



Food & Wine



March 2011

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CHAIRMAN'S

MESSAGE

Dear Members

In the December magazine I wrote about the value of 'Front of House Staff' in restaurants and any other part of the hospitality industry. Since then, in the UK, Michele Roux from the 2 Michelin Starred La Gavroche, has had an excellent television programme on the BBC training young people with no background in catering to be waiters, sommeliers and maître d's. The main lesson is to teach them to serve without being servile; to enjoy service without being servants. The most difficult lesson was to carve, at table, for customers who included our illustrious editor. The unhappy trainee tried to persuade Pam that a rib of beef was in fact lamb but as a retired farmer she was not convinced! I commend the Roux family, who have a long association with this Society, for their efforts in raising standards and training the next generation to become part of a growing industry.

Before Christmas I also attended my own branch celebrations at Paul Heathcote's Longridge restaurant (detailed on page 28). Paul used to contribute recipes to this magazine. Because we had taken over the whole restaurant on a day when it was normally closed Paul did not have his full staff available so came in himself. I think most people (members and staff) assumed he would either take over the kitchen or wander about talking to customers. But he left the cooking in the capable hands of Head Chef Chris Bell (who will compete in 'The Great British Menu' this year) and acted as a commis waiter ferrying food to table. A superb example of management by example; he won brownie points from both his customers and his employees. Perhaps in the future we will be having courses to teach us to be better customers!

There will be many challenges facing the Society this year. Your executive committee (the EAC) and probably the Annual Branch Representatives meeting will have to consider and debate a suggestion from America to move our administration and to spend funds setting up some form of 'destination office' that members from around the world would wish to visit on a regular basis. In the past I have spent over 20 years organising and leading groups of wine lovers around the world's vineyards. Some of our branches organise foreign trips to enjoy food and wine. Most branches offer some form of hospitality to members visiting their area. And these requests are likely to increase as a result of the new website. However good the destination it is my personal belief that most people wish to try something and somewhere different each time. The benefit of an International Society is that the whole world is available to us.

The majority of members attending the Merseyside Festival in June come from outside Europe. I do hope that some, more local; members take the opportunity of attending some of the individual events within the Festival so that we can enjoy sharing our wine and food with members from around the world. The next International Festival is scheduled for Vancouver in September 2012 but before that we are looking forward to a 'Great Weekend' in Zurich in June 2012 and some smaller 'Awaydays'. The best way to keep up to date with what is happening is to regularly visit the new website. But that will only happen and be effective if branches maintain their own pages. The steering committee is now working on phase 2. We have already received many enquiries, through the website, from different countries about setting up new branches. But we do need our branch pages to demonstrate the benefits of membership in both text and pictures.

Finally I mentioned the unfortunate accident and injury that occurred to our new Society Chairman's wife at the Sydney Festival. I am pleased to report that she was eventually flown home by air ambulance and is now recovering. As a past insurance professional I should point out the necessity of both individual and Society insurance cover.

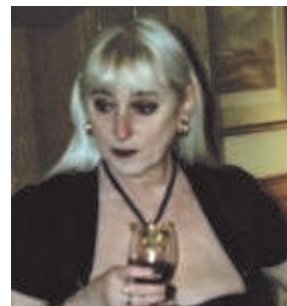
Ron Barker

CONTRIBUTORS



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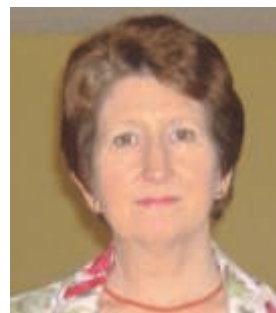
Since retiring from the IT industry, Chris has developed contacts in vineyards across France, Germany, Italy & Lebanon. His current interest is in Chilean wineries. He is a committee member for the IWFS Berkshire Branch, writing articles on food & wine.



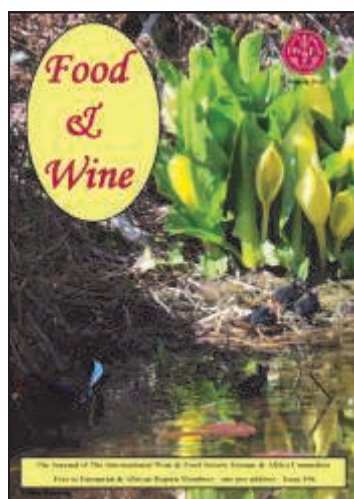
Carole Goldberg has been an IWFS member since 1976. She used to help organise events for HQ before the London branch was formed. For several years now she has been the London Branch Events Manager in which capacity she is well known for organising many eclectic events. Amongst her many other interests she is a keen philatelist.



Andy & Sandy Rose set up The Two Hoots Cheese Company, located in the heart of Berkshire, in February 2003. Sandy is from farming stock and after she married Andy they took over a 30 acre smallholding in Hampshire. Moving to Berkshire they started producing cheese commercially and had immediate success. Since then they have won many medals with their Barkham varieties of artisan cheeses.



Katie Wilkins joined the IWFS over 20 years ago, originally with London branch, she has since moved to Newcastle and joined Northern Dales Branch. She took early retirement in 2006 so now, as well as her work for IWFS, she is able to indulge her passions for theatre and writing.



Food & Wine

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Editorial

As we look forward to the year ahead at least we can console ourselves that February's fill dyke is, so far, black not white. With spring in the air and Easter around the corner our cover picture shows newly hatched moorhens drying themselves in the sun. As to the food connotations, moorhen eggs are excellent to eat but there are mixed opinions on the culinary uses of the birds themselves. Some say they are disgusting, others say edible but tough, I haven't tried. The edibility of the skunk cabbage, (*Lysichitum americanum*) is debatable. In some countries its large, waxy leaves are important in food preparation and storage where they are commonly used to line berry baskets and to wrap around whole salmon and other foods when baked under a fire. Evidently the roots are food for bears, who eat them after hibernating, as a laxative or cathartic!

Again the Michelin ritual has been performed with very little change. A few more single stars have been awarded but the top restaurants have mainly stayed the same. Maybe I am just getting old and more difficult to please but I find the majority of single star establishments very disappointing. There is much hype at the moment about Heston's new restaurant 'Dinner', at the Mandarin Oriental. Having sampled both cuisines I think Blumenthal's take on the food can do little for the superb fare served at this prestigious hotel. He admits that the Fat Duck is his first love and that he will not be presiding over his London subsidiary himself and an absentee chef is rarely a recipe for success.

We have a diverse mix of articles from artisan cheese makers to ethnic dining. Both Carole Goldberg (London) and Chris Graham (Berkshire) have been on their travels and returned with interesting stories. Derek Hawes relates how he was seduced at a St James's Branch event and, after my fun experiences in 'Service' I have included my own tribute to the Roux dynasty.

I trust you are now all becoming familiar with our new website and that each branch has appointed a webmaster who will be loading all the details of your forthcoming events and reports of past events. Only when every branch maintains their own area will the website come into its own as a tool for members to keep in touch worldwide. Used properly it will be a wonderful resource, wherever you travel there will be events at your fingertips.

Unfortunately we have fewer branch reports this time, please keep them coming. Remember when you write an event up you can post it on your branch website as well. I love the photo from the West Yorkshire Branch, obviously EU Health & Safety regulations haven't yet reached Jersey!

Once again our friends in the Americas are wishing to reorganise the Society. They had their way last time when they decreed the end of the Society Headquarters in London as André knew it. Up to the end of the 80's many large prestigious events were organised from there, and members from all branches were welcomed to enjoy some wonderful hospitality. Now the proposal is to spend our funds setting up a new home for the Society in California. André must be turning in his grave.

Pam Brunning

Contents

Secretariat News	4
Liverpool Festival	5
Eggs	6 - 7
A Pilgrimage	8 - 9
A Dissertation on Roast Pig	10
What does iwfs.org mean to you?	11
More Monarchs on the Menu	12 - 13
West Goes East	14 - 15
'Service'	16
A Recipe with a Story to tell	17
Cheese Makers of Distinction	18 - 19
Seduced	20
Collectanea - solina	21
Ethnic Experiences	22 - 23
Around the Branches	24 - 33
Restaurant Review	34 - 35
International Festival Vancouver	36

Dear Members

With the launch of the IWFS website in October last year, I hope that you are now getting to grips with this new source of information about your society – whether it be bringing you more up-to-date with the activities of your local branch (although not everyone has been able to upload this information as yet) or the international events run by the IWFS. From the International Secretariat the following information is available to you:

- Overview – provides you with a brief overview of the role of the International Secretariat and how we may assist you.
- News – currently includes information about the latest “Biodynamics in Wine” monograph.
- Society Papers – official documents about the Society can be located here plus articles on the co-founders.
- For members – here you can locate information about how to order Vintage Cards, Monographs, Merchandise (a new stock of lapel pins has just been received giving you the chance to discretely show your membership of the IWFS), Insurance details covering members of the Society plus Benefits for members*.
- Society Awards – here you can view a full list of medals awarded to members since the first Gold medal was awarded to André Simon in 1965.

* I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the **benefits for members**.

I have once again secured discounted accommodation rates in London for you at The Ritz, Piccadilly; Mandarin Oriental, Hyde Park and the In & Out (home of the IS), Piccadilly. The list is restricted to this select few as in this day and age discounted hotel accommodation can be found on many websites. However the three we continue to work with are able to offer you added value, as well as a special price.

If you are planning a trip to London this year - maybe to soak in the atmosphere of the royal wedding in April - then these prices are available all year round (although I have been advised that rooms are going fast). During the year, you may be able to pick up a slightly cheaper price for their rooms, but not in peak season. So, subject to availability, these really are good deals in prime London sites. As I write The Ritz have provided special corporate rates which also offers complimentary broadband access (normally charged at £26 per day). I am also awaiting details from them of a “dining” offer giving members somewhere special to dine when visiting town. The Mandarin Oriental continues to offer members its Preferred Business Plus Program plus they offer extras which are not usually included within this rate: Continental Breakfast for up to two guests, free local phone calls, free use of wireless lan internet and an upgrade, subject to availability at check in. The In & Out continues to offer excellent value accommodation in a prime London location in the unique English club surroundings. Plus the Club also offers special prices during key holiday periods – August and Christmas – so if you are planning a holiday to London in the Summer or wanting to take a punt on a white Christmas in London then the In & Out is the place to be - but you need to book early.

And finally Decanter magazine have come up trumps this year with a 40% discount on a two year subscription for UK members and a 50% discount for members overseas. While hopefully this will appeal to members this really is also a great birthday gift for friends or family who have a keen interest in wine and is a convenient way to send something they will value all year round.

Decanter offer is:

UK

Direct Debit Offer

Pay just £16.50 every 6 months by Direct Debit - Saving 35% on the full price of £25.55

Cheque/Credit/Debit Card Offers

1 Year £32.99 - Saving 35% on the full price of £51.10

2 Year £61.00 - Saving 40% on the full price of £102.20

Europe

1 Year €70.50 - Saving 50% on the full price of €141

2 Year €141 - Saving 50% on the full price of €282

Rest of World

1 Year £ 46.50 - Saving 50% on the full price of £93.55

2 Year £ 93.50 - Saving 50% on the full price of 187.10

Code: 15x

URL: www.decantersubs.com/I <<http://www.decantersubs.com/Idebd>>

To order call: +44 (0)845 123 1231

Full details on all these offers are available on the website (inc prices for the US).

That is it for now – do let me know if you have any thoughts on how I maybe able to assist further.

Best wishes to you all

Andrea Warren February 2011

EAC LIVERPOOL FESTIVAL
EVENTS AVAILABLE TO ALL BRANCH MEMBERS
14TH - 18TH JUNE 2011



15th June - Wednesday

Black Tie Dinner at Knowsley Hall - £175.00 per person

Knowsley Hall was originally built in the 15th century and has been altered, embellished & extended by succeeding generations the same family - the Stanleys, Earls of Derby. There will be an opportunity before the meal to be taken round the Hall, which is not normally open to the public outside a minimal number of days per year.

We shall enjoy a pink champagne reception with canapés, a 6 course menu with 5 wines from Bordeaux, featuring a mature 'super second' claret which will accompany the venison and a top Pessac-Leognan white wine with the fish course.

There is an option to stay overnight in the Hall for £175 per double room

16th June - Thursday

'Tapas & Sherry' tasting on the river - £50.00 per person

We shall enjoy a 'Tapas & Sherry' tasting on the River Dee, aboard the splendid 'Lady Diana' river cruise boat - Lustau sherries will be tasted with a 3 course Tapas meal

16th June - Thursday Evening

Dinner at the superbly renovated Isla Gladstone Conservatory £90.00 per person

An award winning English Rose sparkling wine will be served and a locally inspired 6 course dinner which the chef has created especially, with 7 wines from Spain & Portugal including Gran Reserva Rioja & vintage port.

18th June - Saturday

Black Tie Dinner at Chester Grosvenor Hotel £165.00 per person

We have arranged a superb menu with Chef Simon Radley, who will present excellent 'inspired' food, which demonstrates why they have maintained their Michelin star in terms of the quality of the meals and general ambience. Six excellent wines have been selected.

Overnight accommodation available at £180 per double room

Your attendance at these meals will afford you the opportunity of meeting members from all over the World and should you decide to visit the overseas branches, you will be made most welcome as the Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire and Manchester Branches will testify during their tours.

We can also offer the following package:-

Transport from Hope Street to Knowsley Hall for the Black Tie Dinner plus transport from Hope Street to Chester for the Sherry & Tapas tasting plus transport to the Isla Gladstone Dinner

*Total cost per person - £315 **plus** Accommodation which is available on Wednesday and Thursday nights at the Hope Street Hotel.*

For more information please contact: Val Bishop karnak.fvb@btinternet.com

EGGS



Moorhen



Quail



Chicken - brown
Duck - white

By Pam Brunning

The Egyptians god, Ptah, created the sun and moon from one. Since ancient times they have been considered the symbols of life. The Roux brothers built an empire on them, producing the humble soufflé. A fresh one will sink in water, a stale one will float.

