

Food & Wine



International Wine & Food Society Europe & Africa Committee - issue 100

SEPTEMBER 2009

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Celebrating 100 Issues

Sherries Hidden Treasures

Dining in Medieval Britain

The Wanderers of China

Sherry & Tapas on the Thames





Food & Wine



European & African Committee Chairman's Column - circa 2009

European Committee Chairman's Column - circa 1984

THIS year the Society's quarterly Journal is being replaced by a handsome 200-plus page Annual. In addition you will receive a Newsletter published by the Area Committee for where you live, and thus in your case, by the European Committee. It will be issued quarterly and will contain both general material provided by



Headquarters and local news about events, branches, people, restaurants and so on. In short what you would like it to contain. But then we do need your cooperation. We must know what you would like to read about, we must have programmes for coming branch events and the like. Together we must find the best format for our European newsletter. It should enable us to keep each other informed about past, present and future Society activities as well as present articles about wine and food by both members and other experts. With your collaboration Wine & Food can be very successful.

This makes me think of Society meetings in general and then of course of the recent Convention in Vancouver, what a success! Well, you could judge for yourself from the detailed article in the last issue of the Journal, wasn't it mouth-watering? The previous one in Australia in 1980 was certainly not less exciting, at least not for me who found my wife there! Such international gatherings are memories for life and especially when one has participated in earlier ones. Then it is, as Lisle Barnden from Australia said, not a convention but a reunion. All European members have their chance to attend the next Convention since it is held in Alsace in September 1986. But before that there is time for training: the European Committee is organizing a Festival in 1985, most likely in May and on the lovely island of Guernsey where the energetic secretary of its Branch, Heather Oses, already is busy planning a three-day meeting. And if you would like to be really well trained the North American Committee has organized a Festival in the Napa Valley in October this year.

I don't think I have to give you more examples of the advantages of belonging to our wonderful Society, the best one in the world. I doubt any other Society can offer their members more friendship, hospitality and joy than the International Wine & Food Society.

Nils H Sternby

Nils H Sternby

I feel like a fraud writing the Chairman's column before I take over the job on the 1st October. I did not seek this honour and I am still not convinced that I am the best person to lead the EAC through



the worse recession in the Society's 75 year history but Chris Bonsall needs to concentrate on Chairing the International Council and implementing the strategic plan.

I will not detail my history or vision for the future here as I have asked the Editor to publish pen portraits of the whole EAC in December. I have been comparing our current situation with that of 25 years ago when Nils Sternby wrote his Chairman's column.

Now, as then, we have enjoyed a highly successful festival, in Cape Town this year. Then, we were launching a new method of communicating with members. Now, we have signed a contract to develop a new website to keep members informed and reach out to potential new members. Look at the photo of the young Nils and compare it with the age profile of our current members (particularly those in England), unless we recruit new, younger members the Society will die in this generation. Not all members have access to the new technology, they must not be abandoned so the Magazine will continue under its current Editor.

Other changes on the EAC include John Legg resigning as Treasurer, having put our accounts on a professional basis he now takes my previous role as Awards Officer. His replacement is Jim Muir from Herefordshire Branch. Nils H Sternby, Helen Mills and Shirley Kilian have stood down having all provided many years of committed and active service for which we are all grateful. Andy Anderson (Lusaka Branch) becomes the African members representative, Michael Messent (Wessex Branch) takes over as Events Coordinator and Tim Gittins (West Riding Branch) joins the committee to head up the Public Relations and Marketing initiative. John W Valentine, who did not stand for re-election, has been co-opted back on to help with the website development and to pass over to Michael Messent the control of EAC events. He remains, at the time of writing, the Secretary/Treasurer of Council. It will be my priority to ensure that the Continental European branches are represented on the committee.

The EAC will continue to help branches and independent members enjoy the pleasures of wine and food. In 2010 there is a 7 night Eastern Caribbean Cruise (see page 7), a repeat of Andre Simon's Asparagus lunch in the spring and the Sydney Festival in October. In 2011, on the 14th to 18th June, we look forward to a Festival on Merseyside.

Ron Barker

CONTRIBUTORS



Michael Hall, looks after Lustau's trade in the UK and is a former chairman of the Sherry Shippers Association. He was awarded membership of the "Gran Orden del Caballeros del Vino" by ICEX in 2004 for his services to Sherry and Spanish wines.



Peter Brears is a leading scholar of medieval cooking in England. He was formerly director of the museums at York and Leeds and has worked all his life in the field of domestic history. He has written extensively on traditional foods and cookery in Yorkshire, as well as a groundbreaking illustrated catalogue of domestic and farmhouse materials in Torquay Museum.



Thomas Hunt the 2008 Heptenestall Winner is 27yrs old and started his career at the Paternoster Chop House in London in 2004 as Demi Chef de Partie where he excelled taking responsibility with enthusiasm. In 2007 he moved to the Underdog Group and has gained experience in their three restaurants.



Food & Wine

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Editorial

As this is our 100th issue I thought we ought to look back at Wine & Food No1 for a moment. It was the spring of 1984 when Peter Bennett-Kennan offered to edit a new quarterly newsletter for the European & African members.

Nineteen eighty four - we had arrived, at last, at that infamous year and with great relief realised life was not as bad as George Orwell had portrayed - Big Brother was not looking over our shoulder. It took another twenty years or more before another Blair achieved Orwell's predictions and made the people of the UK one of the most spied on populations in the world.

The lead item in 1984 was an article on 1980 clarets by Clive Coates. I contacted Clive to ask if he had any further comments to make on that vintage, his reply was, - *"The trouble is that the 1980 vintage was the least distinguished of its era, and that the wines are now almost entirely over the hill. End of story. Little interest therefore to your readers. None have come my way for ages."*

Now 1982 that would be a different matter."

I will have to tackle him one day to justify that comment.

After 17 years of hard work Peter handed the reins over to Margaret Drake who maintained the very high standard. Ron Barker took over in 2004 and transformed the journal into a beautiful glossy publication suitable for a prestigious Society in the 21st century; he then passed the eyeshade over to me in 2007.

We have had a few days of summer this year as can be proved by the photos of our Tapas on the Thames trip in June. After that St. Swithin did his bit and many of our garden parties became indoor events.

Michael Hall from Lustau joined us on the Thames to talk us through the Sherries and has kindly written a biography of the sherry region.

We have an article on bygone dining by Peter Brears who won the André Simon 'cooking' book award in 2008 for Cooking & Dining in Medieval England this gives us an interesting insight in the etiquette of the table in former days.

The Heptinstall young chef awards, which the Society helps to administer, have come round again, the 2009 winner was Martin Malinowski-Evans a 24 year old chef working at Cafe 21 in Newcastle upon Tyne. In this issue you will find a fascinating report from the 2008 winner Thomas Hunt telling of the fantastic ten months he spent in Italy and Spain working and studying with the help of the prize money. This award offers a wonderful opportunity for a young chef to study world wide. It is open to any youngster working full time in any type of catering establishment; he just needs to be recommended by his supervisor.

I am eternally grateful to my regular contributors for their interesting reports but there are still too many branches that do not send news of their events. On page 20 you will see the editor's column from issue No1, please read and digest - it is you that I rely on to make this magazine appealing and motivating, if you have anything to say please let me know.

Pam Brunning

ROUNDUP OF ACTIVITIES

I hope, as you are reading this, you are reminiscing the good times you had over the summer holidays (vacation) and savouring some of the wonderful wines and food you enjoyed on the way.

As I type I am looking forward to my holiday in the Vendée region of the Pays de la Loire in France. I have already asked Jim Budd to recommend a local winery I should visit for my "holiday" wines. Jim is a colleague of mine at the Circle of Wine Writers, who really does know his Loire wines – he was also winner of a Loire Wine Blog trophy this year, so I should be set to go. I plan to visit Domaine St Nicola in Brem Sur Mer, a respected producer of biodynamic wines, and will let you know how I get on.

The IS office has been very busy since May preparing the Vintage Card ready for delivery in the Autumn and in the last two months I have been pulling together the 2009 Directory of Branch Contacts (with assistance from representatives within the EAC, APZ and BGA) and also the 2008 Report and Accounts – both which should be with you any day now, if they are not already. Collating all the information made me think that this would be an opportune time to give an update of the number of branches and members there are in the Society.

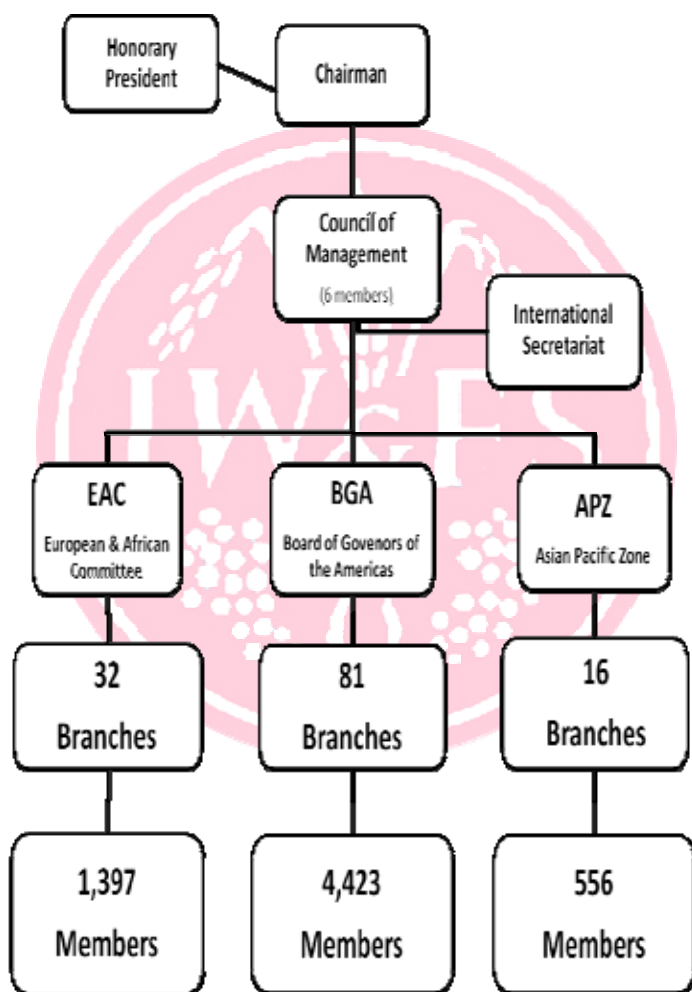
I have included this information within an organisation chart to illustrate quite simply the breakdown of the membership and also to show some of our newer members, who may not be aware, the structure of the IW&FS – although most of you are members of a local branch there are also many people working on your behalf on an international level. My daily speak and e mails, for the IS, frequently include acronyms such as the BGA this, the APZ that and, not forgetting, the EAC the other..... Many of you longstanding members of the Society will no doubt be very aware of what these abbreviations actually stand for – or maybe you are not, as the abbreviations have simply replaced the original meaning. As a result I have also included the meanings of these for newer members and for those who may have forgotten over time.

When looking at these figures it put things into perspective just how many other like-minded people, and lovers of the good things in life, there actually are around the world.

Santé

Andrea Warren

IW&FS Organisation Chart 2009



CAPE INSIGHTS SPECIAL INTEREST TOURS

A TASTE OF THE CAPE

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



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

OUR STYLE OF TRAVEL

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A RECIPE WITH A STORY TO TELL

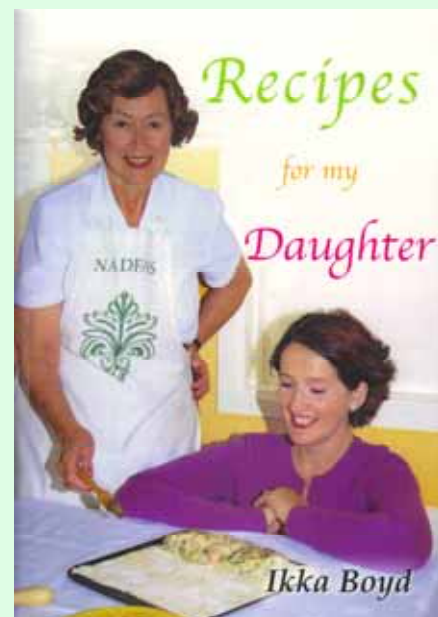
We are very privileged to have received permission to reproduce some of the individual recipes from the captivating book Ikka Boyd wrote for her daughter. Ikka, with her husband John, founded the Hereford Branch and still take an active part in the running of the branch.

To quote from the 'Forward' to the book, written by Margaret Drake, a past editor of Food & Wine:

'Ikka Boyd's delightful book is the result of a lifetime's interest in food, natural greed (her own admission) and the courage to try new dishes then attempting to make them herself.'

Her initial interest was probably based on the good cooking she had at home in Finland. Her mother was a natural cook who had some training but learnt a lot at home on the farm. After Ikka's mother married, she started a business which gave her the chance to stay in top-flight hotels where she found classical French and other European dishes which she then reproduced at home. It was in this environment that, as a child, Ikka was encouraged to make culinary experiments.'

After marrying John, Ikka settled in England, and, with a friend, formed her own catering company spending ten years cooking for an impressive portfolio of customers. She says her main reason for writing the book was, 'to satisfy the pleading of her newly-married daughter for advice and to ensure that these favourite recipes, some of her own childhood, would not be lost - maybe to be carried over for another generation.'



WEST COAST SALAD

Serves 4 to 6

A very nice Swedish first course served with white wine.

Ingredients:

½ lb. shelled prawns (frozen will be fine, defrosted and drained)

1 tin green asparagus spears or pieces

1 tin smoked mussels or oysters

1 small tin peas (petit pois)

4 oz fresh mushrooms, sliced

2 tbs. chopped parsley

1 tbs. chopped dill (or fennel)

vinaigrette, dressing

Garnish:

2 hard boiled eggs

1 lemon

1 lettuce

Method:

Drain asparagus and, if not cut already, cut into small 1 inch pieces.

Clean and slice mushrooms and marinade in some vinaigrette dressing.

Mix together mussels, (including oil), prawns and peas (drained) and add most of the asparagus pieces.

Add mushrooms with parsley, very carefully, so as not to break up the asparagus pieces.

Stir in dill and dressing, also extra salt, pepper and lemon juice to taste.

Line dish with lettuce leaves. Fill with salad.

Decorate with hard-boiled egg wedges, slices of lemon and the rest of the asparagus spears.

Serve cold with toast and butter.

