

# *Food & Wine*



December 2013

The Journal of The International Wine & Food Society Europe & Africa Committee

Free to European & African Region Members - one per address - Issue 117

**EAC Trip to Norfolk**

**Armagnac**

**Pedro Ximénez -  
a case of mistaken identity**

**Venison - Scotland's Bounty**

**Golden Rice - a Wonder Food?**





## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

*Dear Members*

In my message in the September F&W I mentioned that Council had raised the possibility of changes to the relationship of the three Zones (Asia/Pacific, Americas, Europe/Africa) with IWFS Ltd. The subject was considered by the EAC (European & African Committee) when it met in November and our views will have been put before Council by the time you read this.

The second edition of international news has been issued in Grapevine and it looks interesting and worthwhile to me. However it would be helpful if members comment upon such new items, whether they do so negatively or positively. It was followed by the latest Food & Wine in September which did produce some comment about one item. If you disagree with what is written in F&W then do send a letter to the Editor for publication so that others know your views.

A forthcoming addition to the Society's web site iwfs.org will be an area where members and branches will be asked and encouraged to enter recommendations for hotels, restaurants, coffee/tea houses and general travel tips. You will be given full details of how to contribute and how to search it when it is launched in our Europe/Africa Zone.

In October some 40 of us enjoyed an excellent 2/3 night visit to North Norfolk. Some very good meals with an excellent one at a Michelin starred restaurant, plus visits which included Sandringham and two farms were, to my mind, ample justification for belonging to our Society. By the time this appears in print we shall have had, and I hope enjoyed, the events in London in memory of John Avery and our Society's 80th Anniversary. A great deal of time has been devoted to these by members of the EAC and Andrea Warren our International Administrator. Immediately following these events I shall be going to Ireland with a group that includes Yvonne Wallis (Chairman of Council and APZ), Dave Felton (Chairman of the Americas) and Ron Barker, my predecessor as Chairman of the EAC, to attend the inaugural events of a new Munster Branch. With experience of working and holidaying in Ireland I am sure it will be worth the detour!

I retire as Chairman of the EAC at the end of this year and will be succeeded by Ian Nicol of Blackpool and Fylde Coast who will join Michael Messent of Wessex as a representative of EAC on Council; they have my best wishes for the future. It has been a privilege to be your Chairman through 2013 with the help of my colleagues on the EAC and I look forward to watching the Society's progress in the years ahead. Ian takes the place on Council of Shirley Kilian who retires from it on 12th November. She leaves with our best wishes and thanks for the time she has devoted to the Society.

Please accept that each and every branch that comes under the EAC umbrella is equally important and we are only as good as our members, so in thanking you for supporting your Branch Committees and the IWFS, I ask you to continue to do so. The benefits are considerable, especially if you visit other branches in addition to your own and participate in the national and international events that are available.

*Best wishes,  
John Legg*

### **Were you born in 1933 and do you have a birthday close to October 20<sup>th</sup>?**

As we celebrate the 80th anniversary of our Society's founding on October 20th 1933 we would like to offer a prize of a bottle of champagne, to the member of our zone whose 80th birthday falls closest to October 20th 2013 or even better, upon it. There will also be a prize of a bottle of wine for the next closest. In the event of a tie the Editor will decide the winner by means of a draw. We would like to hear from you with your full birth date including the year. Anonymity is guaranteed and your entry should be sent by mail or email to Pam Brunning the Editor of Food & Wine whose contact details are alongside her Editorial.

Entries close on 31<sup>st</sup> December and the prizes awarded in January, send your entry now, lest you forget with forthcoming seasonal distractions.

*Good Luck, John Legg*

The Society was formed on 20th October 1933 in London by wine writer André L Simon and bibliophile A. J. Symons. Within a month there were 230 members. Today there are over 6,660 in 133 branches worldwide.

The Society, which is an independent non profit making organisation run by volunteers, is divided into three areas – the European & African Region, the Asian Pacific Zone and The Americas.

In André's words,

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

In the over indulgent society of the 21st century we endeavour to examine some of the excesses of the western diet and to persuade consumers of the need for quality rather than quantity in the food and drink they consume. To this end we support suppliers of quality produce worldwide.

New members are always welcome, please see page three for details.



## Editorial

Well I did cause a bit of a stir with my last editorial. I have been trying to get a letters page going since I started as Editor but to no avail then a few, in my opinion, honest observations and I have a full page. Thank you to all who wrote in, I do sincerely like to hear your views on anything food & wine related. You will find some mixed opinions in the letters on page 6 and I apologise if my views upset anyone.

With the comments in the letters in mind, I too think it is about time the Society considered supporting some educational enterprise whereby we encourage young people to learn the basic cookery skills that were available to us in our school days. I am looking into some of the schemes which are organised by our top chefs to encourage youngsters around the country to learn the basic kitchen skills. If we can find an appropriate venture, branches will then, if they wish, be able to support such a project.

With 2013 nearly over I look forward to a new year and hopefully a new dawn-ing. I now know I have something in common with the Queen, 2013 was truly my annus horribilis.

Lunching by the Thames the other day I see there are now notices telling people not to feed the ducks, apparently they are getting too fat and can hardly waddle. Are we now turning our birds into fast food junkies? We have trees and shrubs in the garden dripping with berries and hips but where are the birds to eat them? I will tell you, they are in every other garden around us feasting on bread, peanuts and fat balls. Our moorhens are getting so fat that it is becoming quite an effort for them to fly over the hedge into the neighbour's garden to get their fix of carbs. Even the birds today are into ready meals!

No ready meals in the issue but we do have a plum pudding recipe, which I suppose you could call a ready meal, if you haven't started getting ready for Christmas, now is the time.

Member Geoff James has written a book on Armagnac and he tells us of his love of the spirit.

Our branch held a very interesting tasting of Pedro Ximénez wines last month and I thought it would be fascinating to hear an expert opinion of PX's. Head of wine and spirit buying at Waitrose, Pierpaolo Petrassi, has kindly offered an explanation of the origins of this fascinating grape.

With Christmas meats in mind Dick Playfair, who is a director of the Venison Advisory Service, tells us a little of the venison trade in the UK and Judy Ridgway shares with us two of Jeffery Benson's recipes from her new book, 'Remarkable Recipes'. Another member contributing is Andrew Brodie who selected ten wines for his 'Desert Island Wines'.

The EAC trip to Norfolk is described in a report from Valerie Hall who is mentioned in dispatches later, recognising her hard work for the Manchester branch.

We are taking another look at that endlessly controversial subject GM with an article on, what has been claimed to be, a wonder food, Golden Rice.

Reading Money Week recently, in their 'How to Spend It' section, I came across a photo of Little Hedgecourt, André's home of 50 years. It is on the market, (no 'Little' any more), for £2.25 million. If anyone is interested in a little bit of IWFS history in this 80th year, on the back cover André gives you an insight into life in those days.

I do hope you all have a good Christmas and a satisfying 2014.

*Best wishes*

*Pam Brunning*

## Food & Wine

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& Food Society  
European & African Region

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## Armagnac

**Geoff James**, after being interested in wine for most of his adult life, and spirits, whisky brandy etc. in latter years, decided some five years ago to write the occasional article for various magazines. These appeared to be well received. In late 2011 after a trip to the Armagnac region where he quickly realized there was a major gap in the market for English language guides, he embarked upon his first book. ‘A Life Lovers Guide to Armagnac’ was published in August 2013. The guide is available on line at [www.armagnacguide.com](http://www.armagnacguide.com) U.K. Price £13.95 + £3.00 P&P Europe 15€ + 5€ P&P



## Pedro Ximénez

**Pierpaolo Petrassi** was born in London of Italian parents and holds dual Italian & British citizenship. He followed his father into the wine industry in 1983 and having worked for the Carnevale Group, International Wine Services, WaverleyTBS & Tesco, he is now Head of Buying for Beers, Wines, Spirits & Tobacco at Waitrose. Pierpaolo was the first Italian to become a Master of Wine, having worked with Italian wine throughout his career and having lectured and spoken on Italian wine over three decades. He lives in Windsor, Berkshire with his wife Astrid and children Jessica, Oliver, Luca, Charlotte & Daniel.



## Venison

**Dick Playfair** is secretary of the Scottish Venison Partnership, secretary of Lowland Deer Network Scotland, a member of the Association of Deer Management Group’s executive committee and Scottish Quality Wild Venison’s technical advisory committee, and a Director of the Venison Advisory Service Ltd. He is based in Edinburgh. For more information about deer management in Scotland see the website of the Association of Deer Management Groups [www.deer-management.co.uk](http://www.deer-management.co.uk) For more information about Scottish venison, recipes, and where to buy, eat and enjoy it see the Scottish Venison Partnership website [www.scottish-venison.info](http://www.scottish-venison.info)



## My Desert Island Wines

**Andrew Brodie** joined the Society with Janet in the early 70's, was Chairman of London Branch for 8 years and is on the EAC committee. His background was aeronautical engineering followed by computing and a car business. He retired (!) 14 years ago remaining ‘financially’ active. Restoring an ex RAF Lightning XS422 to flight is amongst his hobbies, which include classic car rallying, being a Citroen anorak and organising events for IWFS. He edited a well reviewed travel adventure book ‘An Omelette & Three Glasses of Wine’ Available from [www.brodie.cc](http://www.brodie.cc) IWFS members get a discount. He tries to keep the wine outflow from his cellar equal to the inflow.



## Dear Members

London is playing host to the IWFS **AGM** on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013 which as I write is just a week away. Last year, members were enjoying the wonderful hospitality of Vancouver at the IWFS International Festival, courtesy of the Americas. This year the EAC have organized some wonderful dining experiences for the 170+ members heading for this capital city – a combination of grandeur and tradition and sheer culinary talent – I am sure they will not be disappointed. With the two events – the John Avery Memorial Dinner at Vintners Hall and the two 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary lunches at the Roux venues being held either side of the AGM has meant that numbers are higher than normal. However there is another event, immediately after the AGM, which is also proving to be a major attraction. That is the 2013 Andre Simon Lecture being presented by past IWFS President and eminent wine writer, critic, wine taster and auctioneer Michael Broadbent MW. I have received a number of members specifically emailing me wishing to reserve a place at this event – this doesn't happen every year!

You should by now have received, in the post, your copy of the re-designed and combined **Report & Accounts 2012 and Branch Contacts 2013\***. We trust this full colour A4 brochure with the addition of a wine article – this year's featured writer is Bob Campbell MW from New Zealand - is a welcome change to what has gone before. While the previous black and white A5 publications fulfilled their purpose it was thought something new was in order. We do hope that you will keep this document close to hand over the next year and use it to contact your fellow members around the world should you be planning a trip and would like a friendly face to say "hello" or some local knowledge on restaurants not to be missed.

\* Please note that within the notification of the AGM, page 3, Item 3 "Special Resolution" there was an error in the printed copy. As a result this "Special Resolution" has been withdrawn and will be reviewed for presentation to members at a future date.

The 2013 Vintage Card, now available for members to purchase from the IS, has also been subject to an element of re-design giving you a number of extra regions to refer to, now making this a four-drop card. You will of course receive your copy in the new year in the form of your 2014 Membership Card. The new regions are: EUROPE - South West France, Austria (white and red), England (sparkling), Germany (Mosel and Rhine), Portugal (north and south), Spain (Priorat); NORTH AMERICA - Sonoma (Pinot Noir & Chardonnay), Central Coast North (Syrah), Central Coast South (Pinot Noir and Chardonnay); AUSTRALIA – Clare Valley (Riesling), Hunter Valley and Tasmania; NEW ZEALAND – Martinborough (Pinot Noir).

When expanding a region already covered we have asked our existing consultants to help out, for which we are very grateful - namely David Furer (Austria and Germany), Richard Mayson (Portugal), James Halliday and Greg Mellick (Australia) and Bob Campbell MW (New Zealand). For new regions we have sought experts in these areas and wish to thank Britt & Per Karlsson (South West France), Mimi Avery (England, Sparkling) and Harold Heckle (Priorat and all other Spanish regions – after the sad passing of John Radford). Other new consultants this year are Elizabeth Gabay MW (Provence) and Paul Wagner (Sonoma) and we are also grateful to Ian McKenzie for his help with some of the new Australia regions. We are very pleased that we again have a member of the Avery family assisting us with our Vintage Card - Mimi Avery, John's eldest daughter. As well as being Brand Ambassador for Avey's Wine Merchants and previously their wine buyer, Mimi also passed the first year MW exams and holds the WSET diploma, so is more than qualified to help in our exciting new addition of English sparkling wine. Some of you may recall that this is not Mimi's first involvement with the Vintage Card as she used to put the Card together during her time working at the International Secretariat from 1994-1999 and we are very honoured to have her back on board in this very different role.



**Mimi Avery**

More details on our consultants, who are now also listed on the Card (as the result of a suggestion from a member), can also be found on the IWFS website [www.iwfs.org](http://www.iwfs.org).

Special prices are available for members and they are the perfect gift to include in your seasonal message to family, friends or colleagues.

## 2013 Vintage Cards

Quantity	Non-members price	Members' price	Members' Price per card
12	£26.76	£24.00	£2.00
25	£53.00	£47.75	£1.91
50	£101.00	£91.00	£1.82
75	£147.00	£132.00	£1.76
100	£191.00	£172.00	£1.72

Prices include postage and packing



**Best wishes**  
**Andrea Warren**



# Readers Letters



Dear Editor,

I enjoy my copy of Food & Wine on a regular basis, and compliment you on a vast improvement to its format and readability over the past couple of years. Articles are frequently educational, occasionally enjoyably idiosyncratic, but rarely cause for controversy. Given the diversity of backgrounds, and doubtless also of political views of the membership, I believe that this balance represents a happy medium.

I was, therefore, genuinely shocked by the stridency of the editorial comments in the September issue, which labelled the 350,000 in this country using food banks as being characterised by ignorance and idleness. Like many, I believe that the decline of traditional "home economics" in schools has ill-equipped a large number of people for the realities of straitened economic times. I would, however, respectfully question whether it is appropriate (or even correct) to make the assumption that those in the position for whatever reason of using a food bank are inherently lazy.

I suspect that many of our members are in the fortunate position of being able to enjoy on a regular basis a bottle of wine which costs the same or more than the £7 on which some are obliged to feed themselves for a week. In this context, I would suggest that it is more appropriate for the Society to continue to support and argue for the promotion of food education, to the benefit of all, rather than risk being accused of descending to what some might see as tabloid-style politics.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Harrison, West Yorkshire Branch

Dear Editor

Re. September Editorial

Congratulations on the most sensible article I have read in years. It deserves to be published more widely in the national press. I was brought up on the principle - 'If you haven't got the money you can't have it' !!!

Yours Sincerely

Robert Sykes, Capital Branch

Dear Editor

In the Comprehensive School at which I taught all 14 year-olds had to do IT, Woodwork, Metalwork, Needlework and Home Economics –Cookery- in rotation. Then the Government demolished all that and the kitchens were ripped out. Therefore after that those generations of children are now the parents who were NOT taught to cook, unless of course THEIR parents taught them. Jamie Oliver is quite right as is Mary Berry. Delia Smith also made that clear. That is why people eat fast foods and take-aways. Bring back basic skills and then we won't need food banks.

Yours sincerely

Helen Mills, Chairman Surrey Hills

Dear Editor,

I thoroughly enjoyed reading your latest forthright editorial and couldn't agree more about ignorance of basic cooking and laziness being major factors in the perceived "need" for food banks.

There are many people in this society who seem to think and expect others to look after them and provide for them. I am all in favour of helping those who simply are unable to help themselves, but those who are unwilling need to stand on their own feet.

Of course the definition of poverty changes with the threshold rising every year, but my benchmark is my own childhood when we were genuinely poor and lived on bread, cabbage, carrots and the occasional luxury of sausages the fat of which provided dripping for cooking or dipping our bread into. We rarely had chicken, but as you said, it provided several meals when we did.

Social security payments provide enough for most people to manage on, not luxuriously but just adequately. However, some recipients seem to be able to afford more than adequate supplies of alcohol and cigarettes, not to mention 40 inch plasma TVs, modern computers, holidays and decent cars. These are not merely dubious tabloid claims, I have seen these things with my own eyes.

There is currently a Jamie Oliver TV series in which he shows how to cook nutritious and tasty meals for around £1.20 a head so you are not alone, madam editor, in recognising that the answer is more in education and effort than in free food.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Joyson, Surrey Hills Branch

Dear Editor,

I write to express concern about the comments in the last editorial that the poor are simply ignorant and lazy and that food banks are unnecessary. Such comments and the associated text were sneering, inaccurate and offered sweeping generalisations which were unworthy of a mature publication.

If the IWFS wishes to be considered as a serious organisation and live up to its expressed aims, then editorials should be accurate and impartial providing a balanced view rather than supporting individual's prejudices.

In an attempt to redress that partiality I would commend members attention to the recent report "Walking the Breadline" commissioned by OXFAM and Church Action on Poverty (available on both websites) which gives a stark picture of actual poverty in Britain in 2014.

Alternatively for a more personal view of food poverty go to the [agirlcalledJack.com](http://agirlcalledJack.com) website which won this year's Fortnum and Mason award for 'inspiring and encouraging people to explore, enjoy and experiment with food' - seems to be in full accord with Andre Simon's views!

Ian Edmunds



## IW&FS Members are being offered a unique opportunity to gain a Wine And Spirit Education Trust (WSET) Level 2 - Intermediate Certificate

In 2013 London Branch Members were offered the opportunity to take a course leading to this internationally recognised qualification. We were surprised and delighted that 11 members put themselves forward and 10 of them gained a Distinction and 1 a Merit. See report on page 37.

