all levels in the encouragement and provision of the opportunity for learning and teaching. Draw strength from our heritage so as to differentiate ourselves from Wine Tasting Clubs, Dining Societies and commercial tasting events.

Continue Regional & International Festivals, and develop other programs for the benefit of members.

The reintroduction of a series of knowledge enhancing publications and communications, under the Society's logo.

2. Enhance our Prestige and Image:

Provide a world-class website to attract and engage prospective and present members, by reflecting the opportunities afforded by our worldwide camaraderie and the scope of educational information and events provided by members and other experts.

Develop and market the Vintage Card and Charts to promote the prestige and image of the Society.

Have an active President, well known in the wine and food industry.

Establish opportunities to improve the impact of the André Simon Lectures and other potential high visibility events.

Provide a standardized worldwide Restaurant Award to be granted under the auspices of each Area Committee.

3. Stabilize our Funding and Planning:

Ensure a sound financial basis for the management of the Society.

Formulate a program to protect the intellectual assets of the Society around the world.

Maintain a program of appropriate insurance coverage.

Continue to enhance leadership development and succession planning.

We are achieving some of these objectives and I am now able to share with you some of the exciting developments:

First, we have a programme of Regional and International Festivals planned building on the success of the 2009 International Festival in Cape Town. There will be an APZ (Asian & Pacific Zone) Regional Festival in Sydney in October 2010, an EAC (European & African Committee) Regional Festival in Liverpool and Merseyside in June 2011 and an International Festival under the auspices of the BGA (Board of Governors of the Americas) in Vancouver in the spring of 2012. The André Simon Memorial Lecture will be delivered by a well known figure in the wine and food industry at each of these Festivals. We are negotiating with a number of writers to produce a series of monographs and other knowledge enhancing publications, the first of which will be available, initially on our new website, by the autumn of 2010.

Secondly, we expect our brand new, fully international, website to be operational in 2010, when ready instructions will be sent to all Branch Contacts. A Committee of Council has been working over the past year making this possible. My thanks to the team, ably led by Brian Findlay, for all their hard work. They have been working with web design company Camaleo Web Intelligence in the USA and what they expect to achieve will, in Brian Findlay's words:

"We will be enhancing the look and content of the public area to promote the Society and increase membership. There will be public and members' only areas for the International Secretariat and each Zone. Every Branch will have an individual website that they control with the ability easily to post information, news, events, minutes, pictures etc. They will control who can view or post and edit the different parts. Branches with their own websites will be linked to these pages. There will be the ability to accept credit card payments securely. There will be a world wide members' database on which Branches and members can update their own information, again with access strictly controlled. Each member will have a unique login with their email address as their username and their own password, which will control what they can access. Informational databases such as restaurant recommendations, event ideas, travel tips, and harvest reports will be expanded and become truly international."

Our work on the Vintage Card and Charts is proceeding well and I am delighted to announce two new members of the Wines Committee, namely Harriet Lembeck from New York and Michael Brajkovich MW from Auckland, New Zealand. I thank the outgoing Chairman and Deputy Chairman, Sid Cross and Nils Sternby respectively for all their hard work over the years. We hope to be able to include more wine areas on the Card, this will enable us to market it further for the benefit of members as it provides a useful income source.

John Avery, our Honorary President, has been active in visiting a number of Branches across the Zones and is planning to be in Sydney next October. He has also promised an educational article for the Zone magazines.

We have established a sound financial basis for the management of the Society thanks to the efforts of the outgoing Secretary/Treasurer, John Valentine. We are funding the initial expense of the new website and various publications in 2010. The BGA is protecting the Society's name and logo in their Zone as we have done in the UK. We are investigating trademark protection elsewhere in the world and have strengthened the legal position in relation to our name by making necessary amendments to the Branch Charters and Articles of Association. We have implemented a programme maintaining appropriate insurance cover for the Society and its members on a worldwide basis.

Much work remains to be done but with the help of the Zone and Branch Committees and you, the membership, I am confident we can fulfill our Mission Statement. In my final year as your Chairman I look forward to being part of this continuing process.

Chris Bonsale

ROUNDUP OF ACTIVITES

Summer has been and gone and the IS office could well be shivering as winter hits – although it is much warmer inside. Perched at one of the highest points of this magnificent 18th century building it has to face the elements from nearly all sides, something similar to a nesting crow, I feel!

My visit in August to the cellar door of Domaine St-Nicolas in Brem-sur-Mer in the Loire was however a much warmer experience. The day I visited temperatures were approaching 30°C and not a cloud in the sky. This was typical of the summer they had had, apparently. With much less rain than the past two years the Vendéans are looking forward to a bumper 2009 vintage. Having tasted my way through their range of wines, certified 100% biodynamic since 1995, I thoroughly enjoyed their 2006 Cuvée Jacques made predominantly from Pinot Noir and blended with 10% Cabernet Franc with good structure and length combined with a mouthful of fresh fruit flavours - delicious. With the addition of Loire reds to this year's Vintage Card I will watch with interest to see how the 2009 vintage fares with the experts next year.

2009 AGM & Council Meeting in Philadelphia – the “international” part of my role with the IS literally took off in October as I headed for Philadelphia to attend the AGM and Council meeting. The AGM went off without a hitch and gave those in attendance the opportunity to raise any questions about the accounts (as in the Report & Accounts 2008 sent to members in September). With a solid financial position those in attendance were advised that plans are in place to offer more value to the members through the areas such as the website and publications.

I was also very fortunate that the meetings had been arranged to coincide with the BGA Fall Meeting so I had the opportunity to meet many of the BGA board members and their partners on home turf, so to speak, plus your new EAC Chairman Ron Barker and Tony Levien and Ricardo (Dong) Puno from the APZ. The wine, food and hospitality were all outstanding and I feel very privileged to have been part of the weekend's events – and thanks go to Carl Tinkelman who put all the events together with the help of his wife Sydney and his Philadelphia branch team.

Quantity	Unit Cost	Regular price	Members' price
12	£2.10	£25.20	£22.68
25	£2.00	£50.00	£45.00
50	£1.90	£95.00	£85.50
100	£1.80	£180.00	£162.00

2009 Vintage Card - The latest IWFS Vintage Card is now available for members to purchase. If you are not one of our regular purchasers of these you may wish to consider buying some this year. They are a relatively inexpensive gift for friends or clients, fit neatly inside a Christmas card and provide current and past vintage assessments from some of the leading experts in the wine regions around the world! They are great value for money and prices remain unchanged from last year. Minimum order is 12 cards, prices include postage and packing. Orders should be placed with me at the IS. Contact details above.

Please remember to visit if ever you are in town – just let me know beforehand so I can ensure I am there to welcome you.

Warmest season's greetings to you all,

Andrea Warren

VALENTINE GOES FOR GOLD

It was with great pleasure that I received the news that John W. Valentine had been presented with one of the Society's highest accolades, a Gold Medal.

John joined the Society in 1987 and, following three years as Treasurer of the 1993 International Festival in London, he received a Bronze Medal. Having joined the EAC he worked with Margaret Drake on the organisation of Great Weekends which commenced in 1995. He then took up the roll of Events Coordinator and also the post of Chairman of the EAC in which position he revolutionised the European & African Committee. He brought the organisation of big business to what was reminiscent of an old boy's club committee. Every member was given a job to do and had to do it efficiently. I remember well writing to him complaining that having been a member since the mid seventies I knew nothing of the activities of the EAC, the running of the Society or where our subs went. He responded as any good businessman would and invited me onto the committee to do some work!

He received a Silver Medal in 2000 and continued in his roll as EAC Events Organiser until this year combining it with his position on the Society's Council of Management as secretary/treasurer to Council.

John and his lovely wife Anne are well known at events around the world and have done much to bring the Society into the 21st century. Thank you John.

Pam Brunning



European & African Committee 1st October 2009

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Over the years I have been responsible for several innovations in the Lusaka Branch not least of which was the introduction of a "Glyndebourne Evening" into

the calendar 25 years ago. It has become a regular function which is held at my home each year.

I was Chairman of the branch in 2006/7

As a past Chairman of the Zambia National Tourist Board, running Tourist Lodges, travel is another of my passions. This experience serves me well in performing my duties as Africa Branch Representative. I have already started and will continue to visit the other Branches, make personal contacts and arrange for increased co-operation between them. A project already under consideration is an African Branch "get together" weekend in Livingstone, Zambia on the shores of the mighty Zambezi river adjacent to the Livingstone or Mosi o' Tunya [the smoke that thunders] Falls.

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Having attended a number of Yorkshire events I became a member in 1998 and almost immediately secretary of the West Riding branch - now renamed the

West Yorkshire branch.

In 2009 I took over as branch chairman and was co-opted on to the EAC to chair the PR and Marketing subcommittee.

I am now also a member of the new branches and new website subcommittees, and am looking forward to helping to introduce and market a refreshed IW&FS profile, especially to attract younger members.

In my early career I traveled regularly and so was able to enjoy wine and food across continents. The international aspect of the Society is unique and one which I hope the new website will encourage. I think our main challenge is to maintain the traditions that have always underpinned the Society, but at the same time update its external image, so that the values we have are better understood.

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I joined the Society in 1981 and in 1984 became an original member of the Wessex Branch and I have been on the committee ever since.

As well as organising a couple of events each year for my local branch, I have also given legal advice to the Council when needed for some years now.

With my retirement close I am pleased to be able to join the EAC and help co-ordinate events.

I am also a Liveryman and Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Cooks of London and have been involved in organising large functions for various groups in recent years and so I hope my experience can be put to good use for the benefit of the IWFS.

Following John Valentine in the role will not be easy but I look forward to the challenge of supporting the organisers of Great Weekends, Festivals and Awaydays.

A RECIPE WITH A STORY TO TELL



Vodka-Cured Gravlax from

Jack Amon, Marx Bros. Cafe, Anchorage

courtesy of Alan & Stephanie Shepherd

In the 1970's Jack Amon, Van Hale, Ken Brown and Bob Schmidt made quite a name for themselves on Anchorage's culinary scene. Together, they had created the Wednesday Night Gourmet Wine Tasting Society and Volleyball Team's weekly event of food and wine and on off nights they catered festivals and events under the name of The Spaceway Sausage Company.

The Marx Brother's Café officially opened its doors on October 18th 1979 and over the past 30 years has grown into an elegant establishment acclaimed by tourists and critics and coveted by locals.

Since 1999 The Marx Bros have been the exclusive caterer at the Anchorage Museum. In June 2009 they opened Muse a hundred seat restaurant in the expanded Anchorage Museum

This recipe comes from a book called The New Alaska Cookbook which I bought in Alaska during our visit. We didn't actually eat at the Marx Brother's Café but we did eat at their cafe in the Museum - before its re-incarnation as Muse. The recipes, from the last frontier's best chefs, by Kim Severson with Glenn Denkler are said to reflect the cooking of the Russian Settlers who had a great influence on the development of the State. The chef recommends experimenting with different herbs and different fish, apparently Arctic Char goes well with mint, while Red Salmon is good with fennel.

Serves 4

3 pounds silver salmon fillet, skinned
¼ cup vodka
1 tablespoon crushed white peppercorns
½ cup roughly chopped dill
2 tablespoons salt
2 tablespoons sugar
Sprigs of dill to garnish

Red Salmon- Sockeye



To make gravlax: coat the flesh of both sides of the salmon fillet with vodka and then the pepper. Place the salmon, skin side down, in a pan large enough to hold the fillet without bending. Sprinkle dill over the salmon, then salt and sugar. Cover the salmon with aluminium foil and weigh it down with a board and a 5lb weight. Refrigerate for 48 to 72 hours, turning the salmon and basting every 12 hours with accumulated juices.

Remove the salmon from the pan and pat dry. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve (up to 2 days).

Thinly slice the gravlax on the diagonal, up to 3 to 4 slices per person

Accompaniments - ¼ cup Honey Mustard Sauce, ½ cup Sour Cream Dill Sauce, ¼ cup smoked salmon caviar

Honey Mustard Sauce

½ cup honey
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons finely chopped dill
Combine the ingredients.
Place in a squeeze bottle and refrigerate.



Sour Cream Dill Sauce

1 cup heavy (double) cream.
¼ cup sour cream
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
3 tablespoons chopped dill
Freshly ground black pepper.
Combine the ingredients and chill.

Serving Suggestion

Roll the slices into 4 rose shapes. Set aside in refrigerator.

Fill squeeze bottle with honey mustard sauce, squeeze out a flower pattern on each of 4 cold plates. Place a salmon rose on the sauce. Drizzle gravlax with the with sour cream dill sauce. Sprinkle the caviar on top of the sauce. Garnish with dill sprigs.

This year over 150 million wild salmon were commercially harvested in Alaska. Hundreds of thousands more are taken by sport anglers or by Alaskan Natives who use the fish to sustain them through the winter. Although five different species are harvested, three show up regularly in restaurants and in home kitchens: Kings (Chinooks), Silvers (Cohos); and Reds (Sockeyes).

Silvers are known as fine fighting fish. Reds are one of Alaska's favourite eating fish, and Kings, also prized, are the largest. A 120 pound King Salmon is thought to have spent about seven winters in the ocean.

The superior flavour and firm, meaty flesh of Alaskan wild salmon is worth searching for, it is far superior to soft, flabby farm raised salmon. Wild Alaskan salmon can be found in UK supermarkets, fresh, from the beginning of June to September. Make sure it is not 'previously frozen' as this spoils the firm texture.

Whilst Alaskans can differentiate between various species of salmon, preferring one species or another for different recipes, here in the UK, we can only differentiate between supermarkets!

At a Food & Wine Matching event Alan & Stephanie partnered this dish with a Pouilly Fuissé, Drouin 2005, which provided a good foil for the fish. Ed.

Cider and Perry

The Forgotten Sparkle -

Ancient and Modern

By James Crowden

With names such as Kingston Black, Yarlington Mill, Foxwhelp, Sheep's Nose, Slack-Ma-Girdle, Hang-down, Long Tom and Hoary Morning, cider apples have a long and interesting history. But these apples are very different from desert apples. For a start cider apples are often smaller and if you bite into them they taste sour or astringent, more like the wild crab apples from which they are descendants.

But it is their precious juice, which is often surprisingly high in natural sugars, that is so crucial to the cider making process. For, once fermented with yeasts in large vats or wooden barrels called hogsheads, butts and pipes, this juice eventually gives us the rich, deep colour and taste of farmhouse cider for which the West Country is justly famous.

And then there are the small, hard, quirky perry pears from Gloucestershire and Herefordshire with wonderful names such as Ducksbarn, Brown Bess, Hellen's Early, Gregg's Pitt, Hendre Huffcap, Dead Boy, Holmer, Blakeney Red, Brandy, Butt, Coppy, Taynton, Oldfield and Winnal's Longdon. These perry pears, like the cider apples, are also steeped in history and mythology.

It was the planting of large-scale orchards in the seventeenth century following the Civil War that laid the foundations of the cider world we see today. In the West of England the monasteries had held cider in great esteem and built great tithe barns that housed their large cider presses and ranks of wooden barrels. The new land-owning families, who had taken their place at the helm of rural England, saw it as their duty to continue the tradition. Great tomes and treatises were written on the subject such as John Worlidge's *Treatise on Cider* in 1676, which mentions not only the distillation of cider into cider brandy but the very distinct process of making bottle fermented sparkling cider. This involved the addition of extra sugar to a fully fermented cider and the strong bottle glass. In fact this secondary fermentation process had been pioneered forty years previously in the 1630s by Lord Scudamore who lived outside Hereford at Holme Lacy. A method turned to good use by Ralph Austen who ran a Parliamentary cider works in Oxford in the 1650s. All this took place a good many years before Dom Perignon, the famous French monk who is often credited with inventing champagne even sets foot in the Abbey of Hautvilliers. The process was in fact developed by English aristocrats and their endeavours are catalogued at length in the archives of the Royal Society. John Evelyn produced his book *Sylva* but at the back are a series of cider aphorisms collected by John Beale, vicar of Yeovil, who was on very good terms with the Phelips family who owned Montacute House.