Note:

This is my Husband's favourite starter. Of course, it should be made with freshly cooked prawns from the Swedish West Coast, that gives the dish its name. However, it is surprising how well the combination of tinned asparagus, frozen prawns and tinned peas works with vinaigrette dressing flavoured with dill! I always add freshly sliced mushrooms and smoked oysters or mussels with their oil for texture and more flavour. I first had this dish in a famous restaurant in Stockholm. It was a very elegant place and this salad was served in a glass bowl on a bed of ice and topped with fresh dill fronds. The string orchestra was playing and we were entertained afterwards by the incomparable Danish musician and funny man, the late Victor Borge: an experience that impressed me as a teenager and I would love to repeat.

Ikka Boyd



Sherry & Tapas on The Thames



On a warm and sunny day in June (yes, there were some!) 65 members and guests gathered on a Wednesday morning at St. Katharine's Pier, in London, next to Tower Bridge to board the river boat Salient. They came from 12 different branches to experience a river cruise and to taste quality Sherry along with a Spanish style tapas luncheon organised by EAC members.

The boat has two decks allowing the luncheon tables to be set up on the lower deck whilst leaving the upper deck for members and guests to wander about, look at the riverside buildings (both the historic and new) from a unique viewpoint, and, most importantly, meet other members. We set off down stream just after 11:30 when the Editor arrived, (the taxi having mistakenly taken her to St. Katharine's Dock, some distance away, instead of St Katharine's Pier).

Members with very long memories or access to the menus of past Society functions will know that Sherry was once one of the favourite tipples of the English but most people now think of it as the 'Bristol Cream' drink their Grandmother serves on Christmas morning between opening the presents and beginning to cook the sprouts! Without wishing to upset Harveys, this is a far cry from the Sherry drunk and enjoyed by the Spanish.

Our 11 different Sherries were all kindly supplied by Lustau and they, and the luncheon, were introduced by Michael Hall. We were first served Hogazas (bread) of tomato drizzled with virgin olive oil, roasted peppers and anchovies and a glass of Puerto Fino which was light, bright and fresh and imported specially for us. This was followed by a break on the upper deck as we moved downstream past the Millennium Dome (now re-titled O2 Arena), the Cutty Sark (still being rebuilt after the fire) and the Dartmouth Naval College as well as hundreds of new, very expensive riverside apartments.





We returned to our tables for a selection of fishy bites: salt cod croquettes with dill; deep fried calamari with lemon wedges and squid in tomato and chilli sauce with which we were served Fino La Ina and Manzanilla Papirusa. Lustau have recently purchased the brand La Ina together with its 4,000 butt solera system.

The second course was skewers of kidneys marinated in garlic and white wine vinegar and wrapped in bacon, and skewers of chicken, green peppers and tomatoes marinated in chilli and garlic. We moved onto slightly heavier Sherries with more body; Manzanilla Pasada Almacenista Cuevas Jurado, and Los Arcos Dry Amontillado

For our 3rd (main) course we tasted Palo Cortado Vides, Don Nuno Dry Oloroso, and Emperatriz Eugenia Oloroso alongside Chorizo sausages, black pudding and Spanish onions cooked in a spicy tomato sauce served with Tortilla Espagnola with aubergines, spinach and a salad of Fetta cheese and diced tomatoes.

Just in case you thought that we had forgotten those with a sweet tooth the final course was a fig and almond cake and vanilla ice cream. The three sweet Sherries were East India Sweet Oloroso, Emilin Moscatel, and San Emilio Pedro Ximenez. Michael Hall advised guests to pour the PX over the home-made ice cream as a sauce. This was not new to some of us but a delight to those who found it a new experience.

The food was prepared and served for us by Richmond Creative Event Catering whose team were overseen by their Managing Director, Terry Hughes. It was of a high standard and was generally appreciated. Some people may think 11 Sherries a little alcoholic (there should have been 12 but Fields, Morris & Verdin failed to deliver one Amontillado; most people did not notice!) but they were served as tasting measures and guests enjoyed the variety and quality rather than the quantity.

During the meal the riverboat went through the Thames Barrier and then returned to central London, this time passing under Tower Bridge giving us an opportunity to see the Tower of London and Traitor's Gate, HMS Belfast and the London Eye.

The weather was superb, the food and boat a delight, and the Sherry an enjoyable education. Above all the event was made by the fellowship of members from so many different branches. EAC Chairman, Chris Bonsall thanked Michael Hall and Terry Hughes for the event, and our Awards officer (Ron Barker) & Treasurer (John Legg) for organising it. He went on to announce a similar spring luncheon event in the Cotswolds, in 2010, when the subject will be Asparagus.

The International Wine & Food Society & The Board of Governors of the Americas Present "Cruise with IW&FS Friends" January 31 – February 7, 2010 Visit to the Caribbean Aboard the Celebrity Solstice



When & Where: The *Solstice* will depart Fort Lauderdale, Florida on Sunday, January 31st promptly at 4 p.m. and will return to Fort Lauderdale on Sunday February 7th at 8 a.m.

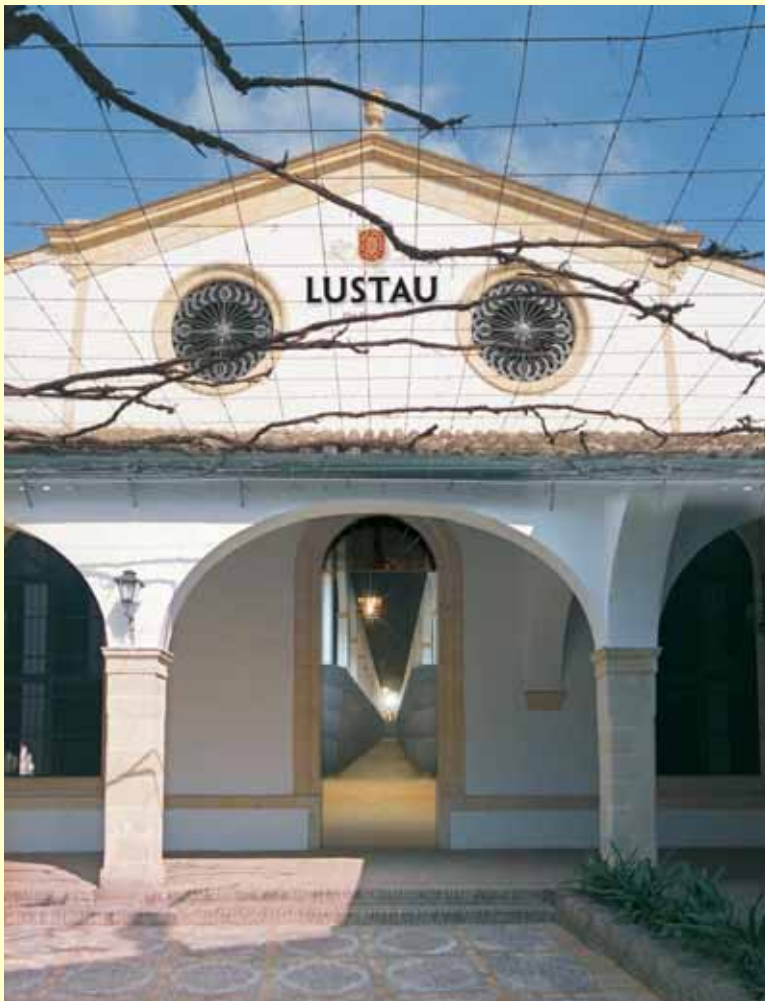
Our Stops: San Juan, Puerto Rico, Phillipsburg St. Maarten, Tortola, B.V.I., Labadee, Haiti

Wining & Dining: BGA Governor Steve Hipple (who will serve as the cruise's on-board host) and his Organizing Committee have kindly arranged for some very special experiences for us. Each evening will begin with a private Champagne Reception, with three Receptions including Caviar, and each night we'll enjoy a special dinner planned by Mr. Hipple and prepared by the ship's world-class culinary staff. Our five-course dinners will be accompanied by wines representing the great wine producing regions of the world and purchased by The IW&FS specifically for our cruise.

For more details and registration form please contact BGA Executive Director Christy Marsh:
Tel: 001 913-541-1491 or email pegleg47@aol.com.

Sherry - Discover the Hidden Treasures

By Michael Hall



Sherry remains a very popular wine in the UK with annual sales of over 20 million 75cl bottles: This is despite a widely held image of being old fashioned and sweet. It is true that Cream and sweetened Amontillado styles account for at about 85% of UK sales and that they are mainly consumed by mature drinkers. And why not, these are pleasant tasting, warm, sociable and good value wines that deserve their lasting appeal.

The problem for the Sherry trade is that this entrenched image inhibits consumer awareness of fine quality dry Sherries which range from light, delicate Fino and Manzanilla (both 15% AbV – same as many new world wines) to fuller bodied, aged Amontillado and dry Oloroso. Dry styles which are the pride of every Sherry house, being the most difficult to perfect, requiring long maturation times through Solera systems and considerable attention and man hours from the Capataz (bodega foreman) and his team. The average age of Fino/Manzanilla is five years and for Amontillado and Oloroso this often increases to ten and even twenty years. Add to this the fact that 4% of wine is lost by evaporation from each barrel (butt) every year – the so called “Angels share” - and it is easy to see that the production costs of aged dry wines is considerably greater than that of basic own labels and brands. Yet, because these older wines are relatively unknown and demand is comparatively small they do not command an appreciably greater retail price than basic younger Sherries. They are therefore some of the finest quality and value wines in the world. In addition they are great

accompaniments to many food dishes from fish courses to meats and cheeses. Every visitor to the Sherry region in Andalucía will testify to the joy of a copita of chilled Fino or Manzanilla with tapas or a nutty dry Amontillado or fragrant rich flavoured Oloroso with cheese.

The choice of Sherry of course depends on individual palates. To the writer one of the joys of fine Sherry is to compare the nuances of style and flavour of wines of the same type from the three Sherry maturation towns – Jerez de la Frontera, Sanlúcar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa María.

These style differences are perhaps most noticeable in Finos where wines matured in Jerez de la Frontera will tend to be fuller in body compared with their lighter and more fragrant counterparts from the coastal towns of Sanlúcar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa María. In turn Fino from Puerto will usually have greater flavour depth and a more tender finish than Manzanilla Fina matured in Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Only Fino matured in Sanlúcar de Barrameda is named Manzanilla and it has a distinctive tang which many tasters call salty. These subtle style differences between the three towns are also apparent in dry Amontillados and dry Olorosos. For example, the warmer temperature in Jerez generally produces bigger and more generous Amontillados and Olorosos.

The quality and character of Sherry, as with all wines, is influenced by natural factors such as location, climate, soil and grape varieties combined with human skills in viticulture and vinification. However, the character of a Sherry is determined by the town in which it is matured through its Solera system. In this regard Sherry differs from table wines where vineyard location has the greatest influence.

The reason each town exerts such influence is due to their individual micro climates. Although approximately only 20 kilometers apart Jerez has a higher average temperature and less humidity due to its inland location. The other two towns being coastal benefit from cooling sea winds and greater humidity. This coastal location encourages the year round growth of “flor”, the natural yeast film which lives on the surface of the wine in barrel and is essential for good quality Fino maturation. Today Sherry houses utilise the latest wine making technology to ensure the best possible growth of flor and bottling standards. As a result the quality and freshness of Fino wines has improved noticeably in recent years but it is pleasing to find that the basic character differences of the three Sherry towns remains evident.

Label terms and recommended choices:-

Solera – the traditional maturation system of oak casks (butts) which ensures consistent quality. It is a form of fractional blending based on the fact younger wines poured into a butt will initially refresh the older and blended wines already in the barrel but in fairly short time will then acquire the characteristics of the older wine. Managing the Solera system requires great skill and time by the Capataz. He is effectively the wine maker and he must control and nurture the wine in every butt: Lustau has approximately 20,000 butts.

Fino – The most delicate Sherry, which matures beneath the “flor” (flower). Flor grows on the surface of the wine throughout its time in Solera and protects the wine from oxidation (note the pale straw colour of Fino). Flor also gives Fino its distinctive bouquet of fresh bread or yeast. Ageing under flor is a biological process and the maximum alcohol level at which it will survive is 15% AbV, any greater and it will die. (recommend: Lustau Puerto Fino - £10 - £12 per 75cl)

Manzanilla is a Fino matured only in the coastal town of Sanlucar de Barrameda: It is ideally located on the estuary of the river Guadalquivir (recommend: Lustau Papirusa Manzanilla Fina £10 - £12 per 75cl or Manzanilla Pasada, Almacenista Cuevas Jurado £10 per 37.5cl)

Dry Amontillado is a matured Fino or Manzanilla. It is the only style matured twice, firstly through Solera as a Fino at 15%AbV. It is then transferred to a separate Solera at 17% AbV to mature for many years by oxidation into a dry Amontillado of great complexity. For this reason old dry Amontillados are referred to as the king of sherries. (recommend: Lustau Los Arcos £10 - £12 per 75cl or Lustau Emperatriz Eugenia £20 per 75cl or Manzanilla Amontillada Almacenista Cuevas Jurado - £12 per 37.5cl)

Dry Oloroso – This is the second family of Sherries being fuller bodied and with deeper, richer character. They mature by oxidation in Solera at 17% AbV acquiring by age a great depth of flavour and a deep mahogany colour. (recommend: Lustau Don Nuno - £15 per 75cl)

Palo Cortado is a rare member of the Oloroso family combining the body and power of an Oloroso with the slightly lighter and nutty bouquet of an Amontillado. They are mainly produced from vineyards along the border between the regions of Marchanudo, famous for Amontillado wines, and Carrascal the highest vineyard region which produces Olorosos. (recommend: Palo Cortado Almacenista Vides - £12 per 37.5cl).

East India sweet Oloroso – a blend of dry Oloroso and Pedro Ximenez sweetening wine. After blending the wine is returned to butt to marry for a further year. This replicates the days of the East India sailing ships when barrels of sweet sherry were sent to the Indies lashed to the decks, and were found to improve in quality after the voyage. Originally it was thought this was due to crossing the tropics but in truth it was that the blend had had time in barrel to harmonise or marry. The result of the extra blend ageing is a delicious smooth sweet Oloroso, evocative to many of Christmas time. (recommend: Lustau East India - £15 per 75cl).

Pedro Ximenez (PX) – A sweet wine made from grapes of the same name. The grapes are left to dry under the sun on esparto grass mats for approximately ten days. The water content evaporates leaving a concentrated sweet raisin. Fermentation yeasts will only reach 5% AbV naturally due to the high sugar content of the grape. Grape brandy is added to increase alcohol to 17%AbV and the PX then matures in its own solera system for between 8 to 10 years. The resulting wine is super sweet with an intense flavour like liquid raisins. It is used for blending purposes but is increasingly popular consumed with ice cream. (recommend: Lustau San Emilio PX - £15 per 75cl).