On average a hen lays 266 per year and an emu's weigh about ¾ pound.

Yes, we are talking of eggs. It is often the case that you either love them or hate them. If you hate them I am sure you will find plenty of other interesting things to read in this issue!

As the egg preceded man in the evolutionary chain, they've existed longer than historians so no one knows when the first egg was eaten. Indian history indicates that wild fowl were domesticated as early as 3,200 B.C. Egyptian and Chinese records show that fowl were laying eggs for man in 1,400 B.C. and Europe has had domesticated hens since 600 B.C. Today in the UK alone we consume over 32 million eggs every day. They contain all the essential protein, minerals and vitamins we need except for Vitamin C. Egg yolks are one of few foods that naturally contain Vitamin D and also contain choline. Choline is a nutrient in the B Vitamin family, which it is thought is important to our early development. Throughout our lives it stimulates brain development and function and helps preserving memory. Eggs also are good for your eyes because they contain lutein which helps prevents age-related cataracts and muscular degeneration. It has been found that eggs contain more lutein than the equivalent amount of spinach and other green vegetables.

The majority of eggs consumed today are from chicken that are the descendants of the red jungle fowl (*Gallus gallus spadiceus*) that is common in Asia. There are some 150 chicken species and numerous breeds.

From the 29 million laying hens in Britain approximately 27% of the eggs produced are Free Range. This definition, **under EU law means that, 'hens must have continuous daytime access to open-air runs**, except in the case of temporary restrictions imposed by veterinary authorities. The open-air runs are mainly covered with vegetation and not used for other purposes except for orchards or woodland. The maximum stocking density is not greater than 2,500 hens per hectare of ground or one hen per 4 square metres at all times'. In theory this sounds acceptable but in practise this is far from the case. Look at a field of free range hen houses, on all but the warmest of days, there will be many more birds holed up inside than there are out and about scratching. The chicken knows the best place, in the warm.

There are no nutritional differences between brown and white eggs, in the UK brown eggs are preferred, but in America white is the favoured colour. The colour of the shell is purely down to the breed of hen and the colour of the yolk depends on the food consumed. If free range birds have been out scratching around and found worms the yolks will be a darker colour. Yolk colour is mainly achieved by diet but the nutritional value of the egg is not affected by the shell or yolk colour.

There have been many egg scares over the years mainly due to the fear of salmonella infection. UK egg sales fell by 60% after Edwina Curry said, in 1988, that most of the country's egg production was infected by salmonella. Many producers went bankrupt and she was forced to resign over the statement. A much more rigorous testing regime came into force and the cost of this forced many more small producers out of business.

Recently there was a scare when 14 tonnes of eggs, in liquid form, was exported to the UK from Germany, for manufacturing purposes. The eggs, destined for the production of bakery products were from hens that had consumed feed that had been contaminated with dioxins.

Eggs, which have about 17,000 tiny pores, can easily become contaminated through the shells. This was the case, **when in the 1950's, duck eggs acquired a reputation for carrying salmonella. Ducks are inclined to drop their eggs in** muddy, dirty water and if left without washing they can easily become infected. These delicious eggs were shunned for many years and are only recently making a comeback with more chefs using them on their menus. Usually white (never buy duck eggs that have grey, stained shells) and sometimes green these eggs have larger yolks than chicken eggs and a higher fat content, which makes them richer. They contain more calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc etc and are also said to contain much more of the omega-3 fatty acids, the one that has been linked to reducing the risk of heart attacks, amongst other health benefits. They provide a powerful protein boost, approximately 15% of the adult recommended daily allowance. If you have a source of clean, fresh duck eggs they are well worth the extra money.

A duck egg can be used as a direct substitute for a hen's egg and are especially useful in baking, given the higher proportion of yolk to white they make very light cakes. They also make superb omelets and lift the modest pancake to new heights. Best of all gently fried with your bacon and mushrooms for breakfast they are far superior to the humble chicken egg.

Always keep your eggs in the fridge, eggs will age more in one day at room temperature than in one week in the refrigerator. When using for baking bring them to room temperature immediately before using in a bowl of warm water.

Many other eggs are consumed around the world from the smallest of quail eggs to an ostrich egg which is twenty times the size of a chicken egg. Pheasant eggs are excellent and can often be purchased from pheasant hatcheries; they are 'incubator clears' which have been candled, a process whereby a light is shone through the egg to see if it is fertile. Moorhens eggs are always very popular with the countryman. They need collecting from the nest as soon as they are laid as they addle very quickly. If one egg is always left in the nest the moorhen will continue to lay and keep you supplied with a succession of eggs.

Evidently nearly half of us still believe that we should eat a maximum of three eggs a week. This theory was based on the high cholesterol content but the good news is that there is no significant link between eating eggs and raised cholesterol levels. A new report published at the beginning of 2011 in the British Nutrition Foundation's Nutrition Bulletin emphasises that it is saturated fat, not the cholesterol found in foods like eggs, that is the main dietary 'culprit' in raising blood cholesterol levels, eggs are not high in saturated fat. The Food Standards Agency also advises that most people don't need to limit how many eggs they have, if they are eating a balanced diet.

Says Helenbeth Reynolds, a registered dietitian and nutrition consultant, "Starting the day with a high-quality protein breakfast like eggs is a great tool to promote long-lasting fullness and reduced calorie consumption. With only 70 calories, eggs are a compact, nutrient-rich source of high-quality protein, and nearly half of an egg's protein, along with many other nutrients, is found in the yolk, so I always encourage eating the whole egg." This statement is backed up in the journal 'Nutrition Research' which states that, "eating eggs for breakfast helps reduce calorie consumption throughout the day by 18 percent".

The egg industry wanted to re-run the iconic British Lion mark egg advertisement filmed in 1957 starring Tony Hancock to mark their 50th anniversary. However this was banned by the UK Government watchdog because, 'it didn't promote a balanced diet'. It is comforting to know that in the light of the new research we can all, once again **'GO TO WORK ON AN EGG'**

EGG TIPS

Egg on your Face:

Egg can reduce the puffiness under the eye. Apply a thin film of white under the eye and allow to remain for 10-15mins.

Egg white mask can make the pores appear almost invisible right away. Just apply the Egg white to a clean damp face and make it stay for 10 min for sensitive and dry skin and 20 minutes for normal to oily skin.

Egg mask can make the skin tighter and firmer.

Egg yolk mask is ideal for those with sensitive and dry skin. Egg yolk is rich in vitamin A that is a strong anti-wrinkle vitamin.

Egg mask is ideal for irritated skin, because it contains amino acids that help nourish skin cells to reduce inflammation.

Eggs can restore Radiance to Stressed and Damaged Hair.

Excessive exposure to the sun, pollution and chlorine from the swimming pool can wreak havoc on your hair. To revive dry and damaged hair, combine 1 egg yolk, 1 tbsp of olive oil and 1 cup of water. Apply to damp hair from roots to tips and let sit for 5 minutes and then rinse with cool water. The yolk is rich in fatty acids and when applied to dry hair will make it shiny for up to a week. This concoction also fortifies hair with healing vitamin A, E and D to combat future damage.

Eggs can make your plants stronger.

To keep indoor and outdoor plants healthy, crush leftover eggshells and sprinkle over the soil. The nutrient-rich shells add calcium, a mineral that plants use to build the new cell walls and membranes required for growth. The shells' sharp edges scrape the soft bellies of outdoor pests like snails and slugs, preventing them from snacking on the plants' leaves. Beaten egg is also applied to leaves of indoor plants to make them strong and shiny.

Eggs can restore the shine of your old leather

To restore the shine of your old and worn out leather, separate the whites of 2 eggs into a bowl. Then use a dry cloth to apply the whites to the leather in a circular motion. The proteins in the egg whites moisturize the material to give it a like-new shape and shine.



Leda, daughter of the Aetolian king Thestius, and wife of the king Tyndareus of Sparta, was admired by Zeus, who seduced her in the guise of a swan. As a swan, Zeus fell into her arms for protection from a pursuing eagle. Their consummation, on the same night as Leda lay with her husband Tyndareus, resulted in two eggs from which hatched the immortals Polydeuces and Helen - later known as the beautiful "Helen of Troy"

Escoffier is credited with establishing the *toque blanche*, the tall chefs hat. He maintained that it should have 100 pleats and that the pleats represent the number of different ways of preparing eggs that a chef should know.





Chateau Musar

A Pilgrimage.....and a Revelation!

By Chris Graham



We're going to Lebanon, I am told! Well then, Chateau Musar must be on the itinerary, I say!

Very well known in Europe, and a regular attendee at the London International Wine Fair, Chateau Musar must rate as the best known Lebanese wine, world-wide. The Berkshire Branch even had Ralph Hochar present a superb Chateau Musar vertical tasting 2-3 years ago so to visit the home of these wines was an opportunity not to be missed.

We were met at the door of the winery, which is in a 200 year old Castle, by Fadia Kadmany who told us that the winery was started in 1930 by Gaston Hochar. He had two sons Serge (now the winemaker) & Ronald (originally an engineer). They each have a son, Ralph & Gaston, who are now also very involved in managing the business. Completely organic, the vineyards, which are in the dry Bekaa valley, grow cinsault, carignan and cabernet sauvignon, plus small quantities of syrah & Grenache, in soils with ph of 3.4 to 3.8. It takes 2-3 hours to transport the grapes from the Bekaa to the winery which is located about 40 minutes north of Beirut up the Ghazir road. This means early morning picking before the sun gets too hot. The vines were originally imported from France and Italy and are pruned to reduce the yield and improve quality. They use only natural, existing yeasts and over 90% of their production is exported.

The red wines are fermented with skins for 15 days in concrete vats, the first day the juice is white, the second day pink, after that it turns red. Temperatures are kept to a cool 20° to get more extract - over 30° will kill the yeast.

The white grapes are all local varieties. A "foule de grapeur" is used to de-stem and press and the wines are slowly fermented in stainless steel at less than 20°. Some sulphur is added to control oxidation and kill bacteria. We were reminded not to keep whites in the fridge as it stops the wine evolving in the bottle.

In common with every vineyard in Lebanon Musar also produces the local spirit Arak. The production of Arak starts with alcohol – ethanol - produced in house from their own wine. This is processed through the still – or alambic – 2 or 3 times to give different types of Arak. Finally, it is distilled again with aniseed seeds (from Damascus) for flavour. Arak distilled four times is unique to Musar and gives a spirit of 70 – 75% proof and is very smooth. The Arak is matured in ancient clay amphora with flat bases onto which plastic caps tied. When bottled, it is cut with water to give 53% proof. The proper method of serving Arak is in small glasses: **1/3 Arak, 1/3 water and 1/3 ice to give the correct flavour.**

Grape picking usually begins in September for red varieties, however for the last three years the vendage has been early and this year it started in August. White varieties are picked in October and by the end of October the vendage is over.

Cellaring technique at Musar is interesting and wandering about their cool cellars one is struck by the large and ancient cobwebs all around. Musar actively encourage spiders because they keep the flies and other insects in the cellar under control. They have also introduced a white plastic cap which fits over the top of the bottle and protects the cork from the humidity in the cellars, which would otherwise encourage black mould to grow on the cork.

Their cellar includes 37.5ml, 75ml and magnums - 1.5 liter - which last much longer. When the last remaining 500 bottles of a vintage are reached, that vintage is no longer sold but kept for competitions and special events. Musar advise that wine over 15 years old should always be decanted slowly to aerate the wine for 1 hour. When very old wine is ordered from the cellar, it will always be topped up from the same vintage and re-corked. Musar has been putting the year on the cork since 1980.

In the tasting room we were first treated to Musar Cuvee Rosé, 2009 and then Musar Cuvee Red, 2008. Then we tasted Chateau Musar 2001: at 13%, it was a transparent red/brown, ripe fruits on the nose, rich and coating the tongue with a long & lovely aftertaste. The Chateau Musar 2001 white, 12.5%, is made from local Obeideh and Mawah varieties, giving it a distinctive yellow colour, muscaty nose with strong caramel almost oxidised flavours. This wine should be served cool but not cold.

A fascinating and thorough visit to a professional organisation which repaid the Pilgrimage handsomely. It contrasted nicely with our Revelation in Lebanon, rather than on the road to Damascus, at Domaine des Tourelles in the town of Chtaura in the Bekaa Valley.

Established in 1868, this was the first commercial winery in Lebanon. Later bought by François Le Brun and then run by Pierre Le Brun, this winery is all organic and humanitarian (without chemicals and mechanisation), just as it was in 1868. In 2000 the 3rd generation le Bruns sold the estate to Faouzi Issa, who hosted our visit. Today the winery has 14 employees which, with office staff, make a total of 19, all of whom live in and around Chtaura. The oldest, Uncle Sam, has been with the winery for 54 years. Interestingly, Faouzi remembers living close by and as a child playing in the grounds!

The winery is situated at 1,100 meters and is very dry. This means no problems with pests or moulds. Faouzi considers Organic and Biodynamic to be equal. He did his thesis at Chateau Margaux (where better to learn the trade?) on Bio Dynamics and they concluded that there was no advantage to using Bio Dynamic techniques. However Domaine des Tourelles uses no technology, aiming to take “wine to glass without any interference”. This winery has seen 142 vendages and is kept as it always was – “wine needs ‘soldiers’”, Fauzi explains, “and these are retained in the fabric of the winery”.

This year the vendage started on 1st August and was completed by 21st September. The grapes are picked by unskilled Bedouin (who are hard workers) then winery staff do manual grape selection, followed by de-stemming. Old style screw presses are used which are slow and gentle with the grapes. Concrete fermentation vats are used because of the high ambient temperatures – sometime Faouzi uses “Ice Blades” to keep the temperature of the fermentation down. Manual remouage is employed, again no technology to disturb the wine, until the extraction is correct, tested by tasting every two hours. The wine is then allowed to go on through malolactic fermentation.