"Bottling is the next improver and proper for Cider; some put two or three Raisins into every Bottle, which is to seek aid from the wine. Here in Somersetshire I have seen as much as a Walnut of Sugar, not without cause, used for this Country Cider."

A walnut of sugar is equivalent to about 20gms of sugar which is consistent with what people use these days for a 75cl bottle of sparkling wine, perry or cider which will give an impressive secondary fermentation. This, in a few simple words, helped to establish the process in 1662 that later came to be known as *methode champenoise*.

Another experienced contributor to John Evelyn's *Pomona* was Captain Silas Taylor, who had several observations of his own which he read to the Royal Society on 22 July 1663, he notes that after bottling the cider it is advisable : *"to lay it in a repository of cool springing water, two or three foot or more deep. This makes it drink quick and lively, it comes into the glass not pale or troubled, but bright yellow, with a speedy vanishing nittiness (as the vintners call it) which evaporates with a sparkling and whizzing noise."*

This is, without doubt, bottle fermented sparkling cider eloquently described. Ralph Austen in his *'Treatise on Fruit*

Trees' also mentions bottling cider.

" Cider maybe kept perfect good many yeares if being settled it be drawn out into a bottle and well stopped with corks and hard wax melted thereon, and bound down with pack thread and then sunk down into a well or Poole, or buried in the ground, or sand laid in a cellar. Put into each bottle a lump or two of hard sugar or sugar bruised."

Earlier evidence comes from Lord Scudamore's account books for 1632.

Paid Jeffrey Cook for carrying 6 hogsheads of sydar to London	16/6d (pence)
Pd Jeffrey Cook for bringing downe from London a dozen and a half of bottles	4/6d
Pd Henry Prosser for makeing 6 stooles	1s(shilling)
thrid (thread) and incle for them	6d
(incle or inkle is a kind of linen tape or thread or yarn,)	
Pd Wilcox for 2 dozen and half quart bottles	7/6d
1 dozen and a half pint bottles	3/9d
6 dozen corkes	3s
a basket corde and porters carryge	1/3d
a watering pot	3/6d
a great knife to cut bread	1/6d
a new lock for sydar house doore	1s

This sounds very like the sort of kit you might need if you are experimenting with bottling cider. John Scudamore was known to have '*rare contrived sellers in his park for keeping cider with spring water running into them.*' He also had a lake and an ice house. The stools were racks presumably for keeping the bottles off the ground.

Interestingly in 1676 John Worlidge mentions the '*laying of bottles sideways is to be commended not only for preserving the Corks moist, but that the air that remains in the bottle is on the side of the bottle, where it can neither expire or new be admitted.... Some place their bottles on a frame, with their noses downward.*' This is without doubt a cider bottle rack otherwise known as a *pupitre*. The real crunch is that the strong dark bottle glass which you need to contain a true secondary fermentation was invented in England c 1628. This bottle glass was the key to whole operation and for many years it was called *verre anglais* in France.

These early pioneers had a deep sense of commitment to improving their native drink.

In fact cider and perry are so deeply embedded in the psychology and mystique of the West Country that it is very difficult to disentangle the tradition from the landscape itself. For hundreds of years cider orchards have played a vital part in the rural economy. Every spring in the West Country in the late 19th century there would have been more than 120,000 acres of orchard in blossom. In those heady days almost every farm had its own orchard and at harvest time there were also mobile cider makers. Some even pressed the fruit in the orchard itself. Sadly, through the ages many apple and pear varieties have become extinct, but a few have recently been rediscovered in remote spots and safely guarded. Many trees were simply cut down to make way for houses without ever being identified.

Cider making is quite complex, a cider apple is not just a cider apple. There are bitter sweets, bitter sharps, sweets and sharps depending on the amount of sugar, tannin and malic acid in them. It is the differences in these levels that the cider maker is really interested in, as it will often define the way he makes the cider and the taste of the end product. Some apples, such as Tom Putt and Crimson King, are dual purpose and can be used for cider and cooking. The sharpness of cider apples, often associated with cooking apples like Bramleys, comes from the acidity of malic acid, not to be confused with the astringency, which comes from tannins. Tannins hold the key to good cider. They help preserve the cider to the following summer, they are nature's antioxidants and they are responsible for the rich rounded flavours, which can sometimes make the taste of West Country cider almost as deep and complex as a fine Bordeaux or Claret. A good orchard may well have between ten and twenty different varieties of cider apples and that is why one farmer's cider will taste totally different from another.

What is really interesting is that today cider and perry are experiencing a vigorous and much needed renaissance. The diversity of producers is enormous. If you move the clock forward three hundred and fifty years from Ralph Austen's first cider factory in Oxford in the 1650s, you go through centuries of farmhouse cider and end up with the large scale factory ciders made by the likes of Bulmers in Hereford, Gaymers in Shepton Mallet and Thatchers in Sandford. The real crunch is often down to juice content and tannins. Mass marketing of carbonated cider made predominantly from desert apples is now commonplace, but the actual juice content will be quite low, usually about one third if you are lucky. Here the sparkle is simply introduced with carbonation, not via secondary fermentation. It can be perfectly pleasant but lacks the depth and complexity which real cider apples tend to give with their tannins. Westons of Much Marcle, for instance, still use large oak vats and gather all their fruit within a 50 mile radius.

The real connoisseur will however tend to seek out traditional farmhouse ciders from medium size producers like Julian Temperley of Burrow Hill Cider who still makes the bottle fermented sparkling cider, as well as running a full blown cider brandy distillery. Try the five, ten and fifteen year old spirit made on a couple of old calvados stills called Josephine and Fifi, but make sure you have taxi ordered to take you back home. Then there are Sheppy's, Rich's, Perry's Heck's and Bridge Farm of Somerset or Dunkertons, Newton Court and the Ross-on-Wye Cider Company in Herefordshire. Or in Gloucestershire, Hartlands, Minchews, Harechurch Cider, Orchard's and Severn Cider. For that elusive sparkling perry you can do no better than talk to Tom Oliver of Ocle Pychard or James Marsden of Much Marcle. No cutting of corners here. It all comes down to terroir, blending of cider apples and perry pears, talk of soils and climate. No imported apple concentrate here. The art of cider making is alive and well in the West Country.

James Crowden is author of 'Ciderland' and 'Cider the Forgotten Miracle'. www.james-crowden.co.uk

In his books James Crowden takes us on a tour around the beautiful and fragrant West Country orchards, outlining the differing manufacturing methods, and investigates the differences between a farm-house cider and an industrially manufactured one. He shows how the best cider makers translate their passion into the process and treat each different batch of cider like winemakers would a vintage. He also takes a look at the rise of perry making and profiles the companies dedicated to getting the best out of the West Country pears.



Paul Stephens Newton Court Cider,, Herefordshire inspects his bottle fermented perry



essence
recipes from
le champignon sauvage
david everitt-matthias
foreword by
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dessert
recipes from
le champignon sauvage
david everitt-matthias
foreword by heston blumenthal



I had the wonderful opportunity recently of chatting to David Everitt-Matthias at his two Michelin star restaurant, Le Champignon Sauvage in Cheltenham. We have been fans of this restaurant for some years so, when we last visited, I asked Helen who runs front of house, if I could have a word with David with a view to asking him to do something for Food & Wine.

Unlike many of our top chefs David is a quiet, retiring person who does not appear in the restaurant if he can possibly help it, so he invited me to join him for a chat in his state of the art kitchen. For eighteen years he produced some fantastic dishes with just himself and a second chef working round the clock (they must have been considering the complexity of the dishes!) doing everything, in what he describes as his 'small galley'. In 2005 they extended the restaurant and the kitchen installing a Moltini stove, often described as the Rolls Royce of stoves and now the brigade is himself and three others.

David's first two books Essence and Dessert were published this year and in those he tells how he started cooking at a young age encouraged by his Auntie Pat who was a very gifted hedgerow cook. She would take him out foraging for many of the wildings we have come to ignore today.

He began his career as an apprentice at the Inn on the Park in Mayfair, now called the Four Seasons and while there attended Ealing College.

"It was while I was at the Four Seasons that two major events occurred. First, I met my wife Helen, a receptionist at the time and now my partner and manager. Secondly I was sent to Pierre Koffmann's restaurant, La Tante Claire," said David.

"Pierre Koffmann had a knack for taking humble ingredients and turning them into intricate gourmet treats. His stuffed pig's trotter is a prime example, a wonderful dish that has been copied by many other chefs. He will always be a major inspiration to me."

After they married David and Helen started looking for a restaurant to buy and in 1987 found La Ciboulette in Cheltenham.

"Needless to say we fell in love with Cheltenham and bought the restaurant. This was the beginning of the highest of the highs and the lowest of the lows. We set about putting our stamp on the restaurant and redecorated immediately, concentrating on the dining room rather than the kitchen, as we didn't have enough money for both. We opened with a full restaurant and a cooking style that was decidedly fussy. To be honest, I was cooking for the guides, or what I thought the guides were looking for. I carried on in this way for a while, then recession hit. We lost quite a few of our big company clients and the restaurant became quieter and quieter. I was forced to seek out humbler ingredients: mackerel instead of sea bass, wood pigeon instead of pigeon de Bresse. It taught me a whole new culinary idiom, using many 'forgotten' ingredients. It was cheaper for me to butcher things myself, so I learned how to do this, and as a result had to cook the whole animal rather than just the prime cuts. A rabbit would give me stuffed legs as one dish and the saddle as another, while the shoulders could be made into rillettes. The offal was served with a pea purée as a dish in its own right, while the bones gave us a wonderful, full-flavoured rabbit soup.

This became part of my cooking style and remains so to this day. I was lucky enough to be invited several times to a restaurant called the Manor House in Romsey, owned by the chef, Mauro Bregoli, who specialised in Italian pork charcuterie, including cotechino, sausages, coppa, and some wonderful salamis. On Sundays, when the restaurant was closed, he would arrange charcuterie days for chefs. What made it even better was that Pierre Koffmann, a good friend of Mauro's, was there as well, doing French charcuterie such as boudin noir, saucisson, fromage de tête etc. It was a great learning experience for me and I am indebted to them both for sharing their knowledge and time.

I stopped cooking for the critics and started cooking what I liked to eat and enjoyed doing. We began to win awards and some acclaim in the guides. In 1995 Helen and I were awarded our first Michelin star. It was an amazing feeling. Other chefs will know what I am talking about. A Michelin star is something you dream of, and it means you are on the first rung of the ladder to greater things."

In 1996 he won the National Chef of the Year competition which gave him the confidence to start experimenting with different spicing and flavour combinations. Wild food began to enter his repertoire – some old things his aunt had taught him, plus new ideas of his own.

David didn't train as a pastry chef so when he opened Le Champignon Sauvage he was very conscious of the gap in his knowledge and decided he had to train himself. He realised the most important thing, whether a light summer dessert or a heavier winter pudding was called for, was that it should be full of flavour as palates can flag towards the end of a meal.

"I read books and experimented endlessly. I had no preconceptions, so the more I found out, the more I began to ask questions: what would happen if I used a different flour for this, a different sugar for that, what would happen if I added things, subtracted things? I applied the same logic to desserts as I did to the rest of my cooking. As the years progressed, my knowledge about ingredients increased, and I now draw upon a much more varied larder.

My desserts repertoire has opened up with wild foods, spices and even vegetables. Twenty-two years after Le Champignon Sauvage opened, I still get a real buzz from bringing new flavours to the dessert table, and experimenting with ingredients such as Jerusalem artichokes, white asparagus and sorrel, pandan leaves, green tea and gorse flowers."

All this hard work paid off as in 1996, while he still had only two in the kitchen, David was named Dessert Chef of the Year in a competition run by the Egon Ronay Guide beating some of the top Michelin-starred restaurants with their own pastry departments.

"In 2000 we were awarded a second Michelin star. It's hard to explain how wonderful this felt. It meant we had entered an even more select elite and were being rewarded for all the hard work we had done over the years. It was also a recognition of my new style and, more importantly, of our consistency." David has certainly maintained that consistency over the years.

"Now I have a bigger brigade, but I still don't employ a pastry chef. Instead, the chefs who work here go through the pastry section along with all the others, so they can turn their hand to any part of the kitchen. I believe it is very important that the head chef's style and palate are in evidence from the starters and main courses right through to dessert and petits fours. Otherwise, there will be a break in the continuity of the meal."

The last time we spoke David was over the moon as Rose Greene, one of his team, had just won the chefs section of the 'Young Chef Young Waiter Awards 2009'. Now in its 25th year, this competition, organised by the British Hospitality Association and the Restaurant Association, rewards the best chef and waiter aged 25 or under in the UK. Rose and waitress Sarah Cooper from London's Michelin-starred Ledbury were crowned the winners of the contest at an awards ceremony in London. The girls beat seven chefs and seven waiters to their respective titles after a cook-and-serve final at London's Westminster Kingsway College. During the final, the chefs were presented with a mystery basket of ingredients including breast of lamb on the bone, lamb tongue, lamb sweetbreads, red mullet, squid and chorizo. They were judged on their choice of menu, their cooking skills and timing, while waiters were judged on their skill in serving the meal, their customer contact skills, knowledge of the wines they were presenting and the professionalism of their wine service. They were given a list of the wines the day before and had to research them and a tasting so they could recommend them with the dishes served. This is the first time that women have won both titles. Obviously David is having no trouble in passing his skills on to his young chefs.

Incidentally the Young Chef runner up was Jenny Thoden from the Church Green Restaurant in Lymm. See our restaurant review on page 14.

Signed copies of David's two books are available on his website. He has given me some wonderful recipes from them that I hope to publish next year. Just to whet your appetite I have included the photo of his Lemon Meringue Pie which I am looking forward to having a go at, I bet I can't get it looking as good as David's! *Editor*



Rose Greene from Le Champignon Sauvage and Sarah Cooper from London's Ledbury the 2009 Young Chef Young Waiter competition winners seen here with Michael Winner who added £1,000 to each of the girls £2,000 prizes.

Lemon Meringue Pie AU CHAMPIGNON SAUVAGE



The Language of Wine

IWFS Member Derek Hawes Wants to Start a Quiet Revolution!

The seasonal newsletter from Berry Brothers drops onto the doormat and this time its headline poses a pertinent question ‘What kind of wine lover are you...’ leading me to contemplate that, whenever I discuss such questions with my St James’s branch colleagues, I can never quite pin down why, so often, I come away with an undefined sense of dissatisfaction, of a question unresolved. How can this be?

Having many times had the pleasure of dining in the splendid range of cutting-edge restaurants that the branch arranges each year, and having the benefit of superb wines to accompany our meals, it often happens that one member or another will offer to donate favourite wines and, with considerable expertise, talk us through them.

We are lucky to have members with a lifetime of experience and vast knowledge of wine-making across the world, and their ability to express the very essence of what is in the glass before us is always impressive. But do these delightful little verbal essays really describe the experience, the personal thrill - the passion and the promise that is evoked when one sips and sniffs the nectar and senses the emotion that is so personal to each of us?

Our experts differ; some take a technical course and will speak of the bottle age, the soil, the mechanics utilised by the vigneron. Others assume a more agrochemical theme, varietals, weather, tannin, blending and vintages. And sometimes we delight in testing our noses for the scents and flavours: do we catch the zingy lemongrass or the gooseberries; the complex elegance of the cherries, vanilla and wild flowers? Simon Hoggart in the *The Spectator* even invited us once to agree that “the red fruit, leather, pepper and even smoke leaps out of the glass...”