Moscatel – The second sweet grape of the Sherry region grown on sandy coastal vineyards. It is made by same method as PX. Sherry Moscatel is one of the world's great dessert wines. It is less sweet than PX but with much more subtlety and greater nuances of flavour, a distinctive bouquet of sultanas and figs with citrus overtones. Unbeatable with chocolate puddings, desserts and summer fruits. (recommend: Lustau Emilin Moscatel £15 per 75cl)

Almacenista. – the word translates as storeholder. Traditionally small bodegas, spread through the three towns, each of which mature a few styles, often of very high quality and with individual character. Originally these wines were used to enhance the quality of the Sherry shippers soleras. Thirty years ago Lustau launched, to much acclaim, a selection of styles under their label combined with that of individual Almacenistas. These are amongst the finest Sherries.

Lustau – Founded in 1896 as an almacenista and now recognised as one of the finest quality Sherry houses with bodegas in all three towns. They regularly win tasting competition awards and take pride in only producing quality Sherries.

Members requiring local stockist details should contact Lustau's UK distributors, Fields Morris & Verdin Ltd
Tel 020 7819 0360
e-mail order@fmvwines.com.



Bodega La Emperatriz

Cooking And Dining In Medieval England

By Peter Brears

Anyone who visits our great cathedrals, with their soaring Gothic architecture, magnificent stained glass and woodwork, who sees the artefacts and manuscripts of the period in museums and libraries, or enjoys the literature of Chaucer, the mystery plays, etc. is left in no doubt as to the wonderful cultural achievements of medieval England. We should therefore expect to find that a society of such sophistication also enjoyed excellent food and the most eloquent of table-manners, but this is not the image with which we are familiar today. Those who have watched the television programmes on medieval food which have been broadcast over the last few months will have seen celebrity chefs and "food historians" indulge their fantasies in grotesque slapstick, either grabbing an ill-chosen selection of gross food and biting lumps off before throwing away the residue, or spearing chunks on their knives like pantomime gluttons. As to



much of the accompanying commentary, one is reminded of the old proverb 'It is better to be silent and be thought a fool, rather than speak and confirm it beyond all doubt.' From the 1930s directors in film and television have actively promoted mis-information on this subject so effectively that almost every scrap of truth and accuracy has been expunged from the public mind.

In reality, food and manners of medieval England achieved the very highest standards. Even the most slovenly of peasants would have been horrified by many of today's habits. To him it would be unthinkable to eat anything without washing the hands both before and afterwards, to carry food to the lips with the hand used for toilet purposes, or to bite into food, a trait which marked the clear divide between mankind and animals. From birth he had been trained how to behave at table so as to be able to share a meal with a knight or a prioress, as in *The Canterbury Tales*, without embarrassment. If he had been born into the higher levels of society, any rank from a squire to a lord, his training in the finer aspects of dining would have commenced in early childhood under



Richard II entertaining the Dukes of York, Gloucester and Ireland, early 15th century

the tutorship of a senior household officer. When a youth, he would then move into a household of superior status, there to become a combination of table-servant, student and adopted son, working through the roles of cup-bearer, waiter, carver etc., until he was thoroughly competent in each one. Only with years of such training could he effectively be accepted into contemporary society and, once he had established his own household, oversee the transfer of these hard-won skills to the following generation.

At this courtly level the service for those dining at the top table in a great hall comprised over eighty separate manoeuvres, some carried out individually, others requiring the choreographed cooperation of a number of different servants. Even just one of these operations might require the display of considerable knowledge and dexterity. The man acting as carver for the day, probably being allotted this task only minutes before performing his duties, had to know which knives, which fingers and which accompaniments were necessary for carving up to ninety different dishes. He had also to know by heart the particular verb used to replace 'carve' for thirty seven of them, venison being 'unjointed', peacocks 'disfigured', and pike 'splatted', for example. Kneeling before the table, he had to use his own judgement, or follow his master's glance, to choose which of the various dishes to cut into delicate mouth-sized portions and deliver on knife tip to his master's place, leaving him only to lift them to his lips with his right hand.

Further down the social scale, either in the body of the hall or around a cottage table, everyone knew their basic table manners. Equipped with their own knife and spoon, and provided with a large white bread roll or a slice of wholewheat bread, they would spoon up liquid or semi liquid foods from their communal dishes, wiping their spoons clean with morsels of bread, and eating them, before moving on to another dish. Solid foods such as joints, pâtés and pies were also served in communal dishes. Taking their turn, the senior first, each person would grasp the portion they wanted with the thumb and two forefingers of their left hand, using the knife similarly gripped in their right hand to cut it off, and carry it back to their trencher, a small personal cutting board made of either wood or stale wholewheat bread. Here, still gripped by the left hand, it would be cut into mouth sized pieces, the knife then being propped on the trencher to enable the 'right' hand to lift them to the lips. Once mastered, this is a very neat and elegant manner of dining, adding a further tactile appreciation of the food, and negating the need for the vast napkins necessary once the knife-and-fork combination was introduced in the seventeenth century.

The foods prepared in medieval kitchens appear to have been designed to complement the contemporary table manners, which in turn were governed by culinary practicalities. At the most basic level many subsisted on the contents of a single cooking pot. After simmering for some time, its joint of meat would have vegetables added, so that both would be ready at the same time. The joint would then be removed and left to rest and firm up, and oatmeal stirred into the remaining stock to thicken it almost instantly. Once tipped into a dish, this might be served immediately as a first-course pottage, with the joint as a second course following shortly afterwards. This method was so efficient of heat, utensils and service that it was used on a vast scale to feed the hundreds of servants employed in great castles and palaces, a separate department called the boiling house being responsible for its preparation.

In such large establishments the financial and physical control of every food-related resource was tightly regulated by a number of chief officers and clerks. As well as purchasing every commodity for the best value, they checked every item as it entered and left its respective store, recorded every ingredient as it came into the kitchen, and every dish as it went out, ensuring that nothing was stolen, wasted or spoiled. For convenience and efficiency the work was divided between various departments. Meats made their way from the slaughterhouse into the larders and on into the kitchen, poultry was drawn and plucked in the scalding-house ready for immediate use, salt fish and meat were stored in the salt-house, spices in the spicery, and grain in the granary, ready for making bread in the bakehouse or pastries in the pastry. There was also a separate saucery for making the characteristic thick ketchup-like sauces of the period, and a confectionery in which sweetmeats and elaborate marchpanes and table-decorations called subtleties were prepared. To avoid the catastrophic effects of food poisoning, experience had already shown that raw ingredients must never be stored alongside those which had been cooked, and that all prepared foods should be either consumed or given away by the end of the day, never being left overnight for re-use.

Within the kitchens, the range of recipes used to prepare dishes for the privileged few was extremely rich and varied, as witnessed by the hundreds recorded in manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Roasting methods included marinating, larding, stuffing beneath the skin, coating in coloured egg batters and basting for example. Pottages were even more diverse, their principal ingredients of meats, fish, dairy products, vegetables, fresh or dried fruits, almonds, flowers, cereals, pasta, breads and toasts being cooked with selections of stocks, wines, ales, vinegars, cream, almond milk, herbs, spices and colourings. They thus achieved an amazing range of flavours and textures, from the smooth, delicate and creamy, to the richest sweet and sour, or the most peppery and pungent.

Other recipes were designed to produce large quantities of freshly cooked hot food just at the time of service. Pre-prepared plain or herbed batters, batter-coated apples, onions or cooked meats, or meat, fish or fruit-stuffed pastas were all rapidly deep-fried to be served as fritters, for example. In the pastry, meanwhile, blind half-baked pastry flan cases were quickly filled with similar mixtures which took only a short time to set in the oven, before being rushed up to the waiting diners. Pies and pastries of game, poultry and fruit requiring longer cooking times appear to have been baked beforehand, so that they did not clog the ovens at the busiest periods.

As this brief description clearly shows, the culinary and dining skills of medieval England represent one of this country's greatest cultural achievements, a totally practical, unified, well-managed and highly sophisticated tradition. It enabled peasants to dine economically and with good manners at the lower reaches of society, and great magnates to hold feasts at which some two thousand covers could be served up to three courses of twelve to nineteen individual dishes. Capable of adopting new ingredients and new recipes, it only started to decline in the late sixteenth century. As the former great aristocratic families gradually lost their power, the Elizabethan *nouveau-riche* decided that they had better things to do than learn good manners and maintain large bodies of professional household officers and servants. By the mid seventeenth century, like the technically brilliant and aesthetically incomparable cathedrals, the excellent cooking and dining traditions of medieval England were already things of the past. What replaced them was certainly new and different, but that does not necessarily mean better.

A Venetian visitor to early Tudor England noted that 'the wealth and civilisation of all the world are here, and those who call the English barbarians appear to render themselves such; I perceive very elegant manners and politeness.' Unfortunately many visitors from the twenty-first century lack his insight still blissfully rendering themselves such at every possible opportunity. English society, both medieval and modern, deserves to be treated with intelligence, truth and respect; it is time for all food writers and presenters to take note of this, and act accordingly.

Cooking & Dining in Medieval England by Peter Brears

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About the Author

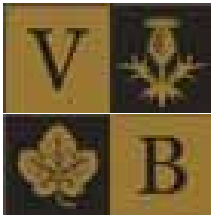
Peter Brears is a leading scholar of medieval cooking in England. He was formerly director of the museums at York and Leeds and has worked all his life in the field of domestic history. He has written extensively on traditional foods and cookery in Yorkshire, as well as a groundbreaking illustrated catalogue of domestic and farmhouse materials in Torquay Museum. He supervised the reconstruction of several important historical kitchens, including those at Hampton Court, Ham House, Cowdray Castle and Belvoir Castle.



A King at table, a stained glass panel from
Cassiobury Park, Hertfordshire C1450

THE EXPERIENCES OF A WILLIAM HEPTINSTALL AWARD WINNER

By **THOMAS HUNT**



When I won the award in 2008 I was clear about my destinations but equally devoted to try and use the financial support to allow me to work and live abroad for as long as possible. I knew from previous experience that an extended stage compared to just a week here and there allows a more comprehensive insight into the food and service of the restaurant but also the local gastronomy and culture. Also it is increasingly common for high end restaurants to only offer a minimum *stage* of 3 months, a factor future winners should acknowledge.

Villa Bordon, Greve in Chianti, Tuscany



Chef Francesco Fino- Villa Bordon

I started my first *stage* on September 5th 2008. David Gardner, the owner of Villa Bordon had insisted that I arrived as quickly as possible after I had initially applied to his Villa. The reasons became clear almost immediately as in my first week the hum and murmur of tractors and trailers rumbled in the Tuscan hills, signalling the start of the Chianti wine harvest. On every hill and ridge, lines of vines stretched away in front of me heavy with grapes shaded by dense vivid green leaves. Whilst working in the kitchen it was also normal to hear the crack and echo of gun shots reverberating around the hills as the hunts for wild boar continued.

The kitchen was impeccable, a bespoke Molteni island range that was surrounded by walls lined with black and white ceramic tiles, seamlessly joined with the kitchen surfaces all made of Italian marble. The pass ran along one side of the kitchen where it and the window also doubled as a counter from where customers watched when the cooking school occupied the kitchen. The restaurant had 30 covers and had a weekly changing a la carte menu and a daily changing 5 course degustation menu. Along side the daily *mise en place** the head chef, the sous chef and I created a new menu each day for that evening.

The hotel served traditional Tuscan food but with more refinement and a 'fine dining' approach. For appetisers; poached and fried egg on a cream of pecorino cheese with shaved porcini mushrooms shows traditional Tuscan ingredients treated with more precision and sophistication. Antipasti: homemade tortelli stuffed with salted cod with a tomato and shellfish bisque and candid lemon or for the second plate, pork loin rolled with fennel and served with cavolo nero and herbed lard. Service reflected the food sympathetically; a beautiful tranquil Tuscan villa delivering service of scrupulous attention to detail, complimented by an exemplary wine list to match from the 11th century cellar culminating in relaxed informality which ensured guests could feel at ease.

During September I spent days at wine festivals celebrating the new harvests and showcasing last year's vintages. In Panzano, 10 minutes from Greve and high on a hill with breathtaking views of Tuscany, I had the pleasure of eating with Dario Cecchini, the worldwide famous butcher from the book 'Heat' and of Jamie Oliver's Italy. He welcomes everybody into his butchery shop where he promptly offers you a glass of wine, bread and oil and sliced porchetta. His restaurant Solociccia was a true Tuscan family experience where there is no menu just a place mat describing whatever he and his family felt like eating that evening and then served 'convivia' where you share a table with 12 other guests.

I was also invited to eat at the famous vineyard and olive frantoio at Cappezana for their annual Olive oil party where they hold a 5 course tasting dinner for esteemed Florentine restaurateurs, where each course demonstrates a differing quality of their olive oil and is then matched to a wine from their own estate. As an aperitivo, a tour of their cellars, grapes drying for Vin Santo and Chianti wines from each year back to 1930 set the tone for this resolutely Tuscan experience.

In the late Autumn, time out of the kitchen was spent brushing olives from our own estate trees which I had the privilege of taking to the press, all 300 kilos of them and waiting whilst they were pressed into the most intense, rich and spicy olive oil.



Hand rolled cavatelli pasta at Villa Bordon

As the hotel quietened in December just before Christmas I asked the local butcher 'Antica Macelleria Falorni' if I could spend some mornings with them learning other methods of butchery and preparation. This opened up some incredible opportunities as I then spent two days with the students from the University of Gastronomic Science (Milan) touring the local suppliers farms as well as the Falorni's very own warehouse for the production of Prosciutto, Salamis, Wild Boar sausages and cures. The lectures took place in the Museum of Wine in Greve, Chianti where at any one time over 150 bottles of Tuscan and Umbrian wines are open for small samples.

Other days were spent going into Florence to visit the city and tour around the Mercatale Centrale, the main food market of Florence. Early winter saw a chocolate festival in Florence for 5 days set in the stunning Piazza Sante Croce and nearby I ate at Cibreo, one of Tuscany's most famous Michelin starred restaurants. Tuscany was a true culinary experience

from rustic peasant family food to Michelin starred meals and wine. There was no better way to perfect pasta making and the diversity of ragus than at a beautiful Tuscan villa in the gastronomic heartland of Italy.

Donostia/San Sebastian Spain



Martin Berasategui

The transition to San Sebastian could not have been more different from Tuscany. It promised from the start to be a completely diverse stage in every way. I spoke to the 'effe' of the kitchen who, after he ascertained that I spoke Italian and a little Spanish allocated me to Pastry with an Italian chef.