**In 2014 we are extending this offer to IWFS Members outside London, as well as our own Branch Members.**

We can do this because our Chairman, Jeffrey Benson is an approved programme provider and examiner for WSET. He is offering a unique 1-day intensive seminar culminating in the 1-hour multiple choice examination. Normally WSET themselves, and others, offer this course as a 6-week series of once-a-week classes..

The syllabus is wide ranging, focusing on the influences of grape variety, climate and wine making styles around the world. This is a good starting point for the exploration of the diversity wine styles available. The content of the course not only covers grape varieties and regions but also the red, white, rose, sparkling, sweet and fortified wines that they produce, and introduces the subject of spirits and wine and food pairing as well as basic wine tasting techniques. It gives a solid base of knowledge of wines and spirits, is aimed at wine enthusiasts who wish to acquire in-depth knowledge of wines and spirits and want an internationally recognised qualification. It is ideal for anyone wishing to be introduced to wine and spirits in an informative and structured manner and is entirely suitable for both the enthusiast and those who wish to increase their knowledge.

No formal qualifications are required. All that is needed is enthusiasm for the subject, a desire to learn more, and the commitment to study independently. By asking for early registration, we are able to supply the study packs, produced by WSET, in time to give you ample opportunity to study them. We will need to receive your booking by 31st December 2013.

Our unique one-day format makes this very suitable for out of London members. The seminar will start at 10.00 am with a one hour break for lunch. Lunch is not provided but is readily available locally. The exam will start at 4.00 pm and finish at 5.00 pm. The venue is less than 5 minutes walk from Victoria Station. The cost is £150.00 for IWFS members, £200.00 for non-members including 1-year membership of IWFS.

We would welcome immediate expressions of interest from any IWFS member interested in taking this course next year. Please contact Jeffrey Benson by email: [jeffrey.benson@iwfs.co.uk](mailto:jeffrey.benson@iwfs.co.uk) or phone on +44 20 8673 4439.

**Date: Saturday 29th March 2014; 10.00am to 5.00pm**

**Venue: Doubletree by Hilton Hotels, 2 Bridge Place, London SW1 1QA (nearest tube Victoria)**

**Cost: IWFS Members £150.00 Non-Members £200.00**

## Grumpy Old Gourmet!

Do you believe some foods have an aphrodisiac effect?

For centuries, certain foods and substances have been rumoured to have aphrodisiac properties. By definition, an aphrodisiac, named for the goddess Aphrodite, is a food, drink, or substance that increases ones libido. How do these foods accomplish that task? They may reduce stress, increase blood flow or positively affect neurotransmitters, all of these effects can improve desire. The list of aphrodisiac food is endless, chillies to chocolate and lobsters to oysters.

My first experience of oysters was not because of some sexual desire but simply because my parents wouldn't buy them for me. So as not to live in ignorance, I saved up my pocket money and ventured into an Oyster Bar on Ilford Broadway. I requested one oyster and the chap behind the bar gave me a funny look, but took my money and passed over a small round mollusc. When I asked how to eat it I was told very sharply that I could chew it or swallow it. I tried chewing but it was tough with little flavour so, much to the amusement of the barman I swallowed the rest. That was it, that was my pocket money gone. I decided the experience was a bit like having bad cold, certainly no aphrodisiac properties there, yet I have seen people getting very excited over a bowl of oysters'. The only way I like them, to this day, is in the concentrated flavour of smoked oysters.

Recently in a restaurant I watched a couple, in their mid thirties, tackling a very small lobster each. They picked every scrap of flesh off the poor little things while he downed a glass of Prosecco and she sipped hers hesitantly. The lobster did the trick, they left without ordering a dessert entwined in each others arms. I wonder why lobster doesn't affect my wife that way.

I read crocin an ingredient of saffron, increases the libido of male rats unfortunately I don't like the flavour of saffron, it tastes like chlorine to me.

The headlines do talk of the 'Viagra effect' from a daily glass of pomegranate juice. A study shows it boosts our sexual desire and it was found that men and women who drank a daily glass of the fruit's juice had a surge in testosterone levels. As a side effect this acclaimed superfood can help raise mood and memory. I wondered why I am given pomegranate juice instead of orange juice in the morning these days, maybe it's not all in the mind!





# EAC Trip to Norfolk

## 8-11<sup>th</sup> October 2013

### Valerie Hall Reminisces

#### Photos by Ron Barker

We arrived at Titchfield Manor on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October for a three day stay, on what was probably the last warm day of the summer. In the evening we were introduced to some Greek wines by Steve Daniel, the buyer for Novum Wines. This was a revelation to me, as I haven't been to Greece for a very long time and the only wines we had were either Domestica or Retsina, both of which were pretty awful. I didn't realise how much the Greek wines had moved on, and enjoyed the 4 red and 4 white we tried. Of the white, the one most people preferred was the Notios White Moschofilero/ Roditis Peloponnese Gaia Wines, Nemea 2012, and of the red, Estate Red Assyrtiko, Gaia Wines, Nemea 2008. David Chapman will write about the wines separately, as he is very knowledgeable, and I am not! Dinner was served in the hotel restaurant, starting with 40° Loch Duart Salmon, crab apple (cut to look like peas), and cucumber – all excellent, and served with Terroir de Picpoul de Pinet 2012, Languedoc. This wine was also served with the next course of Fillet of Cod, carrot, sea buckthorn and cobnut. The nuts added a crunch to an otherwise bland dish. The main course was Norfolk Lamb Provencal, mugwort and BBQ smoked tomato. There was also a separate small amount of very crisp lamb fat, which again added some crunch. Château de Campuget 1753 Syrah 2010 AC Costieres de Nimes accompanied this course

The sweet was Lavender Cheesecake, raspberries, raspberry sorbet and Hobnobs, all of which were delicious, especially when the Essential Orange Muscat 2010, Quady Winery, California was served with it.

There was a decided drop in temperature on Wednesday, when we had a relatively early start for our trip round the house at Sandringham. We were having our tour before the general public was admitted, so we had the guides' full attention. It was very interesting, as it was more like a home than Buckingham Palace is. Outside were sweeping lawns, with magnificent mature trees of virtually every kind. Inside were many portraits, family photographs and some superb bronzes. Our guide was very informative, which added a lot to the enjoyment of the tour.

Afterwards we had a light lunch at the Victoria Arms in Holkham, which just fitted the bill, bearing in mind we were to have a big dinner in the evening. The goat's cheese salad was probably the best I have ever had, followed by Fillet of sea bass, sautéed potatoes, chorizo, squid and sauce vierge. A choice of Stony Bank Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand, or Navardia, Bodegas Bagordi, Rioja, Spain, was offered with the meal. We then went to Burnham Market, to stroll round or shop, depending on preference, then back to the hotel to change for dinner.

#### Sandringham Gardens







### The Dinner at Morston Hall

This was a black tie affair – and let's face it, there isn't a man who doesn't look good in a black tie, so that raised the tone immediately! The sparkling wine aperitif had canapés served with it. The menu was a 7 course tasting menu, and the chef, Galton Blackiston was there to oversee it all.

The first course, a Chestnut Soup with Rosemary oil was absolutely superb, this was followed by sage roasted celeriac with truffle purée. I have never had celeriac cooked like this before, it was delicious. The next course of farmed rabbit with camomile, carrot and Tunworth cheese was not as tasty as I expected and the North Sea Cod with warm egg yolk dressing and Pork puff granola was just as bland. After that, there was Norfolk shot partridge, étuvée cabbage, damson purée and confit potato. I enjoyed this particularly as partridge is my favourite game bird. The Rice Pudding with warm doughnut was not what I was expecting, as the rice was puréed, and a pale yellow but tasted good. The final course was Morston Hall Style Eton mess, with hedgerow blackberry sorbet, or British cheeses with home-made biscuits and sultana & walnut bread. As far as I could see, most people opted for the Eton mess, which was a good choice as it was mouth-wateringly good. Coffee and petits fours followed.

The wines were Domaine Andre Dezart, Sancerre Sauvignon Blanc 2012, Loire valley, France, and Domaine Andre Dezart, Sancerre Pinot Noir 2012, Loire valley, France. We were all feeling very replete as we returned to Titchwell Manor.



On Thursday, the wind was so strong, one could hardly stand up, and the temperature had dropped even further. The visit to Mrs Temple's Farm was rather spoiled by this, as it also started to rain. We were told how the feed for the cows was changed exactly, to give different flavours to the milk, and therefore the cheeses. They make hard, soft and blue cheeses which we were able to taste and it was good to see English cheeses being made in such variety. Mr Temple, who gave the talk, was well-travelled and knowledgeable and spoke well, giving the background to the beginnings of their cheese manufacture.

We then proceeded to The Real Ale Shop, 'Where Real Norfolk Ale Returns to it's Barley Roots', and there is a Micro-Maltings adjacent to the shop. Many types of beer were available in bottles, ranging from low alcohol to the strong 'Nelson's Blood', which had rum in it, supposedly because Nelson's body was preserved in rum immediately after he died, and the sailors didn't want it to be thrown away when his body was removed so added it to their ale. Again, the owner spoke very well and was very amusing.

Our next stop was the White Horse, in Blakeney, where we had lunch. Whiskey cured Gravavlax with beetroot jelly, horseradish crisp and watercress, started us off, after which was Rack of lamb, with braised lamb shoulder croquette, squash purée and elderberry jus. The wines were a choice of a white Rioja, Vallobera or Malbec from Gouguenheim, Argentina. I found the lamb rather fatty, which spoiled it for me.

The plan was to visit Holt, but as the weather was so atrocious, we were happy to be driven round the lovely Norfolk countryside, with the driver pointing out places of interest, and then back to the hotel, where we were to have dinner. This started with Norfolk quail, porridge, charred leek and hay oil. This varied, as mine was excellent, but the lady next to me had a quail that was virtually raw, and she couldn't eat it. Fish pie was next, with the fish and it's sauce in the bottom of the dish, with Parmesan croquettes laid on top, served with sides of mushy peas and broccoli with walnut. Different!.

The pudding was 'Variations of Strawberry' balsamic and white chocolate, which was good. A selection of four Mrs Temple's cheeses was followed by coffee.

The wines were Malvasia Kozlovic 2012, Istria, Croatia, and Dogajolo IGT Toscana Rosso 2011, Carpineto, Toscana, Italy, neither of which I knew, but went well with the dishes.

The dinner concluded a very enjoyable three days, excellently organised by Michael Messent, for which we thank him. Such events take an awful lot of work and organisation and this was much appreciated by all who attended.

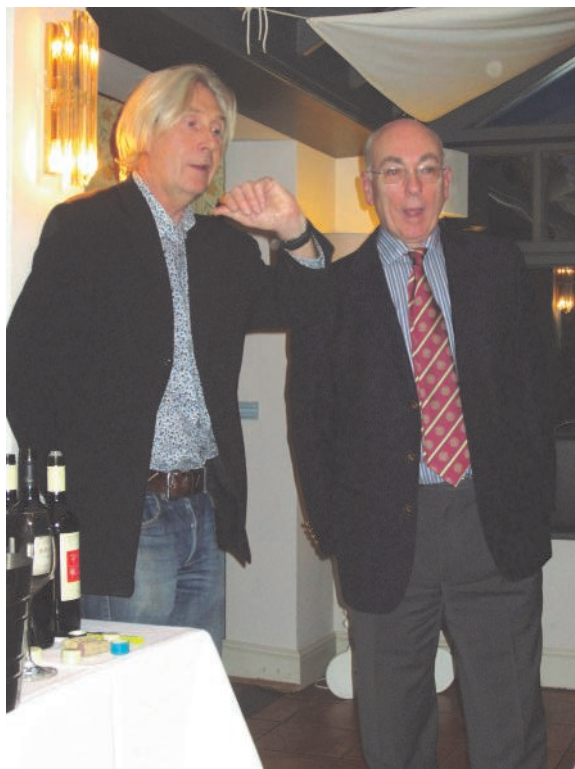
### Mrs Temple's Cheeses



### The Real Ale Shop







Event organiser **Michael Messent**, welcomes **Steve Daniel of Hallgarten Druitt**.

# 'It Was All Greek To Me', says David Chapman

**A**s an apéritif, members attending the visit to North Norfolk were welcomed by a tasting of Greek wines. Most of those at the event lacked any significant knowledge of the subject but were willing to learn. Our tutor was Steve Daniel of London wine merchants Hallgarten Druitt. He had assembled what proved to be a most interesting tasting of 6 white then 6 red wines. Those members who recalled the doubtful pleasures of Retsina wines were delighted with these. Greece is one of the original birth places of the vine and of wine. It has some grape varieties unknown to the rest of the world. The wines derive interesting flavours from the soils many of which have volcanic influences. Steve sped us through the historical context up to the more re-

cent times when EU money has enabled wine to become a more widely sold and drunk product. There have been new wineries and experimentation with vine varieties and soil types.

The ball started rolling with a dry white wine from the Peloponnese made from a blending of the Moschofilero and Roditis grapes. Very pale and bright, it was closed on the nose but with a fresh apple note and was dry on the palate. Whilst I thought it had a slight spritz, it was generally enjoyed. We moved on to a wine from the north-eastern town of Epanomi in Thessalonika made from a grape which had nearly become extinct namely Malagousia. The juice is in part fermented in new French oak and is all matured thereafter on the lees with battonage. Again pale in colour, it had notes of lemon on the nose, no doubt from the oak contact, and had a fresh acidic (pleasantly so) flavour on the palate with a very long finish. The third white was looked forward to greatly by your correspondent who has read much praise of the grape, Assyrtiko, and the origin, the volcanic island of Santorini. Whilst pale and bright in colour, it had a touch of richness on the nose which carried on into the palate but with a streak of acidity giving it a good balance. Again a long finish. 35% of the fermentation is carried out in oak and 15% in acacia casks using only wild yeasts. Last but not least came a blend of Sauvignon Blanc (60%) with Assyrtiko (40%). There were noticeable flowery notes on the nose which also came through on palate with a degree of rich substance balanced with the acidity of the sauvignon. A very long and pleasant finish.

On to the reds starting with the white Peloponnese estate's Notios Red. It had a pale colour with slight violet notes and a plummy nose. Whilst it was sweetish on the mid-palate, some good fresh acidity came out at the end and into the (good) finish. This taster did not find the oak effect from the 45 days of maturation in large new French oak casks. We progressed to a red from the same Macedonian estate as provided the white Malagousia. A deeper colour here with raspberries on the nose. A wine made in 2006 from a blend of 3 varieties, it had been fermented in small oak tanks followed by malolactic fermentation in new barriques where the wine was left to mature over 18 months. This was a "big" wine on the palate but not at all rustic. There were nice tannins and good acidity. Our third offering was from the cool highlands near to the north-western town of Amyndeon. The writer found this somewhat disappointing. The damson notes on the nose did not show in the palate, indeed, it seemed to lack fruit and acidity in the main components of the finish. Finally a wine from Nemea, an ancient site in the north-eastern part of the Peloponnese made from another of the historic grape varieties, Agioritiko. This single estate's hand-picked grapes were cold soaked and macerated for a lengthy period following which the wine was matured in French oak for about 15 months. Showing a medium colour it was full and rich on the palate with a very satisfying long finish.

All-in-all a very enjoyable and educational experience.



# Pedro Ximénez – a case of mistaken identity

## By Pierpaolo Petrassi MW, Head of Buying - Waitrose

**Pedro Ximénez** (affectionately abbreviated by wine lovers to PX), is the name of a white grape grown in Southern Spain which is made into an intensely sweet, dark, fortified wine. Pedro Ximénez, is also the name of a white variety grown in South America (often also called Pedro Jiménez in Chile and Pedro Giménez in Argentina), producing large volumes of a quaffable semi-aromatic dry white wine. On the basis of their names, the temptation would be to think that these two varieties are cousins, or at least share a distant ancestor, but all ampelographic evidence would seem to indicate otherwise.

A vivid imagination may have played a part in the story that the Pedro Ximénez grape originated in the Canary Islands before being taken to the Rhine. PX then apparently travelled to Southern Spain in the baggage of a German marine called Pedro Ximénez (or Pieter Siemens), serving in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Navy. Whilst the Northern European leg of the grape's journey seems implausible, the Canary Island origins may hold some truth as several Moorish varieties were probably introduced into Europe through this trade route.

So how did the South American variety come to be called the same (or similar) name? Of the many possible theories which exist, I am probably most persuaded by an unusual one - so unusual it could just be true. This theory presumes Pedro Ximénez to be a 'backronym'. 'What's a backronym?' I hear you ask. Allow me to explain. As a workhorse variety, it would have often been used to make Mass wine and there could therefore be a connection with the ancient Christian Chi-Rho symbol representing Christ. The PX symbol has commonly featured on the Communion wafer or Host. It is one of the earliest forms of Christogram and is formed by superimposing the first two (capital) letters 'chi' and 'rho' from the Greek word "Χριστός" (meaning Christ) in such a way to produce the monogram. As a grape which commonly produced Mass Wine, it could have acquired a name to fit the PX acronym.

We'll probably never know the true reason, but this is at least a plausible explanation which also makes for a good dinner party anecdote.

Spanish PX is truly one of the wine world's hidden gems. Long considered poor cousins to sherry, the wines of Malaga and Montilla are made by drying the PX grapes under the hot Spanish sun, thereby concentrating the sweetness. The raisined berries are then pressed to yield a thick, brown juice before being fortified and aged in a classic Solera. As one would expect, a wine whose viscosity makes it almost impossible to swirl in the glass (and therefore easy to pick in a blind tasting!), packs amazing texture, with overt notes of molasses, fig compote and Christmas pudding. However, for me, PX is at its debauched best when simply drizzled over ice cream.



