



The Ladies Wine and Food Society of Melbourne (Inc.)
REG. No. A0022942F

Members' Newsletter

December, 2010

President's Report

Dear Members,

The last three functions for 2010 really demonstrate the range of possibilities of dining with the Ladies. All were great functions, and each one was unique.

Our September birthday function was at the edgy modern noisy Cutler and Co. with super modern food; October saw us having a very relaxed evening on barstools eating Asian food at Gingerboy and then Christmas was a formal 'French' dinner with the men at Jacques Reymond.



We are planning an equally more diverse range of functions for 2011. The dates have been set, and we will try our very best not to change them. So please put the dates in your diaries now.

We have had 3 new members join recently – Julee Andersen, Suong Nguyen and Eunice Chan-Healy. They have all been to at least two functions each, so you will recognize their faces, but please make an opportunity to talk to them at the next function and get to know them.

All of us, collectively, are one of the strengths of the LWFS; we are a very welcoming, interesting and friendly group of women that makes a LWFS function much more than just the food and the wines.

A reminder about functions and RSVPs

As our membership is now very healthy in enthusiasm as well as numbers, functions are filling up quickly. I strongly advise you to RSVP as soon as you receive the notice. If there is a limit on numbers, often imposed by the venue, then it will be first in, best dressed. We may also have to restrict the number of guests who attend functions, if it means that members are missing out. So please don't assume you can bring more than one guest at a time to a function.

You might have noticed that the function notices are now being emailed to you from Caroline Kardachi. Caroline has been recently appointed as our Secretarial Service. She replaces Ros Tomkins of Kingsmere who had filled the role for almost 18 years!

The Constitution, the By-Laws and The Blue Book

The LWFS, as an incorporated body, has a constitution. This document is fairly dry reading but is available from the Secretary, Melinda Green, if you'd like a copy.

The By-Laws are the plainer English procedures arising from the Constitution and decisions made by committees over many years. The By-Laws have recently been revised, updated and rewritten. It has been a huge task, led by Pauline Baxter and Janet Mattiske. Thank you to both these motivated women.

The Blue Book is a printed booklet which all members receive on joining the Society. It is a very plain English summary of the Constitution and By-Laws and explains how things work in the Society. It also has been updated and reprinted, by the same dynamic team. New copies will be given to all members at the AGM in March next year.

Website

We currently have a sub-committee working on creating a web site for the Ladies. We plan to have various documents such as the Constitution on the website, and perhaps turn this newsletter into an active blog so that any member can easily give their viewpoint. Any ideas are warmly welcomed, and expertise too!

Committee positions

Committee members are elected at the AGM in November. Nominations close in early February. If you are interested in joining the committee, please get in touch with me soon. We are especially hoping to find someone who is interested in taking on the role of Secretary.

Merry Christmas to all.

Sandra de Pury
President

Meet your committee – Pauline Baxter

I was invited to join the Ladies in 1981, by a lady I met at a branch of Soroptimist International. Having arrived in Australia in the early 70's (Canada via England) I was astonished to find mostly male colleagues in the part of the IT industry in which I worked, so I sought out the companionship of intelligent women as an antidote, and became a Soroptimist. This led to membership of the Ladies.

Over the years I have benefitted from knowing and learning from many of our members, and this extends far beyond wine and food, and have made many friendships.

In the early years I was able to contribute by taking on the roles of secretary and treasurer, but as my career progressed I was unable to spare the time and there were several years where if I made it to a single function I was doing well.

On retiring from paid employment I spent a couple of years volunteering with the National Trust and World Vision and I took on the role of food master in the Society. Negotiating with chefs was quite challenging after a career in the corporate world... another "learning experience" as they say. My time as President was busy, at one stage almost full time, and I was truly surprised to be awarded a Certificate of Merit by the Society at the end of that period. Being recognised by one's peers is always a humbling experience.

