

Wine and Food February 2019 Report

Function No 337

Wednesday February 27, 2019

The lunch was held in the Long Room and attended by 180 members and guests. Drinks and canapes were also served in the Long Room Bar area. We were greeted with a glass of Warrenmang's Pyrenees sparkling, Santé 2013, which complemented the three canapés – freshly shucked smoky baby oysters with sparkling wine and peach granita, prawn scallop and ginger wontons with sweet soy sesame dressing, and caramelised leek and goat's cheese croquettes with black garlic mayo. Diners comments on the canapes were very positive: "great selection, oysters beautiful, plenty available (for most)". Overall, very well received! The opinions on the sparkling were mostly supportive, and overall it was well accepted.

The lunch was formally opened by Chairman Rob Rouch who provided backgrounds to our guest chef Tony Cimmino, and our wine commentator of the day, Athalie Bazzani, who stood in for her winemaker husband, Luigi, who had been admitted to hospital the previous day. She made an outstanding contribution towards the overall enjoyment of the day.

Tony created a superbly flavoured steamed local garfish with crab meat and broth, mushrooms, celery root, radish and asparagus. The presentation of this great concept was extraordinary, with the body of the garfish wrapped around the neck to hold the head and needle vertical. Each of the components added a different flavour or texture. The entrée was accompanied by the Warrenmang Estate Chardonnays of 1996 and 2016, a wine only made in good vintages. The younger Warrenmang Estate Chardonnays are "bursting with classical Pyrenees yellow peach, apricot and nectarine flavours, melding with soft, savoury oak from eleven months of maturation in new and old French oak barrels. A sweet softness carries the delicate fruit right through into a complex back palate where there is a harmonious balance of fruit, subtle oak and a nutty creaminess acquired through 11 months of lees stirring in barrel" (website). There were varying opinions as to which was the preferred vintage, but most appreciated the aged version.

Chairman Rouch provide us with a summary of the contributions made by the Bazzanis to wine and food in Victoria. After arriving in 1969, they opened arguably the first fine dining restaurant outside Melbourne in 1970 – the Copper Pot – still going and still with a reputation for fine dining. In 1976 they established La Scala in Ballarat, then restaurants in Geelong and Warrnambool. They purchased Warrenmang in 1977, and modified it into a resort in 1989. They have hosted royalty, and won many prestigious awards. They have now sold the winery, but the buyers did not buy the cellar of wines, and we were the beneficiaries!

The main course of roasted beef fillet with braised beef, truffle and foie gras tortellino, heritage carrots, peas and red wine jus was quite exceptional. Visually superb! The only minor issue expressed was that the fillet was so lean that it lacked a little in flavour. Tony and his staff need to be complimented on the cooking to perfection of the beef, and providing the visual effect of the heritage carrots – white, purple, and red. The tortellino was sensational. The course was simply yet attractively presented with the colours highlighted against the plain white plate.

Accompanying the main course were the Warrenmang Grand Pyrenees 2008, and the Beyond Warrenmang 2010. The first is a classic Bordeaux style blend of Cab Sav, Merlot, Cab Franc and

Shiraz, each of which all add layers of texture and flavour. “This complex, stylish and balanced wine is an outstanding example of Pyrenees “Cabernets” and is perfect for current drinking or cellaring for up to 8 ++ years” (website). The Beyond Warrenmang is a blend typically of black puma shiraz, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, and dolcetto. It is Warrenmang’s flagship wine, and each bottle is hand signed in gold pen by Luigi! Both wines scored exceptionally well, with the Beyond fractionally ahead.

For the cheese course, we were served a taste sensation – an intensely flavoured Roquefort cheese tart, accompanied by a thin slice of pear, walnut, and quince, and a little extra cheese. The cheese ranked as the best ‘course’ of the day, with many glowing comments. The cheeses were accompanied by Warrenmang’s Black Puma Shiraz 2013. This is made from hand selected grapes from the excellent 2013 vintage which were crushed into open fermenters to ensure maximum colour and flavour extraction. True to Warrenmang’s philosophy of traditional wine making, the wine was hand plunged twice daily on skins and then basket pressed and matured for over 30 months in French oak. The origins of being named the ‘black puma’ go back to the Americans stationed in the area in the WW2. Several companies apparently brought their puma mascots into Australia, and at the end of the war they were let loose rather than being repatriated. There has been, apparently, numerous sightings of wild pumas over many years.

The dessert was a summer sponge, with butter genoise, white chocolate chantilly, fresh strawberries, blue berries and raspberries, and was another enjoyable one. Simply, but elegantly presented, and full of flavours. Tony commented that it was designed to complement the chosen wine, judged by some to be the best wine of the day.

It is the end of an era, and all present thanked the Bazzanis for their contribution to wine and food enjoyment in this State and particularly in the rural areas and regional cities of Bendigo and Ballarat.

Another great day!

Andrew O’Brien

Wine and Food March 2019 Report

Function No 338

Wednesday March 27, 2019

The lunch was held in the Long Room and attended by 168 members and guests. Drinks and canapes were also served in the Percy Beames Bar. We were greeted with a glass of Rutherglen Estates Sparkling Shiraz Durif - 2016, which complemented the four wonderful canapés – a pork and ginger dumpling with fried shallots and ponzu dressing, a honey-glazed venison loin with rosemary, strawberry and beetroot salsa, Persian-spiced Wimmera duck leg pie with zested lemon, mint, pistachio and pomegranate, and a Stracchino cheese risotto croquette with cauliflower, saffron and red pepper aioli. Many comments were made complementing the standard and variety of the canapes, and how well they matched the sparkling wine. The opinions of the sparkling were mostly supportive, overall it was well accepted, and contributed to the variety of tastes available on the day.