**Christian Chi-Rho on a 5th-century marble table, Quiroga, Galicia.**

**RECOMMENDED PXs** - Gonzalez Byass Noe Pedro Ximénez Viejo VORS (£19.99 for 37.5cl)

Harvey's Pedro Ximénez VORS (£21.99 for 50cl) – both available at most Waitrose or [www.waitrose.com](http://www.waitrose.com)

### 'What is in a Name?'

Capital Branch devised a tasting around these interesting grapes, Pedro Jimenéz/ Pedro Ximénez. To enjoy a rounded lunch we decided to first try the whites from Chile with a main course of salmon en papillote with ribbon courgettes and new potatoes, the wines matched well. We then moved on to four rich luscious PX from Spain accompanied by ripe, soft cheeses followed by a lemon crunch dessert and a very dark rich chocolate torte with vanilla ice cream, just in case anyone felt a need to debauch the offerings.

The event was limited to 14 members as all the PX except one was 50cl. I did say that if we were over subscribed we could do it all again in the New Year but fortunately we weren't. It was extremely interesting but for me defiantly a one off experience.

**Dr Bernard Lamb has kindly offered to share his tasting notes with us:** "Here are my

comments on the wines, noting that I am a very generous marker. Marks are out of 10, not to be confused with alcohol level.

**Mayu, Pedro Ximenez, Elqui Valley 2011, Chile.** Straw, lowish bouquet, 13% alcohol. Good acid. Refreshing, not exciting. 6.5/10. £7, Asda.

**Coquimbo, Pedro Jimenez 2012, Chile.** Darker straw. 13.5% alc. Bigger bouquet, stoned fruits. Good flavour. High acidity - needs food. Generally popular. 8/10. Only £3-99 from Lidl

**Gran Barquero Montilla Morales Pedro Ximenez .** Not fortified. 15%. Deep amber with some black/dark mahogany. Big legs. Big rich bouquet Big body. Very sweet, slightly cloying. Delicious! Dried fruit flavours. At £7-99 (500 ml, end of line, reduced) from Waitrose, it was excellent value and many liked it best of all the wines. 9/10.

**Sainsbury's 'Taste the Difference', PX 12 year old sherry.** 18% alc. Deep amber with brownish black. Legs. Lovely rich bouquet. Huge body, even more than the previous wine. Burnt flavour; powerful. 8.8/10. £7-99.

**Barbadillo. PX.** Mid-amber. 19%. Big legs. Good bouquet. but not big. Very sweet but with high balancing acidity. Good length and flavour. Some thought it went well with the chocolate pudding. 8.5/10. £10-49, Auriol Wines Hartley Witney.

**Harvey's PX, More than 30 year old. Solera founded in 1919.** 16%. Big legs. Dark amber. Rich, deep, concentrated bouquet, and flavour. Heavy, sweet but not cloying. Easily the biggest wine, tending to dominate the food. 9/10. £21-50, Waitrose". **Dr Bernard Lamb**

My personal favourite was the unfortified Gran Barquero Montilla Morales Pedro Ximenez, from Waitrose. To me it seemed slightly lighter in character. Evidently Montilla, Andalucía, is called 'sherry's secret cousin'. Similar to sherry in strength and flavour, Montilla-Moriles wines are not easy to track down and only 10 of the 170 producers export their nectar.

**Pam Brunning, Capital Branch Chairman**





# Armagnac – By Geoff James



## “the spirit with forty virtues”

ARMAGNAC - an appraisal by the 14th Century Cardinal Prior Vital Du Four -

*“It makes disappear redness and burning of the eyes, and stops them from tearing; it cures hepatitis, sober consumption adhering. It cures gout, cankers, and fistula by ingestion; restores the paralysed member by massage; and heals wounds of the skin by application. It enlivens the spirit, partaken in moderation, recalls the past to memory, renders men joyous, preserves youth and retards senility. And when retained in the mouth, it loosens the tongue and emboldens the wit, if someone timid from time to time himself permits.”*

**A**rmagnac. A name that many people know but, in my experience, something that very few people know a lot about. This was certainly the case for me in Autumn 2011 when, after a trip to Toulouse, my wife, Clare, and I, decided that we would visit the region.

Where exactly does it come from? Unlike, Cognac, there is no town of Armagnac so immediately there is a dilemma? Where does one go?

We very quickly realised that there was a whole world of interesting towns, Bastides and beautiful countryside that we had no knowledge of. For the first trip we decided to stay in the town of Condom. However on successive trips we found the town of Eauze was far more central, although somewhat lacking in accommodation.

The Armagnac region, a precisely defined area (some describe it as being shaped like a vine leaf), is situated in the heart of Gascogne, the loosely defined region often described as being to the South East of Bordeaux.

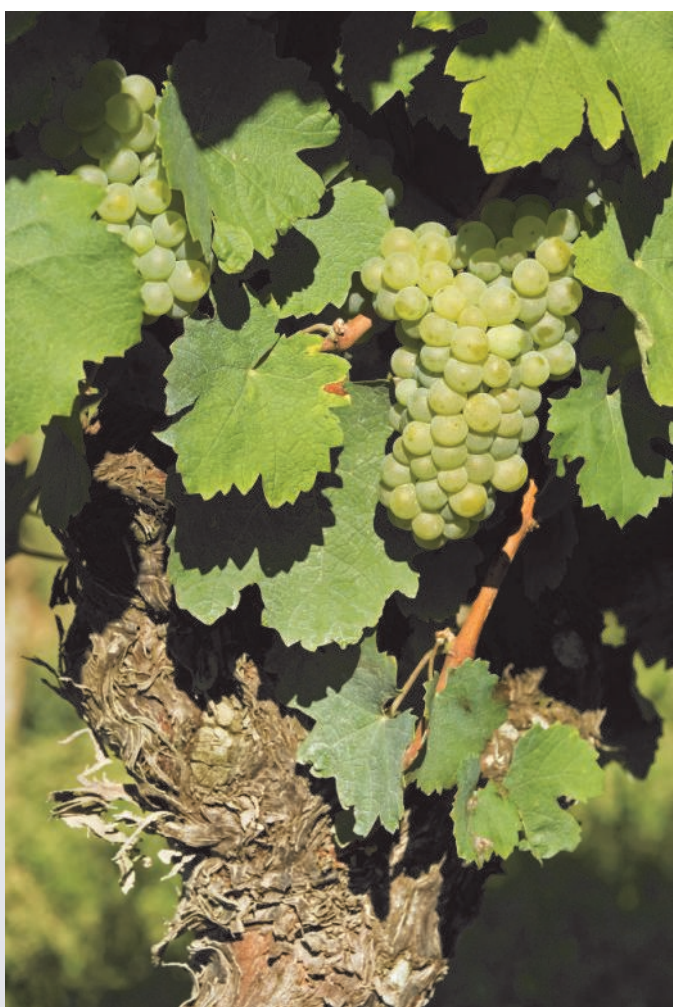
As well as the boundaries of the region being legally defined, so are the grape varieties. There are 10 in number that can be used, but in practice only 4 are planted in any quantity. Ugni blanc (also the main variety planted in Cognac) accounts for about 50 per cent of the total planting with Baco 22a, Colombard and Folle blanche making up most of the rest. There are a couple of companies with small plantings of the other varieties. Armagnac may be made from a single variety or a blend of two or more of them.

The controlling body of Armagnac is the BNIA (Bureau National Interprofessionnel D’Armagnac). It is a legal requirement for everyone producing Armagnac to be registered with this organisation. There are some 900 registered producers of Armagnac, so if you consider the total production is around 5% of that of Cognac you will start to have an understanding of how fragmented the production is. There are, of course, a few larger players such as Marquee de Montesquiou (owned by the Pernod Ricard conglomerate).

However, the bulk of the producers are relatively small family owned businesses that have been in existence for many generations.

What is Armagnac? The definition of brandy in most dictionaries is 'an alcoholic spirit made by distilling wine'. Therefore Armagnac is technically a brandy. However that is akin to saying a Ferrari is technically a car, it is of course but it is much more. You would not win too many friends in the region by referring to Armagnac as a brandy. For most people that I have met who are involved in its production or live in the region, it is a passion, a tradition, a way of life, it is a part of their heritage. In fact it becomes part of their very existence.

Armagnac is believed to be France's oldest distilled spirit and in 2010 the Armagnacais celebrated at least 700 years of the existence of their beloved beverage. The time span relates to the first known recorded reference to the spirit which is a treatise describing 40 medical benefits of the drink, written by Maitre Vital DuFour, the then bishop of Eauze in 1310. The actual work is now housed in the Vatican library.



Labelling can be confusing and the BNIA are trying to standardise the various denotations throughout the industry. Blended Armagnac is exactly as the name suggests. The constituent parts of the mix can be spirit of any age and from any of the three regions and water. The notation on the label denotes the minimum age of any Armagnac in the bottle. The following are the main definitions; VS or 3 star - a minimum of 1 year in wood; VSOP - a minimum of 4 years in wood; XO or Napoleon - a minimum of 6 years in wood, Hors d'âge - a minimum of 10 years in wood and more simplistic, 15 years on the label, for example, means any Armagnac contained in the bottle must have spent a minimum of that period in wood.

The vintages, of course, speak for themselves. The vintage stated on the label is the year in which the spirit was produced. It is interesting to note that a number of producers are now putting a label on the back of the bottle telling the consumer the date the Armagnac was taken from the cask and bottled. This is highly relevant due to the fact that the change to the spirit is almost non-existent after it is taken from the wood, so the true age of an Armagnac is really the difference between the year it was first manufactured and the time when it was bottled. →

Map courtesy of the B.N.I.A.







Why is it taken from the cask? The answer is very simple. Initially, to market the spirit at the optimum age the producer decides. However, with the older ones it is a question of practicality and legality. Once in the cask, the alcohol content reduces at somewhere between 0.5% and 2% per year depending on the conditions of the Chai (Cellar). This evaporation is known as the “Angel’s Part” (there are a lot of very happy Angels in the region)! After distillation, the spirit can be anything from 52% to 68-70%. It cannot be sold as Armagnac with less than 40% alcohol by volume. So time in the wood is a key factor.

With blended and vintage Armagnac, which are often sold at around 40-42%, but have not suffered a substantial loss of alcohol through time, these are blended with water to achieve the required strength.

There are many extremely good-blended Armagnac. Companies like Janneau, Ryst- Dupeyron, Delord, Baron de Sigognac, Darroze and many others all produce superb blends alongside their vintages. However for my personal taste, I prefer tasting the vintages, particularly the ones at natural cask strength.

Over the last couple of years researching for the guide, I have tasted and drunk some truly amazing Armagnac. The range of styles and tastes seems to go on forever. There seems to be a substantial amount of older vintages going back into the 1800’s, they are generally

very expensive. The two oldest that I have tasted were an 1893 and a 1900 both very interesting. For my palate, however, around 20 to 30 years seems to be the optimum age.

Some of the best examples I have tried have come from the chais of people such as Laberdolive; Pierre the current owners proud boast is that you will find his bottles on the shelves of every 3 star Michelin restaurant in the world. Similar can be said of Domaine Boingneres, their 1984 100% Folle Blanche is quite superb. Another absolutely stunning Armagnac is the 1987 from Chateau Laballe.

The list of these superb vintages from the areas top producers goes on, they are all superb but in many cases the price tag tends to be relatively high particularly for the older vintages. But do not be put off. If in the region, there are plenty of smaller producers with great Armagnac at less exalted cost and it can be great fun searching them out.

My journey through the Armagnac experience has introduced me to many interesting and generous spirited people, some great food, wine and of course Armagnac, beautiful countryside and an enviable un-pretentious and easy way of life, I hope yours, should you take it, will be as rewarding. ★

‘A Life Lovers Guide to Armagnac’ by Geoff James was published in August 2013. The guide is available on line at [www.armagnacguide.com](http://www.armagnacguide.com)  
U.K. Price £13.95 + £3.00 P&P Europe 15€ + 5€ P&P

# Remarkable Recipes

## From the people who really know about extra virgin olive oil – the producers by Judy Ridgway

All 76 recipes in this book come from olive growers and olive oil producers around the world because, as Judy says, “Who knows more about cooking with extra virgin olive oil? Some of the most interesting and delicious dishes I have ever eaten have been served at the tables of the olive growers and oil producers”, she comments.

The recipes are arranged in sections according to the time taken to prepare the dishes with great fast food dishes followed by quick and easy breakfasts, snacks and suppers as well as salads and cold dishes. Savoury dishes that take a little longer come next with a final section on baking with extra virgin olive oil. Some of the recipes are traditional, others are family favourites and yet others are modern creations from gifted cooks but one thing Judy is sure of is that they are all quite different to the recipes found in general cookbooks of the various regions. This e-book is available from Amazon kindle and itunes/ibookstore

Remarkable Recipes



### BLACK AND WHITE SALAD

These unusual recipes with their striking appearance come from Jeffrey Benson whose groves are set 500 metres above Lake Garda and feature local Casaliva olive trees, alongside Leccino and Pendolino trees from central Italy. The estate's olives are pressed to make Jeffrey's very special award-winning Monte Castello extra virgin olive oil. It is a beautifully delicate oil which is great to use in mayonnaise, so why not start this recipe by making a batch of your own?

#### Ingredients, Serves four

450g potatoes (waxy varieties are best)  
350g cold cooked chicken  
50g black olives  
225g black grapes  
1 ripe Granny Smith or small cooking apple, diced  
175ml mayonnaise  
Freshly ground black pepper  
50g seedless raisins  
1 bunch spring onions, sliced  
Monte Castello extra virgin olive oil

#### Method:

1. Steam or boil the scrubbed potatoes until just cooked. Then peel, cool and dice. Cut the chicken into bite-sized pieces.
2. Halve and remove the stones from the olives. Halve and remove the pips from the grapes.
3. Mix apple, potato and chicken with the mayonnaise and black pepper to taste, and spread over a large serving dish.

Arrange remaining ingredients decoratively across the top.

4. Pour over plenty of the Monte Castello olive oil just before serving.

### WARM SALAD OF ASPARAGUS AND MANGE TOUT WITH SMOKED TROUT

This makes a lovely light and delicate first course for a festive meal. The Bensons oil is lusciously nutty and goes really well with the delicate flavours in this dish.

#### Ingredients, Serves four

4 fillets smoked trout (about 250g in total)  
1 clove of garlic, peeled and chopped  
1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped  
20 spears asparagus  
150g mange tout. Rocket to serve  
150ml Monte Castello Gold extra virgin olive oil

#### Method:

1. Remove all the skin from the smoked trout and refrigerate for 10 minutes.
2. Place the garlic and onion in the base of a steamer with some water and bring to the boil. Steam the asparagus over this fresh garlic and sweet onion infused water for about 6 minutes. Add the mange tout and continue steaming until al dente.
3. Place the smoked trout in the centre of the plate, then delicately arrange the asparagus and snow peas over and around the fish. Add some rocket leaves around the side.
4. Gently drizzle the olive oil over the whole dish at the last minute in front of the guests.

**Monte Castello extra virgin olive oil are available from Fortnum & Mason in store or by mail order.**



# **Venison -**

## ***the meat that man has evolved to eat***

### ***Dick Playfair of The Scottish Venison Partnership explains a little of the venison trade today***



**U**ntil recently venison was regarded as something of a seasonal speciality, for special occasions, and expensive. But that has changed – sales of venison are climbing steadily particularly in the retail sector and not enough, whether wild or farmed, can be produced to meet the current UK market and export requirement.

Looking ahead, if Scotland (and elsewhere in the UK) is to produce enough venison to satisfy growing UK market demand then either we are going to have to change our taste and eat more roe and less red, or more of what we eat will be coming from farms and parks. The push is on in Scotland to encourage more farmers to consider diversifying into deer.

So what do the figures show? Retail sales of venison in the UK rose from £32M in 2006 to £43M in 2009, and that growth has continued. Annual UK market growth of around 25 per cent year on year has subsequently been reported, although this level of growth is not thought to be sustainable. Other reports show that Marks & Spencer sold three times as much venison in the UK in 2011 as in 2010 (all imported however), Waitrose and Asda reported sales up by a third, and other suppliers reported sales up by as much as 50 per cent. The Co-op stocked venison for the first time in 2012.

Both the London Olympics and the Jubilee saw venison sales rocket, and these figures, and sales have also increased through restaurants, food service, and independent butchers, a number of whom are now sourcing and selling their venison locally.

Figures for the amount of venison actually consumed in the UK are extremely fluid. The Scottish Venison Partnership, the body that represents

Scottish venison producers, estimates that the UK market is somewhere under 4000 tonnes per annum. Scotland currently produces around 3500 tonnes of which the majority comes from wild red deer shot on the hill, with a sizeable proportion also from smaller roe deer – although much of the roe goes for export, as does the meat from stags shot late in the season. Venison imports to the UK are probably in the region of 1,200 tonnes per annum, from New Zealand, Poland and latterly from Spain. So around a third of the venison consumed in the UK is not domestically produced – but imports have been essential as they have enabled the market to expand, and to lose some of its seasonal perceptions.

It is interesting that New Zealand produces around 22,000 tonnes of venison per annum, nearly all for export and all farmed, whereas Scotland produces less than 50 tonnes from deer farms.

The majority of venison entering the UK food chain from Scotland comes from red deer, shot on the open hill in season by stalkers. Deer in the UK have no natural predators and management of them is essential to maintain a healthy population and to protect trees, crops and the wider habitat.

Figures vary considerably, but Scotland probably has a population of between 800,000 to 900,000 deer of all species. The challenge however for the venison sector is that the national red deer cull is declining. Five years ago around 65,000 red deer were culled, but that figure has now reduced to around 57,000. This has happened for a number of reasons including the hangover from some very heavy reduction culls and hard winters, plus the deer population finding a sustainable level in many areas.