But for me, even if it is ‘melons, lychees and slate’ (another Hoggartism) that we are consuming, we are all in some odd way, missing the point; this is not the way to discourse upon wine. We need to find a new narrative, full of emotion, love, warmth and passion. I beg leave to suggest a small, quiet revolution should be commenced in these matters, and I invite you to join. Let me start right here.

On one occasion, when a young lady asked me why I was so complimentary about a rich old claret, I said, for reasons not entirely limited to the wine, *because it kisses, it licks, it thrusts and stings; it provides the tongue with its own private, orgasmic thrill....* she ever after treated me with a certain disdain. However I was in good company because I had read that the novelist Collette, once confronted with a similarly good wine commented: *it is imperious, treacherous, as all great seducers are*. But let us not deal entirely in sexual terminology

The makers of Krug champagne seem to have found something of the same approach when, in a recent advertisement they said “Krug is what God gives to the angels when they have been especially good...”.

Perhaps I had been inspired by the music one evening after a concert and was enjoying a very lovely chilled Chablis with my smoked salmon when I was heard to say *this is like listening to a flute across a moonlit lake*. Poetry sometimes helps in these matters. Inspired by the romantic talk of some Celtic friends who had been competing as to who could remember a long poem of Yeats, someone said of the second glass of Irish whiskey, *it was like watching the last unicorn disappearing into the forest...* which produced, from another poet: *no, rather it was like having a leprechaun dancing on your tongue*. Which, as someone who had taught his children from a young age always to be aware of the little people, even I had to admit was a little over the top!

Has no-one ever felt that the wine, the company and the fine food would allow them to say: *this wine wears the kind of smile that clears the morning skies and draws forth the brittle sun?* It was the kind of comment that captures a moment in time that you know, as you speak, you will remember always. It is the wine that somehow cements a complex set of pleasures into a fulfilling whole.

Many years ago I was listening to the iconic Andre Gagé, who was the winemaker to the great house of Louis Jadot. He was a huge, handsome old man with a shock of white hair who spoke in very poor English, helped along by expressive Gallic shrugs of his bear-like shoulders. We were in the Bristol cellar/museum of Harvey’s. He ended with something in French which I did not understand and I asked my companion what it was; he said: *this white wine, which I made with my own hands, contains the Promethian beauty of the mountain range under whose shadow it was grown*. I have never forgotten the phrase, and I drink that wine still.

But, I suppose, if we are to find a new discourse of wine, one that speaks not of grapes and vintages or oak and chemicals and technical genius, but rather of love and beauty, sex and romance, we must not forget that sometimes we face bad wines that deserve to be trounced. So here are some suggestions for an equally vivid narrative when love has gone quickly out of the window: *this wine was sent from the Valhalla of the undead* said someone....Or, overheard in the coffee room at the Athenaeum: *this bottle is positively and dynamically 4th rate!!*. I remembered that in case someone ever asked me what I thought of the Prime Minister!

So this is my manifesto for a quiet revolution in the language of wine. Let us leave the technical jargon, the endless attempts to find colourful comparators, whether lemongrass or lychees; let us leave the winespeak of the salesmen and their brochures, to those whose task it is to produce and sell the stuff. We, the people, must claim our own language – of love, of passion, of sensation and romantic articulation. Join me!

*“....because it kisses,
it licks, it thrusts and
stings; it provides the
tongue with its own
private,
orgasmic
thrill....”*

Dr Derek Hawes is a St James’s Branch member, do you agree with his views?
We would like to hear from you - e mail editor@sidpam.waitrose.com or write to:
Editor, Brunsden Farm, Heath Ride, Wokingham Berkshire RG40 3QJ



I recently asked Atul Kochhar what made him decide to become a chef. He said that by the age of 16 he had determined that was what he wanted to do. His father's passion for local and regional food was a guiding factor and there was also a huge economic implication, "I could self finance myself while studying catering by working in the evenings".

Atul, who comes from Jamshedpur in northern India trained at the Oberoi Hotel in New Delhi before coming to the UK. In 1994, he was appointed head chef at the Tamarind restaurant in Mayfair and at the age of 31 became the first Indian chef to be awarded a Michelin star.

As well as his Michelin star restaurant Benares, in Mayfair, Atul now has Vatika located in the heart of Wickham Vineyard in Hampshire and interests in Ananda in Dublin, Ireland. He has another restaurant planned in the Marriott Central Market hotel in Abu Dhabi and recently signed a deal with P&O for a restaurant on the superliner Azura. His most recent venture, and the one he is most passionate about is hosting the Indian Odyssey, gourmet trips to India. I questioned him as to whether he felt confident that he was not stretching his talents too wide. Was he sure that he could maintain his Michelin standard with so much time away from the stove?

"For running restaurants, it is really no different than any other business. It is about organisation, training and carrying values and maintaining standards. So, I really do not worry on this issue.

However, Indian Odyssey is a project close to my heart. It is about my motherland and is driven by true love and passion. I do want India to be seen as a destination for discerning gourmet travellers and not merely for visits to Taj Mahal and to elephant rides."

The vineyards they are visiting such as Grover Vineyards and Big Banyan Wines are building a growing reputation for the quality of their wines. Their labels are now found in some of the top restaurants around the World, including his own, and they export 15,000 cases a year to France alone.

Founded by Kanwal Grover in 1988, the Grover Vineyard lies in the Nandi Hills in the state of Karnataka and has three generations of the family behind it, together with the expertise of Michel Rolland, one of the world's foremost wine consultants. The result is a range of wines from the Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc grapes, all grown in the temperate microclimate of the region. At 1,000 meters above sea level the vine-growing season here is the longest in India. They are blending grape varieties but as yet have not started producing a sparkling.

Atul is revered for his masterful use of spicing in creating some of the finest modern British dishes with a unique, innovative Indian twist. He is very excited about this opportunity to present to lovers of eclectic flavours the cuisine of his homeland within its authentic backdrop.

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*Church Green
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Lymm
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www.thechurchgreen.co.uk*



"Michelin poncery in a village pub leaves Matthew Norman of The Guardian with a nasty taste in his mouth," proclaimed the headlines not long after this restaurant opened a year ago.

Church Green gastropub is TV chef Aiden Byrne's first restaurant venture. Owner/chef Aiden, at 22, was the youngest chef to gain a Michelin star when working at Adlard's in Norwich. He has worked as Executive Chef of The Oak Room and The Orangery Restaurants at Danesfield

House near Marlow. He gained his second star at The Commons Restaurant then went on to become right hand man to Tom Aitkin before becoming head chef in the Grill Room at the Dorchester. The General Manager of the Dorchester told him when he handed in his notice, and gave up his £100,000 a year salary, "This is the biggest mistake you will ever make in your career."

One feels that, in this stockbroker area of Greater Manchester, his prices reflect his London heritage. There are no set menus and with starters between £6 and £11 with mains around £20, plus extra for vegetables, there must be something to be said for a place that is pulling the punters in, less than a year after opening. I am told we were very lucky to get a table for four at 6pm on a Sunday evening, booking only a week ahead.

Our starter of six queenie scallops, three uncooked, marinated and three hot, looked most impressive on the plate. The hot ones, on a bed of Jerusalem artichokes were delicious. The cold ones were spoilt by a strong chervil sauce which masked their delicate flavour and also spoilt a good, fruity 2007 Orballo Albarino Galicia from Spain.

A crab salad looked a picture with thin slivers of radish and daikon decorated with nasturtium blooms, the crab was very good quality and plentiful but the subtle flavours were once again masked a little by the mayonnaise topping when you ate it with the crab. Our other starter was a piece of pan fried smoked foie gras which sat on the top of a rich borlotti bean soup. This was pronounced excellent and was possibly the best of the three starters we chose.

Our friends ordered the beef ribs for main course, this was two ribs of beef roasted pink, carved between two and served with three sauces, a béarnaise, a marrow bone, and a brown sauce, accompanied by a potato galette and red cabbage. The beef looked delicious and I was assured it was, it was accompanied by a bowl of broccoli which was sufficient for all of us.

I had decided on lamb but was a little put off by the menu saying it was a Texel beast. I have always considered the Texel to be a commercial breed grown for its bulky frame with a high lean to fat ratio thus lacking in the flavour that you get from a smaller and fatter breed. The large eye muscle of my two ribs was served pink, on the bone and the flank had been removed and slowly braised to render any fat and make it meltingly tender. It was served with cep mushrooms, baby aubergines and anchovies. The sauce was rich and the dish as a whole was very good but I have had better flavoured lamb.

Tender and tasty roast leg and breast of grouse was served with home grown blackberries. With our main courses we drank a soft and fruity Le Fou Pinot Noir 2007. This wine is brilliantly named 'the madman' because it is said you have to be crazy to try and make quality Pinot in the warmer climes of the Languedoc!

With ample portions for both starter and main courses we were all too full to sample the desserts so enjoyed good strong espressos and cappuccinos.

The staff are knowledgeable and efficient and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming. Evidently the celebs have found Aiden so doubtlessly prices will be rising even further shortly. At the moment it is top quality food but with no frills attached - a classic 'gastropub'. We paid £200 for four and left £20 for service. It was buzzing when we left, if it is "Michelin poncery in a village pub," it certainly seems to be what the locals want.



*The Bell Inn
Yarpole
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 0BD*

www.thebellinnyarpole.co.uk



"I want this to be a proper pub - very English,"

so said Claude Bosi when he opened The Bell at Yarpole in 2005. Evidently he does not like the term 'gastropub'. His aim is for a mix of robust French bistro food (cassoulet, coq au vin) bolstered by some re-invented pub grub like cod and chips and mushy peas.

When looking in the guides for a place to lunch in the area we were attracted by the name Bosi and found Claude's younger brother Cedric in charge of this ancient country pub that was mentioned in the Domesday Book. We arrived late on a Tuesday lunch time and several couples were just leaving. Cedric told us that the Bosi fan club have found him and trade is good.

The fare is very French provincial/traditional English and it was good to see plenty of local produce on the menu and the fish comes from Cornwall. Evidently the menu included Brittany rabbit when they first opened but that has been changed to 'local'. Maybe the patrons pointed out that the Welsh Marches have plenty of good rabbits!

I chose a fricassee of six Hereford snails classically served with lots of garlic and parsley butter. They were the best snails I have ever eaten, (including Snail Porridge!) large, plump and tender, with a side salad and plenty of crispy bread, an excellent starter. Salad of Cornish Crab with tomato, red pepper and herb dressing looked attractive with a good dressing but the crab was a little lacking in flavour and the texture of the crab cake was too firm.



Battered Cornish Haddock was top quality, perfectly cooked with light crispy batter, served with good chunky, crisp house chips and mushy peas which were just a little too mushy. My local braised half rabbit was served with a delicious pearl barley broth flavoured with thyme, bubble and squeak and Savoy cabbage. The rabbit was a good flavour and the leg and shoulder were very tender, the loin, was cooked separately rolled in bacon to keep it moist but was still rather dry, it could have done with larding to moisten it. The portion size was very much pub grub quantity rather than Hibiscus style so we were much too full to be able to contemplate a pudding unfortunately. The list was headed by sticky toffee pudding and went on to some interesting French style desserts.

We drank glasses of very pleasant Merlot and Syrah at £3.45 and £3.40 respectively. Cedric looked after us well and he told us of his life at home in France in their parents bistro. His brother Claude was always at the stove helping mother but Cedric was much happier front of house helping father. Claude recruited head chef Neil Mc Cann and Claude said when they opened, "I just want to be very, very busy - good food for a good price is what we're aiming for." His philosophy seems to be paying off. We finished with two good, hot, strong coffees and our bill came to £46.85 and we left £5 for service.



When Garnishes Were Centre Stage

A brief return to haute cuisine

by Alan F Harrison

The menu starts with Consomme Mikado. Then enjoy Sole Sarah Bernhardt or Tournedo Rossini, both with Pommes Mireille. Conclude the meal with Peche Melba.

Let us agree that the best hundred and fifty years of *haute cuisine* ended around 1970. The best menus were in French and garnishes gave the gilt on the gingerbread. An average restaurant today serves poached fish garnished with limp lettuce and thinks it is doing a good job. Cheap icecream, tinned peaches and jam sauce can pass as Peach Melba. Such is the march of progress within our eat-on-the-run society. It's time, then, to savour the good old days.

British city restaurant menus adopted *haute cuisine* before the time-span mentioned previously. **Verdi** is the first on our stage. The garnish applied to noisettes of lamb and beef tournedos. After a quick sauté, the pan was deglazed with Madeira and *demi-glace* [rich brown sauce]. The dish was finished with artichoke bottoms filled with green-bean puree and bouquets of cauliflower *napped* with Hollandaise sauce.

With that lengthy definition over, clearly, we can only describe the people, operas etc or events on those menus as garnishes. [They appear in bold text.] Verdi's popularity was assured from the mid 1800s with Ernani, Rigolletto, Il Trovatore, **La Traviata** etc. Dame Nellie Melba's debut was in Rigoletto in 1887. Escoffier, chef at the Savoy Hotel created **Peche Melba** in her honour. She knew **Sarah Bernhardt**, the actress in whose honour consommé and sole dishes were created.

Rossini is said to have been fond of goose liver pate and it's not surprising that it was featured in **Tournedo Rossini**. The French would have seen 'L'Etoile du Nord' for the first time in 1854 and it was due to the success of this opera that **Meyerbeer** was recognised on the menu.

The **Mireille** potato dish may well have been derived from the opera of that name by **Gounod** which received its first Parisian production in 1863. In 1866, Smetana gave Prague 'The Bartered Bride'. The garnish is **Smitaine**. 1869 may have been when **Bohemienne** was derived from Balfe's opera. "The Bohemian Girl". The popularity of **Aida** (by Verdi) ensured its own garnish. London theatre-goers saw the opera after 1871.

It will be a relief to the British reader to see a name which has some direct meaning and 'The Savoy' should create an image of the very best in gastronomic performance. Whereas the hotel did not open until 1889, the name **Savoy** was on the lips and plates of London society from 1881 when the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera 'Patience' was transferred to the new Savoy Theatre from the Opera Comique on 10th October. 'The Mikado', was first produced in 1885. Bearing in mind that there were many French menu establishments in London, it is supposed that **Consomme Mikado** and other dishes bearing this garnish name were in use at around this time. This was the hey-day of the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas and the money made from them by Richard D'Oyly-Carte was channelled into the new Savoy Hotel which opened in 1889.

Although Sullivan died in the year 1900, we will presume that in the same way the opera 'Mikado' was recognised, he achieved recognition in his own right, not only for his music for the comic operas written by W.S. Gilbert but for the many serious works which he also wrote.

The garnish Savoyarde has a possible derivation in the Savoy area of France but in this discussion of the Savoy Operas as they are termed by the enthusiast, it would be appropriate to mention that a 'Savoyarde' is one who is keen on the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. What wider dedication to the patrons of one's restaurant in theatre-land could there have been from the 1880s?

This gallop around yesterday's high-society stage may have created yearning for a less-modern gastronomy. It's no consolation to think that today's limp lettuce garnish might be remembered with affection within the good old days of the present younger generation in its dotage!

Much of this article comes from Alan Harrison's book "Gastronomy" which can be found at www.gastronomy.org.uk There are twenty seven pages of Chapter 1 – *Cabbages and Kings* for the enthusiast.



Verdi



Sarah Bernhardt



Dame Nellie Melba
(Helen Porter Mitchell)



Rossini



Smetana

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This table gives details of the Liaison Officer for each branch in the Region. Your Liaison Officer is always willing to help in any way he/she can when advice is needed on organising branch events or if there are any problems within the branch which need resolving.