The lunch was formally opened by Chairman Rob Rouch who provided backgrounds to our guest chef Shane Freer, and our guest winemaker, Marco Scalzo. Shane's work is well known to members, and he was the society's 2013 Chef of the Year. Marco has worked in NZ, Beechworth, and with Brown Brothers, prior to joining Rutherglen Estates in 2007. The suitability of the Rutherglen region for the proven local icons, Durif, Muscat and Tokay, suggested it would also be suitable for producing dry table wines from the later ripening varieties from the warmer Mediterranean regions such as Viognier, Marsanne, Roussanne, Grenache, Mourvedre and Shiraz were deemed ideal, as was Sangiovese.

For entrée, Shane created a superbly flavoured Spencer Gulf prawn and crab soufflé with avocado brik-style cannoli, and a bisque sauce, topped with . . . The entrée was highly rated in terms of both flavours and presentation. The cannoli mounted on the soufflé provided an interesting combination of both flavours and textures.

The entrée was accompanied by the Rutherglen Estates Arneis 1998 and their Renaissance Viognier Roussanne Marsanne 2016. Arneis (little rascal in the local dialect) is becoming increasingly popular as a white varietal wine both in Italy and in Australia, where in Italy it is often referred to 'Barolo Bianco'. The Renaissance 2016 is made from vines now reaching full maturity, and combined with the conditions of the Rutherglen region, are proving to be ideal for producing magnificent white wines from varieties traditionally grown in southern European regions (website). Both wines were well regarded, especially considering their 'price point'.

The main course of beef fillet morel crepinette with spinach, sweet shallots, shiitake mushrooms, kassler, and a Rutherglen Durif jus. The kassler is a salt cured and slightly smoked cut of fatty pork. The morel is a distinctive fungi having a honeycomb appearance due to the network of ridges with pits composing their cap, and are prized by gourmet cooks, particularly in French cuisine. The morel crepinette was a wonderful visual and taste addition to the beef fillet. To the delight of many, a side serve of hot greens was available for those wishing for a healthier balance to the main. Visually superb! The faux shitake mushrooms added to the intrigue of the dish. The course was simply yet attractively presented with the colours highlighted against the plain white plate.

Accompanying the main course were the Rutherglen Estates Durif 2009 and the Renaissance Durif 2015. The 2009 was a rather moderate Durif, but the flagship 2015 Renaissance had a better structure and more intense flavour. In 1907 the Victorian wine industry was collapsing due to phylloxera, and viticulturalist Francois de Castella journeyed to Europe to look into the disease, and

how to get around it. He returned in 1908 with Durif, grafted to phylloxera-resistant vines from vineyards at Montpellier in France (website). Durif is a cross between Syrah and Peloursin. It was created at the University of Montpellier in the 1880s by a Dr. Durif who was apparently not averse to publicity.

For the cheese course, we were served another cheese taste sensation – an intensely flavoured Colston Bassett Stilton, and a more moderate Casa Madaio Paglierino made by a Casa Madaio dairy farm in Cilento, Campania, Italy. The latter is made using sheep's milk, the use of calf rennet, and a semi maturing process of two or three months which guarantees its sweetness and complex aroma. The cheese was accompanied by the Renaissance Shiraz 2016. The wine is a rich red with a violet hue, aromas of blackberry and spicy pepper with complex, lingering ripe fruit characters and hints of chocolate, licorice and cedar oak characters.

Chef Shane Freer provided a very interesting insight into the processes involved in preparing the day's extraordinary meal. He paid compliments to his assistants who each had a major say in how their contributions to the courses were developed. Of note was his comment that one of the dessert chefs was trialling 3-D printing for chocolate desserts!

The dessert was a sweet sushi with coconut rice, mango caviar, guava sashimi, green tea sorbet, fruit nori roll, complimented by the Rutherglen Estates Classic Muscat NV. While many enjoyed it, there was a considerable opinion expressed that it did not compliment the other courses – crossing over from fairly traditional European food to Japanese food. At what point does 'fusion' become 'confusion'?

Another great day!

Andrew O'Brien

Wine and Food April 2019 Report

Function No 339

Wednesday May 1, 2019

Function 339 was the Annual Dinner of the Society, was held in the Members Dining Room, and attended by 275 members and guests. Drinks and canapes were also served in the Long Room.

A glass of Moët & Chandon Brut Imperial greeted guests. The champagne complemented the expansive five delicious canapés – seared Hervey Bay scallops with mango chilli salsa and micro shiso, mustard and fenugreek marinated paneer with minted yoghurt and mandarin pearls, confit duck and caramelized onion tartlets with cherry gel of micro cress, mini chicken tacos with pico de gallo, and potato string-wrapped prawns.

Many comments were made complementing the standard and variety of the canapes, and how well they matched the champagne. I continue to be amazed by some wine critics comments. This champagne was described by a critic as having “aromas of citrus, flowers, hazlenut (sic) and smoke, and quite minerally/chalky with citrus and soda water flavours”. Soda water, carbonated tap water, should be without flavour! In any case it was well received by our attendees.