The organisation of the kitchen was on a scale like I had never experienced. Each partita or station, of which there were 5, had its own Chef de Partie organising around 10 staggers. It was a huge operation just to fathom and at the start a little daunting especially when sometimes staff easily outweighed the work load. The only issue I had with such an operation was the range in staggers as there were a considerable number of culinary students from Latin America who clearly had to be there just to finish their studies rather having chosen to be there for experience and development. I quickly became in charge of the Foie Gras terrine which was one of the Pintxos or first plates that all the customers received. I thrived on having the responsibility of this plate and especially when we had to make it for 120 customers at the 25th Annual Convention for Modern Spanish Gastronomy of which Ferran Adria was a guest.



Foie Gras, Smoked Eel and Citric Apple Terrine.

After a month I moved to Pastry production where I was responsible for all the ice creams and sorbets. During service I would liaise with the 'effe' to churn each ice cream a la minute for the desserts which resulted in quality even surpassing some Italian gelaterias. The dishes I worked on were 'Cold essence of basil with lime sherbet, juniper ice shavings and raw almond touches' and 'Carbon of milk, yoghurt ice cream, strawberry and acidic leaves'.

With two full days off a week I was really able to explore San Sebastian and the Basque Country. Every Sunday night would start with Pintxos in the 'Old Quarter' of San Sebastian eating tapas and drinking Txkoli, the famous sparkling white wine. With some colleagues we arranged a dinner at Mugaritz, recently voted 4th best restaurant in the world. We ate a bespoke 14 course meal with wines to match and before and after dinner were given a tour and introduction to all the chefs, the kitchens and the secret

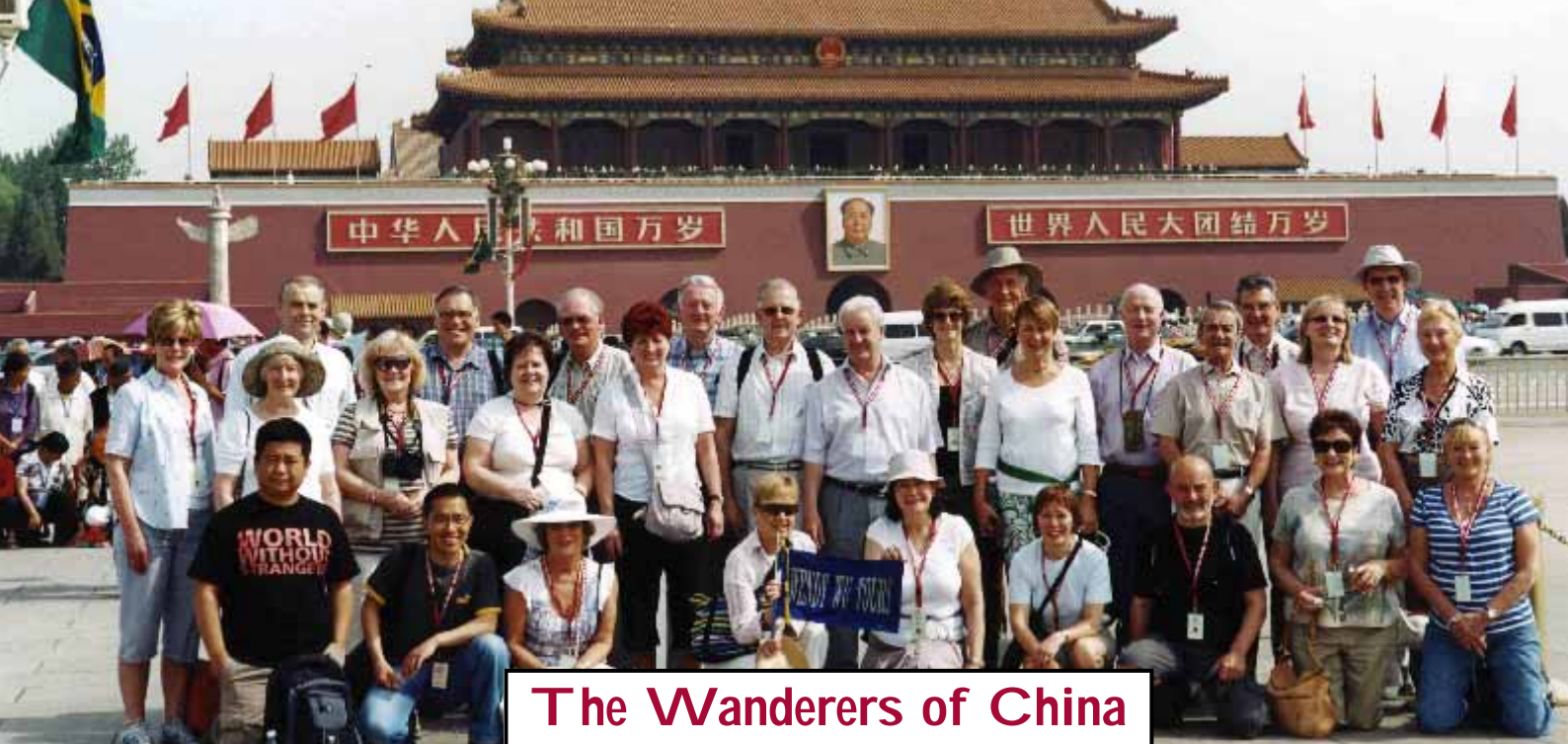
testing kitchens. It was an unbelievable experience and a privilege to have enjoyed a personalized meal there. On another occasion I took a full day tour into Rioja and visited 3 different vineyards from the Alta, Alavesa and Baja, tasting whites, reds and rosés from the whole region.

After over 10 months away of which 6 months were staging I can honestly say I have really experienced and learnt first hand about the gastronomy of both Italy and Spain. The length of time enabled me to follow seasonal changes and become confident in their kitchens, service and contribute to the menus. I can't thank the Board and the William Heptinstall Award enough for giving me this opportunity and I wish all the best for the award in the future and will continually offer my support.



Pastry at Martin Berasategui, 3* San Sebastian

* **Mise en place** (pronounced [miz ɑ̃ plas], literally "putting in place") is a French phrase defined by the Culinary Institute of America as "everything in place", as in set up. It is used in professional kitchens to refer to the ingredients, such as cuts of meat, relishes, sauces, par-cooked items, spices, freshly chopped vegetables, and other components that a cook requires for the menu items that they expect to prepare during their shift. *Editor*



The Wanderers of China

The Wonders of China

By Val Brookfield-Bishop

Wines of China

There is much average Chinese wine, mostly manufactured under two labels - Dynasty and Great Wall. They both produce various qualities.

On the whole, the Dynasty white is preferable to the Great Wall white

On the reds, the reverse is true and the specific grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon are the best.

However the quality varies from bottle to bottle and the vintages were seldom more than three years.

There are other wines, some specialist and more expensive but we did not try many of those.

Paul Bishop

** Hutong is a typical lane or small street in Beijing that originated during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). "Hutong" is a Mongolian word, meaning "water well". During that time, water well was the settlement around which people lived.*

On May 27th, 27 members of the Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire and Manchester Branches embarked on one of the most, in my opinion, interesting journeys we have ever taken.

We flew from Manchester to Dubai and then on to Beijing to commence our 'Wonders of China' tour. We were met by a charming young man, Ding Wei our Tour Captain, who accompanied our party for the whole schedule.

Beijing has been the heart of politics and society throughout China's history, serving as the capital for numerous empires and cultures which have ruled this vast land.

On the afternoon of our arrival, we visited the Temple of the Sun Park, built in 1530 during the reign of the Emperor Jiajing of the Ming Dynasty. In 1951, the area was turned into a grand park containing wonderful ancient houses, little pavilions and a vast lake. The main features are the Alter, West Heavenly Gate, North Heavenly Gate, South West Lingxing Gates and the beautiful Peony garden.

The highlight of our first day in China was a welcome dinner where we sampled the renowned local delicacy, Peking Duck.

Our second day in Beijing took us through the vast Tiananmen Square which was built on Mao Zedong's orders and has a capacity to hold over 1 million people. After passing Mao's Mausoleum, we entered the outer gates to the Imperial City which was the sacred centre of the Empire for 500 years and housed the Ming and Qing Dynasties. A pleasure to behold is one of the most perfect examples of Ming architecture, the Temple of Heaven. Here the locals practice sword combating, martial arts, tai chi, chess or just merely gather to talk. During the afternoon we experienced a superb rickshaw ride through the old hutong* areas. This was an amazingly different life.

The next morning rising early we set off for the awesome Great Wall which, built over 2000 years ago, stretches from Shanhaiguan Pass to the Gobi Desert, more than 5,000 km away. I do not think that members will ever forget the experience of the sheer magnitude of such a construction, all the while remembering that 1,000's of lives were lost during the building.

The afternoon featured the Summer Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The most notorious patron of the Summer Palace was the Empress Dowager Cixi who was known in China as the 'Dragon Lady' owing to her corruption. The Palace is enhanced by the lovely Kunming Lake. After another delicious meal we were entertained during the evening by a superb Chinese Acrobatic Show.

On the fourth morning we flew from Beijing to Xian which is located on the banks of the Yellow River and whose history dates back to 1000 BC. Having once rivalled Constantinople and Rome in size and culture, Xian was the start of the Silk Road. We also visited the renowned Shaanxi Provincial Museum and saw exquisite cultural relics.

In the evening we enjoyed a performance of truly wonderful music and dance from the Tang Dynasty and a gorgeous Banquet of Shui Jiao Dumplings, a speciality of the region.

The next day dawned with a visit to the famous UNESCO listed Terracotta Warriors and Horses housed in a vast arena, an awe inspiring experience. They are one of the most significant architectural discoveries of the 20th century.



That afternoon we visited the Great Mosque and experienced the narrow alleyways and Islamic Food markets of the Muslim Quarter.

Our 6th day commenced with a flight to Wuhan and 5 hour coach journey to our Yangtze River Cruise vessel. The next 3 days were spent relaxing and exploring the wondrous landscape and life along the Yangtze. We visited the Three Gorges Dam and Xiling Gorge, Wu and Qutang Gorges. We were informed of the dramatic achievement of the work which has been executed in order to construct the intricate lock systems and hydroelectric power houses. An unforgettable experience was the boarding of small 'pea pod' boats and being pulled along the Shennong Stream by the 'trackers' who in days gone by dragged the enormous junk ships up to the Yangtze River.

We disembarked at Chongqing, to visit 'my highlight' of the tour, the Chongqing Zoo to see the Chinese Pandas. They were so wonderful.

We then flew on to Guilin, founded in the Qing Dynasty. The area is renowned for its sheer beauty and the unique mountains which fringe the small city.

The following day we cruised down the Li River to Yangshuo. Passing tranquil farms, stunning limestone karsts tower above the river, creating a magical scene which breathed life into the 'Chinese Landscape' paintings.

The town of Yangshuo was enchanting and afforded another unique experience, that of the Cormorant Fishing. Members were actually able to photograph the gentleman who currently features in a UK television advertisement. The town's cobbled streets, relaxed and colourful vista was a pleasure to behold.

The next day brought another early start, we spent the day travelling back to Guilin through the extremely interesting countryside of 'paddy' fields, viewing water buffalo, the local country-folk and their way of life. We visited the Reed Flute Caves and South China Seas Pearl Exhibition Centre.

On the 30th May, I still had 27 members with me and we once again took flight!

We arrived in the spectacular City of Shanghai—once known as the 'Paris of the East'. These days this City, with a long history, is a bustling contemporary metropolis with style and vibrancy. It is supposed that Shanghai's heyday will be in the future.

During the afternoon we visited the heart of the historical city and explored the antiquities and fine arts at the Shanghai Museum situated in the Renmin (People's) Square.

Our first full day in the city commenced with a visit to the Old Town (Yuan Bazaar) where we saw the wonders of the vast array of commodities on sale. Sightseeing encompassed the wonderful moon gates, lattice pavilions and the peaceful Yu Garden and finally the magical Bund, recognised as Shanghai's former 'Wall Street'. The riverfront houses show an impressive collection of architecture ranging from early trade houses of the 1850's to the glamorous Art Deco 1920 styles. The morning extended to tours of the Pudong District, Xintianadi, with the former French concession zone and the traditional Chinese courtyard houses. In the evening we cruised along the Huangpu River and marvelled at the spectacular, illuminated buildings.

The 1st of June gave us some free time for leisurely strolling around the various gardens and walkways of the City and the weather was perfect. It was a pleasure to enjoy and explore such a vibrant City. Late that evening, we boarded our flight to the UK via Dubai.

We participated in an amazing experience and sampled copious quantities of Chinese cuisine, were reasonably regimented in order to achieve the heavy schedule and personally, I would not have missed a second.

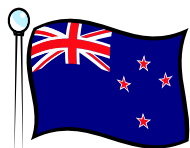


Cormorant Fishing



Banquet of Shui Jiao Dumplings

NEW ZEALAND - March 2010



Val Brookfield-Bishop of the **Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire Branch** is proposing to organise a 'wine' orientated tour of New Zealand during the first two weeks in March 2010. If you are interested, please contact Val and she will forward the details of the itinerary including flights, meals and places of interest, to be visited on the tour. Details : Home: 01745860136 Mobile: 07798880387 E mail: karnak.fvb@btinternet.com



The Sportsman,

Seasalter,

Kent CT5 4BP

Tel 01227 273370

www.thesportsmanseasalter.co.uk

We lunched at The Sportsman two years ago and enjoyed a terrific dining experience. Finding ourselves in the area again, with our daughter and her partner, we decided another visit was a must.



When I booked the day before I was told they were full from 1pm onwards - so booked for 12.15pm. When we arrived they were about a third full. Having had a somewhat fractious morning we immediately ordered a bottle of Prosecco (£16.95) to relax with while we considered the blackboard menu. The bottle appeared on the bar, opened, with four glasses about fifteen minutes later, as our tongues were hanging out my husband went to fetch it, - well it is a pub. 'Oh I was going to bring it in a minute,' said the young waitress.



We decided on a main course and dessert as I remembered that the puds here were super. We ordered a platter of their home made bread, £1 a head, with fresh olives. We were disappointed to see that the butter was not their own freshly churned as it used to be. When we asked why we were told that would be £1.20 extra. Some plates on which to spread the excellent bread with the hard, inferior butter would have been appreciated but with no staff around we used our paper napkins on the bare table.



Monkshill Farm pork belly and apple sauce with creamed potatoes at £15.95 looked, and from the appreciative comments, was delicious with a slab of crisp crackling. Seared thornback ray, brown butter and cockles with a sherry vinegar dressing at £17.95 was also pronounced excellent, the fish perfectly cooked and a good combination. My roast cod on a bed of asparagus was topped with white crab meat and served with a delicious crab bisque - £16.95 - it was superb. The seafood came with a dish of creamed and new potatoes. Eventually the plates were cleared but with no sign of a dessert menu appearing I went to collect it myself. With desserts at £6.95 each the men decided to pass. Our daughter chose the lemon tart with meringue ice cream which was very good with a thin crisp crust and a creamy filling. I chose the dark chocolate mousse cake with raspberries and Jersey cream. The cake was a heavy stodge and the cream just a slick on the plate. I needed more cream but as usual the staff had done a disappearing act. I left the remainder deciding it wasn't worth getting fat for but finding someone to do the bill provided another bit of exercise. It eventually arrived with the legend 'Service not included' scrawled all over it. I felt like pointing out that was painfully obvious!