Branch officers are also encouraged to contact their Liaison Officer from time to time to let them know that the branch is functioning appropriately. It is also suggested that Liaison Officers are made aware of the date of any special events such as award presentations, anniversaries and the branch AGM.



Bill & Cathy Kuhlman Pam & Sid Brunning

This year Sid and I had the pleasure of meeting, for the first time, my counterpart in the US - Wine, Food & Friends Editor Cathy Kuhlman and her husband Bill. Cathy & Bill had flown into Heathrow and were on a three night layover at Gravetye Manor where we joined them for lunch. We enjoyed a delicious lunch and sat late into the afternoon chatting about numerous subjects, not least of which was of course, the compiling of our respective publications. It was a memorable experience and one that highlights the true benefits of the fellowship of members. We look forward very much to meeting Cathy and Bill again soon.

CAPE INSIGHTS SPECIAL INTEREST TOURS

A TASTE OF THE CAPE

Embark on an epicurean journey around the Cape
Savour a variety of flavours in breathtaking locations
There's a story behind each morsel ... and sip ...



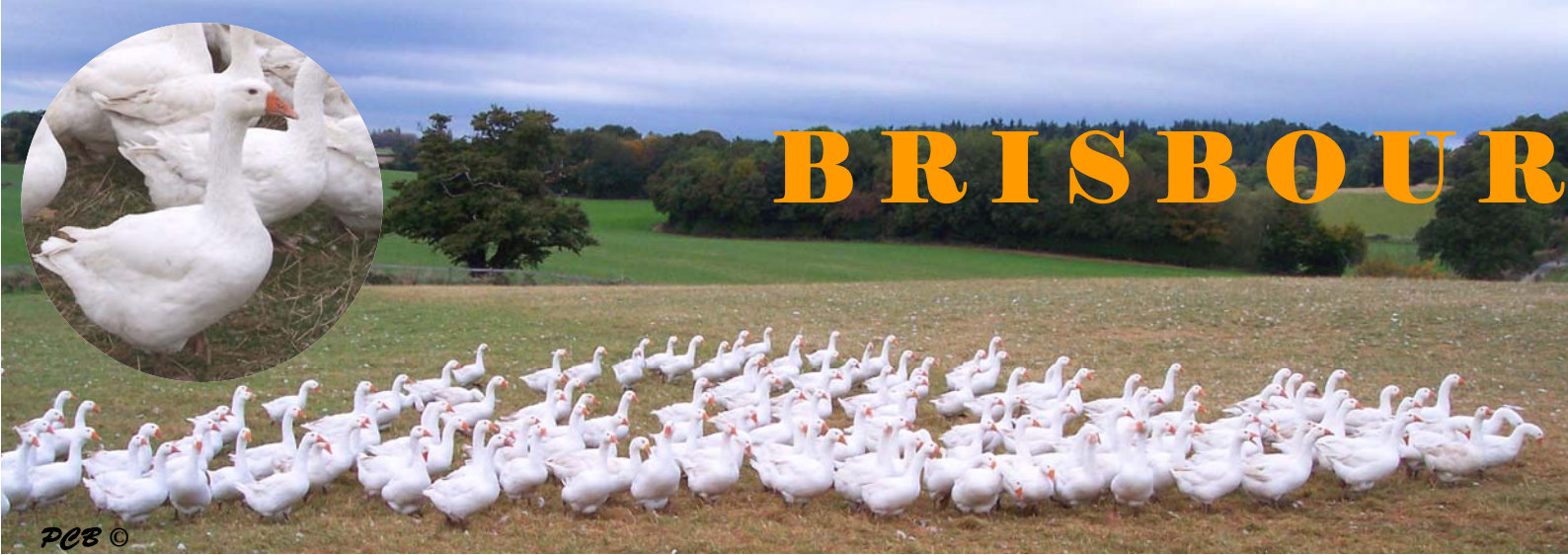
- Visit classic and contemporary wine estates among the gorgeous Cape Winelands along fifteen scenically distinct routes
- Participate in hands-on cooking sprees
- Hear from acclaimed foodies and dedicated winemakers
- Investigate the origins of local dishes where spices tell a story and indigenous 'fynbos' plants add flavour
- Explore Cape Town's cultural diversity and cosmopolitan essence
- Dine at award-winning restaurants around a city listed in The Top Ten World Food Cities by The Lonely Planet, with five featuring in the World's Top 100 Restaurants and two on the iconic 50 Best list of the latest S.Pellegrino awards

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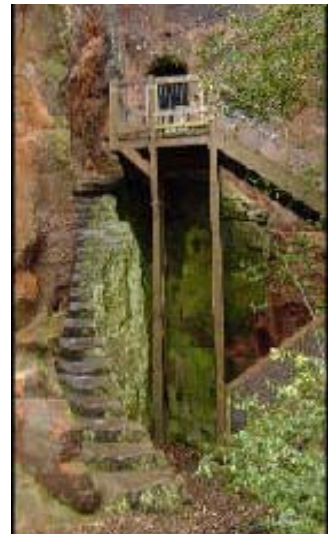


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BRISBOUR

Kynaston's Cave showing original stone staircase



The village of Nesscliffe's one claim to fame is that it was the territory of highwayman, Humphrey Kynaston. Born in 1430, the son of the Sheriff of Shropshire, he received the nickname 'wild' because of his outrageous lifestyle. In 1491 he was found guilty for the murder of John Hughes at Stretton and declared an outlaw by Henry VII. He moved from Myddle castle, the family home, and took up the life of an outlaw living in a cave in Nesscliffe Rock with his horse Beelzebub. It is said that the horse used to climb up the stone-cut steps to their lair. Legend has it that he became a local Robin Hood, robbing from the rich and giving to the poor. In return, the locals protected him, and gave him, and his horse, food. In an attempt to capture Kynaston, the local sheriff removed several planks from Montford Bridge, to keep him from crossing the River Severn, but his horse managed to leap and safely clear the distance. Some accounts state that in 1513, Sir Humphrey provided 100 men to aid Henry VIII in France, and in return received a royal pardon several years later.



William Brisbane

It is in this, once wild, rolling Shropshire countryside that 1,500 geese roam in tranquil surroundings just over the hill from a new stretch of the A5 north of Shrewsbury, which now bypasses Broomhill Farm. Broomhill Farm has been in the Brisbane family for over 80 years and today the mixed farm is run by three brothers. The enterprises consist of mainly a 160 cow pedigree Friesian Holstein dairy herd, arable crops for feeding to the dairy cows and Christmas poultry. One brother, Mark, runs a National Hunt/flat racing stables from the farm.

William Brisbane kept geese as a schoolboy hobby and when he left school in 1979 it evolved into a farming enterprise. "We pride ourselves on our poultry having a good life at Broomhill," William tells me, "the birds are reared on the farm from day-old goslings." William drives over to Norfolk in May to collect the birds. At one time British Rail would deliver day old poultry nationwide but today this is no longer a service they provide. Collecting them himself William says means there is as little stress as possible to the goslings and they can quickly be bedded down in their new home. He prefers the Norfolk-based Danish Legarth strain breeding stock as it has a large frame and lays down a higher lean to fat ratio and, grown naturally, reach full maturity prior to Christmas.

BRISBOURNE GEESSE

“We pride ourselves on our poultry having a good life at Broomhill,”



The goslings are initially fed starter pellets then as they grow strong, to supplement the grass, they are fed, ad lib, home produced wheat (grown to Farm Assured standards), potatoes and a specially prepared corn ration. They are all reared without the use of growth promoters and additives.

The birds are processed on the farm in December for fresh collection at Christmas. William usually employs four or five locals and another five or six people who are usually immigrants. Each bird is individually dry plucked and then waxed to remove the down. They are then hung for 7-10 days in a chilled environment to produce a deep and succulent flavour, then drawn, dressed and finished by hand. The giblets are cleaned, vacuum packed and boxed with each oven ready goose which goes out complete with cooking instructions. The largest proportion of the geese are sold at the farm gate, some go to local butchers and any surplus are sent to the local auction mart.

No doubt if our highwayman Sir Humphrey were alive today you would smell the fragrance of goose roasting over an open fire wafting out of Kynaston's Cave on Christmas day.

How to cook your goose

Allow 15 minutes per 450g/1lb plus 20 minutes.

Approximate timing:

4.50kg/10lb= 3 hours, 5.40kg/12lb= 3.5 hours.

Oven temperature 200°C/400°F/Gas mark 6.

Aga top right hand oven. This is a guide only as all ovens vary.

Prick the skin, rub salt and pepper over the skin.

Stuff the goose with your favourite stuffing, or as an alternative fill the body cavity with chopped apple, green leek tops and herbs of your choice and cook the stuffing separately in a dish.

To prevent burning wrap legs in a double layer of foil or one layer and also cover with some of the fat. Place the goose on a trivet or rack in the meat tin breast side up.

Cover meat tin with foil and place in pre-heated oven. After the first hour baste the goose and make sure the legs are still covered and that the skin is not burning. Pour off surplus fat into a container. You can now use some of this surplus fat to roast your potatoes.

For the last half to three-quarters of an hour uncover the breast to brown and baste again, pouring off the surplus fat.

When cooked, lift the goose on to a carving dish to rest for approximately 20 minutes before carving. Cover loosely with foil.

Giblet Gravy

Place the giblets in 2.2 litres/4 pints of water. Bring to the boil and then simmer gently for approx 1 hour with the lid on. Strain and thicken the stock to make the gravy.

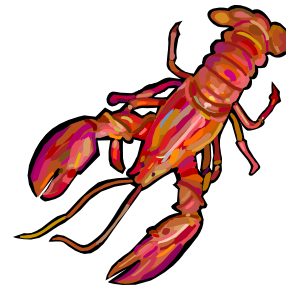
Roast goose makes for a very special Christmas celebration. Goose fat contains a low level of saturated fats and a higher proportion of the more desirable mono-unsaturated and essential fatty acids and only a mere trace of cholesterol. As all chef's know goose fat produces superb results when used to roast your potatoes



Brisbourne Geese Nesscliffe, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY4 1AX 01743 741672 www.brisbournegeese.co.uk

An Organisers Nightmare

By Tim Gittins



M

ost branch reports recount details about an event, its organisation and a summary of what was enjoyed. This is about what happens when things go wrong.

The setting was the Angel Inn at Hetton, near Skipton, North Yorkshire. The guests were 23 committee members from IW&FS North of England branches, including 3 EAC members. The aim was, over lunch, to swap notes and learn from each other about our different experiences. When the idea was first discussed at the Branch reps meeting in May, the Angel seemed a good choice, geographically very central, easily accessible with an excellent reputation, backed up by plenty of awards.

The telephone planning with the Angel's friendly Front of House manager went well. A seafood menu was agreed and an appropriate wine selected. Member response was good, with some prepared to travel up to 4 hours to get there.

On our arrival the staff were very attentive and after a brief chance to meet and greet over a glass of Vernaccia, we went through to the comfortable restaurant, exclusively set aside for our use. Time for the organiser to sit down, relax, and enjoy the event.

"You won't need a starter" Front of House had said *"as our seafood platters are substantial"*. And so they looked on the picture sent through, positively groaning under the weight of "lobster, dressed crab, langoustines, oysters, crevettes, smoked salmon, mussels, cold poached salmon, prawns and scallops" at least that's what the description said. *"We won't need a starter"* echoed the invitation to our members.

In came the waiters with the platters of seafood, at first sight beautifully presented. That brief moment of organisational self satisfaction of a job well done turned to horror. What was supposed to be a combined starter/main course enough for four people only had enough seafood to feed two as one course. Plus some of the promised items were missing.

A few deep breaths, quiet words with guests that there was a problem, and off to find the duty manager (Front of House was off duty) to advise politely that there was a substantial shortfall from what we were expecting. The message came back from the kitchen that there was no more seafood on the premises, but they could offer us an extra course of cheese to try to compensate.

Snap decisions made under stress are notoriously fraught. First thought - refuse the offer, refuse to pay, and organise a mass walkout and picket. On the other hand people were enjoying the company, and the wine was pretty good. Decision made - keep going, sort it out later.

Goodbyes were said, warm compliments and support from fellow guests very welcome.

Monday arrived and time for serious letter writing, with words chosen carefully and with the full force of an official letterhead. On Friday came the response, a phone call from Front of House. It went horribly wrong, was the message, we really want to sort it out, what do you suggest?

"A substantial refund" was the IW&FS reply. Sharp intake of breath, and a comment that recompense policy was to include Angel gift vouchers. *"Vouchers are no good if we aren't going to come back"* was the IW&FS constructive reply. Final conciliatory words from the Angel - *"A few days to sort it out, we'll speak next week"*. The next week brought no call, but a *"deeply apologetic"* letter from the Chef Director with a strong message that, *"lack of communication between senior management"* was the cause. Attached was a refund cheque and gift vouchers, in total worth about two thirds of the cost of the meal.

So another phone call to Front of House - *"I think I told you 'vouchers are no good if we aren't going to come back' but you've sent me vouchers, so how can we get cash?"*

It transpired that decisions are taken collectively, even the letter of apology was a joint effort, so this final plea for recompense to be entirely cash had to be taken back to the team. *"Sorry that's as far as we are prepared to go"* was the eventual collective decision. Time to call an end to the saga, so a deal was struck - the vouchers could be exchanged for wine to be purchased by phone from the Inn's retail list, prices to be at a discount.

Time for final reflections:- The best retailers know that the way in which they respond to customers' complaints has at least as much impact on the customer's satisfaction level as the problem itself.

I once told an experienced and much respected Yorkshire restaurateur of a problem that had occurred, during an important dinner, at his restaurant when he was off duty. *"I'm annoyed that you had the problem"* he said *"but even more annoyed that this is the first time I have heard about it."*

It must be assumed that the Angel's proprietors and senior management also require to be kept informed immediately of any problems. It should provide the opportunity to resolve matters quickly, with no more stress to the consumer, and the chance to regain their reputation.

Looking back they made matters worse by a thinly disguised negotiation at a solution, rejecting this customer's suggestions and needlessly prolonging the agony. Customer satisfaction is about delivery - before, during and, if necessary, after the event. Scoring one out of three isn't good enough, is the message for the Angel.

Socially the event was a success, we all enjoyed meeting our fellow members and agreed we would do it again next year - but somewhere else!

around the branches - Members Entertain at Home

EAST ANGLIA FOODIES 'THE BIG 'K' EVENING'



Imagine the scene! A warm Summers evening in August. Wannabe chefs were prepping their dishes. The promise of good food and wine was on the menu – what could go wrong?! NOTHING.....

Another historic evening around the K's house – commonly known as Mike & Josie Kirkham. These people really know how to host and boy didn't they work hard! To ease the sweat and stress of the evening's entertainment some 'guest' cooks were invited to help out the European Themed evening.

We started off in the garden with canapés - asparagus filo rolls with lime mayo dip, tortilla with smoked salmon, guacamole and lumpfish roe and mini skewers with mozzarella, tomato and avocado accompanied by Lindauer Brut NV from New Zealand.

As part of the evening rituals Mike laid 6 glasses out for each on an A4 mat with six coloured rings on it and each glass had matching coloured dots on the base so they couldn't get mixed up. The idea was for people to try all the wines with each dish and come up with the one they enjoyed the most with each dish. As if by magic these glasses would miraculously be topped up all night by the Kirkham house elves. (Well it was Mike but wouldn't it be fun if Harry Potter style elves did exist!)

Kate Howlett (that's me!) produced a tasty mezze of the Greek sort. Consisting of, homemade hummus, courgette, mint & feta fritters (courgettes & mint from the garden I may add!), grid-dled Haloumi with a black olive and lemon salsa to name but a few dishes.

Vernon & Julie Bane kindly supplied a selection of tasty breads to accompany the first & second courses.