Wine production is 100,000 bottles and the same of Arak, with only a small percentage exported. Their wines have won medals in several Lebanese competitions and the enthusiasm and love for wine evinced by Faouzi should win them many more in the future.

Tasting was taken outside relaxing in the garden and began with a Rosé, deep red colour, 13%, made from tempranillo, cinsault, syrah and some obadieh. Nose of cherries, brut dry and very direct. We moved on to Domaine des Tourelles, 2007, an entry level red with an alcohol level of 14%. This wine is matured for 12 months in concrete vats and 8 months in the bottle. This delivers a very direct style of wine with some earthy aromas, a deep plum colour and intense flavours.

The Marquis de Beys, 2007 – bottled but not yet labelled - was a significant step up. Again 14% volume but made this time from 50% syrah and 50% cabernet sauvignon, the wine is blended and then aged in French oak barrels for 18 months.

The colour was a deep red, the nose a light earth but long in the mouth. The 2006 won a medal and one can understand why. Finally the Syrah du Liban, 2007, made from 40 year old vines. This wine exhibited a deep purple colour and, with its light aromatic nose, fills the mouth with loads of fruits and berry flavours and low tannins. Aged 2 years in oak this wine will continue to mature in bottle for some years.

This was a visit which excited the audience and opened the minds of some of the group as to the way a young, enthusiastic, winemaker thinks and as to what constitutes a good drinkable wine. Domaine des Tourelles wines are imported into the UK by Lebanese Fine Wines.



Bottling at Ch. Musar

Domaine des Tourelles



A Dissertation on Roast Pig,

by Charles Lamb (1775-1834)



Mankind, says a Chinese manuscript, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal. The art of roasting was discovered **accidentally**

One day the swine-herd, Ho-ti, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son, Bo-bo who, being fond of playing with fire, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which kindling quickly spread the conflagration over every part of their poor home until it was reduced to ashes. Of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs perished. Bo-bo was in utmost consternation, not so much for the sake of the tenement as for the loss of the pigs.

Wringing his hands over the remains of one of those untimely sufferers, an odour assailed his nostrils, unlike any other he had before experienced. What could it proceed from? He stooped down to feel the pig, burnt his fingers and, to cool them, applied them to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away on his fingers and, **for the first time in his life (and in anyone's life) he tasted – crackling!** Again he felt and fumbled at the pig, and still he licked his fingers out of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding, that it was the pig that smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious.

Surrendering himself up to the newborn pleasure he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next to it and was cramming it down his throat when his father returned. Finding how affairs stood Ho-ti **railed at the young rogue....**

"You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt down three houses. And now you must be eating fire, and I know not what..... what have you got there, I say?"

"O, father, the pig, the pig, do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats."

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror, and he cursed himself that he should ever have beget a son that should eat burnt pig. Bo-bo soon raked out another pig and thrust it into the fists of Ho-ti. Wavering whether he should not have his son put to death for being an unnatural young monster, the crackling scorched his fingers. Applying the same remedy as his son, he in his turn tasted some of the flavour. In conclusion, both father and son sat down to the mess and never left off till they had dispatched all that remained of the litter.

Bo-bo was enjoined not to let the secret escape, but nevertheless strange stories got about. It was observed that Ho-ti's **cottage burnt down more regularly than ever. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was Ho-ti's house to be ablaze. At length the terrible mystery** was discovered and father and son were summoned to trial. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food was produced in court, and verdict about to be pronounced when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the burnt pig might be handed into the box. Burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, nature prompted each of the jury to the same remedy. Against the face of all the facts, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, bought up all the pigs he could and in a few days **his Lordship's townhouse was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there** was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all

over the district, and insurance offices one and all shut up shop. Thus this custom of firing houses continued until, one day, a sage arose who made a discovery - that the flesh of swine, or any other animal, might be cooked without the necessity of burning down a whole house.

By slow degrees, concludes the manuscript, do the most useful and seemingly obvious arts make their way among mankind.

Abridged by Katie Wilkins from Charles Lamb's charming original in 'The Essays of Elia'.



What does iwfs.org mean to you?

An appeal from Tim Gittins EAC Marketing and PR Manager

The new website www.iwfs.org has provided a huge boost to the Society, especially in its goal to attract new members. Here I will summarise how the EAC can help branches consolidate what's been achieved.

Apart from the financial investment needed, progress to date has relied heavily on the tremendous contribution made by an international team of members who volunteered to nurture the site's development. To ensure that we reap maximum benefit from that work, the EAC would like all members and branch committees to consider what can be done locally.

Why is it vital for branches to be involved? Imagine picking up 'Wine and Food' for the first time because of the impressive front and back pages, but finding very little interesting material between the covers. Our flagship magazine relies heavily on branch input to help make the inside pages as attractive as possible. Similarly the website needs branch contributions. We will work hard to attract visitors to the site but if there's nothing of relevance when visitors look at the pages of the branch that is local to them, it's a lost opportunity.

Most of my effort since I became EAC Marketing Manager has been to understand what the site provides and how to take advantage of it, at regional and branch levels, including the setting up of a new branch.

From the outset, the EAC acknowledged that, for many members, using the internet is not straight-forward, therefore the technical expertise available to branches would vary enormously. A quick glance at what branches have achieved (by end of January 2011), confirms the committee's initial view that not all branches would move at the same pace.

Further, we felt that, to achieve the quality that is expected on websites, we should avoid standards varying between the EAC level (the 'outside' and editorial pages) and the equally important subject matter, the branch 'inside' pages.

To begin with we focused on the EAC material. Because the design of website content is a specialist area and full of pitfalls for the layman, the EAC supported my view that initially some professional help was needed, so I have worked with a designer to set up some of the graphics that appear on the EAC pages.

The initial brief for the designer was to produce some contemporary images with captions to summarise the essence of what the IWFS represents. We decided that the 'copy' on the overview page to which visitors are directed needed to be crisp and succinct, to recognise the very short time that people will look at a site to get an immediate impression. Examples of the graphics are shown.

The other project I have been working on, with the support of the EAC, is the launch of a new branch, based in Leeds, where I live. This would provide some practical experience of using the website as the main communication channel. We have targeted a different generation of wine and food lovers from those of us in the existing West Yorkshire branch, to learn how to find and communicate with younger potential members.

At the time of writing this article the Leeds branch initiative is still not complete – the official launch takes place on February 16th. I hope to report further on the outcome of this in the next edition of Food and Wine. In the meantime it's possible to check the progress on www.iwfsleeds.org

There has been enough reaction to the work so far from both within and outside the IWFS to feel confident that we are getting the right communication balance.

I have to be honest and admit that for me it's been a steep learning curve, but it's worth the view on the other side! With some experience behind me, I can, if needed, offer some assistance to those branches who would like help to get started, or to advise them on how improvements can be made. When the requirement is beyond what I am able to do, I can use the external designer.

To begin with, the focus is on what are known as 'branch public pages', those that any visitor can see, especially the branch overview page. The private branch pages, which are only accessible by members, are really for the branch to administer. However once progress is made on the public pages it's then relatively easy to tackle the rest.

All that a branch needs initially is access to someone who can type and use the internet. The EAC has set up pages for each branch to utilise. The most important is the Overview page, basically an introduction to local activities. As a minimum each branch needs something on this page, and that's where we can advise.

The next aspect is the visual images that appear at the left of the page, and towards the top, the 'header'. We are developing a library of graphics with captions similar to what are shown in this article. We can amend the captions and use non-English language if required. If a branch has a specific image that it would like to be used with a smart caption, we can also assist.

Please let me know how and if we can help you – 00 44 (0)1937 572065 or timgittins@aol.com

It's difficult to anticipate the support that individual EAC branches may need, if any. Most branches have different ways of doing things locally; it's one of the strengths of the IWFS. But we do learn from and help each other; like chefs and wine producers we should watch what is going on outside and adapt. The website is a watershed – and we want to ensure that everyone gets through this evolutionary stage in the Society's history.

"Contemporary graphics used on the website"



More Monarchs on the Menu

by Alan F Harrison



Victoria by Winterhalter, Franz Xavier (1806-1873)

Queen Victoria (1819 – 1901) was Queen Regnant of

the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Her reign lasted more than sixty-three years, longer than that of any other British monarch and her reign is the longest of any female monarch in history. The Victorian era was a period of industrial, cultural, political, scientific, and military progress within the United Kingdom. Prince Albert (1819 – 1861), her husband, was born to a family connected to many of Europe's ruling monarchs. They were first cousins and had nine children. Over time, he adopted many public causes such as educational reform and the abolition of slavery, and ran the Queen's

household, estates and office. He died at the early age of 42 and much of Victoria's widowhood of almost sixty years was spent in self-inflicted social isolation. It is surprising that she has the most mentions on the menu and not surprising that Albert has only two. Albert Sauce is used in several dishes and is roux-thickened water plus egg yolks, mustard, lemon juice, vinegar and grated horseradish cooked in consommé. Breadcrumbs are then added. As late as the 1970s, the sauce was passed through a thick *tammy cloth* tucked inside a saucepan. Two *commis de cuisine* would pull and squeeze the cloth. A food-hygiene inspector's nightmare at the washing stage! **Snipe or Cailles (quail) Prince Albert** are stuffed with foie gras and truffles before being braised. They are presented on a nest of straw potatoes filled with savoury pancakes.

Around this are olives, decorated truffles, button mushrooms and kidneys. Indigestion nightmares!

Poularde Victoria is baked with foie gras, brandy and truffle in an earthenware *cocotte* and garnished with Parmentier potatoes (fried cubes). In her time, salad was not a seemingly compulsory adjunct to everything as it is today. *Salade Victoria* is lettuce with crayfish, truffle and cucumber. *Noisettes Victoria* are dressed on a chicken croquette accompanied by tomatoes stuffed with mushroom purée. *Tartelettes Vic-*

toria are filled with diced lobster, truffle and mushroom and decorated with lobster coral (eggs). We could fill the page with her menu-mentions and suffice it to say that she enjoys more than thirteen garnishes and dish names. This is more than anyone else and suggests London dominance over Paris in the use of the Répertoire.

Edward VII was King of the United Kingdom, the British Dominions and Emperor of India from 1901 until his death in 1910.



He was the first British monarch of the House of Saxe-Coburg and **Gotha** (**his father's house**), which was renamed the House of Windsor by his son, George V. Before his accession to the throne, Edward held the title of Prince of Wales and was heir apparent to the throne for longer than anyone in history. During the long widowhood of his mother, Queen Victoria, he was largely excluded from political power and came to personify the fashionable, leisured elite. The Edwardian period, which covered Edward's reign, coincided with the start of a new century and heralded significant changes in technology and society, including powered flight and the rise of socialism and the Labour movement. He fostered good relations between Great Britain and other European countries, especially France. *His dishes bear the names Edouard VII, Prince de Gaules, and Windsor* (shared with George V) - Brown Windsor Soup. Alexandra of Denmark (1844 – 1925) was Queen of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions



King Edward VII in coronation robes

and Empress of India from 1901 to 1910 as the consort of Edward VII. Her family had been relatively obscure until her father was chosen to succeed his distant cousin to the Danish throne. At the age of sixteen she was chosen as the future wife of the Prince of Wales. They married eighteen months later. As Princess of Wales from 1863 to 1901, the longest anyone has held that title, she won the hearts of the British people and became very popular. Her style of dress and bearing were copied by fashion-conscious women. *Cailles Alexandra* are cooked in earthenware *cocottes* and garnished with diced truffle, quarters of Jerusalem artichokes, **cocks' combs and kidneys, and served with Madeira Sauce**. *Supreme de Volaille Alexandra* (chicken breast) is cooked in butter with sliced truffle, covered with Mornay (cheese) sauce and then *glazed* (browned) under a grill. Bouquets of asparagus tips go on at the last minute. There is also a cold egg dish and a sole dish. Perhaps the most widely known dish is *Coupe Alexandra* - strawberry ice-cream with a macedoine of diced fresh fruit.

Moving to the end of this UK garnitural line, we now have George V who was King of the UK etc from 1910 and through the First World War until his death in 1936. George was the first British monarch of the House of *Windsor* when he *reinvented* (to use the modern term) the British branch of the German House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. From the age of twelve George served in the Royal Navy, but upon the unexpected death of his elder brother, he became second in line to the throne (after his father) and married his brother's fiancée, Mary of Teck. Although he and his wife occasionally toured the British Empire, George preferred to stay at home pursuing his hobbies of stamp collecting and game shooting, and lived a dull life. He was plagued by illness throughout much of his later reign. From this one imagines that he shunned high society. Perhaps ice-cream cheered him up as a *ruche* (beehive) bears his name. Really, it is a form of *Baked Alaska*. Take a large oval silver flat and place thereon a piece of sponge (*Genoise*—Genovese not *Victoria* sponge). Cover this with freshly-made vanilla ice-cream and poached peach quarters. Cover all this with meringue flavoured with orange-flower. Pipe meringue to decorate and bake in a very hot oven until brown. Voila – vous avez une *Ruche George V*.



There is a table of many more garnishes at <http://www.gastronomyafharrison.co.uk/page6.php> and more narrative in the first chapter of *Gastronomy via* the same page.



West Goes East - The Best Of British Travels To Tallinn with Carole Goldberg



In late April 2010, the phone rang, “Hello, my name’s Peter Carter. You don’t know me but I’m Her Majesty’s Ambassador to Estonia and I’m calling from Tallinn!” So started my Best of British promotion.

Peter put me in touch with Martin Dungay, Chairman of Tallinn Branch and 5 months later – armed with a suitcase full of cheeses, frozen sausages, not many clothes but a hefty excess baggage fee, I was met in Tallinn by Martin and his lovely wife Erge. I stayed with them for the first 4 days and then moved into the Embassy Residence.