The lunch was formally opened by Chairman Rob Rouch who provided backgrounds to our guest chef Saurabh (Sonny) Uppal, and our guest winemaker/discussant, Wally Zuc. Sonny’s work is well known to members from his previous meals for the Society. Sonny has worked in luxury international and boutique hotels, as well as high production kitchens. He considers himself a ‘gourmet foodie’ and thus simplicity is the essence of his cooking. Judy and Wally Zuk bought their vineyard and winery in 1995 and renamed it Five Oaks, after the five magnificent oak trees that grace the property.

For entrée, Sonny created a superbly flavoured and presented confit trout, crab, apple and fennel remoulade adorned with blood orange gel, avruga, and kipfler crisps. *Avruga* is a Spanish caviar-like product with a herring base and the colour provided by squid ink) that is marketed as a caviar substitute, but does not contain fish roe.

The entrée was accompanied by the Castle Rock Riesling 2014 and the Main Ridge Chardonnay 2017. To me, the riesling was a bit bland and seemed to be in a bit of a dip between a fresh and an aged wine. Many others disagreed with my opinion. I enjoyed the chardonnay more, in line with published ratings, but not by all in attendance.

The main course was a high-risk dish by pairing two quite different meats - a rack of lamb with a goat curry bastille. Most agreed it was a risk well worth taking. Sonny is passionate about fusion cooking and modern cuisine and considers himself to be a ‘gourmet foodie’. The goat curry, enclosed in pastry, was a rogan josh spiced one, chosen to complement the wine. The polenta and vegetables provided the balance to the protein.

Peter Gago, Penfolds Chief Winemaker, comments that the Kalimna Bin 28 2008 that accompanied main course, is a showcase for warm-climate Australian Shiraz- ripe, robust and generously flavoured, and that the 50th Commercial Release may rival the 1998 Bin28. The second wine with main course was the premium Jasper Hill Georgia’s Paddock Shiraz 2009 which Jasper Hill rates as from one of its finest vintages to date. It was considered the wine of the day by most.

The cheese course was based on the Tasmanian Heidi Gruyere with fig paste, grilled peach and candied pecans and simply presented. Many positive comments were made about the cheese and also its pairing with the wine – Five Oaks Cabernet 2012. The wine itself was generally well received.

The dessert was a surprise. The menu listed it simply as “textures of pomegranate”, which turned out to be beautifully plated and to include pomegranate ‘gravel’, a panna cotta with raspberry, and a sorbet. Really different and most enjoyable. This was accompanied by Hollick The Nectar 2012 - it is said that the gloriously sweet, concentrated wines that result from grapes infected by Noble Rot (*Botrytis Cinerea*) are indeed ‘The Nectar of the Gods’. The first botrytised wine made by Hollick was from the 1985 vintage and the team has developed quite a reputation for this style.

Members who did not attend missed out on something really special!

Andrew O’Brien

Wine and Food May 2019 Report

Function No 340

Wednesday May 29, 2019

Function 340 was, following the Annual Dinner of the Society, held as a lunch in the Long Room, and was attended by 172 members and their guests. Drinks and canapes were also served in the Percy Beames Bar.

A glass of Peter Lehmann Pinot Noir Chardonnay Sparkling Cuvee 2013 greeted guests. The sparkling wine complemented the four canapés – hot smoked salmon, spinach mayonnaise with a rye crunch dressing, Piquillo pepper with Manchego and basil tartlet, three cheese risotto cake with baby pea crush, and smoked lamb with Baba ghanoush (a roasted eggplant and tahini dip) and sour cream. Many comments were made complementing the standard and variety of the canapes, and how well they matched the sparkling wine.

Chairman Rob Rouch opened the lunch by providing backgrounds to our guest chef Caleb Osterman, and our guest 'Brand Ambassador' Malcolm Stopp. Caleb started working in a variety of Melbourne's boutique restaurants before heading overseas, working mainly in Europe. He brought the skills he developed to Epicure in 2008, working as an integral part of the MCG Culinary Centre brigade. His highlights here include cooking for the USA team at golf's Presidents Cup in 2011. Caleb is currently running the Jim Stynes Grill on match days. Malcolm Stopp is a 40-year veteran of the wine industry, having studied wine marketing at Roseworthy before turning his hand to the vineyards and winemaking in Europe which included a vintage at Chateau Petrus in Bordeaux. He joined Peter Lehmann in 1991 and has held many senior positions with the company since. When Casella Family Brands acquired Peter Lehmann in 2014, Malcolm was appointed brand ambassador and educator, a position he holds today.

Caleb's entrée featured about 1000 wonderfully-flavoured Canadian scallops – as he said "the best available in the world at this time of year". No rumbles of disagreement to that statement! They were complimented by spiced cauliflower, crispy chorizo, fennel, and watercress salad, with each of these adding other flavour, texture and visual dimensions to the entrée. The entrée was accompanied by the Peter Lehmann Hill & Valley Chardonnay 2017 and the Peter Lehmann Margaret Semillon 2010. With fruit sourced from the cool climate Eden Valley, the Chardonnay has been perfectly crafted with 40% barrel maturation with 8 months on lees. It shows "refined lemon notes and a somewhat honeyed texture create a pleasing palate with balanced acidity" (website). The Semillon is "an astonishingly lively wine, with beautiful aromas of lemon flower and beeswax with youthful lemongrass aromas and citrus acidity with honeyed development from bottle ageing. Named after Peter Lehmann's beloved wife and 'Semillon warrior, the Margaret Semillon is made from grapes from old vines, some dating back to 1923, and is a beautiful aged white that develops over years of careful cellaring" (website). Both wines were well regarded by members. The best in food accompanied by fine wines! Chairman Rouch commented when introducing Malcolm for comment on the white wines "nothing left here for the dog tonight"!