Josie Kirkham swiftly followed with a Mediterranean Fish Soup with Lobster, Crab and crouton rouille and gruyere. This was a most tasty and decadent soup which pleased all pallets. Josie then produced a twice baked goats cheese soufflé with onion jam with salad leaves.

As you can imagine there was a strict time plan to follow which in my opinion puts some professional kitchens to shame – so there!

James Chant was the next guest cook to wow us with a fabulous dish. Sweet cured herring on black bread with curry salat, prawns and lumpfish roe were presented with a glass of schnapps to compliment the 'Danish' themed dish. James not only produced this dish but helped out most of the evening with the other courses.

Mike Kirkham was next up with his roast fillet of beef wrapped in porcini mushrooms and Parma ham with a bubble & squeak cake and fresh vegetables, accompanied by a red wine and beetroot jus. Mike even had time to ask all 23 guests how we would like our beef cooked. And surprise surprise what we asked for we received – again even some professionals are unable to achieve this!

By this time most people were feeling the strain of all the food and the wine, but we were all looking forward in anticipation of dessert. Christine Perfect did produce the three most perfect desserts which consisted of a three tier chocolate terrine, summer pudding and a Pimms jelly. This was the British contingent of the European tour.

Cheese was then offered, but I must admit it was getting near 12.30am and I was totally full up. I'm sure the cheese course was delicious and Mike gave it a lot of thought but to be fair, all I wanted was my bed!

Well done to all involved in the BIG K evening 2009 – looking forward to 2010!!

Kate Howlett Secretary East Anglian Group.

EVENT NOTES

If you tell people what the wines are and the grape varieties they are inclined to just go for their "normal" favourites. All I did tell them was that the words "Chardonnay" "Cabernet" or "Sauvignon" would not be appearing. This is a good way of experimenting and trying different tastes and grape varieties.

In terms of popularity the reds went down well with the mini Amarone the Pallazzo della Torre being a real stunner, as it was a warm evening the Grenache rosé from Jaboulet was hugely successful and versatile and from the whites the favourite was the Alsace Pinot Gris from Trimbach. All the 6 wines were sourced from Harper Wells wines.

We paid those who cooked a dish, the cost of their ingredients and insisted that no corners were cut on either cost or quality. The total budget for this event was £682.50 or £32.50 per head for 21 people, we didn't charge for James as he worked all night, or for Josie and I. We overran the budget by just over £60. The wine bill was approximately 50% and the beef was around £120. This is the first time we have used others to put together dishes, it requires careful planning and kitchen management. All those that cooked had a real passion and skill, and we insisted they practice their dish several times in advance. Josie was in charge of her kitchen, I looked after wine and cooked one dish. James Chant was in charge of plating up and the fish course. Daughter and son in law, cleared each course and washed up and helped serve the three tables of eight.

Three days preparation, buying etc and a day to clear up -190 + glasses washed by hand!

Not for the faint hearted but it really works well!

Mike Kirkham

around the branches - Members Entertain at Home

"THE PAMPERED CHEF" at SURREY HILL'S

Maja Will, originally from Johannesburg, is an independent consultant of the above company which is based here and in the United States, Canada and Germany. At Gable End in August she prepared two courses in front of us which were then cooked in the kitchen. The first was a Camembert topped with apple and cranberries with slices of baguette. The second was broccoli and ham on a pastry ring accompanied by tomatoes and a green salad. Both these dishes were placed on, and cooked on flat round stoneware. For dessert Maja had prepared a citrus and lime trifle, this was mouthwateringly refreshing with the limes giving it a real zing.

To welcome everyone there was a Chilean Undurraga Chardonnay/Pinot Noir sparkling wine and we also drank Griffin Vineyards Australian Merlot '04, a South African Pinot Grigio King's River '07 and an Italian Pinot Grigio Rosato '08. There were cheeses and coffee to finish.

Maja had brought an amazing selection of cooking and kitchen artefacts, many of which she used during her demonstration, some of which were very innovative. All of them could be ordered on the evening, including the recipe books one of which was on stoneware cookery. For most of us 'stoneware' was a new concept of cookery; roasts, steaks, pizzas etc. as well as the dishes we tasted can be cooked on it. I, for one, am going to try it out! This was something a bit different and certainly Andre would have approved of its 'educational' format!

SURREY HILL'S FAMOUS STARTERS & PUDS NO 18

This event in the Surrey Hill's calendar is regularly a roaring success. Always held in a members home, at least six members produce four starters and four puds and no one ever complains about not having a main course!!

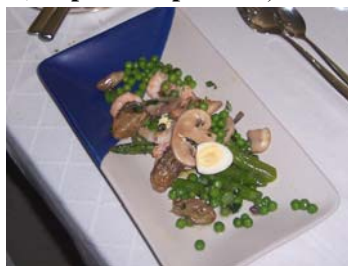
Who says you can have too many cooks?



Plating up Helen's turkey breast in prune sauce



Pam's West Coast Salad
(recipe see Sept F&W)



Marjorie's Chicken Liver Parfait



Susie's Melon, cherry tomato & Serrano Ham



Pam's Apricot & Almond Flan



Bernard's Raspberry Panacotta



with apricot brandy ice cream



Joan's Chocolate refrigerator cake



The cooks on this occasion were respectively for Starters; Susie Punch, Marjorie Cocksedge, Pam Brunning and myself. For the Puds they were Bernard Lamb, Joan Sykes, Pam and I. We are extremely grateful to Alan & Stephanie Shepherd for hosting the event and for providing matching wines which were all AOC and either Vin de Savoie or Roussette de Savoie. An aperitif of sparkling Brut de Savoie, Chardonnay 2006. A Mondeuse d'Arbin, Rouge 2006. The Roussette Prestige, Altesse and the Apremont Prestige Veille Vignes, Jacquere both 2007. The dessert wine was Seduction d'Automne, Altesse, Vendange Tardive, 2007.

Helen Mills

around the branches - Members Entertain at Home

ZÜRICH BRANCH AGM & LUNCHEON



The Zürich Branch AGM took place this summer at the home of Hans Walter and Philippa Keller in Feldmeilen on the Zürichsee. The AGM opened with a glass of Raventos Codorniu Reserve; the meeting progressed quite rapidly with the President Robert Keller (see picture) giving the Treasurer's report. The President gave an overview of the past year and discussed the upcoming Grand Dejeuner to be held on November 14th, a wild game luncheon to be held at Il Casale that should take the full afternoon. This year saw the change of President and Vice President. The new President is Philippa Keller, the new Vice President is Ed Callaway, both elected unanimously. The rest of the Board remains the same. John Macdonald the former President and founder of the Branch will be Past President and Branch Contact as well as advisor to the new management.



With the official part of the day concluded, the afternoon festivities began with a South African theme, barbecued Ostrich steaks, home made Bobotie, South African Malay curry and various other dishes, sambals, and chutneys accompanied with copious amounts of fine South African wines. As the day was spectacular weather wise, many took the advantage of being on the lake to take a swim in the refreshing waters of the Zürichsee. By early evening members began to wander off home in the beautiful evening glow.

John Macdonald

SUSSEX BRANCH AT THE GRIFFIN'S

On a Saturday evening in July, 28 members and guests of the Sussex branch were invited to dine at the home of Jill and David Griffin, two of our newer recruits. Their home is a collection of lovely converted Sussex barns and is situated in the country between Horsham and Guildford. As the inclement weather prevented the planned 'al fresco' pre-dinner drinks, we gathered in the lounge, an impressive room complete with minstrel's gallery where we enjoyed an unusual aperitif, a dry Gospel Green Sussex Cyder served in champagne glasses which was accompanied by a delicious selection of canapés.

Following this we were ushered into the games room for our meal. Any qualms about "home cooking" were quickly dispelled when the starters appeared; a choice of asparagus soup, game terrine or tandoori chicken. David had clearly spent the whole day beavering over a hot stove whilst Jill was out and about winning prizes for her beautiful flower arrangements which adorned the house. The main course comprised tarragon chicken with morels, smoked pork with truffle mash or baked salmon with sweet pepper sauce, all accompanied by perfectly cooked vegetables many of which had been grown in the garden. A choice of rum baba (babas with a bottle of rum handed round!), an assortment of three cream pots or a selection of English cheeses completed our repast. Red and white Mas de Daumas wines complemented the meal and impeccable service throughout was provided by Georgie and Tim, Jill and David's children.

This occasion was certainly one of the highlights of our year and we hope we all behaved well enough to be invited again! Our thanks are extended to David, Jill, Georgie and Tim for an excellent and truly memorable evening.



Lesley Berry

around the branches - Members Entertain at Home



HEREFORDSHIRE BRANCH ITALIAN LUNCH AT BROMSASH

The Herefordshire Branch recently enjoyed a spectacular Italian lunch at the home of one of its members at Bromsash. Unfortunately the weather was typical of our summer this year and, despite having a large marquee erected in the garden, lunch had to be served indoors. However, although a little 'cosy' we all managed to eat in the beautiful dining room. On arrival Members were greeted with a glass of cool Prosecco Italian pink sparkling which set the scene for a wonderful Italian experience.

Before the meal commenced the main course of pig, including head, was presented to guests. The meal commenced with antipasti including melon wrapped in Parma ham and bruschetta, and salad of artichoke hearts with borlotti beans and mushrooms, all prepared by one of our most talented members. Then came the magnificent Suckling Pig and Vincigrassi (a rich and decadent truffle lasagne) which is a 16th Century recipe and was always

on the menu at the Walnut Tree, Abergavenny when Franco Taruschio ran it. This was prepared by Franco's daughter and certainly brought back happy memories for many members who had been regular diners there. Couscous salad and a hot potato salad of potatoes, tomatoes and olives was also served. To accompany the meal were Chianti and Pinot Grigio and we were treated to a magnificent 1996 Tignanello very kindly donated by one of our Members. There was a choice of two desserts being Limone and bilberry pudding and an Italian lemon tart, also prepared by a member. The splendid meal concluded with coffee.

To end the afternoon we were able to stroll around the splendid garden enjoying the magnificent views towards the Welsh Mountains and viewing, what we were informed was, the largest Magnolia in the County. We all had an extremely enjoyable afternoon, despite the weather and many of us went home with the vision of that suckling pig in our minds!

Sue Davidson

CAPITAL BRANCH 'VISIT' THE LOIRE

We are very grateful to London Branch members Keith & Sheila Ellis who offered to host a lunch, at their home in Sandhurst, for which Keith was supplying the wine and tutoring the tasting.

As with any event organised in members homes meticulous planning and organisation is required. Our chosen region was the Loire and Keith had collected an interesting range of wines from the area, all I had to do was source the recipes and produce some authentic dishes!

The task of finding the recipes wasn't too onerous. As a pig farmer I have spent the best part of forty years seeking different ways to present the noble beast, consequently Charcuterie and French Pork Cookery by Jane Grigson has become my bible.

Rillettes (see recipe facing page) and rillons were the answer and that is where the problems started. The best rillettes and rillons are made with belly pork with a high fat to lean ratio. Not being a producer any more this presented a problem as pigs marketed today are lean machines. The wholesale butcher gave me a very funny look when I rejected, as too lean, the first three bellies he showed me. I had to go through about a dozen before I found three suitable. He went away muttering about, 'funny woman, those fat things I usually have a job to sell'.

Twenty two members enjoyed an aperitif of a Cremant De Loire, Chateau de la Presle. We then sat down to a plate of rilletts with crusty bread with which Keith served a Sauvignon De Touraine, Chateau de la Presle 2007 and a Quincy Tradition 2007, Domaine Mardon, Helene Mardon & Luc Tabordet. Interestingly both wines were (to me) high in acidity when first tasted without food but having coated the palate with fat they came through much softer. I then served cold marinated mackerel fillets. These had been floured and fried in olive oil. Sliced onion was then fried in more oil, wine vinegar and sugar added and poured over the fillets while still hot, they were then marinated over-night. The soured mackerel served with a beurre blanc (more fat) accompanied the next two wines, a Sancerre Blanc, Domaine Andre Dezat et Fils, 2007 which as recommended went well with fish and a Sancerre Rosé, Domaine André Dezat et Fils, 2008 which was made entirely of Pinot Noir, some found it tasted metallic with the mackerel.

Our main course was rillons - squares of belly pork marinated in a mixture of herbs, honey and olive oil overnight, then slow roasted for about three hours until a lot of the fat was rendered out and they were well glazed. These were accompanied by crushed new potatoes with chives and green salad and the pork jus. With this we enjoyed a Chinon Les Gravieres, Domaine Couly-Dutheil, 2007 and a Bourgueil Les Quartiers, Domaine Yannick Amirault, 2005. The Chinon was a soft fruity wine but I thought a little lost with the dish. The Bourgueil was a much heavier wine, the Cabernet Franc giving it dense fruit flavours. Here again the high fat content softened it around the edges but for me it needed another few years before drinking.

A selection of excellent Loire cheeses were served with a Pinot Noir - Sancerre Rouge, Cuvée Prestige, Andre Dezat et Fils, 2006 and a Chateau De Villeneuve, Saumur-Champigny, Vieilles Vignes, 2006 with both wines showing well.

One member did suggest that the food should be laced with statins but as the mortality rate from heart disease in France is about half that of the UK it is obviously not the fat that is killing us. I believe the high acidity of the wines from the area must counteract the effects on the body of a high fat diet, while the fat makes the wine more palatable - obviously a marriage made in heaven!

Pam Brunning



around the branches - Lisbon

DINNER AT RESTAURANTE JACINTO

In early June our branch met for a dinner at Jacinto restaurant in Lisbon where we matched the rich rustic cuisine of the Alentejo against the upfront, fruity, fullbodied wines from the same region.

Alentejo is a vast picturesque open area of mostly flat plains and hills spotted with oak(cork) trees and olive trees between the greater Lisbon area and the ever popular Algarve. This hot area and the Douro are the main producers of Portuguese table wine. The cooler Alto (upper) Alentejo is producing some very exciting wines from blends of mainly Portuguese varietals and some traditional French varietals.

Our guest of honour was Peter Bright, the well known wine-maker/partner of Terras d'Alter, one of the top estates in this area. Peter is originally from Australia but has been making wine in Portugal with great success for over 30 years. Terras d'Alter is a joint venture between an oenologist (Peter Bright), Antonio Borges (entrepreneur) and Jose Roquette (medical specialist).

From the many wines produced by Terra d'Alter, we selected what I consider the top six to accompany our vast array of selected starters and main courses.

Terra d'Alter Reserva 2008 branco (arinto / roupeiro & viognier) - fruity, mouth filling white

Terra d'Alter Rose 2008 (touriga nacional) – fullbodied balanced fruity rose

Terra d'Alter Touriga / Cabernet 2007 – still youthful but balanced promising blend

Terra d'Alter Reserva tinto 2006 (syrah / alicante bouchet)- well structured fruity enjoyable

Terra d'Alter Alicante Bouchet 2007- powerful mouthfilling youthful, longafter taste – excellent

Outeiro do Mouro 2007 (petit verdot/ syrah / alfrocheiro) – flagship, excellent blend

The chef/owner of Jacinto, Luis Cardoso, produced a varied interesting tasty selection from the areas vast cuisine. Starters such as Pigs ears, scrambled egg with farinheira sausage, gratinated goats milk cheese with honey were well matched by the Terras d'Alter Rose.

Terras d'Alter Reserva white was a fixing match for the grouper dumplings with 'coriander bread pudding'

Delicious black pork cheeks, a delicacy of the area, matched by two medium bodied wines: the Reserva blend and Touriga/Cabernet blend.

The last main course was the traditional and popular Alentejano, roast kid with potatoes and cabbage shoots which was accompanied by the two powerful mouthfilling, well balanced Alicante Bouchet and Outeiro do Mouro with their lingering aftertastes.