What has been deduced however is, that with the cull declining, any increase in market volume will need to be met either from imports, or from product substitution (i.e. eating roe venison instead of red) or by increasing production from Scotland's deer farming sector. The most manageable solution is to increase farmed output and Scotland has an ambitious target to be producing 1,000 additional tonnes of venison from deer farms and deer parks by 2020. However, if the market continues to grow at anything above 5 per cent per annum then imports also will need to grow in order to keep pace with demand.

Deer are 'res nullius', belonging to no one, but the responsibility for their management and the right to 'take' them lies with the owner on whose ground they are. Deer also know no boundaries and can move freely across vast swathes of ground. In Scotland a system of deer management groups (DMGs), in effect neighbouring landholdings, collaborate to manage the deer in their area. This group approach means that everyone's interests should be protected as some estates will wish to manage deer for sport whilst for others forestry or farming may be their main activity, in which case deer will be a liability. Compromise is often essential for the group to produce a workable deer management plan that meets everyone's objectives.

An essential part of the equation, the stag stalking experience in Scotland is regarded as being among the best hunting in the world – not just for the sport, but also stunning scenery, the company of a stalker who knows his craft, and other features possibly such as taking the carcass off the hill by the traditional method on the back of a pony. Stags can be shot from the start of July through to mid October, and hinds from mid October through to mid February. Hinds present a different experience for the visiting stalker – conditions will be tougher, temperatures lower, and the high ground invariably snow covered.

While the red deer cull is static, the roe cull is increasing, and Forestry Commission Scotland reports considerably more roe deer being shot in order to protect young trees particularly in the light of a significant degree of sanitation felling and future replanting because of ash dieback and other tree diseases.



© Glyn Satterley

The expansion of the venison market in the UK can be attributed to a number of factors, not least the level of publicity it receives on national and regional media – venison is frequently on Masterchef and on other mainstream cookery programmes, and venison recipes are featured regularly in the press without any prompting from the producers. The fact that venison is widely available both through retail, restaurant and catering sectors has also improved visibility. Consumers have also had the benefit of trying products such as venison sausages, burgers and pies to introduce them to the meat, and there are also excellent smoked venison products, venison chorizo and other specialities widely available – so it is no longer perceived as the meat for the elite. The best cuts will cost around £30/kilo - on a par with fillet steak.

John Fletcher, who was in the vanguard of the deer farming sector in Britain in the 1970s and is still very much involved in a consultancy capacity, sees venison as the meat that humans have evolved to eat – He says that it has not been artificially bred for centuries to produce fat, but is the meat that our ancestors ate for millennia.

Healthy eating is a major factor too in venison's popularity, and it is one of the most nutritious of all red meats – young deer have less than 2 per cent fat (less than skinless chicken) and venison is an excellent source of healthy protein. It is also a good source of iron, delivering more than any other domestic meat, and much more than vegetables, and also high in vitamins and other minerals. So it ticks many of the healthy eating boxes.

But above all else, the iconic image of the 'Monarch of the Glen' will always be one associated with wild Scottish venison as the product from an animal that has roamed all its life on the open hill. No wonder it tastes so good. ✨

For more information about deer management in Scotland see the website of the Association of Deer Management Groups [www.deer-management.co.uk](http://www.deer-management.co.uk)  
For more information about Scottish venison, recipes, and where to buy, eat and enjoy it see the Scottish Venison Partnership website [www.scottish-venison.info](http://www.scottish-venison.info)



© Nichola Fletcher



# Golden Rice - Saving the World?

by Chris Long



**I**n a recent interview for the Independent, Owen Paterson MP for North Shropshire and Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs spoke out strongly in favour of 'Golden Rice' a genetically modified strain that has been developed to contain beta-carotene a source of vitamin A. It is claimed by the producers that a single plateful can provide 60% of a child's daily requirement thereby reducing blindness and other illnesses that afflict children in developing countries. "I feel really strongly about it," Paterson told the Independent. "I think what they [opponents] do is absolutely wicked. There is no other word for it. It's just disgusting that little children are allowed to go blind and die because of a hang-up by a small number of people about this technology."

Paterson is not alone in castigating those that oppose the development of GM crops for the good of mankind. A while back a leading African academic Professor Calestous Juma, a Kenyan-born expert on sustainable development, warned that vital improvement in food production that could help to feed a rapidly expanding population in Africa, is being held back by anti-GM legislation designed to placate environmental activists in Europe. He maintains that the EU was forcibly recruiting African governments as allies in a trade war against the US. Professor Juma said. "It involved putting diplomatic pressure on African countries saying that if you produce GM crops we will not import any agricultural products from your countries".

Professor Juma went on to maintain, "Europe didn't want to see GM material entering from Africa when it was saying 'No' to North American GM products, so Europe then pressured African countries not to grow GM crops. It was to the great detriment of Africa."

Professor Juma, who holds a chair in international development at Harvard University, is a former executive secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and founding secretary of the African Centre for Technology Studies in Nairobi.

In June this year he was awarded an honorary doctorate at McGill University, Montreal. In his acceptance speech he sternly criticised Europe for its position on GM technology and for their part in impeding its development throughout Africa.

It is now 17 years since the first commercial release of GM crops in North America and last year the value of GM crops grown in developing countries outstripped industrialised nations' crops. Yet, of the 28 countries growing GM crops, only four – South Africa, Burkina Faso, Egypt and Sudan – are in Africa, Professor Juma, told his audience.

In October 'Scientific American' accused Greenpeace and other anti-GM organisations of using "misinformation and hysteria" to delay its introduction of Golden Rice, while a group of scientists, including Martin Rees the former president of the Royal Society – have backed calls for it to be commercialised but scientists have said that as yet it is not a commercial proposition.

As far as golden rice is concerned it seems Mr Paterson is a little premature in his outburst in the Independent. When golden rice was developed in Switzerland by Igor Potrykus, a biologist at the Institute for Plant Sciences, and Peter Beyer, of the University of Freiburg, Germany it was hoped that it could be made freely available to poor farmers. Their goal was to produce a fortified food to be grown and consumed in areas with a shortage of dietary vitamin A, a deficiency which is estimated to kill 670,000 children under 5 each year and cause irreversible blindness in millions more. Their idea ran

into problems when it was tested on Chinese children with mixed results and without the necessary approvals. The first samples grown were found to be low in vitamin A.

In June 2005 Peter Beyer received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to further improve golden rice by increasing the levels of, or the bioavailability of, pro-vitamin A, vitamin E, iron, and zinc, and to improve protein quality through genetic modification.

In 2009, research results of a clinical trial of golden rice with adult volunteers from the USA, was published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. It concluded that, "beta-carotene derived from golden rice is effectively converted to vitamin A in humans". In a summary of the research the American Society for Nutrition suggests the implications of the research are that, "Golden rice could probably supply 50% of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of vitamin A from a very modest amount — perhaps a cup — of rice, if consumed daily. This amount is well within the consumption habits of most young children and their mothers".

Critics of GM have raised various concerns. First was that golden rice originally did not have sufficient vitamin A. This problem was solved by the development of the new strains, however, there are still doubts about the speed at which vitamin A degrades once the plant is harvested, and how much remains after cooking. A 2009 study concluded that golden rice is effectively converted into vitamin A in humans. A 2012 study, that fed 68 children ages 6 to 8, concluded that golden rice was as good as vitamin A supplements and better than the natural beta-carotene in spinach.

But many are still not convinced by the evidence and the field trials still have a long way to go. It is not only the EU that Owen Paterson is up against but an army of GM sceptics around the world. An experimental plot of golden rice, being grown in the Philippines, was uprooted during direct action on August 8, 2013. While the action was initially attributed to 400 local farmers, it was later found to have been carried out by a group of 50 anti-GM activists. The word 'Luddites' comes to mind.





# My Desert Island Wines

## Andrew Brodie Chooses ten of the Best.



To choose ten wines is a difficult brief. Indeed, with this wine selection there are many fond memories, I consider myself very fortunate to have such wines washed up with me

I have always been fussy about my food, and have always been a bit of an old sweetie! As a youngster I had to sit in the pub and drink lemonade. With peer pressure I developed a liking for sweet cider, Autumn Gold and Westons for instance, cider with lots of flavour. Spirits remained off limits; I was very dull and no doubt remain so.

My journey into wine was started, in the early 1970's, by a door to door salesman, from Pieroth, then a smallish company selling exclusively German wines mostly from the Nahe. I have been told this way of selling is still very common in Germany.

### **Niederhauser Hermanshohle Riesling Auslese 1989 Nahe**

Traditional German wine, sweet yes, but not very sweet and with superb balance and what has now become to me a great depth of character from the Riesling grape. Outstanding, though rather unknown and by fine wine standards not exceptionally expensive, but it does have to be cellared. Having started on Nahe wines, my first foray to Germany included a visit to this area. It made me realise how small some of the named vineyards are, with very small quantities, especially Trockenbeerenauslese. I remember the shock of occupation plates visible on the cars. I used my VAT deferment number to get cases home easily, bringing back memories of my many battles with HMC&E. Evenings sipping in the sun after cooling with my home made wine chiller will be a delight.

My developing interest in wine was next expanded because the legal officer of the Queensland Government lived in the same block of flats. He was into Australian wine of the period, and had the distinct advantage of having diplomatic status, and thus all of his purchases were entirely tax free. (And the delegation was also supplied every month with a free container of 4X Castlemaine beer to help them avoid running dry). Those early Aussie wines were by today's standards often rather peculiar. He and his wife's choice in wines were very different from mine. They were also into French wines. Many of these I actively disliked. But they were kind enough to persevere and grew my interest in wine a little more.

Fortunate happenstance was my next stroke of luck. I was involved in computing and was tasked with implementing the first computerisation of the IWFS. At the time I was membership secretary of the Citroen Car Club. The IWFS treasurer of the time had just bought a new Citroen so I 'sold' him membership of the Club, in exchange for membership of the IWFS. Happy days! Janet & my induction into the IWFS resulted in us attending the Societies Young Members wine education course, given by various member luminaries.

What luck! This blew all my prejudices out of the water as I was introduced to the top wines of the world, it really encouraged me. I am so very grateful, this course made me positively keen to try better wine, and as many of the IWFS luminaries then were 'introducers' of New World Wine into the UK, this led to my current bias towards new world wines in my quest for the best wines.

### **Cave de Turkheim Gewurtztraminer 2011 Alsace 2011**

Whenever I travel, I try to find interesting wines. I have travelled to France many times but never really 'wine toured', and it shows in my lack of knowledge. On a car magazine trip I ventured to Alsace for the first time. Having to keep up the good reputation of the IWFS, I had to take the scribblers and snappers to a decent meal. It was a memorable evening, for the characterful companions, wonderful wines, and the expense. I mixed up the exchange rate in my tired brain and ended up buying some rather expensive bottles. A round of applause was all I got from my compatriots, no offer to chip in. Alsace Gewurtztraminer remains splendid and often undervalued.

### **Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2012 New Zealand South Island**

Through cars I have met many talented people, leading to visits abroad, and thus meeting further interesting people in the wine business. I went to see a chum in New Zealand (Godzone) and naturally, with help from John Avery had to go to Cloudy Bay for the then 'new' Sauvignon Blanc. This is a demonstration of the only 'new' flavour in wine of our generation, though I remember a Menetou-Salon from a hot year in the early days of my IWFS membership that was close.

### **Kistler Sonoma Mountain Chardonnay 2009 USA**

My interest in Californian wine was hustled to the fore by a London branch tasting, on this same theme of Dessert Island Wines, conducted by Geoffrey Roberts, a leading USA exponent. As he talked about the places and the wines, I dreamed of going myself, but doubted I ever would. Lo and behold, 18 months later, again thanks to a chum, I found myself there!

I have wonderful memories of California and its wine, garnered over several trips. I remember John Avery got us a visit to Swanson, a brilliant maker of Chardonnay. We sat and sipped with the owner having a pleasant 'set the world to rights' conversation. Another Chardonnay memory is arriving in Toronto by Concorde, and having scheduled my winery visits was very pleasantly surprised by the quality of Niagara peninsular wine from Cave Spring, Chateau des Charmes. At Inneskillin we arrived late and the director had to cycle back in from home to greet us!

### **Ridge Lytton Springs Zinfandel 2007 USA**

I became a member of the now defunct Zinfandel club. This was set up to showcase California wines in the UK. We had several splendid evenings with members such as Harry Waugh. I think it died as members wanted too much for nothing, but my interest in California led me to join a most memorable trip organised by Diana Patterson-Fox. We went primarily to Napa, but we were treated so well by all the wineries. At Frog's Leap, where we were given a very early morning mug of Zinfandel, and at Domain Chandon, we had dinner with unlimited fizz on the anniversary of Hiroshima with a main course of two vertically stacked spheres with a separating disc. It was such a privilege, wineries flying in Chefs to feed us, winemakers in attendance etc. We also went to a very dispirited Lytton Springs, which had just been sold to Ridge. We picked up some marvellous bargains to bring home and I got such a big head on this trip I had to be squeezed through the door on the homecoming plane.

Ridge Lytton Springs is now a little 'refined' to my taste, but it will give you an idea of the wonderful Zins available, many from Amador/Eldorado rather than the coast and Napa areas. I'd also be happy for a case of top Petite Syrah from California to wash up on the beach!

### **The Aberfeldy Tim Adams Shiraz 2008 Clare Valley, Australia**

Leaping on to Barnes Wallis's hypersonic (1966) plane, with a memory of him describing it and why it had to be, I move to Australian Shiraz.

Nowadays, my sense of smell being less acute, I tend to find Aussie Shiraz a little too hot. Good examples still shine, and with a top winemaker, new world wines are quite long lived. It brings memories of speeding through Barossa straight from metalled road to dirt at random and the fun of controlling the car..... Seeing the 'crude' concrete fermentation vats for Grange Hermitage, and remembering the friendliness of the wineries we visited.

### **BVC Peter Lehman Cabinet Sauvignon 2010 Barossa Valley, Australia**

I really like the up-front berry fruit flavours of the new world Cabinet Sauvignon, and I believe the best area of Australia for this grape is Coonawarra. Mind you, Margaret River gives it a good run for the money. I am also so impressed with California Cabernets that I think that you should search out the best you can afford.

### **Domaine de Terrebrunne Bonzeaux Chenin Blanc 1990 Loire**

Since we do not know how long I am to be isolated, it is probably a good idea to lay down a really long lived wine, hence I have no hesitation in showing one of what is reputed to be one of the best. These Loire wines last and last, and are always a joy. Memories here are of watching my team drive sedately round the Le Mans circuit on the way to our victory, and a spirited Chambres d' Hotes owner in Ingrandes who entertained us night after night. For instance 'There is light at the end of the tunnel.... It is the taxman!' I am beginning to explore more of France and this would be a good area to start with, if I get off my Island.

### **Doisy Vedrines Semillion 2007 Sauternes 13% Fr.**

I have never done a proper wine trip in France. Scandalous as this might be, I have dabbled a bit, and have even been made a Grumer de Santenay by a group who decided to honour me, very flattering. Though I do have a few bottles of French wine in the coal hole, I can't afford Grand Cru's. Fortunately I have had the luck to acquire a few bottles of Sauterne, often after IWFS tastings. I am supposedly a bit British about my Sauterne, I don't like them too sweet, and certainly I find d'Equem a bit overrated. My only visit to the area was another road trip. I had to collect a classic car from Madrid and drive it home to England. We set out from Madrid not particularly early, had a reasonable lunch in Biarritz overlooking the sea, and easily made our bed & breakfast (another fine story) in Sauternes. The following day we toured very briefly, as I had a senior introduction to Suduiraut, and good it was too.

### **Quinta do Noval Pinhao Tinta Nacional 1990 Port 19.5% Portugal**

We rarely have seriously aged port, and one of my lasting memories was after a IWFS vertical tasting of Dow's and Warre's where I had swallowed little if anything. I had to walk round the block several times to recover and had a headache! I was also at a fabulous IWFS tasting given by Michael Broadbent where he knocked off the tops of the bottle with the company's crowbar in a much practiced manner. The '13 Army & Navy house port was wonderful! Do go to Oporto. It is all within 1 sq kilometre, you can waddle about all day and you will be welcomed everywhere. P.S. the Porto trains do all stop at Vila Nova de Gaia station directly above the port houses..... ★



# 'Behold the Christmas Pudding, No, Plum Duff is of a Better Fare'



'Behold the Christmas Pudding', is the cry that always accompanies the flaming offering to the dinner table in our house, eliciting the response, 'No, Plum Duff is of a better fare'.

The Christmas pudding originated as a 14th century porridge called 'frumenty'. It was made of beef and mutton with raisins, currants, prunes, wines and spices. This would often be more like soup and was eaten as a fast-ing meal in preparation for the Christmas festivities.

By the 1590's, frumenty was slowly changing into a plum pudding, thickened with eggs, breadcrumbs and dried fruit it was given more flavour with the addition of beer and spirits. By Elizabeth I reign some pottage had prunes added, an important novelty in boiled food although they had been used in pies for some time. Dried plums became so popular that their name was synonymous with all dried fruits, so that goods containing any dried fruits now became called 'plum' cakes and 'Plum Pottage' became 'Plum Pudding'.

It became the regular Christmas dessert around 1650, and then in 1664 the Puritans banned it as a shocking custom promoting intemperance and gluttony.

In 1714, King George I re-established it as part of the Christmas meal, having tasted and enjoyed Plum Pudding.

The great Christmas and New Year feast, the annual binge for rich and poor alike, had to be prepared weeks ahead. Livestock and poultry were slaughtered and preserved in quantity in autumn as,

except for breeding stock, animals could not be fed through the winter. Mixing the meat with dried fruits and alcohol and boiling in a cloth was yet another way of preserving it until the Christmas feast.