In the last couple of years I have renewed my interests in history with an emphasis on ancient civilisations. History is so much more rewarding when you can travel to countries with an archaeologist who has the knowledge talent to make it all come alive.

More of our members juggle family and work now, so I encourage members to continue to be a member of the Society, even if you can only make one function a year, because circumstances change, and there will be a time when you have time to attend more functions and perhaps contribute by taking a committee role.
quality dishes built around great fresh produce since joining Church St Enoteca.

Pauline Baxter

Cutler and Co *September 2010* *Alexandra Fink (Foodmaster)* *Marissa Royer (Winemaster)*

The September birthday function (the LWFS 43rd birthday!) in 2010 was held at Cutler & Co in North Fitzroy. Andrew McConnell's food and his fairly new award winning restaurant was certainly something we had to try and thanks to Sandra's fantastic persuasion skills we were thrilled to be allowed to bring our own wines.

The trial dinner confirmed what we suspected: the food was very creative and absolutely stunning, making the decision of what to have very difficult. We chose a form of degustation menu for the night, which are usually difficult to fit into our desired timeframes. As a foodmaster, I would only pick more than three courses at a restaurant where the service is

professional and is used to functions. This certainly is the case at Cutler and Co, currently one of Melbourne's most popular restaurants.

The "in-factor" also brought another challenge: the noise level was so high that we decided we will not be able to have discussions around food and wine as a joint group. Given it was a birthday function, we decided to leave it fairly relaxed and left the discussions to be had on a table by table basis. Menus were distributed beforehand, so guessing what we were eating and drinking was swapped with pure enjoyment of it all.

At the trial dinner we were especially impressed with the entrees and the desserts, which led me venture to serve three dishes from the entrée list and two dishes from the dessert list instead of a main. This had the menu falling short of any greens, however the restaurant was willing to include a green salad into the menu.

On arrival we were served a crouton with octopus and chorizo, which went lovely with the NV Pierrier Jouet Grand Brut champagne, which was delicious with a fine bead, and gave a slight indication of what was about to come.

The first entree selected was a cured kingfish with smoked onion, seaweed vinegar and beetroot. The dish was very fresh and crispy and combined lots of different flavors which were lovely as a combination.

The second entrée was more out of the ordinary: tripe and cuttlefish braise accompanied by grilled bread and aioli. I thought quite a bit if I should serve this dish, as tripe is not something I personally would order in a restaurant. However, I was blown away by it at the trial dinner and thought as a wine and food society we have to challenge ourselves more often. Having said this, the tripe was clean, shredded and cooked in mild for over seven hours, which really took all the "dirty" flavors away one usually finds in tripe.

The entrees were served with a bracket of white wines: the 2006 Vasse Felix Heytesbury Chardonnay and 2002 Blain-Gagnard Chassagne Montrachet Les Caillerets. The Heytesbury Chardonnay whilst still being relatively young presented round, buttery and creamy, full of flavor and was a great match with both the dishes, particularly the tripe. The French wine received some mixed reviews on our table. Some felt that it opened up once in the glass and others felt that it may have been just moving past its peak. Personally, I found it to be a little disappointing, with strong alcohol dominating some pear and spice tones, nonetheless, I enjoyed the match to the food of and wine, and it is always difficult as a winemaker to select something from the cellar without having the ability to taste the wine before the function.

As a main we had mandarin duck, crisp duck leg, a smoked fillet of duck and boudin noir. The boudin noir was a late change by the restaurant and when they called me and asked me if it was ok to swap the duck liver pate for boudin noir, it was an easy decision - as we want our members to be challenged.

A bracket of reds were served with the duck: 2002 Domaine Confuron-Cotetidot Gevrey-Chambertin and 2001 Paringa Estate Pinot Noir. Unfortunately when I arrived prior to the function to open and test the wine, there was only one bottle of the Paringa Estate which was in any shape to be served. All of the planned bottles (and a spare) were past their best. A small taste therefore was only given to each person. A decision to utilise the spare bottle of the French wine was made, and larger pours of this wine made up for the disappointment associated with the Australian wine. The French wine showed reasonable fruit and was "very drinkable".