I was helping Peter promote English wines having chosen two for a dinner at the Residence. The next night I was leading a tasting of English wines for 24 members of Tallinn Branch, followed by a supper of English cheeses and sausages, for which Peter Carter kindly loaned the Residence.

Peter was to be in England the week before both events and as he was driving over, had selflessly agreed to take all wines back for his dinner and the Tallinn Branch tasting. Isn’t it wonderful what CD number-plates can do?

English wines aren’t everyone’s cup of tea, many people don’t like them. “No depth, no body, won’t mature, too light, insipid” are just some of the comments I’ve received. What I hoped to show was that when English wines are good, they can be very successful and enjoyable indeed. I chose my favourite 3 reds with 2 sparkling and 4 still whites.

Peter Carter held his dinner in conjunction with a Constable Exhibition for which the V&A had loaned their collection of paintings. I had chosen 2005 Nyetimber Classic Cuvée for his reception and 2009 Wickham Special Release Fumé for one of his dinner whites. Both showed very well and impressed his dinner guests, most of whom were not aware that England actually produced wine, let alone wines of this quality.

For the Tallinn Branch event, we started with 2008 Camel Valley Brut, Cornwall. Despite favourable reports I was sorely disappointed with it. A blend of Seyval Blanc, Huxelrebe and Reichensteiner, we all found this bland, uninspiring and certainly not worth £18.99. The 2005 Nyetimber again showed very well indeed with excellent mousse, good fresh “biscuity” fruit and a lovely long finish. Not in the same league yet as the famed 2003 but give it time to mature. The first white, 2009 Bolney Wine Estate Pinot Grigio (formerly Bookers Vineyard) was chosen purely because an English Pinot Grigio sounded intriguing. I hadn’t been able to try it before the event but I love Pinot Grigio and was looking forward to it. Sadly, whilst a pleasant-ish low alcohol (10.9%) wine for summer supping in the garden, it didn’t distinguish itself overly and wasn’t a patch on Italian Pinot Grigio’s. The 2009 Wickham Special Release Fumé really showed its class and once again impressed everyone there. A blend of 50% Bacchus and 50% Reichensteiner, it had a lovely fumé nose reminiscent of a gentle Sauvignon Blanc, was delicately oaked and full of excellent bodied fruit. This was also our supper wine, it stood up very well to strong tasting food on both nights. For those who aren’t aware, this is the House of Commons white table wine under their own label.



Having previously bought Leventhorpe Vineyard's 2005 Madeleine Angevine, I was much looking forward to the 2007. However there were mixed reactions and, **despite it being Martin Dungay's favourite** white of the evening, I was disappointed as it had more acid and less fruit than the superb 2005 which was still drinking very well in September 2010. The final white **was Stanlake Park's 2005 Gewürtztraminer**. I have to admit that Gewürtz is *not* a wine I like at all but it sounded interesting and Peter Dart makes excellent wines. However I really enjoyed this because it tasted nothing like a Gewürtz to me, it

was much drier and less floral and perfumed, but those Gewürtz enthusiasts present were not impressed. Verdict? Easy drinking and pleasant but nothing whatsoever like a Gewürtz!

Peter Dart also produced the 2006 Ruscombe Red which is his everyday wine and was also our supper wine. Unfortunately he had sold out of his excellent Special Reserve which I particularly wanted to show but the Ruscombe acquitted itself very well with good fruit and body and smooth tannins. Our second red **was a new find, 2007 Carter's Vineyard's King Coel Red. This was proclaimed by all to be the most interesting** wine of the evening. A blend of Rondo, Dornfelder, Dunkelfelder and Pinot Noir, it has a complex flavour of red berry fruits and gentle tannins from ageing 11 months in French oak. For a mere 11% alcohol - no-one could believe it - this is an amazing full bodied wine and needs an hour to open. Our final wine, 2008 Wickham Special Reserve Red, was agreed by all to be the star of the evening. Made from Rondo and Pinot noir this has a full rich damson fruit body, soft tannins and a lovely smooth finish. A very stylish wine and a real class act.

A supper of 7 English cheeses – Cornish Yarg, Cropwell Bishop Gamekeeper, Stinking Bishop, Swalesdale Old Peculiar, Dorstone, Duddleswell and Wigmore, English butter from Netherend Farm and Prior's Clotted Cream Butter – and 5 British sausages – Ostrich, Pork and Black Pudding, Pork and Leek, Lamb and Harissa and Pork and Parsnip accompanied by wild mushroom pasta, went down very well with hardly a crumb of cheese left!

On the Saturday in superb warm weather Martin and Erge took Peter Carter and myself out for the day. We travelled one hour from Tallinn to North West Estonia, to pick mushrooms and berries in a nature reserve in the middle of Noarootsi, meaning young Sweden as it was settled by Swedes in the 18th and 19th century. This area was designated a no-go border area by the Soviets, and it has been a natural habitat for wild life for many years. Afterwards we visited a local beach, one of the best swimming beaches in Estonia, close by at Nõva yours truly responded to a challenge and paddled in the freezing Baltic Sea!

My thanks go to Peter Carter for loaning the Residence, the lovely people of Tallinn Branch who were so friendly and interested but most of all to Martin and Erge Dungay who took me into their home and their hearts. A threat or a promise? I will return!!!!



Carole and Peter Carter Mushroom hunting

Photos by Martin Dungay, Chairman Tallinn Branch



Michel Roux's 'Service', with a Smile



To the older generation the word 'service' usually meant the only job option available to a working class youngster leaving school at fourteen. Today things are very different.

"Well I'm not going, they only want to make a fool of you. You'll get a plate of soup down your back, at least. It's all about entertainment", so said the other half when a request came from Ricochet, a company who were making a series for BBC2, on restaurant service. Of course he knows all about these things, well he used to watch telly, before we married, albeit black and white in those days.

It was last May when an appeal was made to the Society for members, 'who were knowledgeable in food and wine', to attend a lunch to be filmed as part of a TV show. The series was offering eight young people the opportunity to train as front of house staff in the restaurant industry under the guidance of Michelin star chef Michel Roux Junior. The idea was that in eight weeks of intensive training, with the head Maître d' of Galvins, Fred Sireix as their mentor, these potential waiters and sommeliers would work with some of the worlds finest front-of-house staff.

I circulated the details to members but obviously most of our members thinking is in line with Sid's! Between, Capital, London and St James's we managed to get two tables together for the event on June 10th. Great I thought, take my camera, this will make a good article for F&W but when the details arrived, alas, we all had to sign a form agreeing to no photos, no notes, no gossip, we were all sworn to secrecy.

It was to be held in a 'pop up restaurant' (a functions room) in the Kensington Roof Gardens. We were the guinea pigs in episode 5 which focused on presentation at table. The trainees had been honing their skills at Simpsons on the Strand, carving meat and filleting fish at the table. They then went to the Ritz to learn how to prepare crepe suzettes.

The day dawned bright and clear, a beautiful day to spend, being waited on hand and foot, in idyllic surroundings high above the London fumes. We arrived early, were ticked off and paid our £20 donation to charity. Twelve fifteen was the designated time. We were still milling around in the small reception area at one o'clock and began to wonder if we were ever going to get fed. Maybe the kids had chickened out or Michel had sacked the lot of them. Having since seen the series I wouldn't have blamed him. At one fifteen our table was called and we were ushered into the bustling dining room where the youngsters were wrestling with trolleys laden with joints of beef and lamb and demonstrating their newly acquired skills of gueridon service.

Our starter of St Tola goat cheese mousse, beetroot purée and ginger bread crisp was accompanied by a Blanc de Noir, Richmond Plains 2008, from Nelson, New Zealand. Nikita very capably presented the wine, described the fermentation process and explained why it had been chosen to match the starter. The shoulder of lamb and a fore rib of beef had the trainees wielding their carving knives with some dexterity. James recovered his sang-froid rapidly after presenting us with the beef and announcing it as lamb, while the crash of a dome cover announced the arrival of Ashley with the lamb. A Dover sole was filleted with dexterity, while Nikita explained the wines to match the beef and the lamb. A soft Pinot Noir from Chile to go with the lamb and a Ribera Del Duero 2008, "with a much higher tannin madam, to match your beef".

Brook arrived to perform with the Crepe Suzette. By this time, showing off her expertise, she was obviously having a whale of a time. Everyone was in a very convivial mood and Nikita was keeping our glasses topped up with an excellent Beaumes de Venise which, after gentle persuasion, "jog my arm", she joked. She returned several times to the enjoyment of all concerned.

Watching the show now I think we were very lucky to have the opportunity of encountering the youngsters in episode five. The rough edges were beginning to wear off and except for a few fraught moments I think even Fred and Michel were beginning to enjoy themselves. Michel did a wonderful job in the role of mentor, father figure and 'agony aunt' to a collection of very rough diamonds, coaxing them on and persuading them that there are no such words as 'I can't'. I found the later episodes with the celebs a lot less entertaining, I can understand why the youngsters found some of the cliental patronising.

I have received many comments about the show but the two that stood out were, 'Oh why didn't they send them to theatre school for a few hours to teach them how to communicate clearly', and, on a lighter note, 'it's a pity Michel couldn't afford a razor!'

As for the winners, to me they were all winners. Thanks to Michel and all their mentors they have had a fantastic grounding upon which to build a wonderful career. Let us hope it inspires many more youngsters to enter the industry and appreciate that the art of 'Service' is an honourable profession.



Sandy & Andy Rose

Cheese Makers of Distinction



When the annual British Cheese Awards were established by Juliet Harbutt in 1994, to raise the profile of British cheese, there were fewer than 300 cheeses entered. Today there are over 600 unique British cheeses made from cow, goat, ewe and even buffalo milk.

The awards have been abundant for Andy & Sandy Rose who set up The Two Hoots Cheese Company, located in the heart of Berkshire, in February 2003. This artisan cheese maker of distinction had almost immediate success with their three Barkham varieties.

Sandy grew up on her parents dairy farm in Shurlock Row where her father milked Jersey and Guernsey (channel island) cows. During her early years she came to love horses and enjoyed competing. In 1983 she met Andy and a year later they married.

Four years later Sandy rekindled her passion for animals when they moved, with their one year old daughter Nia, to a house with a small paddock. First came the chickens, followed by pygmy goats, a pony and finally two calves and the arrival of their son Liam.

Having rapidly outgrown the paddock and house they decided to move their family to a smallholding with 30 acres in Hampshire. The collection of animals flourished with the addition of dairy goats, rare breed cattle, sheep, horses and a pet pig. As well as running a children's mobile farm that they took around local schools Sandy used to help her cousin Anne Wigmore with turning her cheeses in the maturing rooms.

Anne Wigmore the owner of Village Maid Cheeses, who has been making cheese since 1986, is famous throughout the country for her Spenwood, Waterloo and Wigmore cheeses which were originally produced from the unpasteurised milk from the Duke of Wellington's estate at Stratfield Saye.

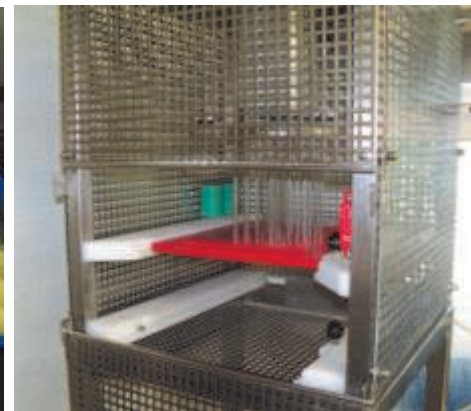
One day her cousin suggested that Sandy make soft cheese from her own goat's milk. She made the first batch in a bucket and hung it overnight in the shower in a muslin bag to drain. The following day salt, garlic and chives were added to complete the cheese which was then enjoyed by all the family. Encouraged by this they started thinking about turning it into a business. The first problem was to think of a name, they finally settled on "Two Hoots Cheese", after their recent experiences with some rescued owls.



The milk is mixed in the vats with the rennet and the starter and left to mature. The curd is then cut and put into the moulds to drain. When all the moulds are all filled the draining curd is turned by hand in the moulds and left for 12 hours to finish draining.



The cheeses are then soaked in a brine solution for 12 hours.



A multi needle injector is then used to introduce holes into the cheese to allow the penetration of air to assist maturation.



Having decided to concentrate on the cheese making business they reluctantly sold their animals and small-holding and moved to a smaller house with outbuildings in Barkham.

It then took around a year to convert the outbuildings into a cheese dairy during which time Sandy spent many hours researching various equipment that would be needed for the business.

A small vat was initially purchased to allow Sandy to make the soft cheese in larger quantities. Their produc-

tion was then potted and sold at local farmers markets .

After going to a cheese festival in the Cotswolds, Sandy came across an old book of cheese recipes in a small bookshop. This spurred her into making a white rind brie type cheese. This cheese, called Barkham Brie went on to win awards at the World and British Cheese Awards.

Not satisfied with this success Sandy had always wanted to make a blue cheese from channel Island milk (like her father used to produce) so, after months of trials and tests, Barkham Blue was born. This proved to be extremely popular at the farmers markets and within the first 6 months of making it Barkham Blue won Best New Cheese at the 2003 World Cheese Awards followed by a gold at the British Cheese Awards.

Since then Barkham Blue has consistently won awards and in the 2008 British Cheese Awards it swept the board by winning Best Blue Cheese, Best English Cheese and Supreme Champion.

A difficult act to follow; however not wanting to rest on her laurels Sandy has now found a source of sheep's milk and is reintroducing "Loddon Blewe" a lovely creamy blue. The last time she made it around 4 years ago it also won best new cheese at the World Cheese Awards.

The business is still very much a family affair with Andy now working in the business full time and Nia and Liam, now both in their twenties, helping out when needed. Even her dad Norman, now retired and her original inspiration, comes in to lend a hand from time to time.