A trilogy of deserts from the Alentejo with a delicious red muscadet, Moscatel Roxo JMF, from the Setubal area was a fitting end to our dinner.

Our hearty thanks to Peter Bright for his informative and concise notes on the wines during the dinner and for very generously donating the Terras d'Alter wines and helping to make this a memorable, well enjoyed dinner.

Rui Mendonça



Rillettes de Porc

In France belly pork is either salted and smoked for bacon, salted, boiled and eaten cold or made into rillons (cubes of slow braised pork) and rillettes.

Rillettes are simple to make and wonderfully tasty if you can get hold of the right sort of belly pork. Choose your pork carefully, it must be at least 30% fat, an even higher ratio is great. Don't worry about there being too much fat, it keeps the lean moist while cooking and if you are really worried about your cholesterol you can drain some off at the end of cooking - but I don't recommend it!

Take 2lb fat belly pork, remove the rind and cut into small strips about one inch long and half inch wide. Place in a deep, heavy casserole, add 2 ounces of water, this will stop it sticking while the fat starts to render. Add a good bunch of fresh herbs, two whole cloves garlic, salt and pepper to taste. Cover tightly with a lid and cook in a low oven for at least four hours until the meat is really tender.

Leave to cool slightly, remove the herbs and garlic then pour into a sieve to drain off the fat and juices. At this stage purists get to work on the meat with two forks and pull it apart to achieve the required texture. Being lazy I find it quite acceptable to pulse, in small batches, in a processor to accomplish the same results. Be very careful not to process for long, you need the meat to still be of a coarse texture. Don't on any account use a liquidiser or mince, you will end up with a grey sludge.

Place the meat in a large basin and stir in the liquid that you drained off. It is at this stage you can leave out some of the fat if you wish but your rillettes won't taste as good, most of the flavour is in the fat. Season well to bring out the flavour and pack into convenient size pots pushing the meat down well so that a layer of fat sets on the top. These keep well in the fridge and can be frozen for a short period but not too long because of the high fat content.

If you can't get hold of fatty pork belly you can add a half pound of flare fat, cut up into small pieces, to the pot. Some use lard but I haven't tried it. Lard can be very variable in flavour.

When I was first married, the one thing that was always plentiful around the farm was pork so for Christmas presents I used to buy some attractive earthenware pots and give Rillettes de Porc to all the relations! **Editor**

around the branches - Leicester



LANGAR HALL



presented and tasted as good as it looked.

There was a plentiful supply of Spitting Spider, Chenin Blanc Riesling - Dowie Doole and Spitting Spider Shiraz Grenache - Dowie Doole both very easy to drink. They complemented the food well. The service was excellent. We were very happy to pay £45.50 which included wine and coffee but not service.

RETURN VISIT TO HAMBLETON HALL

On September the 8th we paid a return visit to Hambleton Hall for lunch. This is almost becoming an annual event and we are never disappointed. It was a lovely sunny morning but with a brisk wind which made drinks on the terrace inadvisable. However some of us enjoyed a walk in the lovely gardens - the knot garden was at its best.

We enjoyed a Vintage 2004 Chamonix Brut Blancs de Blancs Franschhoek for an aperitif with some delicious canapés. I thought it was as good as many Champagnes. We had the main dining room to ourselves and the service and ambience were excellent. We started with a ballotine of ham hock with black pudding, an excellent mixture accompanied by a poached egg. The alternative was a single mushroom ravioli with a pea and bacon velouté

Main courses were a poached fillet of gurnard with green beans or a perfectly sauced confit of duck with onion marmalade and an intriguing eucalyptus sauce.

We finished with caramelised lemon tart with raspberries or a delicious banana soufflé in a little ramekin with a passion fruit sorbet.

The wines were a 2007 Pinot Gris Le Fromenteau Jomsmeier which I found surprisingly sweet, then a 2005 Givry Premier Cru Danjean Berthou - superb - and with the deserts a 2005 Coteaux du Layon Domaine Branchereau. We were served a plentiful supply of all the wines and we couldn't fault the cooking of Aaron Paterson's team. Our thanks are due to Roger Austin who managed to talk the management into providing this very good luncheon for the amazing price of £45. Our branch is paying for service in the restaurants this year.

Mary Jewell

LEICESTER SUMMER EVENTS

On Thursday June 18th Sally and Graham Moore arranged a dinner at The Golden Fleece, South Croxton a Leicestershire village near to Melton Mowbray. This typical country pub has recently been extended to make a stylish restaurant with an elegant space for dining outside. Unfortunately we arrived on a wet evening so we enjoyed our Bellini with excellent and plentiful canapés in the comfortable bar area before occupying four large tables in the main restaurant.

We started with pan fried Scallops with Parma ham and a Pea puree **or** Breast of Pigeon with a mushroom duxelle and bacon accompanied by a glass of Chilean Sauvignon Blanc - Torres Santa Digna. The main course was Spring Lamb with Dauphinoise potatoes and Rosemary Jus **or** Poached Halibut with Asparagus, new potatoes and Aoli. I chose the halibut and was disappointed to find the asparagus was merely tiny green slivers pared from a spear. We drank a glass of Australian Shiraz - Mc Guigan Black Label. For pudding we chose between Crème Brulée with a Raspberry Sorbet, a Sorbet Selection served in a brandy snap basket or Cheese and biscuits. We finished with tea or coffee. The service was good and the meal good value for £35 not including service.

Margaret Bowen organised a Luncheon on August 6th at Langar Hall in the Vale of Belvoir owned by Imogen Skirving. This Georgian country house is in a lovely setting surrounded by parkland complete with sheep. It was a beautiful morning and we enjoyed a sparkling Cremant de Alsace Seppi Landemann - Noble Valley- standing in the sunshine or sitting on the Lutyens seats outside the front door.

We loved the ambience of the dining room with a large Italian chandelier, pillars and a huge fireplace. The first course was a delicious Mediterranean vegetable terrine with a goat's cheese mousse and tapenade - a delight to the eye as well as the palate. The main course, a tower of slow braised Langar lamb resting on garlic mash and a pile of green beans was accompanied by fresh peas and skinned broad beans from the kitchen garden. The dessert was a delicious iced nougatine parfait with a summer berry compote. The food was very well



Ballotine of Ham Hock

around the branches - Manchester



ZEST in BOULTON

On 23 September members met at the restaurant Zest in Bolton for an educational dining evening entitled Tastes of Andalusia.

Zest Fine Foods is a Delicatessen and Restaurant which was opened in 2008 by the owners Richard and Carole Court. The architect Neil Pike, who is a member of our Society, gave us a brief history of the building, its previous uses and explained the transformation to the light, beautiful business premises it is today.

We assembled on the ground floor, which is the Delicatessen,

where we enjoyed a Cava aperitif and then we went upstairs to a room with a high ceiling and a wonderful atmosphere. Jonathon Seal, who supplies Zest with imported Spanish foods, has been collecting recipes of Andalusian home cooking for years and demonstrated three of these dishes to us. Jonathon also told us of the history of the region and its food. The Romans introduced olive oil, the Moorish influence gave the region oranges, almonds and spices. From the Americas came potatoes, tomatoes and peppers, this coupled with the severe poverty the Spanish endured, developed a rustic cuisine. All these ingredients were incorporated into the demonstration.

Mike Harrison, the chef at Zest then cooked these dishes in larger quantities for our meal and added a few extra treats. The starter was Gazpacho de culantro (Coriander Gazpacho) with grilled green lip mussels, Spanish charcuterie and local black pudding, all of which were delicious and accompanied by Manzanilla 'La Gitana' Bodegas Hidalgo.

The main course was Lomo de Cerdo con Salsa de Almendra, tenderloin of pork stuffed with Serrano ham, red pepper and hard boiled eggs served with an almond sauce. Remojon - a salad of oranges red onion and salt cod - was served with this, also tortilla Espanola and Spanish charcuterie. This was accompanied by a Wine Society's Rioja Crianza 2005 which complimented the food and its many strong flavours. Most people enjoyed the food but some found the salt cod too strong and fish served with meat was not to everyone's taste.

The dessert of locally made ice cream was served with raisins soaked in Pedro Ximenez Syrup and was very light and refreshing to round off the meal.

We all had an unusual, entertaining and educational evening. Our thanks go to; Jonathon for his demonstration and recipe sheets, I am sure many of us will try them ourselves. To Mike for the lovely tasty meal and of course to David Chapman who selected and informed us about the wines which accompanied each course and to Neil Pike for his description of our surroundings.

John Hodgkinson



THE WAGGON at BIRTLE

We returned to one of our favourite venues, 'The Waggon' at Birtle, in late autumn, where, as always, we were warmly welcomed by our hostess Lorraine Watson.

We enjoyed a refreshing glass of 'Tigress' rosé from Bay of Fires, Tasmania as aperitif. Made from Pinot Noir & Chardonnay, it had a vibrant pink colour with a fine persistent mousse, a light bouquet of strawberry, and a fresh, delicate and refreshing palate.

Our starter of Seared Salmon marinated in honey & black pepper, was delightful. The Salmon was beautifully cooked and had a sweetish but delicate flavour. Served on a bed of bean sprouts & spring onion, with a hint of chilli, there was a lovely blend of flavours & textures. The accompanying wine was a Bourgogne Blanc - 'les Setilles'-2006, from Leflaive. A good white Burgundy character without complexity - citrus tones and nicely integrated oak. Being medium bodied, it matched up well with the food.

The main course was roasted Rump of Lamb. For some of our tables the lamb was soft, succulent & juicy. Others felt it was a bit dry & tough. It is only fair to say at this point that this dinner was originally scheduled in August when rump of lamb would have been in its prime. Chef Watson would have preferred to have served slow cooked Shank of Lamb, but in discussions with the Committee, he was overruled! Serves us right! In future - Chef knows best. The garlic & saffron mash on which the lamb was served was lovely, as was the cannoise of vegetables.... subtle layers of flavour. We drank a 2005 Cru Bourgeois Superieur from the Medoc, Ch. Greysac. This wine divided opinions, some found it fruity with blackcurrant tones, others thought it was a little green & stalky. I held the latter view, it did seem quite light and short on the finish.

We finished our meal with a generously flavoured Plum, Pear & Almond Strudel. The flavours were rich, ripe fruit balanced by the dry nuttiness of the almonds. The delightfully crispy pastry gave the dish an extra dimension.

As usual, the service was friendly and well-paced, which made for a relaxed and very enjoyable evening. Our thanks to Lorraine & David Watson.

Eamon Mooney.



around the branches - Merseyside & Mid Cheshire Join Manchester Branch

A TRIP TO ALSACE

In July, 15 members left Timperley Cricket Club at 6.15a.m. to travel to Dover for the ferry crossing to Calais enroute to Reims and ultimately Alsace for a wine tasting trip organised by Bob Lloyd.

On arrival we booked into the Hotel de la Paix which is in the middle of the city, and provides excellent facilities. The participants were given a free evening to enjoy various restaurants – strangely enough 12 of the party chose to eat at the Café Flo.

Next day we reached Riquewihr at about 2.00p.m. and booked into Hotel Schoenenbourg for 6 nights. This hotel is just outside the walls of the city, and some rooms had a good view of the Grand Cru vineyards of Schoenenbourg and Sporen.

Later that day we visited Zind Humbrecht, on the outskirts of Turckheim where Olivier Humbrecht M.W. gave us a superb tasting of his wines. They are expensive, but the quality is high. Returning to Riquewihr everybody was free to eat, drink and watch the world go by.

Sunday was spent in Colmar. This lovely city is a treat to walk around with its little squares and bars, pretty flower displays and well preserved buildings. Petite Venice, reached via Rue des Tanneurs, is picturesque and not to be missed.

Five of us dined at the Michelin starred restaurant, Rendez-vous de Chasse, in the Hotel Bristol. We all enjoyed our meal immensely and could recommend this restaurant. It was a wonderful day and it was generally agreed we would stay longer if we ever visited again. We returned to Riquewihr for the evening.

On Monday our driver George had a day off so we had a couple of tastings in Riquewihr. We walked up the main cobbled street to visit Hugel et fils and my old friend David Ling, who is originally from Chester, gave us a lovely tasting and talk on the history of Alsace. He took us on an interesting trip round the cellar, home to the St Catherine barrel, which is the oldest barrel in the world still in continuous use, it dates back to 1715. The only minus of the visit was that Johnny Hugel had died recently – nobody did more for the Alsace wine and food than he did – a delightful man.

After a light lunch we regrouped for a tasting at Dopff au Moulin. This winery was the first to produce Cremant d'Alsace, this was soon evident in the tasting given by a young lady who was doing her first presentation. She found this a little daunting, but with our help, she got through. The wines here were fairly ordinary and we were all disappointed as this was the only place we were asked to pay for the tasting.

The next day we visited Cave de Turckheim. Two pleasant young ladies took us into the cellar where the cellar master was testing a few secret blends. The wines were excellent and I tasted the best Alsace pinot noir I have ever tasted, which could have compared with a light Burgundy and is also much cheaper!

Jean Trimbach had arranged a lunch for us in Ribeauville at Restaurant Catalpas. Lunch was eaten under the catalpas trees, an unusual tree that none of us had seen before which gave ample shade and a good meal was had by all. Afterwards we visited Vincent and Laura Sipp at Sipp Mack in Hunnawir. Vincent took us up into the Rosacker vineyard, where he grows some of his Riesling grapes. The view was superb and he pointed out Clos St Hune as we stood on the hillside. His wife Laura an American lady was most welcoming and we tasted some really good wines. I for one, am looking forward to my next visit.

Next day we went to Ginglinger-Fix, a small family run winery. Eliane Ginglinger, a delightful young lady, who did her oenology at Dijon University, and who is the current President of the Confrerie St Etienne. My idea on this trip was to show different parts of the Alsace wine trade, both the large and small producers. This vineyard was small by comparison to others we had already visited and I know that the group were impressed by the enthusiasm of the family, mother, father and grandmother and, of course, winemaker daughter. The size of the cellar is minimal but the wines are excellent and Eliane is still trying to find an agent in England. I may have found one, but it is beyond my comprehension that Alsace wines do not sell well here. Eliane she joined us for lunch at a restaurant in Voeglinshoffen which she recommended. The views from the restaurant were delightful, with the Rhine flowing through the plains and the mountains beyond.

The following day we visited Jean Trimbach who put on an excellent tasting and gave us a tour of the cellars. Back to the big time here with really high-quality wines. We were privileged to taste Frederic Emile, but not Clos St Hune as they have a very limited stock.

We then travelled to Strasbourg for lunch and an afternoon exploring the city. However, as we arrived we were greeted by a terrific rainstorm and the place was awash. Most of the members visited the cathedral which dates back to 1230 and is famous for its astronomical clock which chimes at 12.30p.m. each day.

On the way back we returned to Reims, stopping at L'Arche for a light lunch. After checking into the Hotel de la Paix we had an amazing Champagne tasting at Vilmart, given by Laurent Champs. Their non vintage, Grand Reserve and Grand Cellier are incredible wines. The Grand Reserve is 70% pinot noir, and 30% chardonnay and the Grand Cellier is 70% chardonnay and 30% pinot noir, both exceptional wines to my mind.

Reaching Boulogne sur Mer we enjoyed a wonderful fish meal at La Matelote, a one star Michelin restaurant. Unfortunately the ferry departure from Calais was delayed for 2 hours which meant that we arrived back at Timperley Cricket Club at 2.00a.m. We unloaded all our wine purchases fortunately not attracting too much attention from the local police!