They never did get more than half full, clearly they have dire staff problems and limit bookings accordingly but it appears they still miscalculate. The food bill, at £84.70, for four mains and two desserts and bread was, I thought, too much for what is a very basic pub. And no, I didn't leave anything for service.



I spoke to Phil Harris the joint owner later, he apologised profusely for the service. Thinking my complaints through it nearly all comes back to the lack of service. We would normally have ordered three courses, the main reason I didn't was because one of our guests - my daughter's partner is a very light eater and I knew he would only have a main course and I find it embarrassing if my guest has to sit and wait for us to eat a starter. When we ordered I thought the £1 a head for bread was a cover charge for all, the staff didn't point out that there was no charge for the bread if we had a starter as well- just one evidently. I would of happily paid the extra for the home churned butter but to pay extra for the bread and extra for the butter was getting a bit much.

If the staff had been about I would have asked for side plates, I am sorry but I don't like wiping my bread around a bare table trying to spread the butter. Phil assures me it is good Normandy butter but being very hard it didn't come through as such.

Once again if the staff had been around I would have requested more cream and finished my pud, although heavy it was obviously made with good quality chocolate. I do still think the puds are too expensive though. Phil didn't like my calling it 'a very basic pub' as he pointed out there aren't many pubs with six chefs in the kitchen but I was referring to the ambiance, not the food which is far, far superior to the majority of pubs. People do travel from all over the country to this gastronomic haven despite the cost. Let us hope they get their staff sorted out.



The Red Lion Freehouse

East Chisenbury

Pewsey

Wiltshire SN9 6AQ

Tel: 01980 671124

www.redlionfreehouse.com

Guy and Brittany Manning refurbished The Red Lion in East Chisenbury and opened in October 2008.

Guy went to Leith's School of Food and Wine, where he acquired a degree with distinction. After three years at Chez Bruce he spent a year and a half with Thomas Keller, arguably one of the best Chefs in the world, at his three Michelin starred Per Se in New York City, where he met his wife, Brittany.

Brittany has worked for nine years in pastry in New Jersey, USA, during which time she received a B.Sc in Baking and Pastry Arts. She went on to work at Thomas Keller's for two years before moving on to work as Pastry Chef for Neil Ferguson, Gordon Ramsay's New York based Head Chef and helped open his New York restaurant Allen and Delancey.

Guy and Brittany left the US together for a three month stage at Martin Berasategui's eponymous three Michelin star restaurant in San Sebastian, Spain. After finishing there, they decided to make their own agenda and took over the Red Lion

I had read several reviews saying this isolated thatched country pub was well worth a visit but that the service left a lot to be desired. We arrived at 1pm as requested by Brittany and she was on hand to greet us with a cheerful smile and bustling manner. We could choose from four dishes from each course on the lunch menu and there were also some specials on the blackboard.

We enjoyed a glass of Chapin & Landais Saumur Brut at £6 a glass while we chose our lunch. I had to ask for plates when Brittany brought the bread. She returned with two ramekin dishes apologising, they had not yet purchased any side plates.

It being in season I started with Everleigh Farm asparagus with poached pheasant eggs and parmesan. The asparagus was fine and beautifully peeled in a pool of butter sauce with two perfectly poached pheasant eggs topped with a disc of crisp parmesan. Brittany brought more of their delicious home made sour dough bread for me to mop up the sauce. Our other starter, roast lettuce soup with snails and radish, was fresh, tasty and very different.

My duck breast served with fresh figs and fennel from the blackboard menu was accompanied by a rich red wine jus all cooked to perfection. George had the braised pork cheeks with spring veggies, cream and whole grain mustard. The meat was soft and tender and melted in the mouth, Guy explained that he brings the pigs cheek to the boil three times in fresh water before starting the cooking process. The sauce had just the right balance of creaminess and sharpness that cut the richness of the dish. Once again Brittany offered more bread to mop up the sauces.

Desserts were a must with Brittany's history. George chose orange blossom ice cream with poached citrus salad and golden sable. Unfortunately he was not impressed, I tried the ice cream on its own, it had a very subtle flavour but the poached citrus overwhelmed it. My 'deconstructed' Tiramisu consisted of an amaretto zabaglione, with sponge fingers surmounted by mascarpone ice cream and candied hazelnuts surrounded by a strong coffee sauce. It was good, the different flavours being distinctive but as someone said on the food blog e gullet 'we thought it was best reconstructed'!

Coffee was served with warm freshly cooked Madelines.

With the meal we drank a 250ml glass of Borsao Garnacha, Joven Spain 2007 at £5.00 which was light and fruity but not memorable. A 250ml glass of Goedverwacht Merlot, Robertson, South Africa at £5.50 was earthy, definitely goût de terroir and not very pleasant. Unfortunately their list is limited, they use just one merchant whose range we know is not very inspired. Hopefully as they settle in they will broaden their range.

We found no problem with service Brittany was very attentive, they had one chap behind the bar and Guy was bringing food out as well, it was a good family atmosphere, mind you they only had 10 in for lunch, it could have got fraught if more had turned up, they seat 26.

Our bill was £86.57 including service.



Restaurant Roundup - Cheap Eats & Really Cheap Eats



The Fox, North Waltham, Hampshire, RG25 2BE www.thefox.org

This busy pub is just off the A303, seven miles west of Basingstoke. The restaurant has a reputation for good food, made wherever possible using local, fresh, seasonal ingredients. We enjoyed a light lunch on a warm summer day in the delightful garden which is a feature of this country retreat set in the rolling Hampshire farmland. They are well known for a good selection of real ales and a reasonable priced adequate wine list.

We decided on two starters each and I chose a dessert just to test the chef.

My cheese soufflé was as good as it looked - it was at this point we decided there was a chef in the kitchen who knew how to cook!

A salmon fish cake was crisp with a light airy filling

Unfortunately by this time the kitchen was getting busy and obviously chefs mind was on other things as my three plump sardines were very crisp and overcooked but the accompanying aioli was excellent.

Fortunately someone had an eye on our other dish, three large pan seared scallops were cooked to perfection.

My chocolate dessert, served with vanilla ice cream, was made with quality chocolate and wasn't too heavy, in fact it was so good half disappeared before I remembered the camera!

With starters averaging £5 and mains £14, a pub worth a visit if you are heading west or maybe on the way to Glastonbury!



The Horn, Castle Street, Reading, Berkshire

This town centre pub, in St Mary's Butts, is reminiscent of the 'Spit & Sawdust' days of this Berkshire market town. Before the smoking ban you would not have dared walk through the door but under the new management not even a whiff of smoke lingers in the bar.



The 'A' board on the pavement proclaims their 'Daily Specials'. The atmosphere is good and the service friendly - the landlord/chef delivers your steak personally. One week, a very good quality T bone steak with all the trimmings for £9.99 - 'buy one get one free', the next two rump steaks, salad and chips and a bottle of wine (an Echo Falls Merlot) for £14.99. The chips are variable - some weeks crisp and excellent others not so good. Their battered cod is excellent, moist with a good flavour and crisp batter - 2 for the price of one at £7.99! Since we have been customers they have progressed from plain tables to table mats and now they even have table cloths, which is more than can be said for many gastropubs five times the price!

We haven't strayed onto the table d'hôte menu, it is quite extensive so wouldn't like to say if 'cling and ping' is involved.

No large screen telly, no fruit machine, no canned music and one hour free parking just round the corner!

A good place for a simple lunch when you are all shopped out and better value than a department store restaurant.

The delicatessen next door is offering a 'Pot of Tea for 2 and biscuits for £3'!



How to beat the FLU this season!



To avoid it...

Eat right! Make sure you get your daily dose of fruit and veggies.



Take your vitamins and bump up your vitamin C.



Get plenty of exercise because it builds your immune system



Walk for at least an hour a day,



Get lots of fresh air. Open doors & windows



Eliminate stress.



Get plenty of rest.



OR Take the doctor's approach.

Think about it...

When you go for a flu jab, what do they do first?



They clean your arm with alcohol...

Why?

Because Alcohol KILLS GERMS.

So...

I walk to the pub. (exercise)

I put lime in my vodka...(fruit)

Celery in my Bloody Mary (veggies)

Drink outdoors on the patio. (fresh air)

Tell jokes and laugh....(eliminate stress)

Then I pass out. (rest)

The way I see it, if you keep your alcohol levels up, flu germs can't get you!



A doctor was addressing a large audience:

"The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us sitting here, years ago.

Red meat is awful.

Soft drinks corrode your stomach lining.

Chinese food is loaded with MSG.

High fat diets can be disastrous, and none of us realizes the long-term harm caused by the germs in our drinking water.

But there is one thing that is the most dangerous of all and we all have, or will, eat it.

Can anyone here tell me what food it is that causes the most grief and suffering for years after eating it?"

After several seconds of quiet, a 75-year-old man in the front row raised his hand, and softly said,

"Wedding Cake."



THE HEARING TEST

A man feared his wife wasn't hearing as well as she used to and he thought she might need a hearing aid. Not quite sure how to approach her, he called the family Doctor to discuss the problem.

The Doctor told him there is a simple informal test the husband could perform to give the Doctor a better idea about her hearing loss.

Here's what you do, said the Doctor, 'stand about 40 feet away from her, and in a normal conversational speaking tone see if she hears you.

If not, go to 30 feet, then 20 feet, and so on until you get a response.'

That evening, the wife is in the kitchen cooking dinner, and he was in the den. He says to himself, 'I'm about 40 feet away, let's see what happens.' Then in a normal tone he asks, 'Honey, what's for dinner?'

No response.

So the husband moves closer to the kitchen, about 30 feet from his wife and repeats, 'Honey, what's for dinner?'

Still no response.

Next he moves into the dining room where he is about 20 feet from his wife and asks, 'Honey, what's for dinner?'

Again he gets no response.

Now getting very worried about her hearing he walks up to the kitchen door, about 10 feet away. 'Honey, what's for dinner?'

Again there is no response.

So he walks right up behind her. 'Honey, what's for dinner?'

'Alex, for the FIFTH time, CHICKEN!'



Notice seen in a restaurant in Spain

"Try our Sangria you will never get better."



Wine & Food



C 1984

In search of an author

One of the vital ingredients that goes into the making of any interesting and successful newsletter is a good mix of regular features, liberally sprinkled with pictures, which the reader can turn to each time his copy drops through the letterbox.

The only reason, apart from shortage of dough, that *Wine & Food* might fall as flat as a pancake is if none of its readers ever write to it. It is what you do in your kitchen, where you turn for your wines, and how your Branch copes with the rigours of dining out, that our readers want to see and hear about. Without you to give it local flavour *Wine & Food* will and can only become dull and unappetizing. Among subjects currently in search of an author, on an on-off or regular basis, are:

Thought for Food

a wide ranging series by one or more writers

Wines to Buy

by one of our wine buffs

Cork Talk

on drinking down or laying down

The Art of Wine Tasting

A long running series of lectures

Delicious Dishes

one or two at a time

Toque Blanche

top chefs famous or favourite recipes

Places to Eat

recommended restaurants and other eating places

Kitcheners' Tales

useful tips and hints for cooks around the kitchen

In season

quarterly notes on when to buy what

Open House

invitations to forthcoming events

Around the Branches

reports of past events

Ask Me Another

readers questions answered

Mail Box

letters to the editor

Faces & Places

your photos please

European Directory

the contact person list

THE EUPHORIA OF THE EVENT by Pam Brunning

Have you ever picked up a bottle of wine in a supermarket, or a wine merchant for that matter and, on trying it thought - why on earth did anyone buy this wine from the producer?

Have you ever gone out specially to find a wine recommended by a wine expert in a magazine and been bitterly disappointed with your purchase?

When you think of some of the wines available today you sometimes wonder how the vineyard ever managed to sell such rubbish.

I can remember indulging in wonderful long, leisurely lunches, alongside the pool, at a very dear friend's house. That friend was also a wine merchant and we were there ostensibly to sample his new imports. Oh yes, we enjoyed the day and went away with a warm glow and several cases of the wines we had so liberally enjoyed. Opening a bottle a few weeks later at home in the cold light of day, the reaction was often - why on earth did we buy this, it tasted nothing like we remembered - it was acid, tannic or so unready as to be nasty. When we tackled Tom about it, with his French beret at a jaunty angle, he would give a little smile and say, "Ah well you see that is the euphoria of the event, it will come round, give it time. It is going through a 'quiet' period."

Many years ago at a Romani Conti tasting in London the wines were presented by a very new Master of Wine and, being a novice, she gave her honest opinion of some of the wines that failed to come up to expectations. She lived to regret that judgment and in future never criticised a top producer. A professional cannot afford to criticise the wine maker, he accounts for their bread and butter, their trips abroad, social life and a whole way of life.

So you see my friends wine buying is full of pitfalls. Those that buy for a living are biased, their livelihood depends on selling for the producers they represent and in turn those producers look after them. You are the only true judge of a wine and make sure you are in full possession of your faculties when you judge and not influenced by the 'euphoria of the event.'

An angler holds 'Benson'



Photograph: SWNS.COM/James Stacey

Benson, Britain's biggest carp is dead.

The fishing world is in mourning after news spread that someone had poisoned the famous fish. When Benson arrived at Bluebell Lakes near Peterborough 25 years ago she was around 10 years old and already weighed well over 10kg (22lb). She gained her name because of a small hole in her dorsal fin that looked exactly like a cigarette burn.

Having been caught over 60 times Benson was undoubtedly the lake's main tourist attraction. Weighing in at 64lb (29kg) it was said that nobody was worth their salt as an angler if they hadn't caught Benson. Sadly someone had thrown a large quantity of uncooked tiger nuts into the water. Nuts are highly toxic to fish because they can't process them and they just swell up and die. Tony Bridgefoot, the owner of Bluebell Lakes said, "We are all still trying to come to terms with her death and get our heads around what has happened. Money could not have bought Benson. Fish that big are unique." **RIP Benson.**

For those interested in sampling carp, rather than just catching them and throwing them back, Jimmie and Penny Hepburn will this year haul Britain's first crop of organic farmed carp from the ponds at their Devon home, Upper Hayne Farm in the Blackdown Hills. They have already had interest from pubs, restaurants and a chain of popular wine bars in London.

"There's great interest in the fish," said Jimmie. "The truth is that we have forgotten how to eat fish like carp. In medieval times they were very popular. Now they are usually grown to huge proportions for anglers who take a photo of them and throw them back. Hardly anyone thinks of them as food."