All the cheeses, which are made from pasteurised milk, are totally natural and made without the use of artificial ingredients and are suitable for vegetarian and gluten free diets.

In 2008 the Rose's were awarded the 'Waitrose Small Producer Award', and today Two Hoots Cheeses are still collecting awards.

2010 British Cheese Awards: Barkham Blue - Silver, Loddon Blewe - Gold, Best Blue Cheese and Best English Cheese

World Cheese Awards: Barkham Blue - Gold, Loddon Blewe - Bronze

Great Taste Awards: Barkham Blue - 3 Star Gold.



The cheeses are stored on racks in the cold room to mature. During maturation the younger cheeses are mixed with the ripier ones to maintain a constant overall humidity within the room.



The cheeses are turned every 2 weeks and ideally maturation takes 5-6 weeks. These cheeses are ready for wrapping and boxing. Due to demand, at high peak times like Christmas, the cheeses are sometimes sold younger if it is requested by the customer



A fully mature Barkham Blue

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Derek Hawes is



SEDUCED



by a Night at the Mandarin Oriental!

“First he seduced me with his eyes” she said quietly. “Then he seduced me with the velvet harmonies of his wine. And after that, in the wild hot days of summer he seduced me with wine and roses; summer, yes, but **by no means the last that summer** “. To say that I was a little startled by the confessional tones of my dinner companion whom I had not met before, is to understate the position; having politely, and quite innocently, asked what her taste in wine was, and how important it was in her life.

“But what wine” I asked, rather lamely, “which wines have been so significant in your life?”

“Ahh!” she sighed, “first it was the *Pol Roger*, singing in the glass, always to be sipped delicately as one listens to its song, full of promise - presaging adventure. Then it was the rich, Promethean grandeur of the claret, venerable, noble and dignified. And lastly it was the elegant chilled Chablis, served with oysters and smoked salmon at the side of a pool in hot French sun as the first songs of Autumn sighed in the trees.”

Clearly, this conversation was going to be out of the run of that of normal dinner companions thrown together unwontedly by the lottery of seat placings. Who was she and what was her name? How did I come to be placed next to her?

The setting was the fabulously grand marbled halls of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Knightsbridge, the first dinner of 2011 for the St James’s branch of IWFS, always a delightful gathering of interesting, eccentric wine lovers; and on reflection the exotic lady by my side more than matched the exoticism of the setting.

And so well timed; everyone gay and smiling, as if recovering from the long, slow toothache of an English winter. We gathered in the private dining room for liberal libations of *Moët & Chandon*, served with exquisite canapés, savoury and chilli.

By chance it was special for another reason....Our event coincided with the announcement that Heston Blumenthal was to launch his restaurant, “Dinner” (his first in London), at the hotel the following day. Everyone was agog too, because he had announced he is to put aside his test tubes, lab coats and other experimental paraphernalia and is replacing them with giant clockwork spits; he is going back into history for his inspiration. With his executive chef, Ashley Palmer-Watts he has announced that all the dishes will be inspired by recipes from the middle ages, Tudor, Stuart and Georgian cuisines. The style will be known as ‘modern and historical British’ in which he offers a modern take on ancient culinary traditions including from the earliest known recipe book dated 1390 and entitled “*The Formes of Cury*”, (Forms of Cooking, *cury* being from the French *cuire* - cooking).

In the meantime our St James’s branch members had a beautiful private dining room and a menu already inspired, I thought, by the new regime. The first two dishes, served with *Gruner Veltliner 2009* from Hochterrasen, were a crab, lobster and smoked salmon salad with avocado and caviar, followed by fillet of red mullet and langoustine, smoked aubergine, confit of fennel and air-dried plum tomato. Then came the most delicate fillet of beef, oxtail and vegetable ravioli, truffle potato galette, baby artichokes and leeks with a Madeira jus.

A splendidly rounded claret, *Chateau Cantegrive 2005 cote de Castillon* accompanied this amazingly presented dish in which the truffle potato came sliced so fine as to be transparent!. To finish, two more dishes – goats cheese in crushed walnuts, grapes and quince jelly, quickly followed by pear pistachio tart *fine*, pistachio ice cream with sauce Anglaise. A luxurious Sauterne helped to enhance our enjoyment and got us to the generous servings of coffee and petit fours and the chance to meet chefs for the evening, Trevor Pritchard and Chris Tombling who have cooked for our group on earlier visits.

Whilst all this splendour was being devoured I managed to persuade *maitre’d* Louis to give me a brief tour of the new restaurant and to see where the giant spits will be set, behind a huge glass screen, so as to be visible to diners. He also told me that Heston’s signature dishes will include a spit roast pineapple straight from the kitchens of Henry VIII – and chicken livers and foie gras, covered in a savoury custard, spit-roasted to make it look like a mandarin! Now how seductive is that!

And speaking again of seduction I also learned that Heston is working on a range of historically-inspired cocktails to start his evening of romantic medieval dining at the Mandarin Oriental. This, I thought, as I hurried back to my table companion and her tales of the seduction of wine, this must surely be my trump card? Never mind her Promethean claret and her *Pol Roger* and her Autumn Chablis, surely my tale of Heston’s cocktails and spit-roasted pineapple - and my own soft cobweb voice will win her heart?



Collectanea - solina

Did you know?

58% of Britons think Chablis is a type of grape.

43% believe chardonnay is a region.

16% are unaware that Champagne is a region in France rather than Spain, Italy or Germany.

When buying wine 74% are motivated by price but 23% admit a pretty bottle can sway their decision.

Morrison/The Daily Telegraph

The incidents of 'eat and run' in London was up by 33% last year. Police records show that 330 people left restaurants without paying in 2010 but few were apprehended as it is judged a 'low priority crime'.

The UK government has £864,000 worth of wine in its cellars.

There are 700 varieties of cheese made in Britain - 100 more than in France.

37% of women in the UK worry their partners are overweight, and 20% believe an unhealthy lifestyle has made him less attractive. 42% say they alleviate the problem by making subtle changes in their lifestyle - such as buying more low-fat foods without their partners realising.

Engage Mutual Assurance/Daily Mail

Tesco turns its stock and debtors into cash 13 days before it has to pay its suppliers. This means its suppliers are financing Tesco's business, allowing them to borrow less. An illustration of the power supermarkets have over their suppliers.

Unlike most fungi which self fertilise the black truffle is either male or female. According to Italian researchers it is often found isolated in single sex colonies. This explains why they are so rare and expensive.



Union Backing?

Today one in four farmers live below the poverty line with a combined household income of less £20,000. 'Farmers For Action' has protested outside supermarket distribution depots, but the NFU's (National Farmers Union) president Peter Kendall said recently: "I regret that farmers feel that it is necessary to protest at what they feel is a dysfunctional supply chain. There's a whole host of reasons why you won't see me advocating civil disobedience. How we present ourselves to the general public is very important. I understand when people see their businesses going down the pan there are some very strong feelings, but you can, if you are not careful, impact on other people's farm businesses."

How many more farms must go "down the pan" before Mr Kendall and the NFU leaders finally confront the government? Is it any wonder that in many farming households Mr Kendall's farming union is known as the 'No F*****g Use'?



The Nanny State has Finally Gone Mad!

A 24 year old woman was asked her age when she tried to buy a slice of cheese and onion quiche in a Tesco supermarket. The girl on the checkout told her, 'You don't look over 21. We have to be really strict now and this applies to quiche.'!



If music is the food of love!

In Japan a fruit company plays Mozart to its ripening bananas. Toyoka Chuo Seika, who imports bananas from the Philippines says that playing music to the ripening fruits makes them taste sweeter.

It must be true as sales have risen since the music was introduced. A wide variety of food and drink is now being serenaded in Japan. Ohara Shuzo brewery reckons that "Mozart works best for sake".



Past its 'Use By Date'?

A pot of soup made 2,400 years ago has been unearthed from a tomb in central China - and although it is very slimy, it is still liquid. Archaeologist Liu Daiyun said he was "really shocked" when he stumbled on the three-legged bronze pot and found that it contained the superannuated broth made with some as-yet-unidentified animal bones. "My guess is that the liquid did not evaporate because of the lid, and because the tomb had been tightly sealed for more than 2,000 years," he told BBC News online.

Tests are now being done to determine the ingredients of the soup, which has turned green due to the oxidation of the bronze, and the contents of a jar found beside it, which holds an almost colourless, odourless liquid presumed to be wine.

It is hoped the results will "play an important role in studying the eating habits and culture" of the 'Warring States Period' in China (475-221BC). The tomb, near the ancient capital of Xian, came to light when digging work was being carried out for the extension of a runway at a local airport.



An archaeologist shows off the soup

And the Worlds Oldest Wine Press

You don't often see Armenian wines around today but a team of archaeologists who were recently exploring a collapsed cave in the Little Caucasus Mountains stumbled upon a wine press and vessels apparently designed for viticulture bearing the residue of grapes and dried vines. Carbon dating proved them to be 6,000 years old - at least 1,000 years older than any other wine press ever found.

"This find shows there was a high degree of agriculture and horticultural skill even back in 4,000 BC," commented team leader Gregory Areshian of the University of California.

Keep up the Butter & Milk Diet!

A farm labourer from northern India has become a father for the first time, at the age of 94. Ramjit Raghav who believes the secret of his longevity is half a kilo of butter each day washed down by three litres of milk, hailed the birth of his first child, son Karamjit, as a "Gift from God", and said he planned to try for another child next year with his partner, who is 51. The former wrestler added that he was confident that he would see his son grow up. "I will only die if a black snake bites me," he said, "that is very unlikely."

THE WEEK 8 January 2011



ETHNIC EXPERIENCES

by

Harold Bolter



My first experience of ethnic food came more than 50 years ago when a journalist colleague, newly returned from service in the Indian Army, cooked a curry for my wife Sheila and I – our first curry. The dish he prepared can best be described as being of double vindaloo strength and nearly blew the tops of our heads off.

The idea that take-away curries would one day overtake fish and chips in popularity and sell better than Chinese food, which had beaten Indian food to the punch in the fast food market (despite monosodium glutamate) seemed out of the question after that Delhi belly experience.

But Edgar Middleham's red hot curry, which I still remember with awe, was the start of a journey around ethnic foods which has taken me across every continent in the world, sometimes on business and sometimes on holiday, and provided many, mainly pleasurable, experiences and a few of which were less so.

Nevertheless, it still astonishes me that there are members of the IWFS – even of the eclectic Manchester branch – **who won't give ethnic foods, of any description, a try. A few even ask for an omelette in place of whatever is on offer at the relatively few ethnic events the branch organises. Incidentally, isn't an omelette, French or Spanish, ethnic too?**

There are one or two members, I suspect, who even think of Welsh rarebit and Scotch broth as ethnic and the haggis is definitely foreign to them. The best chance of pleasing them is to organise an Italian or Spanish evening **without making too much of a song and flamenco about it and hope they won't notice.**

Along my ethnic journey through life I learned to cook Spanish food, after a fashion, when we had a holiday home in Menorca, guided by the remarkable Keith Floyd. I usually found the Floyd in Spain recipes easy to follow, although the food quantities he specified went a long way towards explaining how he came to bankrupt himself. Meals à la Floyd were nearly always gargantuan.

One of Floyd's recipes left us feeling very hungry though. It involved the use of pigs trotters and called for a great deal of courage on the part of my wife, who reluctantly agreed to try it.

I vaguely remembered from my childhood that my father liked pigs trotters. (He was into tripe, brawn and chitterlings, too, which gives you a measure of the man) so I decided to cook a Floyd dish incorporating them as a **sort of tribute to my dear old, long departed, dad, despite Sheila's doubts. Fortunately – and unusually – there were no guests staying with us at the time.**

I'd been tempted to give the dish a try after seeing pigs trotters on display on the meat counter at the local supermarket in Alaior. The counter was manned, when it was manned, by a burly middle aged Menorcan who took a break every hour or so to pop round to the tapas bar next door for an alcoholic top up, when he thought no-one was watching.

I tried to explain what I had in mind for the trotters to the ever so slightly inebriated, ever smiling Manuel (or whatever his name was) so he sold me a couple, the biggest he had.

That night I set to in our kitchen which overlooked the sea. The pig's feet had to be boiled for some hours with vegetables and herbs, I remember. Then, at the time specified by Floyd, I took them out and covered them in bread crumbs before placing them under the grill, once grilled I served them with vegetables. One bite through the crispy skin into the glue beneath and we decided that there was only one thing for it - we threw the lot away.

The pigs trotters sold to me by Manuel had absolutely no meat in them. They were meant to be used for stock, or in place of monosodium glutamate, I suppose and not as a meat course in their own right. We had a cheese sandwich that night - but at least it was Spanish cheese.

I had a couple of starvation diet experiences at business dinners in Japan, too, and Sheila was with me at both of them.



One meal, said to be a delicacy, involved a hot stone, raw prawns and a somewhat frisky geisha. The idea was that you cooked the prawns on the stone, which seemed an unnecessary chore to me but was probably full of symbolism, and ate them with chopsticks. What I didn't know was that I was also meant to feed the rather elderly geisha sitting next to me. (Did you know, incidentally, that only the young trainee geishas have their faces painted?)

The poor woman must have been starving before I cottoned on to what was expected of me. I thought she was there to entertain me as she somewhat naughtily placed her hand inside my trouser pocket, apparently searching for something or other. I whispered to my greatly amused wife about what was going on and she told me to sit back and think of England.

She was rather less amused when the geisha, whose English was limited, told her that she reminded her of a film star – the long dead Vivien Leigh. I was compared to the equally deceased Robert Taylor.

Then there was the boat trip where Sheila and I were presented with a bunsen burner, to be shared by two people, two sets of chopsticks each and wafer thin slices of marbled Khobi beef, which we were meant to boil with a pile of carrots. We were told that we could drink the broth when we'd finished the meat. Boiled beef and carrots, Japanese style.