The desserts lived up to the outstanding dishes which were served beforehand. I had two people saying to me afterwards, that whilst they are not dessert people they were tempted to lick their plates.

The first dessert was sheep's milk yoghurt, mandarin and carrot granite, which was a lovely smooth combination. The sugar in the carrot went well with the slight bitterness of the mandarin. It was a perfect transition - almost a palate cleanser - to the second dessert, which was violet ice cream, chocolate ganache and sour cherry. This dessert was certainly strongly influenced by the powdered sour cherry, which best would be described as powdered craziness! We accompanied the two wonderful desserts with NV Morris Liqueur Tokay 500ml Old Premium, which had been presented as a gift to the LWFS cellar from Barbara Tomkins in her capacity as Federation President. It is hard to match a savoury and sweet desert with one wine, and to be honest, the Tokay probably only did justice to the violet ice cream with its generous and sticky toffee flavours.

Whilst we did not share feedback on the dishes as a group, the more challenging things on the menu (ie. the boudin noir and the tripe) raised quite different views when I went around the room asking various people for feedback. I think this is great as we all experience things differently and this is how it should be.

We believe that the night was absolutely outstanding, with strong support from all you - a record attendance of 29; although the noise levels did interfere with our conversations. The service was, as expected, impeccable and professional, which helped make it a memorable night for all of us. Whilst Andrew himself could not speak to us about the menu and his philosophy around cooking the chef on the night, Chris did a great job explaining the different courses and answering some of our sometimes challenging questions. Thanks to Sandra for providing the contact and the team at Cutler and Co for a fantastic function.

Gingerboy
October 2010
Robyn Rogers – Foodmaster
Janne Williams – Winemaster

On 14th October, a small group of the Ladies had the pleasure of trying Teague Ezard's 'other' restaurant Gingerboy. For those of you that don't know much about Gingerboy, it's Asian and a good mix of Asian styles – no one cuisine stands out, but there still manages to be a great combination of various food styles and tastes.

Between Janne Williams as Wine Master and myself as Food Master we went through varying options when trying to come up with appropriate wine flights to match our food decisions. As we all know, it's not the easiest match in the world when trying to put French and Australian wines with Asian foods. As Janne put it, it's like an arranged marriage – sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't!

Still, ever brave and in an attempt to make this a dinner to remember, Janne decided on the option of a single bottle function after some thought and the fact that October functions are notorious for low numbers. We had 14 all tolled and with the number and variety of wines that we had single bottles of we were able to manage to share the wine from each bottle across the group. More on the wines later.

From a food perspective, Gingerboy would normally provide a banquet with a large range and variety of dishes however we requested that they reduce that number so that we could ensure that we had some hope of working in with the wines. We served 3 entrees, 3 main courses and a sample platter of desserts. It was all served to the table and everyone helped themselves so we kept it quite casual. Even to the point where we sat on bar stools at high tables! I was surprised to find that in reality, despite the fact that the serves didn't look enormous we were all well and truly satiated when it came to the food and we could possibly have done with a little less.

We started the night with some Australian Sparkling, Bay of Fires Tasmanian Cuvee Brut, moving away from the more traditional LFWS approach of serving a French Champagne. The style of meal and venue lent itself to an Australian Sparkling, it was a lighter way to commence the evening on the palate as following this were to be many palate challenges! We chose not to serve any canapés given the amount and variety of food we were planning on serving for entrée and main.

So what was on the menu? The entrees were *Smashed Green Papaya Salad*, *Crispy Chilli Salt Cuttlefish* and *Pork Nam Prik Ong*. We asked the staff to serve the Cuttlefish and the Pork first as when we ate the Green Papaya Salad first at the trial dinner it had quite a chilli hit and had successfully killed off the taste of the other two entrees. There is definite value in a trial dinner because it showed us we needed to manage the tasting of the food and the wine on the night in an appropriate order.