How to cook it

Penny Hepburn advises against the very complicated recipes to be found in Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management. She prefers to keep it simple.

- For the stuffing: chop up a bunch of spring onions, thinly slice a red pepper, add lemon zest and grated ginger

- Gut the fish and wash it, laying it out on foil. Add the stuffing to the body. Splash on a dash of olive oil, add a dab of butter and a teaspoon of coconut cream

- Wrap the fish and bake it. A plate-size fish, weighing about half a kilo (1lb) requires only 20 minutes' cooking. Serve with rice

around the branches - Manchester



Saturday Lunchtime on the patio of Holbeck Ghyll, the erstwhile Hunting Lodge of Lord Lonsdale of boxing fame and temporary residence of Renée Zellweger while making that odd, truncated film of the life of Beatrix Potter. Will there ever be a Part Two?

The sun is shining as we overlook Lake Windermere, in the distance we can clearly see The Langdale Fells and the Old Man of Conistoun. Could the chef produce a luncheon to match the perfect surroundings?

He certainly did. Following the aperitif and daintily constructed canapés we moved from the terrace to the oak panelled dining room. There we were served the amuse-bouche, an intensely flavoured mushroom cappuccino. The Cannelloni of Crab and Cartmel Valley smoked salmon motivated a degree of discussion. Some members were expecting a hint of pasta, but it soon became apparent that the smoked salmon formed the 'cannelloni' case to envelope the crab forming a much lighter dish than was expected. It was most refreshing and delightfully accompanied by the Sauvignon Blanc.

It was the choice of wine with the main course which provoked most discussion. Red wine with fish! Traditionalists would have preferred a white wine, but others of a more eclectic disposition pointed out that the Sea Bass was served with a red pepper sauce. The controversy continues but no member could criticise the generous quantities of the Merlot Cabernet served.

As for the dessert! We were served with, what many thought the highlight of the luncheon, a beautifully presented and deliciously flavoured pear & praline parfait.

This was an outstanding lunch occasion enjoyed by Manchester and friends from Mid Cheshire & Merseyside. Memorable or Historic? These words so often used by 'you know who' in the Sunday Times could apply. Holbeck Ghyll more than fulfilled our expectations. **Chris Redman**

WINES FOR SUMMER DRINKING

This event was aptly named as it took place on a perfect sunny evening in the Pavilion of Bowden Cricket Club overlooking the cricket pitch.

Ian Bamford MW and a past Manchester Branch Chairman chose the wines and gave us a tutored tasting of 8 wines suitable to relax in the sun with. Members were also invited to give their views – and they did!

The aperitif was a N.V. Cremant D'Alsace - Domaine Reifle – Pfaffenheim which certainly proved a welcoming drink for the 54 members attending. A Macon Chaintre 2006 – Domanine des Gerbaux – Solutre – was a good reminder of last year's Branch trip to Burgundy. Next a New Zealand Pinot Gris 2006 – Bilancia – Hawkes Bay, a delicate tasteful wine and an interesting change from Sauvignon Blanc. The Spanish Luzon Rosado – Bodegas Luzon 2007 – Jumilla was not a hit with the majority, it was too harsh to drink on its own and may have stood up better with Tapas. An eloquent positive response with romantic memories by a member to the Nero D'Avola 2006 – Morgante – Grotte – Sicily, was much appreciated by all. A seriously good Crozes Hermitage La Matiniere 2006 – Ferraton Pere et Fils – Tain l'Hermitage – Rhone was thoroughly enjoyed, however one member felt the balance did not match up to expectations.

With Supper 2 further wines were served. Sancerre PMG 2007 Gerard et Pierre Morin – Bue - Loire, a light wine which proved popular with the ladies and Plan B Cabernet Merlot 2005 – Margaret River - Australia which had a body and depth appreciated by men.

Sue Cutter and her family team provided an excellent hot and cold buffet – the lime cheese cake was the star of the evening with not a crumb remaining.

Ian's choices and presentation together with Sue's buffet made for an informal and informative evening of good Wine and Food. We had many requests for further events of this nature – which we hope to provide, but possibility not the cloudless sunny evening! **Tricia Fletcher**

Luncheon at Holbeck Ghyll

Saturday 13th June 2009

Menu

Aperitif- Royal St. Vincent Sparkling Loire Valley

Canapés

*

Mushroom Cappuccino

*

Cannelloni of Crab & Cartmel Valley Smoked Salmon

Three Stones Winery Sauvignon Blanc 2008

Marlborough

*

Roasted Sea Bass with Aubergine Caviar & Red Pepper Sauce

*

Riff Ross, Merlot Cabernet

Dolomiti, Trento Alto Adige 2006

*

Pear & Praline Parfait

*

Coffee & Petit Fours



around the branches - St James's

CELEBRATING SERGE



Serge Hochar, the legendary owner of Château Musar, has been making wine for 50 years and on 13th May 2009, The St. James' Branch, together with Les Amis Gourmets, had the extraordinary privilege of celebrating this astonishing achievement with Serge and several members of his family. The occasion was a dinner at the very elegant Rosebery Rooms of the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park Hotel, a venue which the Branch has found able to reach remarkable heights of gastronomic excellence on a number of previous occasions.

The evening began with Château Musar Rosé 2006, which was served as the aperitif accompanied by excellent canapés. This is a slightly unusual rosé as it is made by blending red wine from Cinsault with white wine from the Lebanese Obeideh grape – a technique which is used to give colour to the majority of pink champagne. It was a full, satisfying style of rosé and one that went particularly well with the more spicy canapés on offer.

The dinner itself began with Château Musar White 2003. This is a wine of exceptional concentration – a real food wine with intense fruit and an attractive underlying richness. The secret, apart from Serge's remarkable skill, lies in

its blend of Obeideh and Merwah which, we were informed, are the ancestors of Chardonnay and Semillon. Another reason for its great appeal is that it has just the right amount of acidity. This no doubt results from the vineyard being at very high altitude – 1200 metres in fact. This astonishing white wine was served at room temperature with a foie gras and chicken liver parfait garnished with pear chutney and toasted brioche.

It had been decided that the menu should bow to the wines and not the other way round with the result that two meat courses were offered – somewhat in the Edwardian style! A roast loin of English lamb with pavé dauphinoise potatoes, celeriac purée, pan fried pressed shoulder of lamb and asparagus was accompanied by Château Musar red 2002. Like all their reds, this is made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan and Cinsault which are vinified separately and blended after spending 12 – 15 months in French oak; the exact proportions vary from year to year, and the wine is never either fined or filtered. At seven years old, the 2002 was just starting to be ready and it displayed a delightful freshness with unmistakable richness and very good fruit intensity; it was a perfect partner to the lamb and, if we were to come back in ten or fifteen years time, I am sure it would be even more magical!

The second meat course was some particularly succulent Highland venison marinated in juniper and thyme. It was served with braised red cabbage, apple with golden sultanas, roast potatoes, braised creamed lamb's sweetbreads, green beans and bacon and a sloe gin and blueberry sauce. Frankly, it was delectable and in perfect harmony with the two vintages of Musar red that accompanied it: the 1993 and the 1981. The 1993 was one of the highlights of the evening; it was amazingly fresh and had a perfect balance of acidity and fruit, although it was clear that there was a higher level of maturity than in the previous wine. Moving on to the 1981, this was fully mature although its colour was no more than garnet showing how difficult it is to tell the age of this astonishing wine by its colour. Its broad, mature flavours were in almost perfect harmony with the wonderful rare meat.

At this point, those who were less familiar with the joys of Musar may have thought to themselves, "the 1981 was fully mature so where are we going with the rest of this evening's much older reds?" The short answer to that was "To Paradise" because, from then on, the wines seemed to taste younger as the vintages turned older!

With the cheese course we had the White 1989 which, as expected, had aged very gracefully. It had developed rich, nutty flavours without oxidising. But the star attraction with the cheese was the Musar Red 1977. At 32 years old, this was still practically a spring lamb – far younger tasting than the 1981 and prompting one guest to ask Serge whether he had found the secret of eternal youth!

The dinner concluded with an absolutely delicious savoury of pan-fried chicken livers, lardons, shallots and wild mushrooms in a Madeira sauce on sourdough bread, accompanied by Musar Red 1969. This wine showed more development than the 1977 and had most attractive vegetal and farm-yardy aromas. Its colour did not reveal its age at all with only a little garnet showing. Finally, the 1959 was served on its own, without food, and rightly so. Unbelievably, it had almost exactly the same colour as the 1969 and, while a fully mature wine, it was fresh as a daisy after half a century and a glorious note to end on. It also proved the point that even in the first vintage he ever made, Serge Hochar had an amazing touch!

You may wonder what memories we all took away from this remarkable evening. Fine food of course, wonderful service as always at The Mandarin, dazzling wines showing incredible longevity, vigour and complexity but also something else. We all had the sensation of having passed an evening in the company of a great man. Serge is so warm, so charming and such fun. He is also one of the greatest winemakers on earth.



around the branches - Zürich



LUNCH BY THE ZÜRICHSEE

June 6th saw the Zürich Branch gather by the lake of Zürich at the **Seerestaurant Tracht** for an early summer luncheon. Original plans were for an outdoor luncheon at the lake's edge, however, the weather gods had other ideas, it rained most of the night before and continued on until well into the afternoon. Not only was it wet, it was also cold and windy.



Inside, members were welcomed with a glass of Prosecco as they arrived and talked about recent personal adventures. Upon finding seats, lunch commenced with a delightful Asparagus salad marinated in hazelnut oil and saffron vinegar accompanied with a parmaschinken mousse. The asparagus salad had both a cold side and a warm side giving a most interesting combination of flavours. The parmaschinken mousse shaped as quenelles were smooth and delicate, a perfect partner for the asparagus. Several members wanted to know how the chef had managed to make Parma ham (Schinken) into a mousse. The recipe was not forthcoming, however we got the word that as he was not only a chef but also a trained butcher, he knew how to do these things. This salad was accompanied by a 2006 Pinot Grigio Ronco dei Folo DOC Novacuzzo Friaul, a lovely full-bodied white wine that suited this course admirably.

The soup course followed, a basil cream soup made with white Merlot, served with a tomato ragout and an almond foam on top. Presentation was beautiful and the flavours sublime. Lots more OOHING and AAHING from the participants as they savoured every mouthful.

Red wine service began, 2006 Rawson's Retreat Release



Shiraz - Cabernet, a big full-bodied red wine with a touch of tannin but definitely a ready to



drink wine. It would accompany a sliced double U.S. Sirloin steak, served reddish pink with a slice of truffle on each slice, an interesting vegetable medley that included asparagus tips on a slice of kohlrabi, and there was a side dish of potato gratin. The meat was tender enough to cut with the fork, juicy and delicious, the truffles added an extra element of flavour, as did the partnering "Sommertrüffeljus".

Tirami-Su Melba with fresh peach and raspberry compote finished the meal. Again a superb presentation that everybody said they "couldn't possibly eat all of that" but did, not a crumb was left behind on anybody's plate. It was simply delicious and surprisingly light and airy.

By late afternoon, everyone was heading out under darkening skies to get home before the next great cloudburst.

Seerestaurant Tracht, Seestrasse 25, 8803 Rüschlikon Tel:-044-724-0515

www.seerestaurant-tracht.ch

around the branches - London

LONDON BRANCH AT THE PHILIPPE BRUGNON/JULIAN WHITE CHAMPAGNE TASTING



Chairman of the London Branch, Judy Tayler-Smith arranged for 31 members to attend a splendid Champagne tasting in the beautiful conservatory of the Millennium Gloucester Hotel, London on Friday 8th May. Members strolled around the palm trees on a sunny evening enjoying copious amounts of Champagne and canapés.

The Champagnes that were sampled were made by quality producer Philippe Brugnion.

The whole Vignoble “P Brugnion” hails from two families. The first one originates in Rilly, where they have been vigneronns for four generations. The second family vineyard is based in Ecueil. The Rilly property is Premier Cru (as is Ecueil), of which 1ha is Chardonnay used in the assemblage for the Vintage and cuvée “Elégance”. The rest is Pinot Noir- essential for the Brut Non-Vintage. There is a small amount of Pinot Meunier, used in the Brut NV.

Philippe only uses the Premier Cru produce of Ecueil and Rilly for his Champagne. His caves, carved from the chalk, are at a depth of 7 meters with a stocking capacity for 200,000 bottles. This permits maintenance of at least two years on NV cuvées and four years for the vintage.

Philippe has won many awards for his Champagne. Some of these are listed below.

Selected Honours and Awards

1992 Vintage – Silver Medal Decanter Magazine.

2002 Vintage – Bronze Medal Decanter Magazine.

2008 The Rosé Cuvée- 2nd Position in a Blind Tasting against 53 other Houses “Wine & Spirit.”

2008 The NV Brut Cuvée selected by Oz Clarke for his 2009 edition of 150 Best Wines.



Philippe Brugnion

Champagnes sampled on the evening were the very fruity **Brut Non-Vintage**, (30% Chardonnay from Ecueil with 65% Pinot Noir from Ecueil & Rilly and 5% Pinot Meunier); the fine and subtle **Brut Cuvée Elégance**, which had lemon and grapefruit flavours, (70% Chardonnay from Rilly and 30% Pinot Noir from Ecueil); the **Brut, Rosé**, full of raspberry fruit and red berries, (100% Pinot Noir from Ecueil, of which 20% is the red vinification); **Vintage 2004**, with its tastes of pears developing into brioche, (70% Chardonnay of Rilly, 30% Pinot Noir of Ecueil) and the **Vintage 2000**, with its light bouquet and biscuity taste (60% Chardonnay of Rilly, 40% Pinot Noir of Ecueil).

The Chairman would like to thank Julian White of Julian White Agencies for the information above and for giving the London Branch a 20% discount on the ticket price (price under £30!). As well as the agent for Philippe Brugnion, Julian is an agent and shipper for more than 60 French châteaux and domains, specialising in Burgundy, the Rhône, Beaujolais and the Loire valley. The London Branch looks forward to more tastings with him in the future.



Julian White

All in all this was a popular and affordably luxurious evening in a magnificent setting which the London Branch will repeat annually. This was demonstrated by people's reluctance to leave!

Judy Tayler-Smith.

around the branches - Northampton



SPRING LUNCH AT THE LAKE ISLE RESTAURANT AT UPPINGHAM.