The trouble with this dish was that the marbled fat quickly came away from the beef and the boiling water soon began to look like something deposited by BP in the sea off Alaska. You also had to remember to use one set of chopsticks for holding the meat in the boiling water and the other to eat the meat when it had been recovered. Otherwise you ended up sharing more than conversation with your neighbour.

It's always the unfortunate experiences which stay in the memory, of course, but I would hate to end this short piece on a down-beat note. There have been some wonderful ethnic occasions.

For instance, one of Manchester's more recent events (written up by Christine Redman for Food and Wine) was a triumph. It was held at Yara, a restaurant in the centre of Altrincham which specialises in Lebanese and Syrian food (although I have to say that I didn't discover which was which.)

The Middle East is not a part of the world I naturally associate with gastronomic glory, but Yara put on a superb spread of subtly flavoured dishes, nothing at all like Edgar Middleham's fiery curry.

There must have been over a dozen dishes, including ones with such exotic names as Lahambayeen and Ful Madas as well as a quite exceptional fish dish, described more prosaically as "steak of halibut." I tried every dish and couldn't fault any of them.

It was a great night and if anyone opted for an omelette they must be mad!

around the branches - Manchester

An Ethnic Night to Remember.

Manchester go Middle Eastern. From time to time the Manchester Committee like to tempt members with the cuisine of countries which they may not usually experience. In the darkening days of November we were warmly welcomed into the popular Middle Eastern restaurant, Yara. This is a family run eatery in Altrincham, Cheshire specialising in Lebanese and Syrian food. Opened only 2 years ago it has fast become a firm favourite with locals and booking is essential.

We adequately filled the upstairs room and while we waited for all to arrive we drank a crisp aperitif of Zondermaam Sauvignon Blanc 2009. All the more acceptable as we were only paying £1 corkage. Our taste buds were soon awoken by the array of mezze which were quickly filling the tables.

We were enticed by the myriad textures and aromas of such dishes as babaghanouj, tabouleh, loubieh and makmour with ingredients of aubergine, tomatoes, pomegranate sauce, onions, beans, parsley, crushed herbs, spices and garlic. Too many to name all. As soon as we had finished one dish then another appeared. We feasted well on the mezze but then there were the main courses. The mixed Kebabs, the Lamb Chops, the Tabakh Rawhou and the Mediterranean Spinach were almost too much for some but my favourite of the evening was the Halibut steak marinated in herbs and spices and grilled on charcoal.

For those who had left room we finished with a choice of coffees or teas accompanied by a selection of desserts: Baklava, Bal-lorieh Kanafeh and Assieh.

We had taken along three Lebanese wines, chosen by Bob Lloyd and David Chapman, to drink through the meal, Chateau Kefraya Les Breteches 2006, Massaya Classic 2007 and Chateau Ksara Reserve du Couvent 2007. There was much discussion as to which befitted the cuisine but my favourite, once it had reached room temperature, was the Chateau Kefraya with its suggestion of dark cherries and hint of spice.

As is the custom in Lebanon we were generously served with warmth and efficiency.

Christine Redman

Lunch at Harvey Nichols

The Branch pre-Christmas luncheon event at Harvey Nichols' Manchester restaurant had been greatly anticipated although not without some initial misgivings. I hasten to add that these were in respect of the branch membership rather than the restaurant. Our usual formula when inviting members to attend events is to set out the menu and, usually, the accompanying wines. The branch committee was persuaded that the restaurant could offer the best service if we allowed the chef to choose, close to the date, a "market menu" - a menu composed of the best available produce that week and served with appropriate wines.

The committee was concerned that the lack of a finite menu might discourage members from coming. We need not have worried. The event was heavily booked - 63 altogether. Even the snow stopped in time for travelling into the heart of the city.

We were welcomed with a glass of mulled wine which set a seasonal note. Lunch followed starting with smoked salmon rillettes garnished with radish and pickled "grelots". This latter ingredient proved to be baby onions, peeled then pickled with tarragon and whole peppercorns in red wine vinegar. The ingredients went well together and made a lovely picture on the plate. A Harvey Nichols' own-label wine (Harvey Nichols, Sauvignon Blanc A.C., Bordeaux) complimented the dish.

Game is a very seasonal dish and so we were delighted to find a main course of breast of pheasant with a leg pithivier (like a miniature meat and potato pie using leg meat and potato in a delicious glazed pastry crust). The accompaniments were braised red cabbage and an onion soubise. The breasts had been cooked in such a way as to enable them to remain moist although one or two members found them a little tough. A Harvey Nichols own-label red wine, Vin de Pays de L'Aude (with grapes sourced from Corbières) was thought to be an excellent companion to the food. We drank this also with the cheeses - a selection of 5 British and continental cheeses each in a small serving with some sweet pickle, a piece of membrillo and a small stick of celery.

Dessert was an Earl Grey panna cotta with some segments of Clementines and an elderflower sabayon. It was a very ambitious dish which worked beautifully. In particular, the panna cotta was not obviously reliant on gelatine which is so often the case. We enjoyed a sauternes wine dominated by the Semillon grape, Chateau Partarieu A.C. Sauternes 2007.

The restaurant performed brilliantly for such a large party with the dishes coming out to table with great alacrity and the kitchen cooking to a very high standard. Full marks also to committee member Patrick Trodden who arranged the event.

Patrick also presented the professionally printed book of branch members' favourite recipes, a project which he has driven forward. He edited the book with the help of fellow member Josephine Jackson who not only typed it up but also ensured that all the recipes had common quantities with oven temperatures at standard settings. The 60 copies which Patrick had been able to carry sold out in minutes with orders being placed for most of the remainder.

David Chapman



around the branches - London



Lunch at the Ambassador Café

I first spotted this Exmouth Market eatery in the Good Food Guide. At first glance the café seemed fairly unremarkable and on my initial visit I would have described the service as fairly laid-back. However, I soon discovered the staff to be “efficient, but unfussy” and knowledgeable about the food and wine they serve. As for the cooking, it is far from unremarkable.



I therefore decided to arrange a lunch with accompanying wines for members and their guests. When Judy Tayler-Smith, Branch Chairman, and I arrived more than an hour early to set out place cards and check that all was in hand, the two long tables were already fully prepared. The whole of the back of the restaurant had been screened off, and all was ready to welcome each arriving guest with a glass of Prosecco. I write “a glass”, but top-ups were numerous.

There were two choices for starter, main dish and dessert, each course with an accompanying wine. In the capable and talented hands of chef and restaurant owner, Clive Greehalgh, every dish was memorable. We were told that the crabs for the bisque had still been in the sea that morning and the taste, according to those who chose it, bore that out.

The duck was “perfectly cooked” according to several participants and the chocolate tart was almost obscene in its opulence. During it all, the wines, which went perfectly with the dishes, were abundant.

The whole immensely pleasurable meal was rounded off with tea or coffee and also with thanks and congratulations to Clive. **Bearing in mind what he’d just produced, it must be said he was remarkably modest.**

Everyone who attended commented on how fantastic the whole experience had been and no doubt many people will return to sample Clive’s cooking on their own.

MENU: Crab Bisque Or Game Terrine with Cornichons & Poilaine Toast

Picpoul de Pinet, Baron de Badassiere 09

Barbary Duck Breast with Sarladaise Potatoes & Savoy cabbage Or Monkfish & Gurnard Bourride

Umbria, Assisi Sangiovese, Sportoletti 07 or Tuscany, Toscana Bianco, Poggiotondo 09

Panacotta with Blackberries Or Chocolate Tart

Monbazillac, Chateau Septy 05

Tea & Coffee

Sheila Moir, London Branch Committee. Photos, Mark Fox.

Manchester ‘Aspire’ for AGM at- South Trafford College Restaurant.

We believe the IW&FS should support the young people who will be our future restaurateurs so chose Aspire for our 2011 AGM.

Our evening started with Canapés and a glass of Deutz Marlborough Cuvée NV New Zealand, a blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. This showed strawberry and lemon with rich yeast flavours on the palate, a most enjoyable introduction.

The first course was a creamy poached sole in a fragrant Thai Broth with ginger and cumin overtones, a delicious combination. With this was served a Mount Trio Lightly Oaked Chardonnay 2007 from The Great Southern region of Western Australia. As this warmed up it had fresh clean fruit flavours with just a light touch of oak. It was a well balanced, full flavoured wine, that stood up to the spiciness of the dish. There was a suggestion that it would have been interesting to have tasted a Gewürztraminer with this dish. It is good to promote thought and discussion.

A succulent, moist, Roast Guinea Fowl with warm Muscat grapes providing a sharp contrast together with Salsify and potatoes followed, accompanied by a flavoursome Undurraga TH Leyda Valley Pinot Noir, 2009. The grapes for this wine come from a selected 2.97 hectare plot in the Leyda Valley, in the southern sub-region of San Antonio, 14 kms from the Pacific Ocean. Cooled by the South Pacific breezes and coastal summer fog, the climate extends the growing season ensuring slow ripening and the development of intense, flavours and aromas. We enjoyed the wine which balanced both the Guinea Fowl and the Selection of Cheeses that followed.

Then came an Assiette of desserts that thrilled the pudding fiends, Sticky Toffee Pudding, Chocolate Brownies, a Meringue with berries and a crème. A Château les Miaudoux, Saussignac A.C. 2005 delighted the sweet wine lovers amongst us. It was from the Bergerac area adjoining Montbazillac, made from Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle producing a rich, full wine whose aroma of acacia, peach and honeysuckle was greatly enjoyed.

Coffee and petit fours finished the meal.

This well cooked and presented meal was expertly and cheerfully served by the students in a manner that would have pleased Michel Roux. It certainly pleased our members and confirmed our belief in the potential of the students in training.

Our Thanks went to them for the Food and Service and to our own Wine Connoisseurs who chose and sourced the accompanying wines.

Tricia Fletcher, Chairman



around the branches - Capital

Celebrating The Chinese New Year - The Year of the Rabbit



HYN'S

Hyn's was a popular restaurant with all our family for some years until the last time we were there, a while before the smoking ban started, we had to ask to be moved three times to get away from smokers so we didn't go again.



We recently returned for a test meal and the atmosphere is now great and the food just as good.

Opened in 1988 Hyn's is, in our opinion, one of the best Chinese restaurants in the county. Everything is of a high quality and cooked fresh to order. We chose two of their set menus, the Chefs Recommendation and Lobster & Seafood Feast. Each flight of dishes was served together and members were able to 'mix and match' from both menus.

Chef's Recommended Menu

Oriental Prawn Roll
Spicy Spare Rib With Chilli & Garlic
Satay Chicken
Crispy Fry King Prawns
Sweet & Sour Won Ton
Chinese Salad With Pickles

Aromatic Crispy Duck

Sizzling Szechuan King Prawns With Garlic
Crispy Beef With Chillis
Stir Fried Chicken With Cashew Nuts
Stir Fried Mixed Vegetables
Special Fried Rice

Toffee Apple & Banana



We started with glasses of house Champagne 'Comte de Robart' at £34 a bottle then, as many members were driving, people ordered their own choice of drinks. Quite a few of us enjoyed the Trimbach Gewurztraminer at the very reasonable price of £22 a bottle. All agreed the wine

went well with the spicy but subtle flavoured dishes. The roast lobster was cooked just right - juicy and succulent and laced with ginger and spring onion. Despite the quantity of food on offer most dishes were scraped clean. To finish the toffee apple & banana were cooked in a very light batter and coated with caramel giving a lovely crunch. All in all a really fun evening with plenty to tingle the taste buds, and for a very reasonable £30.

Lobster & Seafood Feast

Crispy Fry Prawn Dumpling
Butterfly King Prawns
Satay Chicken With Peanut Sauce
Spicy Spare Rib With Chilli & Garlic Sauce
Seaweed With Grated Scallops
Crispy Spring Roll

Baked Lobster With Ginger & Spring Onions

Sea Spice Chicken In Szechuan Style
Sizzling King Prawns In Black Bean Sauce
Fillets Of Fish In Five Spice Sauce
Stir Fried Mixed Vegetables
Special Fried Rice

Toffee Apple & Banana



Pam Brunning, Chairman

around the branches - Zürich

Zürich Branch visits the Kanton of Luzern

A beautiful warm Saturday afternoon in November saw eighteen members and guests of the Zurich Branch come together at the Braui Restaurant in Hochdorf near Luzern. The Braui has long been recognized by the Gault-Millau with its 15 point grading of the restaurant.

Chef Werner Tobler believes in regional cooking and fresh interesting market produce. To that end, all the menu items came from the Seetal where Hochdorf is situated except for the fish which was sourced from the Bodensee (Lake Constance). The wines also came from this region, so in many ways it was a classic case of wines of the region matching foods of the region.

The afternoon started off with an aperitif of Solo Müller Thurgau from Matthias Brunner

of Hohenrain accompanied by amuse bouche. During this time Chef Tobler showed us the kitchen and the preparation that goes into producing his menus. Of particular interest was the Zander filleting exercise. Zander is a form of Pike/Perch, you can Google it for further information. Members then moved to the dining room. The meal began with thin slices of delicately smoked Wildschwein (wild boar) set upon a Little potato salad, a delicious starter. The Wild Schwein come from a nearby forest and are hunted every fall. The wine accompaniment was a Riesling x Sylvaner from Schloss Heidegg, a deliciously dry example of the wine type grown only 20km away.

There followed a velvet smooth Kürbis

(Pumpkin) Capuccino soup with black truffles, all from the Seetal region. It was a bright saffron colour with a little citrus and peppery flavour, absolutely delicious. Again Schloss Heidegg provided the wine, with an offering of a Pinot Gris.

Following this was the Zander im Speckmantel auf Rahmsauerkraut. The Zander, wrapped in a bacon bolero, had a crispy skin but the flesh was deliciously tender sitting on a little bed of 'Champagne' infused creamy sauerkraut, a very tasty dish, many members were very impressed with this course. The wine was a Müller Thurgau from Matthias Brunner in Hohenrain only a few kilometres away.