The Christmas pottage was a thick sweet-sour meat pottage which had been handed down from Roman times. In the seventeen hundreds the advent of cheap sugar altered the whole pattern of our dining. It made bland foods sweet, harsh and bitter meats and fruit palatable. It lessened the dependence on spices and made a division into savoury

and sweet dishes. Pottage turned into two kinds of porridge pudding, a plain one for savoury dishes, and a sweet one which was the basis of the Christmas pudding

These were particularly popular in the UK because there was a plentiful supply of wood fuel and well into the seventeenth century, the 'boiled dinner' in a single cauldron was the outstanding feature of me-

dieval British cooking. Pottages were particularly suitable for this, being simmered long and slowly over the flames. For special occasions, in affluent households, these were sometimes served with a wine sauce which was reinforced with brandy this was set alight so that the pottage could be served flambéed. By Victorian times, Christmas Puddings had changed into something similar to the ones that are eaten today.

The traditional way of serving the pudding is by placing a holly sprig on top, pouring some brandy over the pudding and lighting it. In her article, "

***"On a silver dish the Christmas pudding reposed in its glory. A large football of a pudding, a piece of holly stuck in it like a triumphant flag and glorious flames of blue and red rising round it. There was a cheer and cries of 'Ooh-ah.'"***  
**The Adventure of the Christmas Pudding', by Agatha Christie**

Christmas Plum Pudding," food historian Regina Sexton states, "A flaming halo of brandy came to represent Christ's passion, while the holly stuck on top symbolized the crown of thorns."

In Ireland there are 3 special puddings made for the holidays; one for Christmas, one for New Year's and another for Twelfth Night.

The "figgy pudding" is known mainly from the Christmas carol, 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas'. Although enthusiastically suggested by this popular carol, figgy pudding is not a popular dish today. Very much an English dish it resembles a white Christmas pudding containing figs. The pudding may be baked, steamed in the oven, boiled or sometimes it is even fried.

We all have our own favourite Christmas Pudding recipes and due to our colonies there is not a lot of variation around the world. It is said that Prince Albert had his own personal recipe and would eat nothing else.

There is much tradition and folk law connected to the Christmas Pudding.

Traditionally puddings were made on or immediately after the Sunday "next before Advent", which is four to five weeks before Christmas. The collect for that Sunday in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, as it was used from the 16th century and still is in traditional churches, reads:

"Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen"

The day became known as "Stir-up Sunday". Traditionally everyone in the household, or at least every child, gave the mixture a stir and made a wish while doing so.

Part of the fun of Christmas plum pudding was finding the treasure buried inside. Traditional puddings have tokens to foretell the future. A silver coin meant health, wealth and happiness. This at one time was a silver threepenny bit but when they went out of circulation a sixpence was used. A ring for marriage, a silver thimble for thrift, and an anchor to symbolise safe harbour.

One nutritionist has claimed the average Briton eats 7,000 calories on Christmas Day, and the pudding is usually, 'the last quivering thing to pass the exhausted, jowly lips'.

Well according to Mr Google and many other sources our greeting accorded the culmination of our repast is flawed. Most consider the Christmas Pudding and the Plum Duff to be the same pudding but looking at this recipe from, 'Traditional English Puddings', by Mary Norwak, it is the first Xmas pudding I have found made with fresh plums so maybe plum duff, 'is of a better fare'.

You might like to try it this year! ➡

***"Oh! All that steam! The pudding had just been taken out of the cauldron. Oh! That smell! The same as the one which prevailed on washing day! It is that of the cloth which wraps the pudding. Now, one would imagine oneself in a restaurant and in a confectioner's at the same time, with a laundry next door. Thirty seconds later, Mrs. Cratchit entered, her face crimson, but smiling proudly, with the pudding resembling a cannon ball, all speckled, very firm, sprinkled with brandy in flames, and decorated with a sprig of holly stuck in the centre. Oh! The marvelous pudding!"***  
**Charles Dickens, 'A Christmas Carol'**



# Plum Duff

## from 'Traditional English Puddings'

### By Mary Norwak



This Plum Duff recipe from Traditional English Puddings is, to quote, "a distant and more complex relative to spotted dick. It is apparently the favourite of Rear Admiral Sir John (Jack) Aubrey, fictional character of the novels of Patrick O'Brian". It tells us that the, "plums could be replaced with drained tinned prunes but it's worth the effort to use fresh if they are in season".

#### Ingredients

110g Self raising flour  
110g shredded suet  
220g dried fruit (currants or sultanas)  
110g Bread crumbs  
110g Dark brown sugar  
1/2 Teaspoon mixed spice, 1/2 Teaspoon ground cinnamon, Little freshly grated nutmeg  
250g plums, stones removed and chopped.  
1/2 large apple, peeled, cored and chopped.  
Juice & zest of 1 orange  
4 Tablespoons of dark rum  
225ml Milk  
2 Eggs

#### Method

Butter the inside of a 1 litre pudding basin and set aside. Mix the dry ingredients together in a large bowl. Add the chopped plums and apple, orange juice and zest, rum and eggs and mix together well. Begin adding the milk gradually and stir well. Keep adding milk until the mixture drops easily from the spoon when lifted from the bowl. Spoon the mixture into the buttered pudding basin.

Take a double sheet of foil and form a pleat across the middle. Cover the top of the pudding and tie well in place with kitchen string. Form a handle with string to make it easy to lift the pudding out of the steamer when cooked. Partly fill a large pan with boiling water and place a steamer on top. Bring the water back to the boil and place the pudding in the steamer, cover and steam for three hours. Check the water every thirty minutes to make sure it doesn't boil dry.

When serving, remove the foil from the pudding and loosen the pudding carefully from the edges of the basin. Turn out onto a warmed serving plate, serve with custard or double cream.

# Wine words -

## No 2 - Binning the words by Prof. Alan F. Harrison



Michael Broadbent's lecture following the AGM in November is still fresh in our minds. In his "Pocket Guide to Winetasting" (1979, p 105) he uses the following "bins" and a few examples are given. I have italicised those that may not be in as much use as the others.

**Words in common use** - acid/acidity, bouquet, clean, fruity, grapey, tannic, *tough*, watery.

**Those which should be used in a qualified context** - aftertaste, *big*, coarse, *neutral*, sour, weak.

**Words to use precisely or with care** - astringent, *baked*, *dumb*, *feminine*, *forthcoming*.

**Additional qualitative descriptions** - *well bred*, insipid, powerful, *sensuous*, *supple*, *vinosity*."

If the titles in bold text can be seen as individual bin headings, we can visualise Michael's mental wine bins. In a subsequent description of red wines in his larger book on wine tasting (2003, p 97) we can imagine rows of bins in *the red corner* as follows and bin examples are given.

**Appearance** - depth, colour/hue. **Nose or bouquet** - condition, development. **Palate** - body, tannin, acid, development, length/finish." Bins often need to link to other bins. Sixty words describing *body* include *alcohol content*, *extract*, *vintage* and *geographical origin*. *Alcohol* uses 100 words.

In another 'main bin' *tannin* is defined. - "astringent, noticeably drying, soft tannins, mellow". Our tannin bin may include a note against "astringent" saying "see bin number 179" The 1979 book defines it thus: "a dry, mouth-puckering effect caused by a high tannin content often accompanied by a high degree of acidity. Might well soften and mellow as the wine matures. Not bitter." Perhaps we take "mellow" for granted. Our author tells us, "soft, mature. No rough edges. A desirable characteristic normally associated with maturity and age; also essentially associated with alcohol, glycerol and fructose." We have insufficient space to explore glycerol and fructose.

Another author previously met by readers (in June) is Prof. Adrienne Lehrer. It's interesting that Michael Broadbent has been impressed by her (his 1979 book p 97, his 2003 book, p 90). Prof Lehrer, during the 1970s, identified 240 wine terms in the wine literature. Let's see 10% of them. "attenuated, baked, blurred, charming, has come on, cooked, dead, dumb, finesse, flabby, flattering, fleshy, has majesty, mettlesome, ostentatious, pebbly, penetrating, redolent, roguish, skunky, has stamina, transcendental, twiggy, vegy, zestful. A desirable characteristic normally associated with maturity and age; also essentially associated with alcohol, glycerol and fructose." Most items on the list are adjectives. Additionally, "berry", "has bite", "has grip" (no adjectival forms.) However, at the rate English changes these days, don't be surprised one day to come across 'berryish', biteus' (rhyming with "righteous") and 'grippish' or 'grippy'. "Grap(e)y" is listed and that was new once but who knows when?

More seriously, how does one go about mentally filing and then understanding some of the more unusual wine words before launching them in the direction of unsuspecting fellow-diners or sommeliers? The latter may be as unknowing as the diners. We saw "*has come on*" earlier. Would you ask a sommelier for a wine with that description? What is the characteristic? Among the IWFS monographs is "The Science of Taste" by Ruth Binney. On p 41, she deals with "First impressions". "The first aroma of a wine is the one that reaches the nose as it approaches the glass, described as *montant* - that is, coming to meet you, as with a Mosel or dry white Bordeaux." Looking at the verb from another direction, you ask your fellow diners about the *montant moment* and they raise their glasses expectantly. Even more challenging is to explain that you are trying to categorise wine words and ask them to help you find a *bin* to store *montant*. New wine words take time to enter the every-day vocabulary. Google *wine montant* and it thinks you mean Montana. *Montant* actually goes as far back as 1835 in the Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française.

*Mouthfeel* you may remember (June issue, p 25) may be an update for André Simon's *palate memory*. It is certainly more than wine word of the month and there's plenty of Internet coverage. Although Michael Broadbent doesn't include it in his books mentioned, mouthfeel is dealt with on eleven pages in Prof. Lehrer's book *Wine & Conversation* (2003). Under the heading New Words for Body, (p 34) we read that "One word that has become common is *structure*, a word that was rare in the 1970s. *Structure* involves body, acid, tannin, and to some extent, it overlaps with *texture*, which has become a common word for *feel* or *mouthfeel*. Structure is more inclusive." A separate quotation is that structure is "the plan or architecture of the flavour.". We are planning the architectural layout of our wine word bins.

Readers who enjoy a binning system buy (or perhaps are given) a new wine. Perhaps it doesn't reach the bins. Perhaps it is placed where the 'drink soon' or 'drink later but not too late' wine goes. Perhaps it is for laying down. Wine words are no different. Some are explored *asap*. We want reaction to the way we use them. If none, we *bin them* in another other sense of the word. Others are laid down until mentally digested (mixed metaphors?). There's rather a lot of wine words here so let's look at ways of consuming them. Like new wines at a commercial tasting, we have looked at the colour of the words, assessed their fragrance and tasted them. We won't buy them all. One aspect of that is there are alternative suppliers. Many wine words receive different definitions and it's your choice which expert you adopt on a regular basis.

The way we learn and remember information varies from person to person as does the way we use it. Here are suggestions. There are words from my previous articles and some are new.

**nouns** - acid, acidity, alcohol, **adjectives** - acidic, baked, bal- **'human' adjectives** brawny, **verbs** decant, montant, mull,  
bouquet, Bua fragrance, nose. anced, dumb, fragrant, grapey, Charming, feminine, sensuous. nose, savour.



The extended article, with links, can be found at <http://www.gastron-omy.com/iwfs-let-wine-talk/>





## Treasures of Sicily by Nevill Bagot Bath & Bristol Branch go Touring

Eight members of Bath & Bristol Branch, with Jim and Margaret Muir from Herefordshire, embarked on a bespoke eight day tour of Sicily. The tour was organised, and personally accompanied, by Damian Croft, the proprietor of a small travel company, Esplora Ltd.

Sicily has a fascinating 3000 year history, with cultural and architectural treasures resulting from countless foreign invasions over the centuries.

While our principal object of course was to sample several wineries and restaurants, on the island, the itinerary was so devised as to permit visits to many other spectacular sites.

We flew from Heathrow to Catania, via Milan, on 26<sup>th</sup> September, staying overnight at a comfortable small hotel in Acireale, North of Catania. Next morning we were off to the

Murgo Estate at Santa Venarina for an introduction to the wines of Mt. Etna ([www.murgo.it](http://www.murgo.it)). The Etna DOC is the oldest in Sicily, the region being compared with the Burgundy region of France, and considered by many to be the next big thing in the wine world. Having sampled Etna Rosato, Bianco, and a Rosso, plus a Cabernet Sauvignon (Tenuta S. Michele), in the warm sunshine on their terrace overlooking Mt. Etna and the sea, life took on a decidedly rosier hue. So on to the Villagrande winery at Milo ([www.villagrande.it](http://www.villagrande.it)) on the slopes of Mt. Etna for a further tasting, and lunch. This vineyard, situated 700m above sea level, again offered, among others, the Bianco Superiore and Fiore wines, produced from the characteristic grapes Caricante, Cataratto and Nerello Mascalese, a perfect accompaniment to the excellent lunch provided on their terrace.

The next day we drove for a couple of hours to Valledolmo, the home of the Tasca d'Almerita winery, one of the finest in Sicily and set among some spectacular scenery ([www.tascadalmerita.it](http://www.tascadalmerita.it)).

The Tenuta Regaleali estate comprises several hundred hectares. Both indigenous and international grape varieties are planted, from the ubiquitous Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, to flagship Sicilians such as Nero d'Avola, and Inzolia.

The hospitality and accommodation made available to us for lunch was of 5 star quality, and it was a real effort to board our bus in the heat of mid-afternoon for the onward journey to Palermo.

Palermo was everything you would imagine – chaotic, exotic, noisy, colourful. It holds a superb position by the sea at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, and so has in the past been the prize for the island's colonisers. The Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, and Normans have left a rich legacy, which we sampled under the expert and enthusiastic guidance of Damian.

Notable were our visits to the splendid Norman palace, built by the Arabs in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, and extended by the Normans, the chapel of which was decorated with incomparable Byzantine mosaics. Also the grandiose Monreale cathedral (from the sublime to the .....), the forecourt contained a large gathering of Ferrari owners, with their cars ranging from classic to modern – several million euros' worth. I suppose to a car enthusiast this would also be considered "sublime".

The next day we drove from Palermo to visit the famous Florio and Pellegrino wineries at Marsala. ([www.cantineflorio.it](http://www.cantineflorio.it))

Marsala is Sicily's largest wine producing centre, with an interesting history. Admiral Nelson discovered its wines in 1800, and ordered 500 barrels for his fleet anchored in Malta. Thus Marsala found its place in the British market. As tastes subsequently favoured dry wines, many producers lowered the image of the brand by making flavoured wines used mainly in cooking. The position has now been corrected and we were treated to a varied selection of their finest wines at both wineries. The Florio tasting, a video presentation, was somewhat OTT however, with a Sophia Loren lookalike, accompanied by a violinist, reminding us that "the most beautiful emotions arise from unplanned arrangements, unexpected encounters....." My tastings regrettably are never quite so emotive.

The following day we made our way to Syracuse, calling in midway at the Villa del Casale, a Roman Hunting Lodge. This is an unmissable reconstruction of the original villa, endowed with some of the most incredible mosaics left over from the Roman world, astonishing in their scope and in the imagery they portray. Here you see girls in scanty bathing costumes (the first bikinis?) indulging in gymnastics, hunting scenes, and much much more. Pompeii has nothing on this.

Syracusa was a fitting end to this highly enjoyable tour. A city which once rivalled Athens as the largest and most beautiful city in the Greek world, contains an unrivalled Greek theatre, labyrinthine medieval streets, Baroque palaces, and the Cathedral containing the remains of the temple of Athena. So much to see, a place to wander aimlessly, to admire the shopping, and of course take a refreshing swim in the Med. if so inclined.

And the gastronomy? Italian cooking is really a collection of regional cuisines, and Sicily rates highly in the presentation of certain specialities. We ate lunch and dinner every day, in either wineries, trattoria, street ristoranti, or one evening in a delicatessen, and on another day a picnic lunch in a park by the sea. Haute cuisine it may not have been, but sampling many inventive revisitations of traditional Sicilian dishes, with freshly caught fish pre-eminent on the menus, added a certain piquancy to the whole experience.

To sum up, this is a very recommended way to travel. With an English guide, steeped in the history of the island, knowledgeable about its wines, wineries, and eating establishments, bi-lingual when necessary, and providing a running commentary in an air-conditioned mini coach. Taxis were also provided to restaurants at some distance from the hotel for the less nimble members of the party, and at no additional cost. Everyone was very comfortable with their 4 star hotel accommodation in Acireale, Palermo and Syracuse.

We could not speak too highly of the organisation, care and conduct of the tour by Damian Croft. For further information, see [www.esplora.co.uk](http://www.esplora.co.uk)



# 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinners

## Manchester Branch

### 80th Anniversary Gourmet Dinner at The Alderley Edge Hotel

An anniversary is a time for celebration, and I don't think we could have chosen a better venue for our 80th anniversary gourmet dinner than The Alderley Edge Hotel. Eighty members and guests attended the dinner on 31st October 2013.

Our menu included some unusual touches, and we enjoyed wines from the Burgundy and Bordeaux regions of France which were presented by Richard Bampfield M.W. It was especially interesting to have the opportunity to compare two wines from Ch. Sociando - their second wine from a good year (La Demoiselle de Sociando 2010) and their first wine from a not-so-good year (Chateau Sociando Mallet 2007). We felt the score was a draw.

For the aperitif we had Cremant de Bourgogne, Albert Bichot. This was an excellent aperitif wine and was thoroughly enjoyed by all. A well balanced fruity wine, which had good acidity.