The Lake Isle Hotel and Restaurant lies behind an unassuming shop front in Uppingham but its aspect belies the warm welcome that awaits you. Twenty members of the branch managed to park and make their way inside to be greeted with a glass of Champagne Reynier. For lunch we chose between asparagus wrapped in Parma ham with rocket and parmesan salad and Cornish sardines with caper and olive focaccia. This was followed by pan-fried sea bass or roast rump of Pembrokeshire lamb. Our desserts were honey and ginger brulee – perhaps the only disappointment of the day as there was little crunch to the top – or hot chocolate pudding with peanut ice cream and brittle. We drank Chilean wine – Camino del Sur Sauvignon and Merlot - and left well satisfied with all aspects of our day.

SUMMER LUNCH AT Le GAVROCHE

The best value quality lunch in London can be found at Le Gavroche, the long-established and feted Roux Brothers establishment in Upper Brook Street, now run by Michel Roux junior. Probably wisely, no reservations are accepted for groups, even those as distinguished as IWFS branches, so we booked their two largest tables as private individuals and were well oversubscribed even so. We went straight to the basement restaurant and enjoyed canapés of diced salmon and blue cheese mousse followed by an amuse bouche of salmon and crab roulade with an alternative of spicy mushroom roll - for the allergic among us. This place is so hot on customer service that allergies are kept on record! We then chose from the set lunch menu which offered three choices for each course, ranging from mackerel with aubergine caviar and asparagus with deep fried egg and chorizo to chicken with tarragon jus and perfectly roast pork. Desserts include the chariot of ices and sorbets and a wonderful double sized cheese board, which the knowledgeable staff can explain in every detail. Wines are included in the price of lunch and were mainly classical French, apart from one South African Shiraz. Coffee is also included and comes with petit fours. All 18 members of the branch were well satisfied with a perfectly cooked and served lunch, and I did hear a suggestion that we make it an annual event. I for one would not complain!

Alex Corrin.



around the branches - Berkshire



RYAN SIMPSON AT THE GOOSE -- GREAT FOOD AND A WARM WELCOME!

Early July found 15 members taking a long relaxed Sunday lunch at The Goose. The very high standard of the food and the superb presentation we experienced, intrigued me and I went back to find out more about their up and coming head chef, Ryan Simpson.

Ryan has always loved cooking, starting by baking cakes with his Grandmother and cooking for the family his ambition was to become a chef.

His first cooking job was at a Beefeater, rapidly rising to lead the late night grill team, whilst attending North Warwickshire & Hinkley College in North Warwickshire. Here he developed his interest in fine dining and prizes followed. While in France he discovered the Maison Troisgros, a top class restaurant which had achieved three Michelin stars consistently for 48 years. Ryan had to get a job there!

Since 1957, Jean and Pierre Troisgros have played a significant role in the history of French cuisine. They developed their skills working in Paris with Paul Bocuse and at the Hotel de Crillon, where they met Michel Guérard. Guérard invented "Cuisine Minceur", a form of healthy cooking, and the Troisgros adopted some aspects of this approach in developing their dishes.

Ryan achieved his goal and spent three years working as Commis Chef, then Chef De Partie in Maison Troisgros whilst learning new skills and honing his personal style.

Returning to the UK he helped friends while looking for his first head chef role. The opportunity came when the chef at the Goose, who had gained a Michelin star, left and Ryan took over in June 2008.

Ryan is very conscious of the need to offer customers a place where they can feel welcome and relax, while enjoying good professional service. He works very closely with his Sous Chef and partner Liam to achieve the creative balanced menu whilst Dylan and Mira manage front of house very effectively.

At the Goose the food is fresh and cooked to precision using the very best local and seasonal produce but with prices which are no more than those at a pub-restaurant.

Ryan's food is very well thought through and every element of the dish on your plate has been carefully considered and balanced to achieve style, along with interesting textures, distinctive flavours and visual pleasure. Ryan believes that "Less is more" on the plate and incorporating the Cuisine Minceur approach into his dishes helps him achieve this aim. His French experience shines through in the dishes on his menu: crab with grapefruit jelly: salmon with sorrel sauce.

Earlier in the year he was using asparagus in some dishes and wild garlic garnish, now fennel is coming into season along with Jerusalem artichokes. In this way the menu is always evolving with the seasons. However, some components such as the Muntjac, his signature dish, come from the surrounding hills and are available all year round. Fresh is king and frozen is normally only used for the Rougié Foie Gras.

His clientele tend to be older and in developing new dishes Ryan thinks that there is a need to have some starch on the plate (meat and two veg!) Put simply the client + dietary needs + chemistry = a balanced meal, for example his earl grey beetroot cannelloni.

Today's wine list contains several interesting and good value offerings from South Africa and Chile. Ryan is currently working with his wine supplier, Peter Osborne Wines, towards having many more traditional wines, and older vintages, to offer from his cellar.

Ideas for new dishes come from many sources and Ryan comments: "The Pink Praline Tart is a light modern interpretation of an idea from a French chocolatier. Originally it was very rich and

sweet, however, in discussion with my pastry chef we decided that it needed something to cut through the sugar". They looked at lemon or lime – too sharp; apple – too autumnal; and eventually agreed on sorrel which has an apple-like flavour. After some experimentation their unique dish was perfected. Then Ryan saw the recipe in a new cookbook! – is there really anything new?

Ryan's medium term plan is to take a financial interest in The Goose, by becoming Chef Patron he will have full control over every aspect of the business including investment. I can believe that Ryan will achieve whatever objective he sets himself and in the meanwhile why not visit www.gooserestaurant.com or better still, book a table and taste the difference for yourselves?

Ryan has kindly agreed to share with IWFS members his delicious recipe for "Sweet and Sour Strawberries".

Chris Graham



Paignton Crab
Pink Grapefruit,
Red Pepper, Crab Fritter



Roasted Brixham Plaice Fillet
Nettle & Crayfish, Asparagus,
Clams



Hay Baked Chiltern Hill's Muntjac
Butternut Squash, Vanilla Roasted
Salsify, Radish Jus & Rösti Potato



around the branches - Wessex

LES MIRABELLES in THE NEW FOREST

Les Mirabelles is a family-run French bistro idyllically situated in the New Forest village of Nomansland (yes that really is its name!) opposite the village green, where New Forest ponies wander at will. Claude Laage who is chef/patron came to England over 20 years ago, and has a reputation for fine traditional French cuisine. The Wessex branch has visited Les Mirabelles in the past, though not for a number of years, and found that it more than lived up to its lovely setting. We were not disappointed on our return visit for lunch in July.

The restaurant is small and intimate and was slightly overwhelmed by our rather large party of 35, but we received a warm welcome from Claude and his team. Since the weather was fine most of us chose to have our aperitif outside on the small terrace. This was a Pieno Sud Bianco from Sicily, a blend of native Sicilian grape varieties with a fresh perfumed bouquet and flavours of apple and lemon.

Lunch itself started with fillet of sea bream served on a bed of vegetables wrapped in a light flaky puff pastry with a wild mushroom sauce. It was delicious, the fish moist and perfectly cooked, the vegetables and mushroom sauce full of flavour. The accompanying wine was Glen Carlou "Tortoise Hill", a South African blend of predominantly sauvignon blanc with some chardonnay and a small amount of viognier. This had the fresh tang of a pure sauvignon plus more rounded tropical fruit flavours from the Chardonnay and paired very well with the food.

The main course was a generous helping of rump of lamb with a spicy sausage crust, very tender and flavoursome. The accompanying wine was a soft and fruity merlot / syrah blend with hints of vanilla oak and was very well received. Members were invited to guess the country of origin, but without success, and all were surprised to learn that it came from Morocco, produced by Domaine Larroque. Again it was a very good match for the food.

For dessert we had a wonderfully smooth and creamy vanilla pannacotta served with a topping of fresh raspberries and amaretto crumble. This was presented in individual Kilner jars, an unusual but effective touch.

The cuisine could not be faulted and all the dishes were simply but beautifully presented. The service was pleasant and attentive but unpretentious. The bistro style did not lend itself to table cloths (at lunchtime anyway) but the spotless starched napkins, generously-sized wine glasses and polished cutlery were all that they should be and the ambiance was relaxed and informal.

Coffee to finish was accompanied by home made petit fours and we all sat back afterwards with the contented, mellow feeling that follows from excellent food and wine and of course good company. All agreed that we should not leave it so long before our next visit.

Joan Cardy



Sweet & Sour Strawberries, Chartreuse Sabayon, Cream Cheese Sorbet & Digestive Biscuit

Sweet & Sour Strawberries

200gr Strawberries (stalks removed)

250ml Water

250gr Caster Sugar

100gr Sherry Vinegar

Peel from ½ a Lemon

1 Piece of Orange Peel

1 Vanilla Pod, 1 Clove

Cream Cheese Sorbet

100ml Water

50gr Caster Sugar

¼ Lemon Juice and Zest

90gr Rian Fromage Blanc

(Available from Waitrose)

Digestive Biscuit

250gr Digestive Biscuits

40gr Butter (unsalted)

Chartreuse Sabayon

100gr Egg Yolk

40gr Double Cream

35gr Caster Sugar

15gr Chartreuse

Serves 4

Method

Mix all the 'Sweet & Sour' ingredients except strawberries together in a saucepan, bring to the boil then add the strawberries. Bring back up to a simmer, remove from the heat cover with cling film and allow to cool, keep refrigerated. This can be done up to 24 hours in advance.

For the sorbet, mix the sugar and water together and bring to the boil, add the fromage blanc and lemon. Mix well then churn immediately in an ice cream machine. Store in the freezer. This can be made days in advance.

To make the digestive biscuit. Crush biscuits into a sand texture, heat in a pan and incorporate melted butter. Spread thinly on a tray, place in the freezer to cool. Once cooled cut out four discs and keep refrigerated.

The sabayon should be made no more than 1 hour before serving because it will lose its lightness.

Whip up the egg yolks with the sugar with an electric whisk this is your basic sabayon. Once it is light and thick fold in the cream and the chartreuse. Then keep to one side in the fridge.

To assemble the dish, place the biscuit in the centre of the plate or bowl then place the strawberries on top of the biscuit. Place a ball or quenelle of the sorbet on top of the strawberries and finally spoon the sabayon around the plate. If you have time reduce a little of the marinating liquid until a syrupy consistence and drizzle that on the plate and garnish with a sprig of mint.

around the branches - Members Entertain at Home

CAPITAL FOOD & WINE MATCHINGS

Capital members have spent a lot of time and energy trying to decide the best combinations of food and wine this summer. At an event at Alan & Stephanie Shepherd's home in Camberley five members produced a dish each and brought a wine that they considered would match their offering. We started with Champagne Grand Cru Réserve, Marguet Père et Fils accompanied by canapés of tomato tortilla and mushroom pâté made by Stephanie. Our starter of home made Gravavlax was prepared by Alan. He had marinated the salmon for several days in Vodka and dill, it was excellent (watch out for the recipe in December). He accompanied this with a Pouilly Fuissé, Drouin 2005 which was a good foil for the fish. We continued with this wine with our fish course of Portuguese Kedgeree made by Malcolm Howe with salt cod, once again a good combination.

Our main course, brought by Rosita Pinto, was Meat Balls in tomato sauce with rice, roasted courgettes, mange-touts and peppers. The slow cooked tomato sauce was rich and sweet with only a hint of acidity. She had matched this with a Fleurie, Bouchard Père et Fils which was light and fruity.

Beverley St John Aubin had recently been to a tasting of Tenerife wines so matched a Tacoronte-Acentejo 2006 with her selection of cheeses. The cheeses were superb but there were mixed reactions to the wine, but all decided it was very interesting.

Les Pêches Chatelaine, poached peaches in a wine and cream sauce was made by Germaine Kruzynski and accompanied admirably by an Orange Flora Muscat from Brown Brothers brought by Subrata Sen. We concluded with coffee, a very enjoyable evening and a fascinating matching exercise. We are grateful to all concerned.

On a hot June day we gathered on the patio at Eric & Madeline Bull's home in Crowthorne for a New World Pinot Noir tasting kindly presented by Keith Ellis from a list of Decanter's recommended Pinots. This time Madeline and I made the effort to match the food with the wines. Some we won and some we didn't!

Our aperitif was a Codorniu Brut 2006 from the branch cellar, we are pleased to say it is ageing well.

We then tasted two pinots, a Secano Estate, Leyda Valley, Chile, 2008 14.5%, £7.49 from M&S and a De Bertoli, Gulf Station, Australia, 2008 13.5%, £9.99 from Sainsbury's. With these we ate a terrine of three smoked fish - salmon, trout and mackerel - made by Eric & Madeline and I made spicy grilled tuna kebabs which were laced with slices of mouli to give texture. Amazingly the wines stood up well to the smoked fishes, the first was light and fruity and recommended on our notes with 'duck, other poultry or game birds or even a fresh salmon dish', we could add smoked fish to that. The second had a lot more body and was more complex. It was recommended as 'a good partner to lamb or try with tuna or salmon steaks', and it went particularly well with the tuna kebabs.

With the main course of mustard marinated loin of pork I served two separate accompaniments. The cooking jus, thickened, chilled and laced with mayonnaise and a spicy tomato salsa which was one of Decanter's recommendations with our third wine the Wither Hills, Marlborough, New Zealand, 2006 14.5%, £15.99 from Waitrose. Don't try it, the salsa didn't go at all, or with our other main course wine a Pirie, Tasmania, 2005 £16.99 from Majestic. The mustard sauce, because of the long cooking time loses all its bite and comes through very mild and was a good accompaniment to both wines. The Wither Hills Pinot was bright ruby with lots of ripe berry flavours. The Tasmanian was maturing beautifully with hints of chocolate and mature fruits. Decanter suggests it will last for another 5-8 years. It also recommends serving Steamed wallaby shank with it but wallabies are in short supply in Berkshire.

Three cheeses, an Old York Ewes Milk, Mature Shropshire Blue and a Gorgonzola Dolce were served with a De Bertoli, Yarra Valley Estate Grown, Australia, 2005, 13%, £18.99, from Oddbins and a Mt Difficulty, Central Otago, New Zealand, 2007, 14%, £20.99 from Waitrose.

We partnered the two most expensive wines with the cheese so as to enjoy them at their best. Both were intense, fruity wines that showed well.

My personal favourite of the day was the Tasmanian, possibly because I enjoy the mellowness of an older wine. I have not tasted a range of wines that have shown so well for a long time. All very drinkable, there were no duffers, just some that showed better than others - thank you Keith. We finished the afternoon relaxing in the garden over coffee and discussing plans for a similar event centered on the Loire.

Another interesting event at the reasonable cost of £18 due to the generosity of our members offering their homes and their time for the branch. Thank you all. **Pam Brunning**



around the branches - Members Entertain at Home

MANCHESTER SUMMER GARDEN PARTY LUNCHEON

The setting for this event was the home of Valerie Hall, set in her magnificent gardens, with a stream meandering through the grounds.

An enthusiastic committee staged the event and finesse and fine detail were very much in evidence with their unique team spirit.