The main course consisted of Klabsbacke im Pinot Noir mit Kartoffelselleristöchli. Kalbsbacke are calves cheeks, considered a delicacy in the region and accompanied by a potato and celery root mash with black truffles. The wine was a

Nonsolorosso Pinot Noir, once again from Matthias Brunner. The calves cheeks were deliciously tender and a highlight of the meal.

The afternoon finished with a choice of local cheeses with home made fruit bread or a warm Chocolate souffle with a melting hot chocolate centre and bourbon vanilla ice cream.

Coffee, Espresso and a small glass of locally produced Eau de Vie sealed the memorable meal. Wines were served in small portions and our systems easily stayed below the recommended alcohol limit for the homeward journey. Many members took advantage of purchasing a signed copy of Chef Werner Tobler's book, *Cusiner*, before heading off.

John Macdonald

The Braui Restaurant located in the old Hochdorf brewery



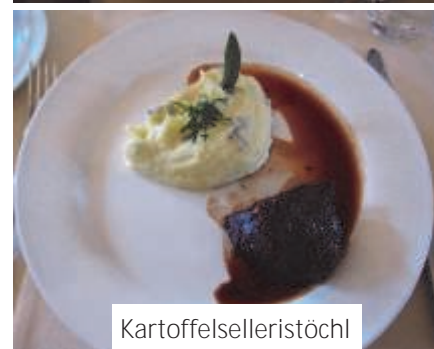
Chef, it says to keep stirring until.....



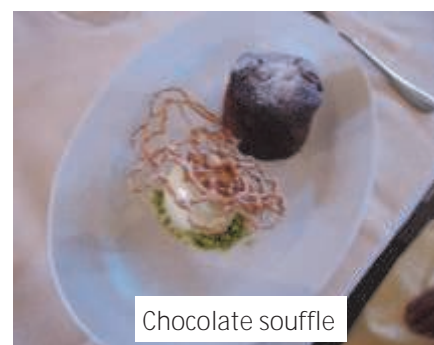
Wild Schwein



Kürbis (Pumpkin) Capuccino



Kartoffelselleristöchl



Chocolate souffle



Chef Tobler getting to grips with the Zander

around the branches - Blackpool & Fylde Coast



Christmas Meal at The Longridge Restaurant

The Blackpool and Fylde Coast Branch have an Annual Christmas Meal at a selected local restaurant, this year planning began as soon as Autumn was upon us because it had been decided that we would venture a bit further afield. Being a coastal branch our choice of destination is somewhat limited, to the west lies the Isle of Man (good smoked fish but a 60 mile swim), to the north we come to Morecambe Bay (tasty brown shrimps but treacherous tides and quicksand), southwards leads to the River Ribble Estuary and Southport (a classy area but quite a detour), so clearly we have to go East.

Between Blackpool, the hills of the Forest of Bowland and Longridge Fell there are many hidden "Restaurant Gems" several were considered but we finally settled on Paul Heathcotes, The Longridge Restaurant, Longridge, Lancs. PR3 3SY, a small but friendly country establishment of national acclaim. We succeeded in booking for the first Monday in December, this being our usual branch meeting night, despite normally being closed on a Monday Paul agreed to open exclusively for the IW&FS, perhaps this is one of the advantages of being members of a nationally known society.

We negotiated to be allowed to take our own selected wines to accompany the meal and had the aperitif of Bollinger Champagne and the digestif of Grahams 1983 Vintage Port supplied from Branch funds, it's no coincidence that both these are amongst our Treasurers favourites. Everyone attending had viewed the menu from the outset and was therefore able to select from their cellar, or buy, any wine they felt would best accompany the individual courses. As a result the overall balance and appreciation of the evening varied for every diner, the added bonus was that you simply have to pass a sip to fellow diners in order that they can marvel at your wise choices (or unwise as the case may be!)

This is not the first time our branch have used this arrangement so with the advantage of hindsight coach transport was organised to allow members to enjoy the evening without needing to drive.

So the scene is set - MENU

A selection of home baked breads.

These included Blacksticks blue cheese bread and Caramelised onion bread, still crispy and warm from the oven.

Jerusalem artichokes and smoked bacon soup, hazelnuts

Smooth creamed Jerusalem artichokes topped with crispy lardons of smoked bacon, hazel nuts and a dash of soured cream, delicious.

Roast cod, salsify and brown shrimps.

A generous portion of Atlantic cod, topped with a melting round of butter with the tasty local Morecambe Bay brown shrimps. They made a perfect match.

Haunch of venison, celeriac puree, wild mushrooms and warm lentil vinaigrette.

Locally bred venison tender and flavourous, the accompaniments were as shown along with candied walnuts which to me was new and surprising.

Prune and Armagnac tart, pecan ice cream.

A generous serving of homemade frangipan tart with a delicious pecan ice cream.

Coffee

An alternative vegetarian menu was available.

This was a truly superb meal, prepared with meticulous care and expertly served (with the personal assistance of Paul Heathcote himself). The meal, corkage and service amounting to just £47 per person.

The Blackpool and Fylde Branch were delighted that the Chairman of the Merseyside Branch Dr. Paul Bishop and the Secretary of the Merseyside Branch Mrs. Val Bishop were able to join them.

Footnote: All our members were most relieved to hear that the venison was bred on a local farm and was not part of a sleigh hauling team.

around the branches - Wessex

Lunch at The Lord Bute Hotel, Highcliffe

Our final event of the year was a lunch at the Lord Bute Hotel in Highcliffe, organised by one of our members Eric Freeman in November. The hotel is set on the historic site of the 18th century Highcliffe Castle's entrance lodges and is a handsome building that retains the classic style and character of the original. The dining room is also very attractive in the style of the period with chandeliers, mirrors and paintings. The restaurant has a very good reputation for its cuisine and prides itself on using fresh local and organic food where possible.

The restaurant does not normally open for lunch on Saturdays but made an exception exclusively for our group. We were welcomed by the manager Chris Denley, who was personally on hand throughout the meal to ensure that everything ran smoothly. The proceedings began in the elegant bar, where we gathered for a glass of Rotari Brut Cuvée 28, an excellent Italian

sparkler made by the traditional method, before making our way into the adjacent dining room for lunch. The chef Kevin Brown had made every effort to produce a tempting menu to suit all tastes and the end result did not disappoint.

To start we were offered a choice of chicken and leek terrine served with prune purée and baby leaves; or seared king scallops with crushed peas and ham crisps; or **"breakfast tart", this being a savoury tart case filled with truffled eggs, roast cherry tomato, crisp bacon, wild mushrooms and spiced chorizo.** My scallops were very good, moist and tender, and the other dishes looked equally appetising.

For the main course I chose the "trio of lamb" (roast rump, grilled cutlet and braised shank wrapped in cabbage leaf) with a plum and mint sauce. The locally-sourced lamb was very tender and tasty. My neighbour had breast of organic chicken with spinach and pistachio farcé served with asparagus tips and asparagus cream sauce, which was reported as equally delicious. The fish alternative was seared wild sea bass fillet, caught locally and served with a fennel and ginger cream, cockle popcorn and fresh mussels. All main courses were accompanied by a side dish of attractively presented vegetables, comprising dauphinoise potatoes, carrot purée and fine green beans cooked al dente wrapped in a hollowed-out ring of courgette. It was lovely to get a proper helping of vegetables, so many restaurants now seem to use vegetables just as bits of decoration on the plate!

My dessert was panna cotta flavoured with fresh raspberries and accompanied by a raspberry compote. The panna cotta was deliciously smooth and creamy, though perhaps slightly overpowered by the compote. Others chose the aptly-named chocolate sin cake, a rich Belgian

chocolate cake served with butterscotch sauce, fresh berries and chocolate ice cream, which was wonderfully indulgent and guaranteed to put on weight! For those with less of a sweet tooth a selection of local cheeses was on offer, served with biscuits, celery and grapes.

The wines to accompany the meal were chosen with care by the sommelier to compliment the dishes on offer. The white was a Coopers Creek Sauvignon Blanc 2009, a classic herbaceous Marlborough sauvignon with flavours of gooseberry and tropical fruits, which went very well with the fish and scallops. The red wine was Santa Cristina Toscana Antinori 2008, a well-structured but soft, fruity wine with a long finish, perfect with the lamb.

The service throughout was very professional and attentive and over coffee Kevin Brown came out of the kitchen to say a few words to us and to receive our thanks for an excellent meal. His commitment, and indeed that of all the staff, was very obvious and together they made this lunch a very enjoyable experience.

Joan Cardy

around the branches - Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

Dinner at The Cock O' Barton

This legendary watering hole at Malpas in south Cheshire close to the Shropshire and Welsh borders has been known since the 14th century to discriminating farmers, merchants and travellers. Following a £1,2million renovation it is now a widely acclaimed bar and restaurant. So it was that some 36 members and guest journeyed on a cold autumn night for dinner in the private restaurant, fitted out in a comfortable meld of the old and new.

The very warm welcome we received on arrival set the scene for the remainder of the evening. All the ingredients for a successful event were in place, a warm inviting ambience, friendly attentive staff, superb company and an expectation, of excellent food and wine, we were not to be disappointed.

Relaxing with an aperitif of Don Gallo' Prosecco this fresh deliciously, crisp wine set the tone for some fine dining to come.

Our first course was sun-blushed tomato, buffalo Mozzarella and basil risotto cake, rocket and parmesan salad, tomato and olive salsa, an attractively arranged, enjoyable and refreshing starter, some diners felt it was a little bland, possibly a little more salsa was required. This was accompanied by a pleasant, light, crisp Pinot Grigio Blush 2008/9. I am told that a rosé made from Pinot Grigio is a rarity as it can only be produced in years when the hot autumn sun turns the grape skins a copper colour. When pressed, the grapes give the wine a pale pink tinge, floral aromas and soft, red fruit flavours.

The main course was a pan roasted fillet of duck with carrot and potato gateaux, confit garlic tempura and a port and pink peppercorn reduction. A well presented, generous portion of meat with delicious accompaniments gave a satisfying main course. The wine was Chateau Lamothe de Haut 1er Cote de Bordeaux 2007, a rich full bodied wine and an ideal choice for this robust tasting bird.

Our pudding was summer fruit with clotted cream and candied orange peel. Perfectly displayed, it was the more enjoyable in that the individual fruits over laid separately the base and gave an appreciable contrast to the cream and candied orange peel. As an alternative choice there were Regional cheeses by Peter Pappirill, cheese detective, with accompaniments.

This event proved to be a memorable night of conviviality in charming surroundings and was very much appreciated by members and guests alike.

Tony Overland

Visit to La Boheme, Lymn, Cheshire

Paul Bishop welcomed thirty-nine members to La Boheme, Lymn, Cheshire in January.

Mike, who produced some very interesting choices, had selected the wines for the tasting and to accompany the meal. Chateau de la Grave Grains Fins 2009 that provided a crisp and lively start with an interesting nutty flavour.

The Macon- Villages, Domaine Mallory 2009 demonstrated the round style of unoaked chardonnay Reuilly, La Ferte 2009 is a new label that carries a cuvee label for the first time and was found to be a really grainy sauvignon blanc.

Fleurie, Christian Gaidon 2009 was considered a little thin but would be superb in another two years.

Riesling ,Trimbach 2008 , followed by The Society's Exhibition Saint-Aubin Rouge2008 were the excellent choice of wines made by Mike and which combined with the imaginative menu proved a great success.

Chateau Lafleur Beausejour 2005 delivered complex fruits with a well balanced after taste.

Massif d'Uchaux, Cote du Rhone Villages, Domaine St Esterre2006 deliciously fruity and refreshing.

The roasted belly pork and French black pudding (seemed very like Bury black pudding) **was not the lowest calorie offering and it's richness needed to be offset by the apple and sweet sherry and thyme jus.** The guinea fowl was kept moist by the olives and sun dried tomatoes and the fresh herbs made a tantalising dish complete. Pudding was a light apple platter with green apple sorbet providing a refreshing finish to an excellent meal.

The mood was cheerful after excellent food and very pleasant wines and everybody enjoyed a happy and relaxed event.

It was noticeable that of the members at the event there were a good many single people who regarded the events throughout the year as a very important part of their lives.

Please carry on with the good work and many thanks to Val, Paul, Angela and Mike for their creative efforts with the group.

Tim Hodges



around the branches - West Yorkshire



Seeking Jerseys Treasures

It's on our doorstep. It's got a lovely climate, beautiful beaches and countryside. Friendly local people and, above all, it's full of superb places to eat.

Jersey has yet again reinvented itself. From a honeymooners' favoured destination, via Bergerac and high finance, it's now a culinary island paradise that's so easy to get to.

So, it was with great anticipation, that fourteen West Yorkshire members arrived for a long weekend in September. The objective was not just to enjoy eating and drinking but to learn more about the unique supply chain. It has helped transform the island's focus away from growing Jersey potatoes and early flowers for the mass market, to producing what chefs and consumers want in the finest restaurants on the island and across Europe.

We learnt a lot. During the daytime we talked to the food producers, and in the evenings we were lucky enough to meet the chefs and each stressed their interdependence. I often hear that chefs' use only the freshest local ingredients' and wonder how much of a cliché this has become. On Jersey it is fact.

This was evident when on the first evening we met chef Daniel Ward at Sumas at Gorey. A Yorkshire man, so normally plain speaking, his pre-dinner talk to us about each dish he was giving us was animated, driven by his obvious commitment to the use of the abundant local produce he selects, and his love of his adopted home.

The following evening at Oysterbox at St Brelades Bay after we'd consumed mountains of local fruits-de-mer, chef Patrick Tweedie told us that the turbot he was cooking for the main course had been landed seven hours before.