The first course - chicken with a foie gras and truffle mousse - got the meal off to a rather shaky start as the mousse was served at an inappropriate temperature. Some thought the taste rather insipid.

All was forgiven when we got to the hand dived scallop with its beautiful presentation of cucumber and apple pieces, and an oyster and caviar emulsion. This was an appealing blend of taste and texture. The dryness of the wine and the acidity of the Montagny premier cru 2010 from Burgundy complemented the first and second courses very well, particularly that of the scallops.

The main course was the star, and when it was served it seemed to shout "Eat me!" before we had even picked up our knives and forks. The pavé of beef and roasted salsify shared the plate with a wonderful piece of ox cheek, the *joue* of French restaurants. Where does all this lovely meat go? Cattle have two of them, but we rarely get a chance to eat them. Why? Perhaps dogs and cats get them: lucky animals. This course was accompanied by the Savigny les Beaune 2009 which was a great vintage in Burgundy and confirmed by the quality of the wine in our glasses. It had a lovely fruity nose and body, all of this followed by a long finish. It was arguably the best wine of the evening.

The cheese course offered us the second mousse of the meal, this time made with Brie. It tasted good, but the presentation was not appealing.

There was a nice touch when we got to the dessert, as our deconstructed plum tart harked back to the mirabelles of the first meeting of the Society in 1933.

As we have come to expect from the Alderley Edge Hotel, the service was excellent.

An anniversary is also a time for reflection. In the 1930s haute cuisine reigned supreme. Fine dining, as we now refer to it, was always a French experience, as it was for the Society's first meeting and for the two planning dinners that preceded it. Partridges and pheasants, or should I say perdreaux et faisans, featured in the menus, from which we can deduce that these meals took place in Autumn. Seasons mattered then: there were no game birds in May, and no fresh raspberries in January, and few freezers anywhere.

I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall when the first menus were being discussed. There was one point for discussion concerning the placing of the cheese before or after the dessert. Should it come *before* because it was a French meal, or *after* because we were eating it in England? A nice solution was to do it one way, and then the other, and on the third occasion to leave out cheese altogether and serve a savoury instead.

The wines served at the planning meetings are just names to drool over: 1920 Ch. Lafite, 1914 Ch. Beychevelle, and a 1908 Warre port. I was amused by the phrase "a glass of cold water with the fish".... Perhaps we should do this more often.

I hope our founders would delight in our present day menus. I am sure they would be impressed by the way our courses are presented. The silver service, the disruption of our conversations, the dangers of our food going cold - all has been swept aside and the look of our food matters as well as its taste. I like to think that André Simon and A.J. Symons would approve wholeheartedly of how we do things today.

**Josephine Jackson**



#### AWARDS

During the Celebratory Evening, Chairman of the EAC, John Legg, presented awards to two very active members of the Manchester Branch.

Valerie Hall (far left) received a Long Service Diploma & Medallion for her active personal service as Secretary of the Manchester Branch for five years. She has also helped to organise many events including hosting the annual Garden Party at her riverside home.

Dr. Patricia Fletcher received the Andre Simon Bronze Medal for meritorious service. 'Tricia' has been a member of the Manchester committee since 2001 and has taken on all roles of office. She has been Secretary, Chairman and is now tackling the role of Treasurer with characteristic enthusiasm and efficiency.



To round off the evening in style, Chairman of the Branch, Bob Lloyd, called in all the kitchen and serving staff in order to thank them and present the Society's Restaurant Award for the meal which they had served for the AGM in January this year. It could just have easily been given for the night's commemorative dinner.

**Chris Redman**



## Cape Town Branch 80th Celebrations Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa



Cape Town Chairman Hilton Kück chose the magnificent Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa to host his first Chairman's Dinner – in celebration of the Society's 80th Anniversary – on Saturday 7th September 2013.

Built on the site of an original hunting lodge from the days of Lord Charles Somerset, the hotel stands alone amongst pristine *fynbos* under the peaks of the western façade of Table Mountain, a stone's throw from Atlantic Ocean waves. It was acquired by the Red Carnation Hotel Collection and recently refurbished as Cape Town's top boutique hotel.

General Manager Horst Frehse who is a longstanding friend of the Society welcomed us with a glass of bubbly, canapés and breathtaking sunset views.

Under Horst's eye for only the best, Executive Chef Christo Pretorius crafted a special menu, for which Sommelier Gregory Mutambe hand-picked the accompanying wines.

With the sounds of the sea lingering, we took our seats at elegantly appointed tables. Veteran member, fine olive oil producer and Devon Valley wine-maker Eugene Mori offered a vintner's grace that set the tone for celebration of the fine things of the table, before we enjoyed an amuse bouche that was a tongue-in-cheek take on Cheese and Crackers – goat's cheese mousse, lemon compote, gruyere crackers.

The first course of Salmon Trout Galette – tartare, horseradish, almond, fennel, apple – was accompanied by *Waterford Estate Library Collection Bordeaux White 2009*. From a no-expense-spared producer in an outstanding Stellenbosch vintage, the Semillon veritably bristled with erect grassiness and, in tandem with Sauvignon Blanc, offered the somewhat more demure trout a feisty waltz.

Next was Roast Duck – breast, ballotine, parfait, parsnip, coconut, barley salad, peach jus; an outstanding combination that was set off by the silky Hamil-

ton Russell Pinot Noir 2012. Considering the balmy evening, some members called for and enjoyed the wine lightly cooled.

A Spring Berry Sorbet swept clean for the third course, Springbok Loin served with an inspired 'slow-food' venison shank and potato pavé, king oyster mushroom, red cabbage, fig, baby beetroot and juniper jus. The wild character of the succulent game called for a wine of adventure, *Bouchard Finlayson Hannibal 2010*. Famed for the great Carthaginian military commander who trekked across the Pyrenees and the Alps, this blend of Sangiovese, Pinot noir, Nebbiolo, Mourvedré, Barbera and Shiraz had just the right balance of left-field delinquency, and main-stream austerity.

Dessert was just that: a Tropical Explosion of mango cremeux, mango gel, mango salad and delicate passion fruit cake with noix de coco sorbet and petite beurre for good measure. What a mouthful! One that demanded voluptuous, indeed unctuous, viscosity... which *Sweet Carolyn from Paarl's Vondeling* – eked from desiccated Muscat de Frontignan – provided by the bagful.

Hilton then proposed a fitting toast to Andre Simon, the Society and its Members, after which Petit Fours were served with brandy and coffee. It was a magnificent evening that offered, 'far greater rewards than the mere satisfaction of appetites'. The redoubtable Andre would have been proud.

**David Swingler, Cellarmaster.**

**Chef Christo Pretorius & Hilton Kück**



## Capital Branch 80th Celebrations & 10th Anniversary at Audleys Wood Hotel



Just twenty members met at Audleys Wood Hotel, Basingstoke for a cream tea followed by a black tie dinner and overnight stay.

A Champagne and canapé reception was followed by a five course dinner accompanied by wines chosen by Ben Whettingsteel from Bibendum. After André's Grace read in French by Surrey Hills chairman Helen Mills. Joan Webb then gave a short talk about André as she knew him in the sixties.

We enjoyed an amuse bouche before Chef Adam Fargin produced a Saddle of Rabbit with Ceps & Buckwheat. The aromas when the dish arrived at the table were absolutely outstanding and so was the dish, complete with a tiny rabbit chop! With this we drank a Huia Pinot Noir 2010, New Zealand, it was light, soft

and fruity, a good red for the dish. Halibut 'Bonne Femme' and Scallops with Violet Pommes Puree followed. Another good combination, the huge plump scallops were fragrant, juicy and perfectly cooked and served with a light dressing of reduced red wine vinegar to give a pleasant zest to the dish. With this we drank a Clay Station Viognier, a delicious wine with perfumed nose and lot of fruit on the palate. ➡



## Liverpool Branch 80th Anniversary Dinner & 1st Branch Anniversary Dinner

### Menu

Cold Chicken with Ginger & Spring Onion  
Steamed Salmon with Garlic  
Aromatic Duck Roll & Yuet Ben BBQ Ribs  
Main Course of Assorted Meats & Vegetables  
[Served with Pineapple Rice]

### Wines

Piesporter Goldtropfchen Auslese, 2002, Stefan Bollig  
Domain Bongran, 2007, Macon Villages  
Chateau Cissac, 2005, Haut Medoc  
Gewurztraminer, 2009,  
Oberer Weingarten de Rorschwihr, Rolly Gassmann

Forty eight members and guests gathered at the Yuet Ben Restaurant on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2013 for a joint celebration of the society's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the branch's 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary.

The Yuet Ben Restaurant is the birth-place of EAC's newest branch in Liverpool. It sits in the shadow of the largest Chinese ceremonial arch outside of China. Yuet Ben was also the venue for IW&FS's members for a Dim Sum Lunch on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011 when the EAC Merseyside Festival was held.

Upon arrival everyone was greeted with a celebratory glass of Veuve Cliquot Brut NV, a Grande Marque champagne and the chairman's favourite aperitif. It is a blend of around 50 cru village and reserve wines from different vintages. This is a rich, classic Champagne with a yeasty bouquet, exhibiting fruit, finesse and style.

In his welcoming speech, the chairman Terry Lim, reminded everyone of the society's stated purpose: "To bring together and serve all who believe that a right understanding of good food and wine is an essential part of personal contentment and health, and that an intelligent approach to the pleasures and problems of the table offers far greater rewards than the mere satisfaction of appetite."

The menu, organised by the chairman, and the wines, selected and supplied by one of the branch's members, Dr Peter Zacharias, were aimed at complementing each other. It wasn't perfect. Nonetheless, the general consensus was that the food was excellent and the wines were too.

The Piesporter Goldtropfchen Auslese was a touch too sweet to match the Cold Chicken with Ginger & Spring Onion.

Steamed Salmon with Garlic went really well with the Macon Villages.

The next course of Aromatic Duck Roll & Yuet Ben BBQ Ribs paired with the Cissac had mixed results, the wine complemented the aniseedy Ribs but hasn't enough fruit to go with the plum sauce in the Duck Roll.

For the main course the food and wine pairing was uncomplicated; Rolly Gassmann's Gewurztraminer was ideal. The wine has the nose and taste of ripe fruits and ginger spice, which accommodated the assorted flavours of Aromatic Crispy Lamb, Minced Pork with Ginger & Garlic sauce and the Pineapple Rice.

The evening, with a convivial atmosphere, was hugely enjoyed and appreciated.

[www.yuetben.co.uk](http://www.yuetben.co.uk)

Do watch the video of the Liverpool Festival meal at Yet Ben @

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MILlgyAHQLU&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MILlgyAHQLU&feature=player_embedded))

*Terry Lim, Chairman*

Our main course of Roast Mallard, Butternut Squash, Tamarillo & Truffle Honey Polenta came as a confit duck leg with a rolled breast which had been slow cooked but some found it too undercooked for their palate. With the duck we drank a Cote de Beaune Villages dom de Valliere. A thin wine, several of us reminisced of the good old days when blending was rife and imports from Morocco gave these wines some character!



A predessert of Hibiscus soup, with guava sorbet and a floating island was very exotic. This was followed by "Apple & Blackberry Crumble" unlike any you have seen before! With this was served a very interesting Darenberg Vintage 2007 fortified Shiraz from the McLaren Vale, to quote 'rich bramble fruit lifted by spirited sweetness'. It was not to everyone's taste!

Coffee and petit fours were served as Dr Bernard Lamb proposed the Loyal Toast followed by Ian Rushton who proposed the toast to 'Our Founder'.

We were very thankful that many of us didn't even have to climb any stairs to bed! The evening was pronounced a successful and a fitting tribute to André.

*Pam Brunning, Chairman*





# around the branches - Restaurant Awards



## Zürich Branch Presentation to Ristorante Milano, Pallanza, Italy

The Zürich committee who arranged the April event at 'Lago Maggiore' was composed of Edi Hug the organiser, John Macdonald, Zürich Chairman, Kurt Haering and John Nicholas our financial overseer. They reconvened to organise a return to present a Restaurant Award for the excellent dinner attendees, from various EAC chapters enjoyed in April 2013.

The committee started out by visiting the Grotto Chiara in Muralto Thursday night for an evening meal of classic Ticino specialities accompanied by Ticinese wines. The next morning they joined some members of the Zurich branch, boarded Edi Hugs motorboat for a trip down the lake sightseeing along the way. The weather was warm and sunny unlike the April event where rain was the predominate feature.

The restaurant has a snug little harbour and we were soon tied up at the dock and heading for the garden where we were treated to an aperitif of De Faveri sparkling wine (the same one

as served the night of the original dinner) and nibbles and bites from the kitchen. Soon we were heading for the terrace overlooking the lake where we enjoyed a wonderful lunch, al fresco, prepared by chef de cuisine Egidio Sala accompanied by an excellent Fabio Contato Lugana and a superb Jermann 'Red Angel' Pinot Noir. Following the long languid luncheon the committee made the presentation to the chef Egidio Sala Chef de Cuisine and to the owners Egidio Sala and Luciana Sala. An extra presentation by the Zurich Branch was made to the sommelier, Gianni Natali, for his outstanding choice of wines at the event as well as his choice of wines for the luncheon.

Once again we boarded Edi's boat and headed back to Locarno with some more sightseeing along the way. That evening we started with the Branch AGM at Edi Hug's house in Brione followed by another classic Ticinese dinner at the Grotto Al Capon nearby. Superb food and superb wines, in particular a magnum bottle of 2003 Carato Merlot del Ticino by the Delea winery, were the order of the evening. A great way to end a wonderful few days in the Ticino.

Plans are already underway for another such weekend for next year possibly in the Canton of Graubunden famous for their Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc and Riesling.

**John Macdonald, President Emeritus Zurich Branch**



## Capital Branch Presentation to 'Shaun Dickens @ The Boathouse, Henley on Thames

In August twenty one members and two guests gathered for the second time this year at The Boathouse in Henley on Thames to present Chef/Owner Shaun Dickens and his front of House Manager Rhys Griffiths with a well deserved Restaurant Award.

Once again we were treated to a superb lunch from the delicious passion fruit Amuse Bouche to superb petit fours.

Melt in the mouth hot canapés were accompanied by a Graham Beck Sparkling Brut Rosé taken on the terrace as the sun emerged for a brief instant over the grey Thames. Returning to the bright interior we feasted on confit mackerel with poached gooseberry, almond crumb and crème fraîche. With this we drank a As Laxas, Albariño from Spain. Smooth and fruity, I think the high acidity of the gooseberries complimented it.

Perfectly cooked slow roasted duck breast with confit leg, braised rainbow chard, potato rosti and patti pan went well with a deliciously soft, rich Hungarian 'Moonriver' Pinot Noir. A pre dessert of mint sorbet and water melon cleansed the palate before a dark chocolate brownie with poached cherries, cherry sorbet and white chocolate, a chocoholics dream. Finally, coffee & petit fours.

**Pam Brunning, Chairman**





# around the branches - Manchester

## Linthwaite House, Windermere

In July, 23 members and 2 guests were joined by the Chairman and Secretary of Mid Cheshire & Merseyside Branch Paul and Valerie Bishop when we enjoyed a wonderful summer lunch at Linthwaite House, near Bowness on Windermere in the Lake District. Ron Cowley and Tricia Fletcher were the main organisers and what a great job they did.



The menu was as follows:-

Canapes served with Cloudy Bay Sauvignon from New Zealand 2012  
Foragers Soup  
Gin cured salmon, lemon puree, tonic sorbet  
Chablis, Domaine Daniel Dampé & Fils 2011  
Seabream, lemon fregola, olive, tomato & basil dressing  
Brouilly, Chateaux des Tours, St Etienne 2011  
Poached pear, white chocolate granola, Koppaberg ice cream, chocolate sauce  
Coffee and petit fours



The Cloudy Bay drank well as an aperitif, with good grassy aromas and gooseberry fruit with a stylish tangy finish.

The salmon course was an absolute delight. The fish was succulent and tasty, and the gin added another dimension. The Chablis complemented the dish.

The Seabream – an explosion of flavours, cooked to perfection with a crisp skin, topped with tomato concasse and green olives, sat on a bed of fennel. The baby tomato black olive tapenade with basil and fregola was unique.

For the red wine drinkers – a Brouilly was well received.

The dessert was based on a great classic, Pear Belle Helene, with a modern day touch, the white and dark chocolate complemented the poached pear and Koppaberg ice cream to perfection.

The sun shone and with the view over Lake Windermere - we were in heaven!

**Bob Lloyd Chairman, & Patrick Trodden**



## A taste of Italy in Oldham at the Summer Garden Party

This year the weather was kind in August for our Garden Party in the garden of Secretary Valerie Hall. This has always been something of a branch community event with committee members assisted by several branch members in the provision, production, preparation and serving of the lunch.

First on the scene and a welcome sight was EAC Chairman John Legg keeping a quiet watchful eye on events. Everyone enjoyed a glass of Zellina Rose Spumanti Brut, which was well received and shared with the team in the kitchen, who included ex Branch Chairman David Chapman, arranging the food.