The main course was a premium braised beef rib accompanied by celeriac textures (strings), just available pine mushrooms and BBQ glaze, with a side of brussels sprouts with pancetta. Caleb needs to be congratulated for incorporating the side dish in line with numerous requests from members

over time. It was well-presented, and in no way detracted from the main dish, but provided for those who wish to 'balance' their meal. The main dish was a taste sensation. Malcolm summed up the beef with his comment "you could cut the beef with your elbow".

The accompanying wines chosen by Peter Lehmanns were the VSV Carey Shiraz 2014, and Peter Lehmann Stonewell Shiraz 2013. The Carey Shiraz is a special wine from one of their grape growing families' vineyards and named after that vineyard. It shows aromas of satsuma plum, blueberries and subtle French oak with cherry and dark chocolate flavours. Fruit from some special pockets of land is set aside, and made in small batches to highlight this character as single vineyard wines produced under the name "VSV" – Very Special Vineyards. The Stonewell has been considered for over 20 years to be one of Australia's greatest wines and one of the world's greatest Shiraz. The grapes are sourced from vineyards with the best grapes, smaller, deeper in colour, and with more intensely flavoured characteristics. This vintage produced a wine that was just great.

The cheese course was Hafod cheddar with apple, fig and pecan with water crackers. "Hafod Welsh Organic Cheddar is a traditional hard cheese handmade on Wales' longest certified organic dairy farm, Bwlchwernen Fawr. We only use the raw (unpasteurised) milk from our 75 Ayrshire cows to make Hafod. Ayrshire milk is rich in butterfat and protein, and is widely regarded as being ideally suited to cheesemaking. It is this unique combination of organic Ayrshire milk and traditional cheesemaking techniques that give Hafod its buttery, rich and nutty flavours. The name - Hafod (pronounced Havod) – is Welsh for summer place or pasture. In our farm's case, Hafod is an area of meadow next to the river Aeron where the cows graze when they are not being milked" (website). Even if we cannot pronounce the farm's name, we can rest with the experience of a lovely cheese.

The wine served with the cheese was the Peter Lehmann VSV Ruediger Cabernet Sauvignon 2016. The wine is a limited release, from an excellent year that shows just how unique Barossa Cabernet can be. The palate shows a rich tannin structure balanced by flavours of blue fruits and cassis. Considered to be one of the wines of the day.

The dessert was listed simply as pear tarte tatin with toffee ice cream. Its enjoyment by most was probably summed up by the chairman's comment that it suffered from 'clean plate syndrome'. This was accompanied by the Peter Lehmann Botrytis Semillon 2016. This is a dessert wine with a "luscious palate of dried apricots, lemon marmalade and toffee characters, balanced by a soft finish of lemon acidity. With the Barossa's warm lingering summers, it is a natural home for botrytis cinerea, used to masterfully craft this wine and show diversity of Semillon". Both Caleb and Malcolm provided informative and humorous discussion of the food and wine - "never drink alone, do it in front of a mirror if you have to" (attributed to Humphrey Bogart . .), and Caleb's comment to couples in attendance "don't ask what's for dinner tonight"!

This was a very special event!

Andrew O'Brien

Wine and Food May 2019 Report

Function No 341

Wednesday Jun 26, 2019

Function 340 was a lunch in the Long Room and attended by 180 members and their guests. Drinks and canapes were also served in the Percy Beames Bar.

Guests were greeted with a glass of Summerfield Sauvignon Blanc 2018, to enjoy with the canapés. This is an attractive Sauvignon Blanc with tropical melon, peach and lime on the nose and a palate that is packed with flavour. Mark Summerfield, the winemaker, commented that the wine has a good balance of fruit and tannins, and is great example of sauvignon blanc from the Pyrenees. The wine complemented the four canapés – Karaage chicken with wasabi kewpie, togarashi, devilled crab croquette with Chipotle, smoked ginger prawns with garlic, coriander, and Peking duck dumpling with Spiked soy. Paul commented later that he chose the chicken to be nice and light, the devilled crab croquette for contrast, and the prawns cooked like you have not experienced before. Many comments were made complementing the flavours, variety, and presentation of the canapes, and how well they matched the still wine.

Chairman Rob Rouch opened the lunch by providing backgrounds to our guest chef Paul Johnson, and guest winemaker Mark Summerfield. After travelling and living in Vietnam for four years Paul moved back to Melbourne after honing the many skills and techniques required to master Asian cuisine. He started work with Epicure in 2006 and is currently sous chef of members' dining and production. The Summerfield family had farmed in the Pyrenees region for more than a century before Mark's father, Ian, decided to follow his neighbours' lead and planted 10 acres of Shiraz. That was more than 40 years ago and while initially the grapes were supplied to other vineyards eventually a winery was established. A Roseworthy graduate, Mark has been chief winemaker since 1999 and three of the wines on today's list are named after his children.

Paul's entrée was a spiced quail with spinach, mushroom and shallots, was well presented and, again, had numerous positive comments on both the flavours and textures. Paul commented that, as a youngster, he used to shoot quail at Phillip Island – hence the connection. The entrée was accompanied by the Summerfield Merlot 2016 and Summerfield Cabernet Sauvignon 2016. The merlot shows "This Merlot has plums, cherries and floral aromas on the nose while the palate is full and well balanced with dark fruits and long soft tannins" (website). The cabernet showed "black currant, root spice and black plum notes, all strewn with dried sage. Cabernet's code of tannic austerity is in full force, harnessing the phalanx of fruit into a compact, well defined whole" (website). Mark explained that these were their entry level wines – is that setting a high bar! He also said that the cabernets were the wine of the Pyrenees, with great wines from recent plantings. They get the best out of their grapes by micro-management of their processes to get the balance and complexity – under great guidance from his father. The best in food accompanied by fine wines!