Forty eight members and guests were welcomed with a refreshing glass of Cava. To start we had a classic pâté maison with melba toast that Dame Nellie Melba would have been proud of, plum chutney and a little rocket – the pate was full of flavour and the texture was perfect. It was cooked in loaf tins and sliced using a knife dipped in boiling water that gave the dish a professional presentation. The wine chosen to accompany the pate was a favourite of the Manchester Branch Château de Sours Rosé 2008. A superb colour with a mouthful of roses that matched the starter well.

The main course, breast of chicken stuffed with herb cheese with fresh mango and wrapped in Parma ham, drizzled with a little olive oil and rested. The sauce to accompany was a mixture of mayonnaise, Noilly Prat, cream, a dash of curry paste, chopped tarragon and finely diced mango. The breasts were sliced, coated with the delicious sauce and topped with toasted coconut, an impressive dish and easy to put together with an explosion of flavours.

New potatoes were served with a marmite and butter glaze with a liberal sprinkling of chopped mint and parsley. The garden salad was a unique combination of leaves, with Feta cheese, grapes and pine-nuts with a light dressing.

The dessert was a fantastic combination of Scottish strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries, mixed with a fruit coulis. The fruit was served in dishes and topped with crème fraîche Chantilly flavoured delicately with Madagascar vanilla essence and a little icing sugar. This dish won the accolade of the lunch – the balance was first rate.

Cheeses were chosen by our own Cheese Detective from the Hamlet in Didsbury. With the main course and the cheese we drank George Duboeuf, Fleurie, Flower Label 2007 this most feminine of the Beaujolais Crus drank well.

The cooking on the day had a modern approach with good presentation and favourable eating quality. The committee are creative and share their love of food and wine. May they long continue to do so!

Patrick Trodden



SURREY HILLS SUMMER LUNCH

There is nothing so predictable as the unpredictability of the English weather. It was all set up to be outside but the clouds rolled in and I decided discretion was the better part of valour and then lo and behold it started to clear up! So finally some of us ate in while others were outside in the sunshine. Pam cooked mouthwatering fillets of sea trout, she also provided delicious cold roast rib of beef which had been properly hung. Both had their accompanying special sauces. Kip and Susie Punch and I produced a variety of salads, including my special banana curry. Susie produced her celebrated fruit pavlovas and crème brûlée, to accompany my fruit salad. To welcome everyone Kip valiantly served out the Kir Royales as the Chilean Undurraga Chardonnay/Pinot Noir sparkling which proved to be a bit lively! We also drank Bardolino Classico '07, a South African Pinot Grigio King's River '07 and an Italian Pinot Grigio Rosato '08. There were cheeses and coffee to finish and a few brave souls sampled some of the homemade 1996 Cherry Liqueur. We all had a great day and for those who are interested, the rain held off until 4.30, weren't we lucky?

Helen Mills



around the branches

SUSSEX BRANCH DINE on the BLUEBELL LINE

onemanhisdogs



SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR

Jon Bowers



members who have fond memories of travelling to London on that rather special train. The locomotive hauling the dining train was the Battle of Britain class Sir Archibald Sinclair which returned to traffic in April 2009 after being restored in the Bluebell's workshops. Those Sussex members who thought this would be a novel and fun way to spend an evening with friends, but without much expectation of quality dining from a railway buffet, were in for a pleasant surprise.

Kir was served as our aperitif in the station waiting room at Sheffield Park before we boarded the train to be served a three course meal as we travelled up and down the track. Three choices were available for each course, the starters arriving during the outward journey to Kingscote, with members selecting either Carrot & Coriander Soup, Terrine of Duck or Tian of Smoked Trout. The wines chosen to accompany the meal were a South African Chenin Blanc, Millstream 2008 and a Spanish Rioja; Dos Santos vino De Le Tierra Manchuela. The return journey provided the opportunity to partake of Beef Sirloin, Chicken Breast roasted with Pancetta or Supreme of Scottish Salmon. All were accompanied by beautifully cooked vegetables

During the second outward trip as far as Horsted Keynes the choice was between Pear Frangipani Tart, Chocolate Truffle Torte or Cheese & Biscuits whilst Coffee on the final return leg concluded the rail journey." This was an excellent evening which was thoroughly enjoyed by all especially as there were still bluebells to be seen along the line at this time of year. The trip is thoroughly recommended to any members of the IWFS who would care to make the trip to darkest Sussex for an unusual dining experience.

Close by is Sheffield Park gardens, a lovely National Trust garden for those who would like to spend time in the area prior to boarding the train for dinner.

John Montgomery - Sussex Branch Secretary

MERSEYSIDE & MID-CHESHIRE LUNCH AT BODYSGALLEN HALL Llandudno

It was with great pleasure that the branch was able to return to one of their favourite venues to present the staff with the prestigious IWFS Restaurant Award in recognition of the outstanding food prepared on our last visit in September 2008. On this occasion Chef Gareth Jones had created his own selection of 'Welsh' themed food which was enjoyed by all.



MENU

Canapés Aperitif Don Jose Oloroso Dry Aged
**

Pan fried local sea bass with oyster and red wine shallot tortellini, & foaming watercress

Fontevicchia Verdicchio Classico Superiore 2007
**

Corn fed chicken breast with confit leek & potato with Pantysgawn boudin & smoked bacon cream

Dolcetto Mascarello 2005
**

Blood orange parfait with Penderyn whiskey ice cream & sugared pistachios
**

Concern was expressed that the Penderyn distillery had only been operating since 2000 but the dessert was superb.



*Dr Paul Bishop presenting Chef
with his certificate*

around the branches - Capital

THE VANILLA POD

On a beautiful sunny Saturday at the end of May 26 members travelled to Marlow for lunch at The Vanilla Pod. The majority of us met at Maidenhead station to complete the last leg of our journey on The Marlow Donkey which ply's back and forth every hour through Bourne End and Cookham, alongside the Thames in many places.

Chef/patron Michael Macdonald is one of the Society's Heptinstall Chefs (see report in F&W December 2008) so we were looking forward to a high-quality lunch. We were welcomed with a glass of house wine while we chose from three dishes on each of the three courses. Members were left to choose their own wines for the meal as there were drivers amongst us. Our table chose a Marta's Vinyard Malbec Signature Reserve Vintage 2006 but unfortunately that was sold out. The sommelier recommended 1999 at £49. Sid, knowing this wine wholesales at £18.95 made him an offer of £40, which he accepted, as we were disappointed on our first choice.

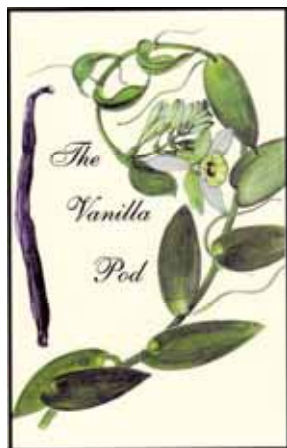
The choice of starters were Salad of Green Beans with Sharpham Cheese and aged Balsamic Vinegar, Asparagus Risotto or Cream of Carrot and Coriander Soup. The majority chose the salad or the risotto which was perfectly cooked, incorporating very finely diced asparagus and dressed with asparagus foam, it was delicious. The salad was beautifully presented and even the fine green beans were shredded lengthways.

Once again the main courses were superbly presented. Roast hake on a bed of lentils with a coconut and ginger sauce that was spicy but subtle. Rump of lamb with creamed potatoes and port jus was pink, succulent and of good flavour. Appleton loin of pork with fondant potatoes, confit shallots and Madeira jus was pronounced excellent by those that chose it. Tahitian Vanilla crème brûlée with blueberries was interestingly a light unmolded brûlée served with warm blueberries. Michael told us that he uses Tahitian vanilla sometimes as it is spicier than Madagascan. Hazelnut Parfait with Greek Yogurt Sauce I considered delicious.

The presentation was superb, the service attentive at all times and the whole experience excellent value for money at £24 inclusive of aperitif, coffee, petit fours and service.

The branch is looking forward to returning in the autumn to present Michael and his team with a Restaurant Award.

Pam Brunning



Vanilla is a flavouring derived from orchids of the genus *Vanilla* native to Mexico. Etymologically, *vanilla* derives from the Spanish word "vainilla", *little pod*. Originally cultivated by Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican peoples, Spanish conquistador Herman Cortes is credited with introducing both the spice and chocolate to Europe in the 1520s.

There are currently three major cultivars of vanilla grown globally, all derived from a species originally found in Mesoamerica, including parts of modern day Mexico. The various subspecies are *Vanilla planifolia* (syn. *V. fragrans*), grown on Madagascar, Réunion and other tropical areas along the Indian Ocean, *Vanilla tahitensis*, grown in the South Pacific; and *Vanilla pompona*, found in the West Indies and South America. The majority of the world's vanilla is the *Vanilla planifolia* variety, more commonly known as "Madagascar-Bourbon" vanilla, which is produced in a small region of the East African nation of Madagascar and in Indonesia.

Michael Macdonald

The Vanilla Pod, 31 West Street, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 2LS Tel: 01628 89810 www.thevanillapod.co.uk

Wine & Food



The 1980 Clarets: a special report

Clive Coates explains why they are outstanding value

SANDWICHED as it is between the good to very good vintages of 1978/1979 and 1981/1982, it is perhaps inevitable that little interest has been shown so far in the vintage which is certainly the poorest of the five, 1980.

Yet how poor is poor? No vintage these days is totally beneath consideration. Greater understanding of what actually takes place during vinification and élevage, the adoption of new techniques such as anti-rot sprays, and, perhaps most important, the increasing prosperity and perfectionism of the top château proprietors means that, at the cru classé level at least, there is wine of character and quality in almost every vintage, however inauspicious the climate.

THE WEATHER

In any year, there are two periods which are more crucial than any other time: June, when the vine flowers and those flowers set into fruit; and the six weeks or so from 1st September onwards, when the grapes approach maturity and the harvesting takes place. As the old adage has it, June decides the quantity, September the quality.

1980 was characterised by a miserable June. It was cold, wet and grey. As a result, the flowering was poor and prolonged, indicating that the harvest would be late and the quantity small. July was similarly cold and wet, but August hot and sunny. The weather in September was curious: it was the least sunny September since 1965, but also hotter and drier than average; indeed, hotter than any year since 1973.

However, the vintage was late as a result of the poor Spring. Indeed, it was not due to commence until October 14th, the latest start for 25 years. Inevitably, the weather broke in October, and there was some rain in the first half of the month, though the second half - from the 18th onwards - was dry and fine.

So the weather before and during the harvest was, while not perfect, certainly not disastrous. Although not sunny there was enough warmth to ripen the small quantity of grapes and, despite the rain and thanks to the new sprays, there was little rot, at least at the cru classé level. Moreover, these châteaux, which tend to harvest latest of all, gathered most of their crop in dry conditions and could afford to reject vats of weaker wine from grapes harvested in the rain. It was certainly a vintage where rigorous selection would be required to make good wine.

THE WINES WHEN YOUNG

When I first visited Bordeaux to taste the young 1980s in cask, I was immediately struck by the possibilities of the vintage. The wine, though light in structure, had an impressive colour. This meant that, though they might not have staying power, they were at least healthy: made from healthy grapes. There was little if any taint of rot in the wine, especially at the higher levels.

Moreover, while at the lower levels there was so much which was weak and watery, at the top levels there was much to commend: good fruit, plenty of elegance, and sufficient length on the palate. Forward wines for early drinking. I noted, which would need to be bottled early. I did not consider that there would be a problem in selling the wines on their intrinsic merit, but in persuading customers that even a Ducru-Beaucaillou would be at its best in, say, 1985.

THE WINES NOW WHICH ARE BEST?

At the classed growth level, there is plenty of good wine in 1980 if trouble is taken to hunt it out. It is certainly a year where one should taste for oneself before purchase, or place trust in a reliable merchant. Not all well-known properties have made good wines.

In general, it is those châteaux with a high proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon in their make-up which have done best. This means the leading growths of St. Julien and Pauillac - wines like Léoville-Lascases and Ducru-Beaucaillou, Haut-Bataille and Lynch-Bages. However, Cos d'Estournel, in St. Estèphe, is certainly one of the great successes of this vintage, and many in Margaux and the Graves - wines like Prieuré-Lichine and Palmer. La Lagune and Domaine de Chevalier - are also excellent for the vintage. Margaux and Haut-Brion are unexpectedly stylish and full of character.

On the other side of the Bordeaux area, in St. Emilion and Pomerol, the quality is more patchy, even at "classed growth" level (Pomerol has never had a classification). Yet there is still much to be admired. La Conseillante has a lot of charm, as has Clos Fourtet, while Belair, La Fleur and Figeac are as good as the reputations of the châteaux would lead us to expect. Cheval-Blanc is fuller and richer than most of this vintage, while Ausone 1980 demonstrates the re-markable renaissance this property has enjoyed since the change of management in 1976.

WHY BUY THE 1980s?

Most important, of course, is the quality. The vintage at its best is elegant, attractively fruity and charmingly balanced. The wines are not big, firm and long-lasting, but neither are they sharp, hard and unripe like the 1977s or awkward and ungenerous like the 1974s. They are small wines, not exceptionally weighty, not excessively high in acidity, not very long on the palate. Yet within this small scale, the best are well-made, harmonious and ripe. In this, they resemble vintages such as 1960 or 1973, and as in these vintages, there is much which will give pleasure and even surprise.

Secondly, they are good value. Opening prices were less than those of 1978 and 1979 and substantially less than those of 1981, let alone 1982. Moreover, these price levels, despite inflation, have not risen nearly as fast as those of other vintages.

Thirdly, the wines will be drinkable very soon; some, even classed growths, are ready now. The 1980s fill a useful gap since the 1975s, '78s and '79s, at classed growth levels, are still a long way from maturity, as are the best 1976s, and earlier mature vintages are increasingly scarce and expensive. Good 1980 clarets from well-known properties can be obtained at interesting prices for drinking now and over the next three or four years. For those with no old mature wine, or those who have already drunk what they originally purchased, the 1980 vintage is more than worthy of consideration on that count alone.

CONCLUSION

At their best - and there is a surprising amount of "best" among the classed growths - the 1980s have a lot going for them. Having recently sampled a wide range of the 1980 vintage, I can report that the vintage has plenty to recommend it: it is outstanding value; most of the wines are eminently drinkable; and the best, if not big and full, are sufficiently elegant, supple, fruity and well-balanced to repay cellaring. Over the next few years, these bottles will give much satisfaction.

*Clive Coates, a Master of Wine, is Director and Wine buyer of the London-based wine club Les Amis du Vin. He is an acknowledged specialist on the wines of Bordeaux and author of the widely acclaimed book *Claret* (Century Press, London, 1982).*