The attractively laid tables were set with plates of antipasti, rich Parma ham, Lombok, Salami Milano, Salami Napoli, spicy Calabria salami, olives and dips complimented by flowers arranged by Gillian Cowley. To compliment this excellent array, the wine was a Verdicchio di Matellica 2012 Poggio alle Rondini

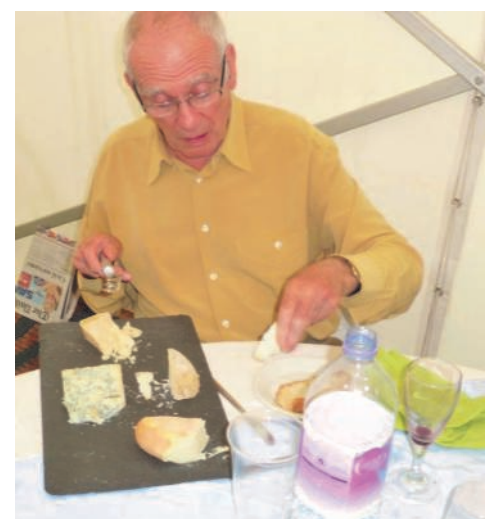
Bury Market has been the scene of a number of Branch visits in recent times and good connections have been forged which came in useful for Tricia Fletcher to visit one of its best known fishmongers, to procure the salmon for our next course. Tricia prepared the salmon fillets, baked them in white wine with a light pesto and cheese crust and served them with an avocado and crème fraiche sauce accompanied by baby new potatoes. The accompanying salads had been prepared by members: Tropez Martin, Pam Lloyd and Helen Marsland. To go with this course our Chairman Bob Lloyd, who had selected all the wines, presented a Casa Aragona 2012 Salice Salentino.

Being in little Italy for the day we had Italian Cheese and Bread, selected by the Chairman and his wife, Pam, to suit the occasion. The wine with the cheese was Campofiorin 2009 Masi.

The excellent final course was a Strawberry and Mint Salsa with a home made Italian Ice Cream. The dish was a team effort with Christine Redman and Judith Adams, making the strawberries salsa, and Jane Chapman the ice cream. Then was served with excellent 2013 tea or coffee!!

The committee thanked all those who helped make the event yet another memorable success for the branch

**Ron Cowley**



**Don't you ever feed him Chris?**  
EAC Secretary's husband Bill Redman tucks in





**Fine and Rare Rhone Tasting Presented by Jeffrey Benson  
Doubletree Hilton Hotel**

Sixteen members attended this very special presentation of fine and rare Rhone wines, most of which came from the cellar of our Branch Chairman who very kindly provided the wines at historic cost and tutored us through the tasting. The evening started with a brief introduction by Jeffrey to the Cotes du Rhone AOC emphasising the significant geographical separation between the Syrah-dominated wines of the Northern Rhone and the mainly Grenache-based wines of the Southern Rhone. We learned that the red wines of the Northern Rhone are generally 90% Syrah, with a little Viognier to soften. In the south, Chateauneuf-du-Pape permits up to 13 different grape varieties, with some estates producing 100% Grenache, an example of which would be our final wine of the evening.

Our first wine was the only white interloper – Chateau Fortia Blanc 2009, a mix of 60% Clairette, 30% Roussanne and 10% Grenache. A clear pale gold colour, with a delicate, minerally nose, it had robust fruit and good acidity on the palate; with good balance and concentration. At 14% alcohol, it was a warming and popular start to the evening.

Our next wine was a 1990 Crozes Hermitage, La Guirade, Alain Graillet, kindly donated by Dr Bernard Lamb. 1990 was a great year in the northern Rhone. This particular wine had had some oak-ageing. In the glass, it was dark and opaque. On the nose there was some sweetness, with hints of tar and licorice; and on the palate, black berry fruits, chocolate and soft tannins. Chewy and dense, some thought that this wine had a maturity beyond its years while others felt that its time had not yet come.

Very different in style was our third wine, a 1983 Crozes-Hermitage from Paul Jaboulet. This was much lighter in colour, clear and bright in the glass, with a fragrant, sweet berry nose. Smooth and rounded on the palate this was an enjoyable and easy-drinking generic Crozes Hermitage from another good year.

The 1982 Crozes Hermitage Domaine De Thalabert, Jaboulet, which followed had a lovely colour, bright and clear, with slight browning at the edge. It had a distinctive strawberry nose, and rich, ripe, sweet strawberries on the palate, with some chocolate notes and soft tannins. Excellent structure and balance. Rather Burgundian in style and very pleasant.

Wine number five was 1983 St Joseph – Le Grand Pompee, Jaboulet. This was light in colour, browning at the edge. On the nose there was that sweet berry fruit that we were beginning to associate with these mature Northern Rhones. Some thought that there was some volatile acidity, while others thought there was a whiff of cork taint, but on the palate there was plenty of lovely fruit, good grip and structure.

Next up was a 1984 Hermitage “La Chapelle”, again from Jaboulet. Jeffrey informed us that “La Chapelle” was not a vineyard, but a brand name denoting a selection of top grapes. 1984 was not a particularly good year, but I don’t think that we would have noticed, because this wine was a real treat. The colour was mature and layered. The nose was vibrant, forward and appealing (some described it as “sour cherries”, others as “gamey” and savoury). The palate had a lovely, mature, rounded sweetness balanced by soft tannins. Generally silky and delicious, and very long. Definitely one of the stars of the evening.

The seventh wine was 1986 Cote Rote “Les Jumelles”, Jaboulet, from a single vineyard. Light red in colour, paling at the edge. A correct, mature, sweet berry nose. Very integrated on the palate, sweetish, slight licorice, good acidity and soft tannins. A long and satisfying finish made this a very pleasant tasting experience.

Wine Number eight was 1969 Cote Rotie – Domaine De Vallouit from Guigal. 1969 was an extremely good year in the Northern Rhone. This wine was looking its age in the glass, and was very opaque. Hints of sherry and black fruits on the nose, and similar on the palate, with chocolate notes. Full and rounded, sweetish, with soft tannins and excellent length. This proved to be one of the most controversial wines of the evening. Many raved about it, and felt that it offered many more years of enjoyable drinking, while others didn’t like it at all – a “Marmite” wine perhaps?

Our penultimate wine was a 1987 Chateauneuf Du Pape – Domaine De Monpertuis from Jeune. This was 70% Grenache. Light red in colour, browning at the rim, this had a pleasant, sweetish nose with hints of chocolate, and in the mouth had attractive, sweet, berry fruit. A most enjoyable wine.

The final wine of the evening was 1989 Chateauneuf Du Pape “Barbe Rac” Domaine Chapoutier. This was 100% Grenache. It was dark and opaque in the glass. The nose was interesting and complex, with forest fruits and chocolate notes – not quite as sweet as some of the previous wines. A lovely concentration of rounded fruit with balancing acidity and soft tannins on the palate. This was an impressive wine, with a refreshing finish and good length. A fitting close to a magnificent tasting.

All the wines apart from the first two were decanted, and were carefully and lovingly poured out by Andre Nogueira to whom we are most grateful. The tasting was accompanied by a light meal which was well received and enabled the attendees to enjoy the wines to the full.

## around the branches - Malmoe

### Stella – a shining star

Unfortunately I and many other members were not able to attend our dinner at Bistro Stella in October. Only about half as many as normally enjoyed this opportunity. As the name of the place indicates this was not, and was not supposed to be, fine dining but indeed proper, delicious cooking according to those present. After an amuse bouche together with a pure Champagne Blanc de blancs from Dom. Vilmont the following specially composed five course meal was served:

*Grilled nephrops, pickled turnip*

2011 Auxerrois Vieilles vignes, Jean Baptiste Adam

\*\*\*\*\*

*Back of cod, spinach, mussel*

2010 Chateauneuf du Pape Blanc, Dom. du Vieux Lazaret

\*\*\*\*\*

*Baked calf back, forest mushroom, Pommes Anna, red wine gravy*

2009 Pinot noir MOMO, Marlborough, Seresin Est

2009 The Ladybird, Stellenbosch, Laibach

\*\*\*\*\*

*Cheeses*

2010 Côtes du Rhône Villages Cairanne, Marchel Richaud

\*\*\*\*\*

*Crème brûlée, passion fruit, chocolate egg, candied almond*

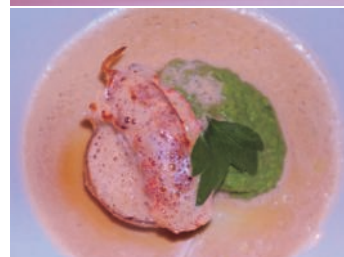
Ruster Ausbruch Beerenauslese, Heidi Schröck

The Burgundy was a bit smoky with exotic tones and slightly honey flavored and went very well with the seafood as did the chalky and clean white Vieux Lazaret with the absolutely perfectly cooked cod. It is

fascinating to experience how two totally different wines like the fruity well-balanced Pinot noir and the powerful Bordeaux blend from South Africa, both very good wines were a perfect match to the calf. The full-bodied red Rhône wine had no problem to match the cheeses and, finally the Beerenauslese was a small monument of a lovely sweet wine!

In all this was a most enjoyable evening created by the two ambitious chefs Mattias and Anders, which explains that the Bistro Stella has become very popular in a fairly short time and it is indeed well worth a visit.

**Rolf Fransson Photo: Pierre Mens**



## around the branches - Leicester

### Leicester Join Northampton at Oundle

In September seventeen Leicester members welcomed nine members from Northampton to an event, organised by Sally Moore and Mary Hind at Oundle Mill Restaurant, Northamptonshire.

Oundle Mill, a converted water mill, lies in a lovely setting beside the River Nene. The old mill stream flows beneath the bar floor which is covered by thick glass. We were welcomed with a glass of Pinot Grigio in the bar before ascending two flights of stairs to a private dining room adjacent to the kitchen.

For the starter we chose between whitebait with a Louisiana cocktail sauce or a beautifully arranged plate of two tiny squares of pressed ham hock with two small square cheddar beignets. The first main course was a delicious boned and stuffed chicken leg positioned on the plate between two small mounds of mashed potato with a nipple like protuberance on top! accompanied by Agen prunes and green beans. Alternatively we could choose sea bream with butternut squash and char grilled potatoes. Most people chose a superb lemon posset with shortbread for pudding but one could enjoy Colston Basset stilton instead. All the food was very well presented and the service was excellent. We drank a Romanian white wine and a red Malbec from Argentina – much discussion about the comparison with Cahors wines ensued.

The young enthusiastic Chef, Gavin Austin, came to talk to us after the meal and answered our questions well. We decided we would like to do it all again sometime.

**Mary Jewell**





## around the branches - Herefordshire and Monmouthshire



### Broome Farm Cream Tea

Our branch decided to celebrate the summer season with a typical English diversion – a cream tea.

There could be nowhere better to enjoy the quintessential experience than Broome Farm in Ross-on-Wye. Set in 45 acres of cider orchards and presided over by the owners - former food lecturers and capable chefs - Hilary and John Draper, we were confident the occasion would be an authentic one.

Members were treated to a welcome glass of Cava (provided by the branch, although Broome Farm has its own licence). Then we loosened our belts to allow for the calorific delights to come. A selection of traditional sandwiches, smoked salmon, egg and cress, ham and cream cheese, was followed by Hilary's famous home-made scones and strawberry jam, with copious bowls of whipped cream.

The piece de resistance was Hilary's signature cider cake. This proved a bridge too far for many members, who could be seen covertly wrapping the doorstep slices in napkins to serve as a full evening meal!

The intention was to enjoy our repast outside on the terrace, viewing the beautiful Herefordshire countryside, but summer showers and marauding wasps drove us indoors to the farm's cosy dining room. The intimate company meant that close friendships could be renewed and the assembly were reluctant to leave – always a good sign.

Our modest event was deemed a great success, and Broome Farm was noted as a venue for the future. They cater for private dinners (or lunches) in their small dining room, and ceilidhs, weddings and operas find a home in the large barn. The cooking and front-of-house meet with universal acclaim.

For us it was a rustic experience to remember, at a price to make the Ritz turn pale!

**Judith Stares**

## around the branches - Surrey Hills



### Well Here We Are Again.....

Another Starters and Puds and no mains. Our four starters were Gazpacho from Susie Punch; Stephanie Shepherd's Courgette Flan with Tomato Coulis; Bernard Lamb's Creamy Cod with Cumin and Pam Brunning's Ultimate Chicken Liver Parfait. The Puds comprised Susie's Raspberry Sorbet; Helen's Lemon Posset with Shortbread; Stephanie's Summer Berry Salad with Toasted Pistachio's and Minted Fruit Syrup and Pam's Deconstructed Black Forest. As usual we'd all had plenty to eat without the main course! Our welcoming Champagne was Antoine De Clevecy Brut NV. Through the meal we drank Chablis Vieilles Vignes, Domaine Seguinot-Bordet, 2008; Le Bois de Clementine Chevrot, Maranges AOC and Grand Vin de Bourgogne 2009. There were two sweet wines; Vieilles Vignes 2004 Reisling Turckheim and Muscat 1992 Medaille d'Or Colmar Pfaffenheim, the latter was definitely past its best. Alan Shepherd organised the wines and we have to thank Kip and Susie Punch for the venue. A lovely garden, marquees and a superbly sunny afternoon. IW&FS members are so generous with their time, their homes and gardens, to say nothing of their culinary skills. We salute you!

**Helen Mills, Chairman**



## around the branches - Sussex

### Annual Dinner at the Sundial Restaurant, Herstmonceux

A lovely mild evening in August heralded the arrival of 26 members and guests of the Sussex branch to their annual dinner at the Sundial restaurant in Herstmonceux. We were able to sit and chat in the attractive garden whilst enjoying some Cremant de Bourgogne and the extensive range of canapés, before being welcomed into the restaurant.

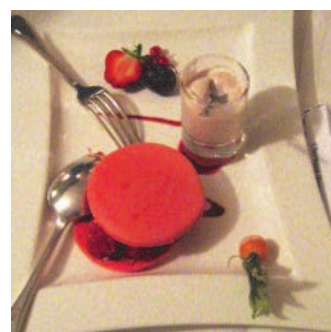
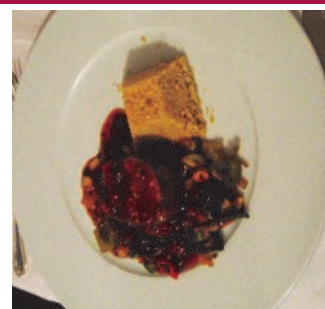
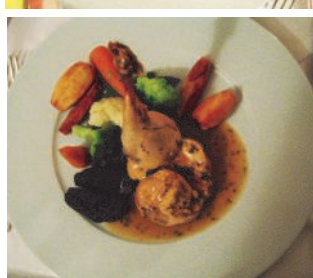
The amuse bouche of a tiny glass of gazpacho set the theme for an evening of culinary delight. As usual, I chose fish throughout and the Vegetable macedoine with herbs, crabmeat cocktail and scallops carpaccio with lime was well constructed, delicate and delicious. The most popular starter of Guinea fowl terrine with foie gras and apricot, fruit chutney and salad bouquet with walnut oil was full of flavour and the few people who chose the Wild mushroom cream soup with ravioli Royan (small cheese raviolis) reported it to be well balanced and not too heavy.

Following a palate cleanser of vodka and lime granite, the choice of three main courses was, unusually, evenly divided between fish and meat, perhaps reflecting either a lighter meal for a summer evening or Vincent's reputation as a superb fish chef. The pan fried sea bass in potato crust was served with red pepper coulis and summer ratatouille. The potato crust comprised small, almost translucent discs which completely enclosed the fish keeping it moist and cooked to perfection. Dave chose the rabbit leg filled with chicken mousse, a meat rarely offered on a menu. Presented with a tarragon cream sauce and vegetables, this was tender and flavoursome. The more conventional guests plumped for slow cooked lamb (7 hours apparently!) with tomato and black olives and the unusual accompaniment of couscous and spiced vegetable stew.

A pre-dessert of apricot panacotta preceded the grand finale of the meal. This consisted of a choice Raspberry macaroon with violet ice-cream, Poached white peach in strawberry and rose jelly with a tiramisu cornet or Milk chocolate mousse cake with minted fruit coulis and sorbet. I was the only person not tempted by these wonderful looking dishes and was instead offered a large plated selection of cheese and biscuits. By this time of course sadly I just couldn't manage to eat it all!

The red and white wines served with the first two courses were both Heritage de Baron Louis 2012 with Muscat de Rivesaltes accompanying the dessert. The evening was rounded off by tea or coffee, with home made petit fours and migardises for those who still had room.

Yet again Vincent and Mary Rongier gave us a wonderful evening with beautifully presented dishes and fantastic service. Their standards remain consistently high and we are grateful to them and all their team, including their new chef, William. The Sundial is a restaurant in the country well worth visiting.



### Dinner at Horsted Place,

In October we made our fifth visit to Horsted Place, a lovely Victorian country house built in the Gothic Revivalist style. Sixteen members, two of them new to the Sussex branch, and two guests met for a pre-prandial drink in the sumptuous drawing room. We then retired to the elegant morning room where we were all seated at one oval table, which always makes for a sociable evening.

Roasted globe artichoke served with courgette, tomato and basil spaghetti, poached egg and hollandaise sauce made an unusual and tasty, although perhaps slightly filling, starter, the alternative was potted duck with balsamic roasted pear and warm brioche. Both main course choices were simply cooked and beautifully served under their individual cloches all of which were removed with a flourish by the staff. The tender, succulent fillet of roast beef was presented on a potato cake with pancetta and button onions in a red wine sauce. Grilled fillet of halibut (one of my favourites) was accompanied by a light cauliflower puree with sauce vierge and

new potatoes. To follow, the chocolate frangipane with brandy and vanilla roasted pear and chocolate sauce produced a rich and classic combination of flavours whilst the less chocoholic guests tucked into a delicate gratin of raspberries with framboise sabayon and vanilla ice cream.

Neil Joubert Chenin Blanc 2012 and Ladeia Verde Merlot 2012 were available throughout the meal. The Chenin Blanc certainly matched the artichoke and the halibut well whilst the Merlot was robust enough for the beef. The evening was rounded off nicely by coffee and homemade petit fours.