Paul's main course was a carved Berkshire pork with Porchetta flavours, apple, and fennel, and with some accompanying tomatoes and micro-salad. Again, beautifully presented, with a wonderful range of flavours. Paul mentioned that he really wanted to incorporate the Porchetta which had to be 'deconstructed'.

The accompanying wines chosen by Mark were the Summerfield Reserve Shiraz 2015, and Summerfield Saieh Shiraz 2015. The Reserve is sourced from the best block of the original 70s plantings, giving it its intensity of the fruit. It is the balance and length that really finishes the wine. Mark commented that it is far harder to make a single block wine than a blended one. The Saieh is “back to the Summerfield of old, big bold and beautiful. The very fast early ripening has delivered a wine that is packed with ripe fresh sweet fruit. Although not for the faint hearted this is a wonderful wine that is a must for the cellar” (website). Mark commented that it is from one of their best blocks with great attention given to detail – which is the source of the blueberry, spice and minerality in the wine.

The cheese course was Challerhocker with Leek and toasted nuts with water crackers. The wine served with the cheese was the Summerfield Taiyo Cabernet 2015, named after his son. Mark commented that 2016 was a wonderful season for Cabernet, and these 1970 old vines excel on years like this. Packed full of ripe fresh fruit on the nose, the palate is full of varietal Cabernet flavours.

The dessert was Chocolate soufflé with chocolate soil, raspberry. The dessert was as close to perfect as we are likely to see! The highlight of the meal. Paul commented that it is not too hard to do soufflés for 6 persons, but it is a real challenge to do it for 180!

The Summerfield Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2015 and Summerfield Sahsah Shiraz 2015, named after his daughter, accompanied the dessert. This cabernet “adds an extra dimension to the regular cabernet bottling by route of optimum quality fruit, abstemiously selected across the best plots. Cassis, blueberry, dark plum, anise and verdant herbs are underlain by a gauntlet of precise grape tannins. Coffee mocha vanillin oak imparts a generous creaminess to the wine, belying its strait-laced, gun barrel austerity. Sahsah’s wine, made from our old vine Shiraz, has a beautiful elegance, lovely plums and spice on the nose, the palate is perfectly balanced”(website).

This was sensational food served with wines to match!

Andrew O’Brien

Wine and Food July 2019 Report

Function No 342

Wednesday July 31, 2019

Function 342 commenced with drinks and canapes being served in the Percy Beames Bar area before adjourning to the Long Room. The function was attended by 173 members and their guests.

Guests were greeted with a glass of d'Arenberg Pollyanna NV to enjoy with the canapés. As often, there were divided opinions on the sparkling wine. This wine has spent 7 years on lees, and was variously described as being fresh, slightly sweet, fruit driven, and clean and easy drinking without setting itself apart. The wine complemented the three canapés – Crostini with tarama and kalamata olives, Lobster mac and cheese croquette macaroni & gruyere, cheddar, and romano, and Roasted garlic aioli, watermelon and feta bites, and a lamb kefta – one of Morocco's most popular street foods. Many comments were made complementing the flavours, variety, and presentation of the canapes, and how well they matched the wine. Some felt the watermelon and feta fell a bit short.

Vice Chair, Beth Benson opened the lunch by providing brief backgrounds to our guest chef Renee Guymer, and guest winemaker Chester Osborn a fourth generation chief winemaker and viticulturist. Renee has done several functions previously. After completing her apprenticeship in various restaurants around Melbourne with the Red Rock Group, she returned to the MCG in 2004. Renee has been involved with many of Epicure's major events around Australia, including the 2006 Commonwealth Games and the F1 Grand Prix as well as many major golf tournaments. She is currently working as chef de cuisine matchday. Chester, an intriguing personality, is highly regarded in the industry having been crowned the prestigious Bushing King of McLaren Vale and in 1994 the Winemakers' Federation of Australia invested him as a Patron for his contribution to industry affairs.

Renee's entrée was Grilled sea bass with Jerusalem artichoke, hassleback beets, buttermilk, caraway and dill sauce, was well presented and, again, had numerous positive comments on both the flavours and textures. The fish was oven cooked, to perfection, for just 12 minutes.

The entrée was accompanied by the d'Arenberg Hermit Crab Marsanne Viognier 2017 and d'Arenberg Money Spider Rousanne 2018. The marsanne blend was clean and crisp and suitable for accompanying a range of entrée foods. The Rousanne was a full flavoured with great potential and considered to be a good representation of this varietal.

Renee's main course was a Wimmera duck as a Confit leg pie and a seared breast, with mandarin gel, red cabbage puree, duck crackle, and juniper sauce. A real surprise, and beautifully presented with the pie shaped to resemble a duckling, with a wonderful range of flavours. The only things missing were vegetables.

The accompanying wines chosen by Chester were the d'Arenberg Wild Pixie Shiraz 2015, and d'Arenberg Galvo Garage Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2014. The shiraz is from vines that varied from 50 years old to 129 years old, and wine incorporates 6% rousanne crushed together. While a little muted initially, it improved by matching beautifully with the duck. A seriously good wine. The Galvo is named after the old galvanised iron shed that stores much of the winery's equipment and where some of the wine is made. It has also has petit Verdot blended, and made using traditional French methods.