All the entrees were excellent – the pork was served on perfectly cut rounds of iceberg lettuce leaf and we were encouraged to eat with our fingers; the cuttlefish was small pieces of cuttlefish that had been crumbed and deep fried and was extremely tender – it can sometimes be tough if cooked incorrectly, a bit like calamari but this was perfectly cooked and the chilli salt just added a great tang to the dish. Lastly the papaya salad was at the same time refreshing mixed with a little 'oh my god' chilli which left our palates tingling.

The wines selected to pair with the entrees were based on styles that often match Asian influenced food flavours and textures. It is important in matching wines with these food styles that texture is taken into equal account with flavour. Wines also need to be textural compliments to the food. A particular challenge was dealing with chilli and salt. Although there were differences of palate experience on "which went best with which" with the first two courses, the majority preferred the 2002 Pikes Reserve Riesling from Clare Valley with its flavour and texture of age, with the Cuttlefish, and the 2006 Yerringberg Marsanne/ Roussanne with the Pork Nam Prik Ong. The Dr Loosen Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinnet 2005 was chosen to provide the best contrast to the chilli and salt driven papaya salad. It is a wine with some residual sweetness which did prove to be a good foil for the heat and saltiness ...think of the sweet and sour concept.

Mains consisted of *Red Duck Leg Curry, Fried Whole Baby Snapper and Bangalow Pork Belly*. Everyone who goes to Gingerboy really loves the Red Duck curry so that was a must on the list and did not disappoint. Though we often have duck at our functions, to have it in a red curry was something completely different from the usual preparation we experience. The Baby Snapper was a real standout in my mind – it was served to the table looking as if it was still swimming (as opposed to lying on it's side). This was a little scary as we first thought we were expected to carve it up ourselves, however this was not the case and the expert staff at Gingerboy carved up the fish so we could all just help ourselves. Tender, tasty with just a very fine tempura like batter – the fish touched all the requirements for looks and taste. Lastly the Pork Belly was served exactly as it should be – the crispy crackling on outside, the pork beautifully tender and just enough fat to make it melt in the mouth. All this was served with sides – as if there wasn't already enough food! The coconut rice that was one of the accompaniments was delicious but probably horribly fattening at the same time – it certainly tasted like that anyway!

The wines selected for the three main courses were based more on the primary ingredient - Duck, Snapper and Pork. However it was most interesting to find that for many of those present the wine/food connections they found best did not necessarily match the more classical expectation. The 1998 Peter Lehman Reserve Semillon Barossa, with its wonderful aged characters went very well with the Red Duck Curry. The 2007 Grey Sands Pinot Gris and the Semillon both were enjoyed with the Snapper, and the 2005 Main Ridge Half Acre Pinot Noir seemed to marry well with the Pork Belly.

Lastly, and with much groaning around the tables, we were served a dessert platter with a variety of desserts to choose from. Asian restaurants are not normally known for great desserts so expectations weren't high – we had not been able to fit desserts in at the trial dinner so it was a surprise for both Janne and I as well. They turned out to be quite delicious with some good use of Asian flavours such as green tea and coconut and an Asian take on some more traditional desserts.

The wine selection to accompany dessert, a 2005 Haut-Bergeron Sauternes, was chosen as indicated above without knowing precisely what the desserts would be. The Sommelier was particularly helpful in advising on the styles to use with respect to Gingerboy Dessert styles, and the wine chosen worked very well. Its weight and sweetness were just the right pace in front of the desserts weight and sweetness.

I would like to thank the ladies who attended the night – it was not a meal, venue or seating arrangement (ie. bar stools) that we would usually go for but it turned out well. Together with the single bottle experience it made for an interesting night that created much discussion particularly on those wines and did or did not go with the food. It was always going to be a lottery!