The food throughout was of a high standard and the service was superb with plenty of waiting staff. The only slight criticism was that the Kir, served as the aperitif, was somewhat overdosed with cassis. The number of members attending was unfortunately rather low and the rest missed a thoroughly sociable and enjoyable evening in beautiful surroundings.

**Lesley Berry**



# around the branches - Merseyside and Mid Cheshire

## Summer Picnic.

Our summer picnic was held at the lovely home of Paul and Val Bishop, in the beautiful countryside of North Wales. The weather was dry and the sun shone so we were able to enjoy an alfresco meal. We began with a tasting of Eastern European and Mediterranean wines presented by Paul. The wines were all sourced from the Wine Society. Their new list includes many East European and Lebanese wines. The tasting included those from Hungary, Greece, Romania, Turkey and Lebanon. All were good examples of their type and some were quite exceptional. The increased availability of wines from the Eastern Mediterranean have added another dimension to the everyday drinking of good quality wines with modest prices.

Hilltop Estates Pinot Grigio Goteoldal Single Vineyard 2012

Hatziidakis Santorini 2012

Tamaioasa Romaneasca Sec 2012 Prince Stirbey

La Catina Pinot Noir 2009

Kalecik Karasi 2011 Vinkara

Massaya Classic Red 2010

Chateau Ka Rouge 2009

After the tasting we were treated to a delicious picnic lunch.

The Menu.

Tomato and Mozzarella Salad followed by a Hog Roast with apple sauce and stuffing, accompanied by a variety of interesting salads. A sumptuous array of desserts which included Strawberry Pavlova, Raspberry and strawberry terrine, 'Anne Saville's' poached peaches, sumptuous fresh raspberry cream sponge, chocolate mousses, delicious trifles and a superb ripe Stilton cheese

The Hog Roast was presented by The ROACH'S ROAST COMPANY.

The starter, salads and the deserts were prepared by ladies of the Branch - Jean, Veronica, Angela and Anne. It was a wonderful occasion, enjoyed by all and a perfect way to spend a lazy, late summer Sunday.

**Angela Britland, wine notes Paul Bishop,**

**Photography Tim Hodges.**



## Dinner at Buckley's Restaurant

In October the Branch held a dinner at Buckley's Restaurant in Warrington. The restaurant is part of the Warrington Collegiate and it has been selected as one of the final five contenders in the UK's most competitive student catering competition. After an aperitif the company enjoyed the following menu:

Carrot and coriander soup with carrot crisp

Roast Rack of Rosemary Lamb, Dauphinoise potatoes and ratatouille of vegetables

Trio of English desserts comprising of, sticky toffee pudding, Bramley apple crumble and homemade Cornish ice-cream.

The soup was considered to be one of the best ever tasted and the Lamb was a unanimous success, though many people thought that the ratatouille was too highly seasoned. The desserts were delicious and so plentiful that many of the company thought that each one was a dessert portion on its own!

The wines were selected by Paul who took advantage of the low corkage mark up and they were appreciated by all. They were:-

Henri Ehrhart Muscat Reserve Particuliere 2012

As an aperitif and first course wine.

Rosso Montalcino 2010 DOCG

With the main course.

Moscatel De Setubal Colheita 2009

With the dessert.

It is over five years since we last visited Buckley's but I am sure that it will not be as long before we visit again.

**Angela Britland, wine notes by Paul Bishop.**



## around the branches - London

### Learning More about Wine - A Course Organised by London Branch

Have you ever thought that you would like to know a little more about wine?

Do you find that half of the wines on a restaurant's wine list are unfamiliar?

Do you tend to stick to a few favourites to be on the safe side?

Do you find that sommeliers make you feel just a tiny bit uncomfortable?

Would you like to be able to play them at their own game?

Well, I guess that most of us who have belonged to IWFS for a while like to think that we have got beyond that stage, but I must admit to the slightest twinge of familiarity. So when I learned that London Branch was to offer a one day course leading to the Intermediate Certificate from the Wine and Spirits Education Trust, I had to give it a go.

This is an internationally recognised qualification, and the first stage in the training of many a professional sommelier, leading ultimately all the way to becoming a Master of Wine. Normally it would involve six nights of evening classes, but our Chairman, Jeffrey Benson, who is an accredited programme provider for WSET managed to fit it all into a single day. The only snag was the need to read the study material beforehand. Fortunately this turned out to be beautifully laid out and presented (I will want to keep it), and really quite easy going for anyone with some prior knowledge and experience of wine. And of course Jeffrey was on hand throughout the pre-study period, to deal with any questions.

The course was wide ranging, focusing on the influences of grape variety, climate and wine making styles around the world. The course covered the major wine making regions around the world, the major grape varieties, and the different styles of wine that they produce. It also introduced the subject of wine and food matching, as well as basic wine tasting techniques. It proved to be ideal for anyone wishing to be introduced to wine and spirits in an informative and structured manner and is entirely suitable for both the enthusiast and those who wish to increase their knowledge.

The examination lasted for an hour, and was a multiple choice paper of 50 questions. Each question had four possible answers, from which we had to select the correct one. All the answers were in the course material. Topics covered included

- \* Food and Wine Matching

- \* Main grape varieties

- \* Different world-wide styles and qualities

- \* Methods of growing and production of: Red, White, Rose wines

- \* Sparkling wines

- \* Sweet wines

- \* Fortified wines

- \* Spirits and Liqueurs

There was no requirement for written answers, and, fortunately for me, no blind tasting!

The good news is that the members who tried out the course this year found the study material extremely easy to use, did exceptionally well, and will be going on to the advanced certificate next year! It really did a lot to solidify and organise the knowledge that we had acquired over the years, expand our knowledge in the areas which were less familiar to us, and build a sound base for trying a wider range of wines in the future, and learning more effectively from experience. It would have been well worth doing, even without the qualification, and we would recommend it to anyone who would like to know more about wine.

Another course is scheduled for early 2014, and members from all IWFS branches are invited. **Details to be found on page 6.**

**Alan Shepherd, Deputy Chairman**

## around the branches - Capital

### Vineyard Visit & Lunch

It was a dry blustery day in early September when we visited Hattingley Valley Vineyard. As an event organiser I found this a very interesting exercise. We are encouraged to organise 'educational' events occasionally, so I decided a this could be our education for the year. The trouble was I gave members an option, they could come to the vineyard then for lunch at the local County Restaurant of the Year, The Purefoy Arms or just join us for lunch. Only 8 ventured out to be educated and another 10 joined us just for lunch. Obviously members are not too worried about being educated, I will remember that in future! In fact those

that didn't attend missed a very interesting visit. You will have read of the enterprise in our September issue but seeing it in the flesh was quite impressive. A multi million pound investment with the aim of producing a top English sparkling wine. After the tour of the vines and the state of the art winery we went upstairs to the board room to taste their inaugural cuvee, the 2010 vintage. It was excellent, all I can say is, watch out Nyetimber.

We then adjourned to The Good Food Guide's Regional Restaurant of the Year for the South East, The Purefoy Arms, which is co-owned by Andres & Marie Louise Alemany, where the rest of our party were already enjoying their aperitif. We enjoyed a very good lunch way above pub grub standard, a place well worth a visit. [thepurefoyarms.co.uk](http://thepurefoyarms.co.uk)

**Pam Brunning, Chairman**







**When is a pub not a pub?**  
**When it is**  
**The Gunton Arms!**  
**Ron Barker investigates.**

**T**he Gunton Arms claims to be a pub and it appears in the 2014 Good Pub Guide. But it was also shown in the 2013 edition of the Good Food Guide as Norfolk's best new entry.

Six members from Blackpool Branch, having attended the festivities at the EAC North Norfolk event decided to stay on in the county and see what East Anglia had to offer. After the grandeur of Morston Hall we thought a good dining pub would be a comparison.

We were not alone. Separately the Bonsalls (past Chair of both the EAC and the Society) had made the same decision and had eaten there the previous evening. The first problem was to find it. Norfolk roads remind me of those in Devon, narrow, winding with high hedges. Both guides give the address as Thorpe Market, a village not far from Cromer. But on an exploratory trip we drove into the village and asked a local who had never heard of it! With the help of an accurate Post Code and a good Satnav and nearly 10 minutes driving we found it, some way from the village in the middle of a deer park and from a distance, looking nothing like a pub. In fact when first spotted, there were deer grazing less than 5 yards from the front door.

It looked much more like a Country Estate House. We learned that it has been a pub for less than 2 years but because it employed a top chef, Stuart Tattersall, who earned his spurs as head chef with Mark Hix in London, it immediately made it into both guides. It may be an attractive walk from the village in the daylight but the roads could be treacherous after dark.

Inside was very different; at one end there was a very peaceful resident's lounge for those lucky enough to be staying in one of the eight rooms. But the end comprising the bar and restaurant was noisy. Music from the machine made proper conversation difficult but it was turned down to a civilised level at 7:00 pm. After an aperitif in the bar, near to the pool table, we moved into the Elk Room. The main feature of this room is a large open log fire with a pair of Elk (or Moose) antlers suspended above it. Most of the cooking is done over this fire.

Although our table was by the window, some distance from the fire, the room was extremely warm and jackets were removed. The chairs, wooden, probably antique, were uncomfortable. In fact I had to swop mine because I was unable to fit myself between the carver arms. The second chair was better proportioned but creaked worryingly whenever I moved. I fully accept that I was the largest at the table but even the less well-proportioned would have preferred more comfort.

In the bar we had been given menus; each had the days date on it. We assumed that if they printed the menu each day then there would be no "daily specials". We were wrong, the very pleasant waiter pointed out additional dishes on the blackboard on the wall.

Perhaps I should first talk about the Beef Rib Roast which is on the printed menu. It is shown as £60 to share, but there is no indication as to size. Now in the north a main course at £60 per person would be judged extremely expensive, but sharing it between four would be more than acceptable. So I asked the waiter who invited me to approach the log fire and judge for myself. He told me that some customers had consumed it alone but that it was usually shared between two or three. We opted out as we could not find three amongst our six who wanted to try.

I decided that as we were on a deer park; I should eat venison. My starter was described as "Fallow deer heart and kidney with Lancashire black peas". I am not medically qualified but we did have one recently retired GP on the table. The offal was served on toast and was extremely tasty but I think that I tasted liver and kidney, not heart. I did not expect Lancashire black peas in Norfolk but I have lived in the red rose county for 45 years and my oath of allegiance is to the Queen, Duke of Lancaster. These peas would have found favour in the villages of east Lancashire.



Other starters at our table included lamb sweetbreads, queenies, squid, and two types of local smoked salmon (one with Irish Soda Bread; and one wrapped around a sea trout mousse). All six of us had a different first course and everyone was more than happy with their starters

My main course was a haunch of venison from the Specials Board, which was cooked over the fire with a red wine reduction. It still had a blood red centre which is how I like it. The accompaniment was a mash of 'neeps and tatties'. My only complaint is that I would have preferred more vegetables even if this meant less meat. One of my colleagues, disappointed not to try the rib of beef, selected the Aberdeen Angus sirloin steak which we were told had been hung for 28 days. He asked for it to be cooked 'medium' but although the open fire obviously worked very well for the roast rib, the steak was a little too dry. My wife chose red deer sausages cooked over the fire served with mash and onion gravy. It does not sound special but they were tasty with a dash of mixed spice. My brother stuck to the venison theme with Deer liver. Then there were a couple of main dishes using sheep meat. Braised Hogget (sheep meat that is too old for lamb and too young for mutton) was declared to

be excellent, and the Shoulder of Lamb was also enjoyed. None of the portions were 'nouvelle cuisine' sized.

I should not give the impression that they only offered meat. The menu also featured local fish (we were very close to Cromer) and vegetarian dishes. I confess to being tempted by the Mundesley line caught sea bass with Shetland mussels and sea purslane and by the crab pasta.

One other moan is the current fashion to charge all additional vegetables as side dishes. We were warned that the main courses were served as described on the menu and any accompaniment was more decorative than substantial. We opted for some additional potato and three side dishes of vegetables (£2.50 each) for the table. We chose carrots, mixed greens and the seasonal vegetable. This turned out to be young leeks, but whilst the mixed greens and carrots were large enough to share around the table the supposed seasonal veg barely covered the bottom of the serving dish.

The bar served a good selection of cask conditioned ales as well as wines by the glass, but none were cheap. Bottled wine varied from £18 to £95. With two drivers present we limited ourselves to two bottles with the meal, a Chenin Blanc 2011 from Saumur which had the right amount of acidity to accompany the starters and a 2011 Cote de Rhone from Domaine Saint Gayan (£28). This is the little brother of their Gigondas and is made mainly from Grenache from Sablet with 25% Syrah and a dash of Mouvedre. I was concerned that it might be too young but the fruit and tannin character complimented the meaty mains.

Only two people had room for proper desserts; an apple tart with some acidity and a Butterscotch cheesecake that my wife described as good but not outstanding. The rest were happy to finish off with various combinations of ice cream and sorbets.

The total cost including service came to £40 per person, which I considered good value for money. The experience of food cooked over the open fire was enjoyable but the 2014 version of the Good Food Guide scores this 'pub' identically with Morston Hall (both 5) and that cannot be correct. Morston has, and deserves to have, a Michelin Star. I think it should get a six in the GFG. In my opinion and based on my experience the Gunton Arms should be a 3 or 4.

Also in North Norfolk is The Neptune at Old Hunstanton which has a Michelin star and has also been given 5 by the GFG. It is very low key establishment (unlike Morston Hall) and is owned by Kevin Mangeolles and his wife who manages the front of house. Members, the Coughlins, who ate with us at both Morston Hall and the Gunton Arms also visited here and judged it as superb. They told me that Kevin or his wife personally served all the dishes when they were there. They tell me that it is well worth a visit. This is yet another reason to encourage members to add recommendations to the Society Travel tips and Restaurant recommendations on the Website.



# Little Hedgecourt

## André's Country Home for Half a Century



When André was demobbed in 1919 he moved, with his family, into a flat in Evelyn Mansions, near Victoria station. It was ideally situated for catching the morning train to Reims and within walking distance of The Ritz and the Carlton but to quote André, “We were for the first time without a garden and we all loved a garden. So we looked round for a garden within easy reach of Victoria, where we could run down for a breath of fresh air at the week-ends: and we bought Little Hedgecourt.”

Little Hedgecourt, is twenty-eight miles from the City, on the main London-Eastbourne road, two miles north of East Grinstead, at Felbridge, on the Surrey/Sussex border.

In his autobiography ‘By Request’ André tells us, “It was not at all what we had intended to buy. It was really as unsuitable as it could possibly be, but having bought it in haste we made up our minds to like it and we did not regret it in the end. What we had had in mind was a house large enough for us, our five children, a friend or two occasionally, two servants and a chauffeur. What we had bought was a couple of farm labourers' cottages, one of them very old in part and the other, three hundred yards away, not nearly so old but dull and by no means modern. The older and larger cottage had been enlarged and modernized by the people from whom we bought it: they had put in a small bathroom, and there was no object in having a large bathroom since there was no water other than that which could be pumped from the well outside. There was neither gas nor electricity for either light or heat. But, in time, all was put right. We first of all dug a cellar, facing north, and built a garage; we brought the main water all the way from Redhill and electricity from East Grinstead; we built on a new kitchen, a larger dining-room, four bedrooms and two good bathrooms. The other cottage was given to the head gardener and his family, and we built a third one, near the gate, as a lodge and a home for our other gardener.”

Jean Roberts, whose father was among the workforce of five gardeners, was born at The Lodge, and remembers as a child seeing the extensive work that was being carried out. The twenty-eight acres was mostly, rough grazing and woodland with a large number of great old oaks, ditches full of stagnant green water, with brambles everywhere. As André explained there was one attraction, “There was a sheet of water, sixty acres according to the Ordnance Map, an artificial lake with a dam at one end built to flood a narrow valley, Hedgecourt Lake. It meant swimming in the summer and skating in the winter but above all it meant work, and the kind of work I dearly loved, planning, creating order out of chaos. This, I knew, I would enjoy far more than sitting on the beach and staying at seaside hotels. But it really was the water that sold the land.”

Jean Roberts remembers that by the 30's a lot of alterations had been made, many trees and shrubs had been planted, especially Rhododendrons and Azaleas. She recalls the excitement preparing for cricket matches in the roadside field. “There would be many cars and coaches from London with teams made up from friends connected with the Wine Trade. The Felbridge XI and Lingfield XI would be challenged, and according to Mr Simon's memoirs, the Beer v. Wine matches were most amusing as the beer drinkers could not resist the wine, and in his words, ‘Wine and first class cricket were not the best partners.’”

In the 1920's André had an Open Air Theatre constructed. There were four tiers of half circle grass covered steps as a sitting area backed by Lime trees. The wings of the stage were Golden Yew and Beech trees. Jean's parents told her of the parties of people from London that would come down, well-known actors and actresses of the time, and especially Mr. Cochran's Young Ladies.

When the crash of 1932 came they had to let the house but were back in residence within three years.

“In August 1939 my wife and I were at Little Hedgecourt, alone and lonely.” With little hope of the children returning the Simon's decided to sell. The asking price was, “ .... £8,000, which was just about half what we had paid for it in 1919. Plus what we had spent on it since then.” A buyer was found but when André heard that it was a developer who intended to build two streets of bungalows through his beloved garden, the sale was off.

“It was not long before we realised acutely how little it matters to lose one's money compared to the loss of ones children: with luck and hard work there is always more money to be found somewhere but the children who leave home to live their own lives can neither be recalled or replaced.”

It must have made the Simon's very happy when their daughter Jeanne returned from Switzerland with her husband and daughter at the start of the war. They settled at Little Hedgecourt and were still in residence when André died in 1970.

**Hedgecourt House as it is today, available with 6½ acres for £2.25Million through Chesterton Humberts**