The cheese course was the Le Conquerant (a French camembert) with caramelised pistachio and pear paste. It was highly regarded by most, and considered by some to be the standout course of the day. The wine served with the cheese was the d'Arenberg Dead Arm Shiraz 2016. Chester commented that 2016 was a wonderful season for cabernet producing highly tannic wine similar to their great cabernet years of 1996 and 2006. He has "high hopes" for it, and it should be good for up to 15 years cellaring.

The dessert was 'Tropical Mess' - Passionfruit curd, meringue, orange chantilly, and sorbet – and lived up to its name. Very well received, and Chester remarked that the dish and the wine were a great match. No disagreement there! The d'Arenberg Noble Mud Pie Viognier 2017 accompanied the dessert. The viognier is blended with small portions of other varieties. Thick, luscious, and powerful, this was considered by many as the 'wine of the day' and one which could go with just about any dessert.

Another great function!

Andrew O'Brien

Wine and Food August 2019 Report

Function No 343

Wednesday August 28, 2019

The Percy Beames Bar welcomed members and guests for Function 343, where drinks and canapes were served before adjourning to the Long Room. The function was attended by 173 members and their guests.

The Yarrabank Brut Cuvée 2013 greeted guests on arrival. It is produced through a joint venture between Champagne Veuve A Devaux and Yering Station. "Aromas of citrus apple and bread-dough leads into a complex palate displaying zesty cool-climate fruit, creaminess and subtle yeast influence. Has scored 95 Points, and is from 56% chardonnay and 44% pinot noir. Made in the traditional fashion, this was aged for 5 years on lees without malolactic fermentation" (website). The wine complemented the three canapés – BBQ scallop pea and mint, potato with brie, truffle and chorizo, and a chicken parfait with mandarin and wheat. Many comments were made complementing the flavours, variety, and presentation of the canapes, and the potato was considered the 'winner'.

Chair Robert Rouch opened the lunch by providing brief backgrounds to our guest chef Jerome Mulryan, and guest winemaker Darren Rathbone who is the CEO and winemaker of the Rathbone Wine Group, and who graduated as a chemical engineer before finding a far more satisfying career. Jerome has done several functions previously. Jerome started his career in 1996 in Sheffield, gaining valuable experience working in boutique hotels. He arrived in northern Australia in 2005 working at the Sovereign Resort Cooktown and the Sofitel Reef Casino Cairns before moving to Melbourne to work at Sofitel Melbourne on Collins before joining Epicure at the MCG in 2010. The society's Chef of the Year in 2017, Jerome's current role is sous chef - production at MCG.

Jerome's entrée was King George Whiting with oyster sauce, fennel, and dollops of caviar. It was generally considered to be the course of the day. The fillet was beautifully presented surrounded by the sauce and, again, had numerous positive comments on both the flavours and textures. The entrée was accompanied by the Mount Langi Cliff Edge Riesling 2018 and the Yering Station Estate Chardonnay 2016. The riesling was not generally considered to match the beautiful chardonnay – arguably the pick of the day's wines.

The main course was Rangers Valley eye fillet with broccolini, garlic, vacche rosse (from the rare Reggiana red cow) and Café de Paris. My view, and that at our table, was that it was very good, but this view was not widely supported. Its presentation was a little bland. While there was some broccolini, some further vegetables, even as a side dish, would have been appreciated.

The accompanying wines chosen by Darren were the Mount Langi Talus Shiraz 2017, and Yering Station Estate Pinot Noir 2018. The Shiraz was scored 95 points by master of wine Toni Paterson. An enjoyable full-bodied wine that will surely improve over time. The combination of a full-bodied shiraz and a pinot was interesting and challenging. The pinot was produced in one of the Yarra Valley's best years with classic growing conditions for pinot. A significantly good Yarra Valley pinot.

The cheese course was the Guilloteau Saint Angel with apple, fig, and crackers. Saint Angel has a velvety covering of fine white mould over its rind, and a soft luscious texture, with the extra cream giving it a higher fat content which changes its overall character. The cheese has a very clean finish; it is rich, sweet, with a satiny-buttery mouth feel. Arguably a French masterpiece! It was universally highly regarded, considered by many to be the standout course of the day, and one of the best cheeses ever. The wine served with the cheese was the Xanadu Black Label Cabernet Sauvignon 2017, which competed for the wine of the day. Again, full-bodied with some cedary oak character.

The dessert was 'S'mores' with smoked chocolate, vanilla and amaretto marshmallow, butter sable (Graham cracker + marshmallow and chocolate) – one of the most controversial dishes we have had. This is a current 'food fad' in Canada and the US for campers. The presentation was sensational, with dried ice in the covered glass providing 'smoke'. Unfortunately, not all agreed that the dessert was 'appropriate', while others thought it marvellous. One of the aims of the society is to introduce different food concepts, and this certainly filled the bill. The Yering Station Fortified NV accompanied the dessert, but it was not a standout wine.

A most enjoyable day!

Andrew O'Brien

Wine and Food September 2019 Report

Function No 344

Wednesday September 25, 2019

The Long Room welcomed members and guests for this fabulous Function 344. Following the sparkling wine and canapes, 240 members and their guests headed into the Members Dining Room.