Bob Lloyd & assistant Eamon Mooney



around the branches - London

THE BUTCHERS' HALL LUNCHEON

The Chairman of the London Branch arranged for 29 members and guests to attend a splendid carvery luncheon at the Butchers' Hall on Wednesday 16th September. The Worshipful Company of Butchers is one of the seven oldest City Livery Companies and has written evidence of its existence dating back to 975AD. The Company is still closely associated with the meat industry and among their members are, HRH The Princess Royal and Clarissa Dickson Wright (of 'Two Fat Ladies' fame). The Butchers' Hall is centrally located in the historic and vibrant Smithfield area and is one of the most elegant of the City livery halls.

The Worshipful Company of Butchers has always taken a keen interest in education and training within the meat industry. Livery members were involved in the creation of the Institute of Meat in 1946 and the influence of the Livery helped to sustain the Institute until 1990 when its successor, the Meat Training Council (MTC), was launched. The Livery Company has close management and financial links with the MTC, which is recognised by the Department of Education and Employment as the National Training Organisation and Awarding Body for the meat and poultry industries. More than 3,500 people per year take up MTC courses and NVQ's.

The Carvery Luncheon took place in the beautiful Great Hall and started with an aperitif of one's choice. This was followed by a seated lunch with wines. The first course was a superb spicy mushroom soup with croutons, which was thick and tasty, together with crusty bread and butter. Then followed the star of the show; the famous Fore Rib of Beef, purchased fresh from Smithfield Meat Market around the corner. The beef was accompanied by roast and new potatoes, broad beans in a cream sauce, carrots, green beans, cauliflower and, of course, fluffy Yorkshire puddings. Mustard, horseradish and proper gravy completed the ensemble. There were copious amounts of red and white wine, which were the Company's house wines and these went down very well indeed. Dessert or cheese followed; there was a very pretty vanilla panacotta with a berry topping and a

selection of excellent British cheeses, many of which were distinct, regional specialties'. Coffee or tea and chocolates in the shape of farmyard animals followed the lunch and rounded off a very enjoyable occasion.

The Chairman would like to thank the Master of the Worshipful Company of Butchers, Mr. Jeffrey C Davies, and the Clerk, Mr. Anthony Morrow, for making us feel very welcome on the day and for taking the time to speak to our members. She would also like to thank the Company for the information from their website, which was used in the preparation of this article.

Judy Tayler-Smith, Chairman

TASTING WINE -- With Food or Without?

By Alan Shepherd

The normal model for wine tastings in London Branch is to taste up to 12 wines with only water and dry biscuits, followed by a supper at the end of the evening. These events have a loyal following of serious wine tasters, but other members attend them rarely, if at all. For some, drinking up to half a litre of wine, followed by a supper and more wine, is an indigestible experience. And throwing some of it away and filling up with biscuits is only a partial solution. But casual conversation would indicate that many of these people would welcome an opportunity to try out different wines, in the medium price range, alongside the food with which they would normally be drunk.

So, when I was recently asked to take over the organisation of a 'White Wine Challenge' at the last moment, I decided to try something a little different. I reduce the number of wines from 12 to 9, and used the money saved to fund a selection of canapés, representing the courses of a meal with which they would normally be drunk. So we had three wines with smoked salmon, three with chicken and three with cheese. Participants were asked to rate each wine in its own right, as a match for the food, and for value for money.

Rachel Burnett showed wines from the South of France, Alan Shepherd from Spain, and Keith Ellis from Germany. And, whilst the French wines won the overall title, it was interesting to note that the Spanish wines were judged the best match for the food, and also the best value for money.

From the comments that I received afterwards, the event was much enjoyed. For fine wine tastings, of course the experts will want to stay with their traditional model. But I gained the strong impression that there was also a substantial contingent, who drink wine mostly with food, and would welcome more opportunities to taste medium-priced wines in the format that we experimented with on this occasion.

What do other branches think? E mail your views to editor@sidpam.waitrose.com or write to the address on page 3.



around the African Branches - Lusaka



CHAIRMAN'S FARM LUNCH

"A five course gourmet meal, served after a pre-luncheon snack and sparkling wine, followed by cheese and freshly brewed coffee, accompanied by appropriate wines." - not a problem. The chef however had no electricity, refrigeration, air-conditioning, or running water - now we have a problem - this Chairman has really gone Bush! But in Zambia no problem even though the venue is in virgin bush, which has not seen rain for five months, with the only means of access being a rough track.

This was the scenario for my annual Chairman's Repast and it followed the theme of an "Endless Feast". Everything was local - the food, the music, the bush setting, the dust and the long drop. Preparation of the site started two months in advance - bush had to be cleared so that



we had a level playing field and a view of the farm dam. A track for vehicle access had to be cut and the long drop dug - loo with a view.

Chef and his team were on site before the members and guests were even contemplating getting up. No pre-preparation of food before the day - everything was done on site. Cooking was on charcoal and the drinks chilled in ice-filled bath tubs. Additional atmosphere was provided by a Zambian Jazz Quartet - minus the Dolby System.

After mid-day drinks, the afternoon slipped by, course after delicious course, and a spectacular African sunset announced the end of our Feast - a truly Zambian experience. This country has so much to offer and my Luncheon was a celebration of our bounty, and a fitting end to my term of office.

We are justly well-known for our hospitality - we would love to share it with other members of our International Society.

Christina Holding Past Chairman

Harare 2009



Bushman's Rock Vineyard

Harare started it's events this year with our ever popular and well supported Valentines Day Brunch and AGM at Pangolin Lodge.

This was followed by a dinner at the Taverna Athena, a Greek restaurant in Harare, plate breaking and lively Greek music contributed to the enjoyment of all. Our next event was to be a Wine and Spirits quiz evening with dinner, this proved to be an unpopular choice of events, as the response was so poor, the event had to be cancelled.

A sponsored wine tasting and dinner followed at a newly opened Wine Bar, this was well attended.

Our next event in early November is again a sponsored wine and food tasting to be held at a members house. We hope to then visit a local vineyard - Bushman's Rock, later in November, this will be a tasting and al fresco lunch .

Victoria New



Pangolin Lodge

around the branches - Cape Town

OIL IN A DAY'S WORK - OLIVE AND OLIVE OIL TASTING IN DEVON VALLEY

The Costa family has been associated with olive farming and olive oil production in South Africa for decades and Linda Costa, a doyenne in the field, gave us an organoleptic experience in her wonderful 'free range' home (in which we could range free!) on Sunday 24 August 2009. Organoleptic? A wonderful word! This is what happens when all your organs go 'leptic', i.e. you get the *rittelits*, as we would say in the *platteland* (SA countryside *Ed*).

A good function undoubtedly comprises good wine and food – that stands to reason – but when an educational element is thrown into the mix and one comes away with new ideas, knowledge and insights, when the subject is refreshingly demystified, then all the better. Linda did a sterling job of entertaining, informing, regaling us all and was hugely relieved I think that we picked out the good oils and disliked the bad.... Well done tastebuds – superior, e-ve-ry one!

We arrived (well some of us!) to a sparkling drink of *Prosecco*. The white *Teresa Rizzi* was, in my book, splendidly delightful and infinitely nicer than the pretty pink *Sole Novi Rose* whose looks promised 'refreshing' but whose taste delivered 'tired and flat'. Even though one bottle was corked, I tasted two more for good measure and found them anything but sparkling.

The *Mori Zuppa di Cardi* (Cardoon soup) was a revelation and lapped up quite literally with proffered seconds taken up with alacrity. Garlicky *ciabatta* helped to mop up the last few drops.

Then Linda took over and we tasted 5 oils blind. The first evoked freshly cut grass aromas and peppery, nutty, somewhat bitter flavours which induced a polite cough or two – a winning combination which placed this locally blended oil, (*Vesuvio*) in 2nd or 3rd position. Smooth and creamy, lovely mouth feel, we were off to a healthy, high antioxidant start. Then we were brought down to earth with a rancid bang with the next rather greasy, castor tasting oil from Spain (*Arte Oliva*). Beautifully packaged, this oil might well be picked on looks but, alas, this was an awful exemplar – although quite recently 'bottled'! This was rated 4th or 5th by the majority. Oil number three, made from the FS17 cultivar proved to be the 2009 *Morgenster*. Redolent of peppery green tomatoes, its harmonious nutty, grassy flavours brought back some gentle coughs and antioxidant behaviours (better than antisocial!). The next unfiltered *Verdenso* from Italy proved to be defective with a strong 'winey' nose and descriptions ranging from "old motor oil" to, er, "c--ppy". Well, that says it all! Finally, we ended on a high note with a majority 'best of day' thumbs up: a local *Olyfberg* from the Robertson valley. A wonderful, creamy smooth finish, super peppery grassy flavours – everything one wants in a young fresh oil which, unlike oils 2 and 4, would complement rather than taint any dish. This is the oil that Linda herself has chosen to use in her novel oil dispenser, the Vacu Fresh, many of which sold like hot cakes, later in the day!

Linda's descriptions of process and product as well as comparisons with other oils will come in handy when oil shopping especially the point made about checking colour and labels carefully for harvesting and production information as well as sell-by dates. The question of colour is important. In the past, one always expected the best extra virgin oils to be really grassy green. Linda made the point that these oils, made from unripe olives, produced a great colour but very aggressive, bitter flavours and coughing fits to rival swine flu victims! More recently producers have settled on a middle course: not too green, not too ripe, but just right (ask Goldilocks!). A cloudy look would be a dead giveaway of unfiltered oil and, as far as Linda is concerned, this is not an enviable characteristic and something to be avoided. So, in summary, oils 3 and 5 were the winners with 1 joining the thumbs up brigade while 2 and 4 got the thumbs down.

Home-made *Mori Fettuccini* with two sauces, *Ragù al vino Rosso*, (Beef in Red Wine) and *Bagna Cauda*, (Anchovy Cream) followed the olive oil tasting. This was served with tossed salad and more bread for mopping and dipping. Once again seconds were the order of the day amidst much lipsmacking and yummy sounds emanated across the room. The white wines served included *Mooiplaas Chenin Blanc* and a delectable *Quando Sauvignon Blanc*. Red wines, *Graham Beck The Ridge Shiraz* and a Woolworths sourced *Chianti*, slipped down thirsty throats.

All of this followed by a home made Olive Cake served with Olive ice-cream and pears poached in Marsala.

As said in the function letter, through her company **OlivesInFact**, Linda runs training courses on olive oil and table olive processing, assists and advises clients on their olive processing and sells processing equipment. As a partner in Olives Go Wild cc she also presents courses and co-ordinates the local tasting panels. Olives Go Wild organises various events for the SA Olive Industry Association and has set up an on-line industry directory. Visit the www.olivedirectory.co.za for oil your information about this wonderful product, without which our (o)lives would be so much the poorer!

Finally, to our food committee of Marilyn, Sharon and Magel – a huge thanks for *lekker kos* (delicious food *Ed*). Huger thanks must go to the entire Mori clan for organising the event and doing so much more besides in the wine and food arena. To all our other helping members and their guests, some of whom were also helping with the clearing and washing up (let them join immediately!!) we say thanks. It was a great effort, thoroughly enjoyed.

Finally to Linda and Jos, thanks for hosting this warm day (weather and atmosphere!). Your hospitality was greatly appreciated by all.

Terri Grant



Linda Costa with her recently launched novel extra virgin olive oil dispenser.

around the branches - Manchester Branch join Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

On an Egyptian Trip



As this tour was my 13th visit to Egypt, I was very excited to be accompanied by like minded people from my own branch, Manchester branch and friends.

The holiday commenced with a 4 night cruise along the Nile from Luxor to Aswan, taking in the wonderful experience of the West Bank Tombs of the Kings and Queens of Ancient Egypt, the Collosai of Memnon, Luxor and Karnak Temples, Edfu, Esna and Philea.

On reaching the beautiful city of Aswan, some members carried on their visit to Abu Simbel, after a joint visit to the Nasser Lake projects.

The holiday continued with three nights in the vibrant city of Cairo with visits to the Ancient Pyramids, the Sphinx and the fabulous Cairo Museum where we met with an old friend of mine who kindly acted as our guide for two informative hours.

The food on board our boat, the Royal Viking, was varied and as all Egyptian food, very colourful with speciality pastries, carved fruit displays and a variety of fish, especially Nile Perch. Copious varieties of dates, pomegranates, plums and figs were always available. Speciality sweets such as a Baklawah and Basbousa containing rose water, honey and nuts were plentiful. The staple diet of breads, aysh baladi, whole wheat or aysh shami white, are made from wheat harvested from the banks of the Nile. Beans and stews, falafel, are widely used as are soups such as Melokhia, made with fresh vegetables which are locally grown. There is no shortage of variety of fresh food, imaginatively prepared, in the land of Egypt.

As you are probably aware, the quality of wine in Egypt once left much to be desired. However in recent times there is a large producer of Egyptian wine, Gianacis, who have employed, Karim Hwaidak of Sahara Vineyards, located outside Cairo, to plant varieties of grapes in the Egyptian desert over a total area of 550 acres. He has planted an international variety of 16 red and 14 white grape vines. Anyone interested in researching this vineyard can visit www.saharavineyards.com where you

will be amazed at the achievements, given the unrelenting terrain.

Among the wines are Casper, Nermine and Miriam, the Casper variety being Chenin Blanc, Viognier and Blanc de Noirs, all being 2008, drinking 2009. It is fair to say that the presentation of Mr Hwaidak's wines is superb but the quality as yet, not wonderful but he is trying to make headway and has already shown his products in London and will do so in Bordeaux this year.

Imported grapes from the Lebanon are used to make commercial brands e.g. Pharaoh and Obelisk, using Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Merlot.

Local drinks are Shay bil na'na' - mint tea, Karkaday – a drink made from the Hibiscus flower and various local beers i.e. Aswanli and Zibib.

We enjoyed a good holiday and as usual, with these tours, experienced the educational value of the local cuisine and culture.

Our next trip, to New Zealand, will take place during the first two weeks in March 2010. Anyone interested may contact me. Secretary, Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire Branch 01745860136 or my email : karnak.fvb@btinternet.com
Val Brookfield-Bishop

SUSSEX BRANCH VISIT THE OLD HOUSE



The September event of the Sussex branch was held at the Old House, a delightful restaurant on the edge of Copthorne village. It was originally built around 1500 as a farm labourer's cottage and was used, in more recent times as a small hotel by a theatrical couple whose guests included some well-known post-war stars. In 1979 it was renovated and converted into a restaurant but the original character of the building, with its oak beams and inglenook fireplaces was retained.

Unusually for the Sussex branch, the focus was more on the wines than the food. Paul Champness, from Ellis Wines in Richmond, presented an informative comparative wine tasting and Colin Dormon produced an excellent menu to complement the wines.

These were chosen so that members could experience two different grape varieties with

each course and Paul gave short descriptions of the wines during the meal.

A glass of Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Brut, Bortolotti N.V., set the evening off to a very promising start. Chardonnay, Five Ashes Vineyard, Hamelin Bay, Margaret River 2006 and Godello, Adega A, Coroa, Valdeorras, Galicia 2008 accompanied a delicious first course of Roasted red mullet and sweet potato puree with ginger and saffron glaze. The main course was Canon of lamb, Braised kidney with a Madeira jus and Savoy cabbage parcel, or a vegetarian option of Goats cheese and artichoke ravioli with tomato relish and baby vegetables. With these dishes Paul chose Chateau Beausejour, Fronsac 2005 and Cabernet Merlot Kleinbabylonstoren, Backsberg Estate, Paarl, 2005 as the two reds to compare. An Espresso crème brulee, Amaretti biscuit, white chocolate sorbet in chocolate tuille and poached peach with caramel sauce was served as the dessert which worked extremely well with the unusual choice of a red wine, Red Muscadell Rietvallei Estate 2007. Saussignac, Cuvee Flavie, Ch. Des Eyssards, 2005 rounded off the meal nicely. A most enjoyable evening, very high standards of wines, food and service with some mild education thrown in as well!