JACQUESREYMOND

C U I S I N E d u T E M P S

DINNER

Gougères
NV Pol Roger Brut Reserve

Blue swimmer crab and avocado tian
06 Villa Maria Chardonnay, Hawkes Bay, NZ

Black bream and Tasmanian ocean trout en croûte, a champagne and sorrel sauce
06 Domaine Bouchard Père et Fils Beaune de Château 1^{er} Cru, Burgundy, France
06 Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA

Lacquered saddle of lamb, sweet pepper and aubergine with miso,
fresh borlotti bean purée and merguez, a tamarind sauce
1998 Leeuwin Estate Arts Series Cabernet, Margaret River, WA

Salmis of duck and parcel embeurrée of savoy cabbage,
our black pudding, with compressed apple and potato
1995 Cos d'Estournet, St Estephe, Bordeaux, France

Caramelised mango, berry millefeuilles with ginger cream,
pure Caraibe flan and pistachio foam
Rugby House Premium aged Muscat
(from solera barrels)

Coffee and petits fours

Tuesday 23rd November 2010

Note: Full food and winemasters' report to be included in the first newsletter of 2011



"Oh great. All we've got to eat are fish."

Sponge recipe?

Do you have a sponge recipe that you could share for the next newsletter ?

Fantastic sponge recipes tend to be a well guarded secret, well, if you'd be willing to share yours with the rest of us we'd love to hear from you. Please email your recipe and any tips/tricks to marissa.royer@axa.com.au and we'll publish it in the next newsletter.

Book review by Marissa Royer : "The Widow Clicquot – the story of a champagne empire and the woman who ruled it"

I was recently visiting friends and as we popped the cork of a bubbly they mentioned they'd come across a book that they thought I'd be interested in: "The Widow Clicquot – the story of a champagne empire and the woman who ruled it" by Tilar J Mazzeo (published by Harper Collins in 2008). As 'Veuve' is one of my favourite champagnes, the minute they passed me the distinctly recognisable book – of course, coloured in that yellow orange that makes Veuve Clicquot stand out on any bottle shop shelf – my interest was sparked.

I'm not aware of the LWFS including book reviews in our newsletters, however I couldn't resist with this one. I found it completely fascinating, educational, extremely easy to read and imagine the life of the woman who I'd fondly only ever referred to as 'the Veuve'; I didn't even know that her name was Barbe-Nicole Clicquot Ponsardin!

As I said, there are some very education references within the book around the methods employed in champagne and the origins of that celebratory drink. The era of Barbe-Nicole was late 18th century and into the 19th century, where women were primarily excluded from business – making her story all that more impressive and enduring.

It has been written in a factual way with references coming from detailed research by the author, following some of the key historical events of the period – fall of the French kings, the formation of a republic, Napoleon wars and how Barbe-Nicole witness these events and how they helped shape her passion for the craft of champagne making. I didn't know for example, that it was Barbe-Nicole who came up with the technique of *remuage* – (riddling in English) - disgorging the sediment from the bottle through a process of systematically turning bottles, forcing the sediment into the bottle neck.

The road to success that Barbe-Nicole trod was a very bumpy one. There were times that she was nearly desolate – but her persistency and passion led her onwards through adversity. Not only is this book a fascinating read for the history of the Clicquot Ponsardin champagne house, but all the grand maisons we know today, Moët & Chandon, Tattingers, Heidsieck, Mumm...are invariably discuss also.

I won't go into too much more, but if you are looking for a Christmas present for someone – this is a good one.

Oh and if you're interested, Dan Murphy's is currently selling that famous yellow/orange NV bottle for under \$50 – the best price I have seen it in recent times. Merry Christmas!

(if you have other food/wine reviews you'd like to share with everyone, please email me at marissa.royer@axa.com.au and I'd be pleased to include them in future newsletters).