The Yarra Valley Chandon Vintage Brut 2010 had greeted guests on arrival. A deliciously soft, fresh and creamy wine with considerable length and finesse. The wine complemented the four canapés – oysters two ways - mandarin and Chandon granita, salmon pearls, bloody Mary, chorizo crumb; chicken san choi bau spring roll with spiced plum and hoisin (which sold out early); avocado goat's cheese mousse and roasted cherry tomato tartlet with baby basil, and Croatian cevapi with Ajvar chutney. Chef Josh Munro commented that the last of these was created by a Croatian member of his team – wonderful. Many positive comments were made complementing the flavours, variety, and presentation of the canapes, including being 'the best this year'.

Chair Robert Rouch opened the lunch by providing brief backgrounds to our guest chef Josh Munro. Being a 'cellar day' we did not have a commentary on the wines.

Josh's entrée was "three ducks in a pond". It was generally considered to be one of our best in recent times. The wontons and duck were beautifully presented within the surrounding 'pond' based on the traditional Peking duck sauce. Again, there were numerous positive comments on both the flavours and textures. The entrée was accompanied by the Yarra Valley Innocent Bystander Chardonnay 2015, and Saltram's Winemakers Selection Fiano 2016. The Yarra Valley is a classic Chardonnay growing area with some of the finest chardonnays in Australia. "Innocent Bystander offers an excellent value version yet is still full of the region's alpine influences and flinty soils. Unoaked but with lovely malolactic treatment this is a taut, citrusy, refreshing, textural Chardonnay, rounded out with creamy oak and cashew notes" (website). Saltram's Winemakers Selection Fiano 2016 is an emerging variety in the Barossa - well suited to the region and produces wines with complex aromatics and textured palates. Fiano exhibits notes of lemongrass and lime with a touch of spice, the palate is generously textured with a salty mineral finish. Was generally considered to be a superior wine, being much richer, with a more lingering finish.

The main course was crystallised raspberry, citrus and herb-crusted lamb rack with potato puree, asparagus, and lamb jus. In discussion, Josh said that the 'raspberry' was actually from jelly crystals – something he learned as a youngster. The rack was cooked at 190 degrees, came out perfectly, and was enhanced by the parsley thyme and rosemary herbs. The quite light meal was enhanced by the carrots and asparagus.

The accompanying wines chosen by Paul were Hollick Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 and the St Huberts Cabernet Sauvignon 2012. The Hollick Cabernet with its bouquet and flavours is classic Coonawarra cab - full bodied with rich, ripe fruit, vanillin cedar and spice. Excellent length and persistence with a long finish. The traditional Yarra cabernet sauvignon has moderate alcohol and well balanced ripeness. The bouquet suggests nicely harmonised fruit and oak. It's tight and powerful, precise and

firmly concentrated on the palate; a beautiful cabernet that needs time and is full of potential, and could be cellared for around 15 more years.

The cheese course was the sensational baked Clarines with pear, fresh fig and walnut - one of the best cheeses ever and arguably even better than in August! The creamy cheese came in a box, was baked, then each molten cheese shared amongst several attendees. While most indulged in seconds, there was plenty left over. Vive la difference! The wine served with the cheese was Chateau Tanunda's 'The Chateau' Bethanian Shiraz 2012 from their estate vineyard in Bethany, the oldest settlement in the Barossa. Aromas of dark berries and black pepper were supported by spicy, dark berry fruits on the palate. "The extensive finish is framed by elegant, fine-grained tannins from maturation in a combination of new and seasoned American and French oak" (website).

The dessert was, given the preceding course comments, still arguably the course of the day. The "Black Forest", chocolate soil, and Kirsch ice cream tested the imagination. The black forest of 'chocolate soil' referred to the forest floor, with a milk chocolate mushroom and some small leafy greens as garnish. I am not sure as to which part the ice cream represented? Great tastes and great presentation. Hollick's *The Nectar Botrytis Riesling 2012* accompanied dessert. Hollick's botrytis wines are made in extremely small quantities, and only in vintage years when the 'Noble' appears naturally. The wines are rich and sweet, with dried apricot and honey overtones from the Botrytis infection, balanced with concentrated fruit characters and a clean acid finish. This wine can improve with careful cellaring.

A standout function!

Andrew O'Brien

Wine and Food October 2019 Report

Function No 345

Wednesday October 30, 2019

The Percy Beame's Bar welcomed members and guests for this fabulous Function 345. Following the sparkling wine and canapes, 164 members and their guests headed into the Long Room.

The Vinea Marson Prosecco 2018 and three canapés had greeted guests on arrival. The Prosecco was produced using the Charmat (or Metodo Italino) where wine undergoes fermentation in pressurised stainless-steel tanks rather than bottles, and is bottled under pressure in a continuous process. A touch of pinot bianco adds body and complexity. A deliciously soft, fresh and creamy wine with considerable length and finesse. The wine complemented the three canapés – mini prawn toast, the seared scallop with curry cauliflower and blue scampi roe, and the truffled mushroom tart with goat's curd and lemon thyme. Very positive feedback on the canapés – excellent range of flavours, good variety, but still some issues with their distribution.

Chair Robert Rouch opened the lunch by providing brief backgrounds to our guest chef Sharn Greiner and winemaker Mario Manson. Sharn's background covers an enviable spread of high cuisine from classic French cooking to Asian-influenced Verge and Gingerboy, punctuated by a stint at The Point in Albert Park with Ian Curly. A former head chef at Ezard, he later opened ezard@levantine in the Yarra Valley before seeking a change of pace with Epicure at the MCG nearly five years ago. His patisserie assistant today, Serena Chang, is a William Angliss graduate who joined the Epicure team in 2016 and has previously had created sweets for events in Japan, Taiwan and at Crown.