Next it was off to see the supply chain in action. We hitched an exhilarating wind-blown lift on a trailer to take us out to the Jersey Oyster Beds, a mile off the coast near Grouville. Owner Chris Le Masurier produced freshly harvested oysters for us to sample, and one or two bottles of Sauvignon Blanc to help wash them down, all delightfully served from the trailer on which we'd travelled.

Then to Fungi Delecti, an 18 acre small holding that the Raclan family have transformed. It's an amazing set-up, from free range ducks and hens to polytunnels growing micro herbs, and stores of French oak logs for growing organic shitake mushrooms.

Jamie Raclan is a dedicated young entrepreneur who is more than a farmer. He is a classic 'middle man' in the best sense – as a trained chef himself he finds what the local chefs' need and if he can't produce it he persuades other Jersey farmers to do so. The business now professes to supply over 12,000 lines. Not for nothing is Fungi Delecti referred to by chefs as 'the store cupboard of the island'.

Knowing our plans for that evening, Jamie explained how some of their produce had been packed that morning to be delivered to Bohemia, the two Michelin starred restaurant in St Helier, for the menu we were to have there. So it was a few hours later, the evidence was on the table, and the duck eggs, mushrooms and pea shoots were consumed.

This meal was the culmination of the trip. This is serious dining out, we thought as we were ushered into the private dining room. Next appeared chef Shaun Rankin, fresh from numerous TV appearances but showing no signs of letting celebrity take over. In fact he insisted we go behind the scenes, where we watched the kitchen's hubbub being directed with military precision, whilst he talked us through the action we were observing.

At the end of the weekend we naturally reflected on what was the high point for each of us. It was difficult to get consensus about the best meal – the culinary standards were very high, and the service so professional. The supplier visits we made were immensely informative and enjoyable, but very different, and again there was no majority view.

But one thing stood out. Our hosts' enthusiasm and dedication for what they did was captivating. Long hours didn't seem to matter – the priority was to deliver the freshest and finest produce quickly to table. And on that we all agree.

Tim Gittins

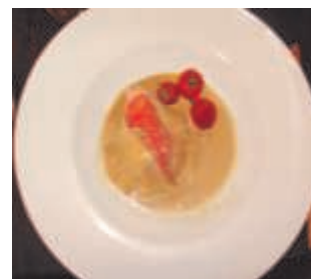
NB For full reports on our Jersey trip, including all the meals, a visit to the Le Mare wine estate and why at Judith Queree's garden she chatted about underpants and aconitum, see our branch pages on the website www.iwfs.org/europe-africa/west-yorkshire There's also a web link to some interesting footage of the supplier visits on Youtube, if you want to see things first-hand.

around the branches - Malmö



A Return to Atmosfär

It has been more or less a tradition that the Malmö branch finishes off the autumn season at the Atmosfär. This year we enjoyed the seasonal five course menu after an amuse bouche of beetroot puree with goat cheese, honey and pine nuts accompanied by a clean blanc de noirs from Collard-Picard, Champagne Cuvée selection NV.



MENU

Lobster, celery root ravioli, tomato

Grüner veltliner Smaragd Axpunt 2008, Domäne Wachau

Baked cured back of cod, saffron tagliatelle, spinach

Chablis 1er cru 2007, Domain Pinson

Fallow deer, juniper berry and red wine stock, smoked ham, cabbage, onions

Granato 2006, Foradori (Trentino)

Barolo Bricco Broschis 2005, Cavalotto

Brie de Meaux, Morbier of goat milk, Pavé de l'Aveyron (Papillon)

Gigondas 2007, Domaine de Grapillon d'Or

Crème brûlée, pear sorbet

Pinot gris Réserve Rolly Gassmann 1997, Rolly Gassmann

The starter was in fact the meat of half a lobster in a tasty stock covered with thin sleeves of celery root, indeed delicious and the Grüner veltliner with mineral, exotic fruit and acidity went very well with it. The delicate Chablis with balanced acidity and mineral matched the superb fish with its discreet touch of saffron.

The deer was perfectly tender in a heavy stock and was in very good company of the two top Italians, the concentrated Granato and the classic fruity and tannic Barolo.

The fully mature Pavé de l'Aveyron, the uncommon goat milk variety of Morbier and the delicious creamy Brie worked all incredibly well with the deep fruity and complex Gigondas.

A perfect crème brûlée accompanied by a fresh sorbet made a happy end together with the exotic fruity and smoky Pinot gris.

The whole event was very pleasant and I doubt if any of our members would object to continuing the tradition of ending the year at Henrik Regné's very much appreciated restaurant.

Rolf Fransson, Photos, Pierre Mens

Leicester Branch at The Nevill Arms



On Tuesday November 11th Graham and Sally Moore arranged for us to have dinner at the Nevill Arms, Medbourne. This stone built Grade 2 listed building built in 1863 was originally a coaching inn. It is set beside a stream in the beautiful Welland valley near Market Harborough. We entered through the oak beamed bar and were warmly welcomed with a white peach Bellini. For a starter we could choose between butternut squash and cumin soup, sushi of tuna with crispy vegetables and rice noodle salad or confit of chicken terrine with plum chutney. We drank an excellent Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough New Zealand.

Our palates were refreshed with a grapefruit and orange sorbet before a main course of roasted venison, confit of duck leg or cod fillet. The Beronia Rioja Tempanillo 2007 provided a fitting accompaniment to the venison and duck. For desert we could have an orange and Grand Marier posset or syrup sponge with custard or if preferred Stilton with a glass of port. Coffee and truffles completed an excellent evening for £40 excluding service.

Mary Jewell

around the branches - Members Entertain at Home

Capital Branch at Keith & Sheila Ellis's



GAME LUNCH

This oversubscribed event took place at Keith and Sheila Ellis's home in Sandhurst, Berkshire. The aperitif was an unusual and very pleasant sparkling wine, Crémant du Jura Chardonnay Brut, by Philippe Michel from the branch cellar. Pam's game terrine with tomato chutney and balsamic reduction was well matched by Keith's choice of Quinta Do Crasto, Duoro Red, 2008.

The main course was Bernard Lamb's venison casserole, with petits pois. He served the wine blind to see how people would react to his un-

conventional wine-and-food match. Most, but not all, guests liked the match, and the wine was judged superb with the cheeses. We drank the entire production (three bottles) of his extremely fruity sweet home-made Red After-Dinner Wine 2007, unfortified, made from elderberries, blackcurrants, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, sloes, dried apricots, red grape juice and bilberries, with about 16% alcohol.

Pam's strong cheeses were absolutely ripe Époisses de Bourgogne and St Agur. Dessert was Sheila Ellis's delicious lemon crunch with raspberries and vanilla ice cream, matched with Vouvray Moelleux, 1996, Clos Baglin, which had plenty of acidity to match the lemon flavour. Coffee rounded off a very successful event, organised by Pam Brunning.

Bernard Lamb

Leicester Branch at Geoffrey & Mary Jewell's

Bat & Bottle Tasting and Supper



On Tuesday January 18th we had a wine tasting at my home. Ben Robson from Bat and Bottle, an independent wine merchant in Oakham, presented the wines. Geoffrey, my husband, and John Hind thought it would be good to try something unusual and so asked him to present Portuguese wines. Ben, a lively speaker, has travelled widely in Portugal and chose wines from a selection of small vineyards. He told anecdotes about the owners and made the presentation good fun and very interesting.

Thirty of us started the evening with a sparkling rosé, Luis Pato Baga Espumante Bruto, and canapés provided by "Lucy's Food" a catering company run by Leicester's Lucy Cufflin who has written a very good cookery book, theme - minimum effort, maximum impact - published by Hardie Grant books.

We then tasted three whites. Most enjoyed the Vinho Verde, Niepoort Giro Sol 2009, similar to Chablis, it would go very well with fish. Vale da Murta 2009 made from Arinto grape was rather odd. Roger, our chairman, enjoyed Quinta dos Roques from the Encruzado grape. The red wines were more approachable. Feitoria Meruga 2005 was made from the only well known grape, Tempranillo. Quinta da Chocapalha 2007 was made from four grapes including Touriga Nacional which gave it a pronounced port flavour. I enjoyed Quinta das Maias Black Label 2000 from the Jaen grape. All the wines would have been better with food.

After the tasting we enjoyed a beef and mushroom casserole with carrots and green beans and Lucy's Gratin Dauphinoise. and the fourth red, Casa de Saima Colheita 2007. Roger thought it lighter, lacked body, good taste but not a serious wine. For puddings I provided Hazlenut Meringue, Caramel and Vanilla Bavarois, Apple Crumble and Lucy's Honey tart followed by Wensleydale, Stilton and Dolcellate. I over catered providing too much casserole and a redundant hazlenut meringue. Being unused to catering I find it difficult to judge requirements, but leftovers were enjoyed next day.

Mary Jewell



Pennyhill Park

Luxury Hotel & Spa

London Road, Bagshot,
Surrey, GU19 5EU



The Latymer Restaurant

Pennyhill Park's website tells us, "under Chef Michael Wignall, our fine dining restaurant, The Latymer, has been awarded its first Michelin star (2010) as well as the prestigious accolade of 4 AA Rosettes". They describe Wignall's cooking as, "complex, carefully crafted and very technical but not intimidating, his style has familiar classical themes with all flavours staying true to themselves."

It sounds wonderful and with their 'Ten Good Reasons' lunch deal where the second person dining pays just £10 giving an average cost of a three course lunch for two of £42, it sounds even better.

We have known Pennyhill Park for many years under various owners but it is now part of the Exclusive Hotels group. It is a lovely venue with a feeling of utter luxury, the staff are affable and service is excellent - so what is wrong the food. One gets the impression that Michael Wignall is trying too hard to create a masterpiece - more for the eye than the palate, and more importantly, as far as he is concerned, I suspect, for a Michelin inspector.

There were lots of bits most of which were better executed than the main dishes. These days the size of the plate seems to be in inverse proportion to the size of the helping!

A very good mushroom and truffle soup with parsnip crisps and taramasalata dip was followed by pepper jelly rolled round smoked salmon mousse. Then we started lunch, my tiny slices of foie gras were served with shavings of mature manchego - that was an interesting combination, the cheese teased the palate and made the foie gras taste full and creamy - one up to Mr Wignall for that one. My partners veal heart was not a success - obviously cooked sou vide it was dry and lacking in flavour. The accompanying pickled carrots were the best part of the dish.





Now a pre main course - a rather tough puff of Gruyère cheese on a bed of lentils and chopped veal heart - well I suppose they had to use it up somewhere.

My main course was venison, once again it looked as though the water bath had been in action. Six small rectangular, uniform slices of tender, moist though rather bland, venison - no nice caramelised crunchy outside with a slightly bloody centre. The plate looked exquisite with turned artichokes and palm hearts, some drips of this sauce and drips of that sauce so small that any fine flavours were gone before you could discern what they were. As far as the whole dish was concerned it was a collection of ingredients with little cohesion but I fared much better than the other half - again. Plaice with cocks combs. The plaice, a low quality fish at the best of times, was grossly over cooked and under seasoned and the waiter had to be called back to point out the cock's combs. A thorough search did reveal a few tiny pieces too small to get any flavour from. He was bitterly disappointed as he had read of them recently and was interested in trying them - he is still not sure what they taste of. He then had to call a waitress to ask for some salt as the fish was completely lacking. Much to our amusement this obviously caused major trauma - she disappeared out of one door came back in another disappeared again and eventually, several minutes later, returned with a little pot containing sea salt.



The pre dessert, a tiny pot of a flavoured crème, was superior to the desserts themselves. My poached fig with a slice of fig cake was served with the ubiquitous drips of this and smear of that, the crisp sugary flakes gave a welcome texture change - all pleasant enough but unfortunately no wow factor. A chocolate and pistachio pud came in the same category.



The hotel advertises its own bakery with a bakery school, the bread was good but once again with no wow, but it would have been excellent to mop up some unctuous sauces- dream on!

We skipped coffee, it is often better at home and we had had enough sweet bits.

An unmemorable bottle of red wine doubled the bill, plus 12½% service, it brought the bill to over £90.



IW&FS 2012 VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL



The International Wine & Food Society holds an “international” festival, open to members worldwide, only once every three years. Is Vancouver, in September of 2012, in your future?

Planning for the 2012 festival is already moving forward a pace. Our rooms are contracted at the stunning, new Fairmont Pacific Rim Hotel. The dates have been set for an opening reception and dinner on the evening of Tuesday 11th September 2012, through to a closing black tie event on the evening of Saturday 15th September, with departure on Sunday 16th.

We hope to open registration during the second quarter of 2011. I anticipate we will register participants through our new IW&FS website. As this is an international festival, we will allocate reservations to our three regions based on recent membership census numbers. We have expanded openings to 200, as I believe Vancouver will prove popular with members worldwide. Stay in touch with the website, your branch contact and regional administrators as we plan to announce the registration process and the opening date in advance.

Vancouver is one of the great melting pots of North America with large population contingents from Europe, Asia and the Southern Hemisphere. The cuisine matches its citizenry. Last year, Conde Nast anointed Vancouver as the best place in the world, outside The Middle Kingdom, for Chinese cuisine. World-famous chefs Jean-Georges Vongerichten and Daniel Boulud have arrived, joining famous local chefs like Vikran Vij, whose Indian restaurant, Vij's, has people waiting in line every day.

The city which is surrounded by water and mountain is gorgeous. Wait until you visit the Public Market on Granville Island, with its vendors of everything fresh and delicious. Then there's gritty Gastown near the water, Yaletown and its hip boutiques, the fragrances of Stanley Park and the Sun Yat-Sen Garden, and hundred-mile views from atop Grouse Mountain only minutes from downtown.

All our regional publications are kindly sharing the news about the event. And when we finally open registration to the 2012 IW&FS International Festival, we hope you'll be among the revelers who travel with us to Vancouver.

Dave Felton

Chairman, 2012 Vancouver Festival Organizing Committee

January 2011