Lesley Berry

around the branches - Wessex

25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Wessex Branch Annual Dinner on 11th October had a special significance this year as it marked 25 years since the very first event organised by the newly formed branch in October 1984. A number of the founder members and very early members are still with us and they turned out in force to take part in the celebration. We were also fortunate to have as our guest of honour the new EAC chairman Ron Barker, who very kindly agreed to travel all the way from Liverpool to be with us for the occasion.

The dinner was held at the Haven Hotel, which has a wonderful setting beside Poole Harbour at the tip of the Sandbanks peninsula. The reception was held in the Marconi Lounge, a very pleasant room named after the radio pioneer, who established a wireless transmitter at the Haven in 1899 and carried out some of his first wireless telegraphy experiments from the hotel. The Champagne apéritif was a Duval-Leroy Fleur de Champagne Premier Cru NV, a silver medal winner in the "World Wine Awards" in the October 2009 edition of *Decanter* magazine. It was accompanied by some excellent canapés.

Dinner was served in the Brownsea Room, which comfortably held our assembled company of 38 at four round tables.

The meal started with a very good amuse bouche of celeriac and russet apple soup followed by Parmesan Gnocchi, Roasted Ceps, Butternut Squash Purée with Brown Butter & Sage, accompanied by a Trimbach Pinot Blanc, 2007. This was followed by Seared Diver-Caught Scallops, Coco Beans & Marjoram with a Picpoul de Pinet, Beauvignac, 2008 from the Languedoc. The wines in the main proved to be a good match for the food. With the principal course, "Creedy Carver Farm" Duck, Pithivier of Confit Leg & Foie Gras, Parsnip Purée, Smoked Bacon & Savoy Cabbage we enjoyed two red wines. A Côtes du Rhône, St-Esprit, Delas Frères, 2007, a Syrah and a Shiraz, My Word is my Bond, Peter Lehmann, 2006 from Australia, in an "Old World versus New World" contest. The idea was to compare the two very different styles of wine made from the same grape and assess how well they were rated, firstly when drunk alone and then with food. The general consensus appeared to be, as is so often the case that the juicy fruitiness of the New World wine was very good on its own but the Old World wine was a better match for the food. A pre dessert of Citrus Trifle followed to cleanse our palates.

The dessert wine, a Château Jolys, Cuvée Jean, 2006 (Jurançon), though delicious on its own, did not go well with the Pear Tart Tatin with Almond Ice Cream. During coffee Ron Barker gave us a brief and very interesting talk on the early days and general history of the International Wine & Food Society. Our branch chairman, David Packer, himself a near-founder member of the Wessex branch, then followed with a short account of the founding of the branch. Originally called the Bournemouth branch, it came into being due to the efforts of two or three couples who were co-founders of an IWFS branch when living for a time in Brussels but discovered when they later retired to Dorset that no such branch existed here. The first event was a dinner at the Carlton Hotel in Bournemouth on Saturday 13th October 1984 with just 10 members present, but from those small beginnings the branch has continued to thrive to the present day.

Members were in suitable celebratory mood to mark the occasion and it was a very convivial evening as well as a fitting tribute to our first 25 years. We are now all looking forward to the next 25 years and wishing the branch every success in the future.

Joan Cardy



EAST ANGLIA FOODIES AT LAVENDER HOUSE

We had wanted to go to Lavender House for ages so when the branch decided to go we jumped at the chance. We opted to go by train. Arriving in Brundall on a very dark evening, both wearing dark clothes, we proceeded to walk to the restaurant and Ed's exclaimed as several cars came speeding by, "We're going to die!!" Fortunately we didn't, and were welcomed with a glass of Prosecco and a few nibbles.

When starters arrived we could see that the meal was going to be of a high standard. There was a sublime dish of 'Wood Pigeon both breast and leg delicately presented on Savoy cabbage and pumpkin'. Others had a perfectly cooked 'Wild Salmon dish' whilst the rest of us plumped for something more earthier 'Chicken of the wood' which was served with mushrooms, an incredibly delicate dish with strong flavours and a refreshing nasturtium flower. The wines matched the dishes - a very robust red, Cinsaut shiraz, with the gamey pigeon with the Chilean Veramonte Sauvignon Blanc to help complement the subtle textures of the salmon and the mushrooms. We all started to relax and swapped wine and starter courses with fellow members.

The main courses were 'Halibut with a mini fish pie', a Fillet of Beef and the vegetarian course which no one chose. The fish pie was presented on an oblong plate with the 'pie' contained within a copper pot accompanied with a most delicate piece of halibut, placed on baby carrots. The beef came perfectly presented with sufficient garlic to deter the most determined vampire. For those who expressed a preference the fillet was cooked to perfection either medium rare or for some 'just show it to the pan and remove'. The accompanying 'jus' was enough to ensure the two were proudly complemented. The wines with the main courses were again perfect - a pronounced viognier for the fish and a zinfandel to harmonise the beef.

After a palate cleanser, dessert did not disappoint, there were two choices or the option of cheese. A 'Peanut butter parfait' with the title of Snickers (I still remember when Snickers was a Marathon!) or a Norfolk Apple Terrine. Again all were presented to the utmost attention and detail - a real credit to the restaurant under the guise of Richard Hughes. The dessert wines were also delicious and powerfully helped our, perhaps, jaded palates to recover some of their vigour for the onslaught of peanut, apple and cheese!!

A good value evening that ended all too quickly but with a promise by ourselves to return soon.

Ed and Rachel Lancaster





MEMBERS GO DOWN ON THE FARM

During 2008 one of our most enjoyable functions involved creating a tasting menu that was based on a substantial number of the winning products from the 'Deliciously Yorkshire' 2008 Awards. The products we used in our gargantuan feast certainly justified their success.

We decided that it wasn't enough just to taste the products, we wanted to learn more about the businesses and their methods. So our 2009 programme has included events featuring two of the award winning suppliers. Most recently a Saturday morning visit to High Callis Wold Farm, half an hour east of York, who's Organic Bread Mix was the winning product in the bakery category.

Our initial objective for the visit was to see the milling of the flour that we had used to make bread for our function. However it became obvious that there was a lot more to High Callis Farm than we had realised, and our plans changed to take in a tour to learn about the farm's introduction of organic methods.

On arrival it was clear the farm was something special. To start with the setting was idyllic – high up on the Yorkshire Wolds, the views across the Vale of York and south to the Humber estuary were magnificent. Then we met the team – father and son Mark and Mike Stringer, the second and third generation owners of the family business that has over 1100 acres of mixed arable and livestock farming.

Passionate about the land, Mark and Mike are equally committed to the well being of their animals, currently about 600 lambs and 65 cattle. It was their concerns about animal welfare that helped persuade them to move out of the highly profitable intensive pig farming operation that the farm previously ran. In 1999 they began the organic process, the first farm on the Wolds to do so, to the bewilderment of some of their farming neighbours.

Our visit began with a live demonstration in the potato sorting shed. Here the machinery grades the size of potato for different markets. Whilst organic potatoes are more susceptible to disease, lower yields are offset by the higher price the products command.

Then it was out into the fields, moving through the lush grassland where the cattle were grazing. The grass and clover mix is crucial to the farm's organic 7 year crop rotation plan, which also intersperses crops such as wheat, barley and winter oats. Most of the beef is destined for a supermarket chain, for which the Stringers had nothing but praise for its commitment and support.

Next we saw the lambs, also fattened on a grass and clover diet, that are reared for local consumers, farmers markets and shops and some internet customers.

The organic focus has brought some beneficial side effects in that the land has recaptured its natural richness, avoiding chemical pesticides and fertilisers and resulting in greater diversity of insects and thus, birds. The Stringers' decision to go organic was not applied to the whole farm, and on some fields conventional methods have not been entirely abandoned. However they believe that what they have learned from the organic process has helped them improve their other operations significantly.

Our final part of the visit was the original purpose – to see the milling of the flour, in fact a very simple and straightforward process. The mill is next door to a small display area where we were able to buy from a wide range of the farm's meat and flour products.

As no IW&FS function is complete without food and drink. Our secretary, and the event's organiser, suggested the Old Sun Inn at Colton, near Tadcaster, which has a growing reputation for food, as an ideal stop for lunch on the way home.

When chef Ashley McCarthy knew of our farm visit, to our great pleasure he agreed to source some High Callis organic lamb and serve it as part of the lunch. He created a 'Trio of High Callis Lamb' featuring a mini Shepherds Pie, Roasted Rack and Toad in the Hole with a minted lamb sausage. It was an imaginative use of the lamb from the farm, which everyone agreed was an extraordinary extension of the range of flavours and textures that could be achieved from the basic raw material. The very positive feedback we gave Ashley was such that he included the new dish in his cooking demonstrations at the subsequent York Food Festival. Since awarded the title 'Yorkshire Pub of the Year' by the region's tourist authority and Yorkshire Life's 'Traditional Pub of the Year' 2009, Ashley and Kelly McCarthy's Old Sun Inn is definitely a shining star.

Our Editor stresses that when we write about events we should be as objective as possible, the 'warts and all' approach. As my wine glass is always half full I am careful not to be too free with praise. But in our brief half day event we experienced a perfect combination – commitment to the highest standards of food production and cooking at its best. Truly, deliciously, Yorkshire.

Tim Gittins





Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire Branch

Invite you to **LIVERPOOL**

For the EAC Regional Festival 2011

The Society's oldest branch (established in 1934) will host a

MERSEYSIDE & NORTH WALES FESTIVAL

based in Liverpool from 14th to 19th June 2011.



Liverpool, the historic English Maritime City, is a World Heritage Site and became European Capital of Culture in 2008. It has a number of world class museums and art galleries as well as theatres. The architecture is outstanding, with more listed buildings than any other UK city outside London. It is home to two iconic Cathedrals and two Universities*.

Liverpool is in the centre of England's Golf Coast, it is home to three of the top 20, and seven of the top 36 courses in the UK and Ireland. Located on some of the most naturally beautiful coastline in Britain, three of the courses - Royal Birkdale, Liverpool and Lytham & St Annes have hosted the Open Championship no fewer than 29 times since 1897.

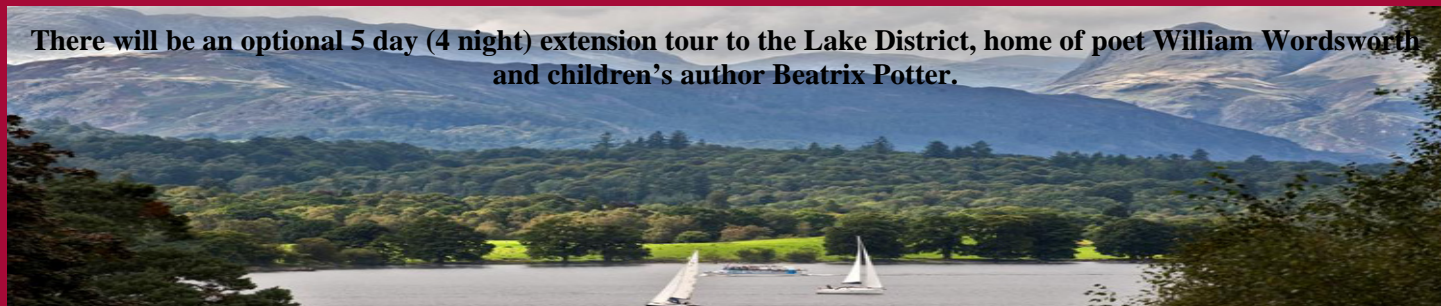
The program will be based on the Hope Street Hotel, positioned midway between the two Cathedrals and opposite the Philharmonic Hall, home to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Liverpool boasts a large number of alternative hotels to accommodate all pockets.

We have spectacular settings to take pleasure in the food of the Duchy of Lancashire, the North Wales Coast and Snowdonia. We expect to include dinner in Knowsley Hall, seat of the Earls of Sefton.

Full details will be available in March 2010. Price will be in the region of £1000 - £1200 excluding accommodation. Numbers will have to be restricted due to the size of some of the venues selected. Priority will be given to members who submit an expression of interest to EAC Chairman Ron Barker (ronbarker@hotmail.co.uk) in the order they are received. A deposit of £500 will be required by 31st March 2010.

* Liverpool is also home to the Beatles and two half decent football (soccer) teams.

There will be an optional 5 day (4 night) extension tour to the Lake District, home of poet William Wordsworth and children's author Beatrix Potter.



If you have enjoyed reading this magazine and are not a member of the International Wine & Food Society why not find out more from our Membership Registrar

Katie Wilkins Tel +44 (0) 191 239 9630 e mail: eacmembership@talktalk.net (full address see page 3).

For £40 for a single member or £52 for a couple, per annum, you will receive a quarterly magazine, a membership card with a vintage chart, details of a wide range of events to attend and best of all a welcome from members in branches around the world.

Join today and find out the address of a branch near you.

Please dispose of this magazine in an 'Environmentally Friendly' manner - pass it on to a non member - they may wish to join.


EAC

Asparagus Awayday


A CELEBRATION OF ASPARAGUS

Join us in Recreating History

11/12th May 2010



In 1938 André Simon organised a trip to the Lygon Arms, in the Cotswold's village of Broadway, where members ate a luncheon based entirely on the new season asparagus. The EAC has decided to recreate this event, appropriately updated and expanded.



A reception at The Lygon Arms at 7:30pm on Tuesday 11 May 2010, will be followed by dinner, in a private room, at which the Chef will create a special menu, highlighting the local asparagus. We will be joined at dinner by Antiques Roadshow china expert Henry Sandon who will give a talk on asparagus related china, illustrated by exhibits from the Royal Worcester Museum.

On Wednesday morning there will be a coach tour of the surrounding area, visiting first The Fleece at Bretforton, a National Trust Pub. We will be told the history of the Fleece and its association with the historic asparagus auctions. From there we will take a short tour through the Vale of Evesham, visit an asparagus grower and watch an asparagus cooking demonstration. This will be followed by a two course lunch - featuring asparagus! The coach will return to The Lygon Arms at approximately 3pm. This promises to be a fascinating and unusual experience for asparagus lovers.

The cost per head for members sharing a double room will be £150. Occupants of a single room will pay £185. The payment covers the cost of bed and breakfast in the Hotel and the special dinner, including reception drinks and wines to accompany the meal. Also included is the following morning's coach tour and lunch. Please note drinks at lunch are not included, neither is the cost of any light refreshments which may be desired on the tour. The EAC very much look forward to seeing you at this special event and, as space in the hotel is limited, you are advised to book early as places will be allocated in order of receipt

To book send your name, address, phone number and email details to EAC Treasurer:-
Jim Muir, The Old School House, Llanhennock, Monmouthshire, NP18 1LT, UK
before January 31st 2010 and enclose a cheque for the full amount payable to IWFS-EAC.

There will be no refunds after the 31st March, unless places can be filled from the waiting list.

If you wish to pay by credit card a 3% handling charge will apply and you should contact:-

Jim Muir on 01633 420 278, e mail: muir112@btinternet.com

A full programme will be sent out in April to those attending but if further information is required at this stage please contact - **EAC Events Co-ordinator e mail: michael.messent@btinternet.com**

If you wish to stay extra nights the hotel has agreed to offer a DBB rate of £150 for 2 sharing a double room, payable direct. Please contact the hotel on +44 (0)1386 852255 and ask for Vicki Woodman or e mail: v.woodman@barcelo-hotels.co.uk and quote "IWFS Asparagus Event".

Please be aware that the EAC plan to hold the Annual Branch Representatives Meeting at the Lygon Arms on the afternoon of the 11th May. Full details of which will be sent out to Branch Representatives in accordance with the constitution.