Mario Marson is from an Italian family steeped in the many skills associated with viticulture and winemaking and comes armed with double degrees in agricultural and wine science. Mario spent 15 years working with the legendary John Middleton at Mount Mary before buying a 50-hectare plot at Heathcote. The first vines were planted in 2000 and regular visits to Europe have helped develop Mario's French and Italian-style wines that were enjoyed on the day. Mario's story in wines was one of the more fascinating that we have experienced.

Sharn's entrée was a seafood charcuterie plate - smoked salmon, crab, octopus, salted cod, pickles, and seeded mustard in the concept of an antipasto to add to the Italian wine variety theme. It was generally considered to be one of our more innovative dishes in recent times. Again, there were numerous positive comments on the variety, flavours, and textures. Beautifully presented and arguably the best course of the day!

The entrée was accompanied by Vinea Marson's Pinot Bianco 2015 and the Vinea Marson Grazia 2014. According to Mario, the Pinot Bianco was his first and only Pinot Bianco, a varietal usually found in their Grazia blend. Inclement weather leading into vintage 2015 meant they were unable to source all of the usual varieties, so he seized the opportunity to craft an intriguing single varietal. He described it as "fresh and lively Pinot Bianco possesses a typical minerality, with pear, floral and citrus characters. A dry-style white, it displays a crisp acidity with a slight amaro finish" (amaro is Italian for 'bitter' and is also an Italian herbal liqueur). The Grazia 2014 comprises 40% pinot bianco, 26% malvasia d'Istria, 20% friulano, 14% picolit. Vinea Marson's 3rd vintage of this intriguing and complex

blend pays homage to Mario's roots in north-eastern Italy. "Pale green in colour, the Grazia exhibits attractive aromas of preserved lemon, citrus peel and orange blossom with a hint of flinty struck match. With an intriguing textural palate reminiscent of the multi-blend wines of Friuli (northeast of Venice), this medium bodied wine displays characters of peach, melon and lemon with a creamy almond finish" (website). Both wines were generally well received and considered to be an interesting experience for many attendees.

The main course was free-range pork duo - pressed pork and braised pork jowl, with maple-roasted pumpkin, lollipop kale, sugar snaps, with red pepper crumb. The main provided a good balance of protein and vegetable – something that is too often missing. The presentation of the dish was outstanding.

The accompanying wines chosen by Mario were the Vinea Marson Sangiovese 2014 and the Nebbiolo 2013. The first wine shows "Mario Marson's resilience and skill in the face of climatic disaster. It is richer than normal, as it largely emanates from Heathcote and its Brunello bio types, and has considerable length. It has the right mix of dried herbs, cherry fruit and spice, yet stays in savoury territory. The appealing palate is more medium-bodied with lithe, grainy tannins and fresh acidity keeping everything tight" (Jeremy Oliver). Mario advised that the Nebbiolo, like the Sangiovese, takes a lot of hard work in the vineyard, and "is closer to a pinot, hard to make, quite confronting, and with a lot happening on the palate".

The cheese course was the Occelli Testun di Barolo – with quince, strawberry and mint, with lavosh soldiers. This full flavoured cheese, suggested by Mario, is coated with the pressed grapes used to make Barolo wine – the flavours of the cheese and grapes merge to provide a flavour that has grip, is sweet, winy, and creamy yet sharp. Brilliant!

The wine served with the cheese was Vinea Marson Shiraz Viognier 2014. It has "impressive textural and flavour complexity to its bouquet and a medium bodied palate; the 30% new French oak has been absorbed into the fabric of the wine, as have the tannins. Mario Marson at his best" 95 Points, Jeremy Oliver.

The dessert was the 'smoke and mirrors' - milk chocolate, hazelnut crunch, chocolate crumble. Having no visual cue for the dessert being called 'smoke and mirrors', I discovered that it is an English language phrase used to describe "things and actions that are deceptive, manipulative, or lack complete explanation". It certainly lacked any explanation, but was a lot of fun, beautifully presented, and most enjoyable.

Vinea Marson Rosé 2016 accompanied dessert. The 2013 was described as "light salmon colour; a wave of complexity crashes through the mouth, with a wash of spices first up, then a bowl of cherries of every imaginable type and style. Outstanding food style. Rating 95" by Jeremy Oliver.

During Chairman Rouch's final remarks he was urged to tell one final country joke before stepping down as Chairman. "Proud owner of a multiple prize-winning Holden Ute at the Deniliquin Muster's son now had his licence and requested a loan of the ute. Unfortunately, said son was something of boozing hoon! Dad says okay on three conditions: he gets his uni grades up from C to B, he reads the bible regularly, and gets his hair cut. After 8 weeks, dad sees noticeable change on the first two

conditions, but no haircut. Questions son on that, who responds that his illustrated bible shows Solomon, Moses, Jesus and others with long hair. Dad responds “and wherever they wanted to go they walked!!” (Raucous applause)

Andrew O'Brien

Wine and Food November 2019 Report

Function No 346

Wednesday November 30, 2019

The Long Room welcomed members and guests for this fabulous Function 346. Following the sparkling wine and canapes, 238 members and their guests headed into the Member's Dining Room. The Vina Las Perdices Sparkling Brut NV and three canapés had greeted guests on arrival. The sparkling was the 'black label' produced using the Charmat (or Metodo Italino). This was 50% pinot and 50% chenin blanc blend. Las Perdices produces a considerable range of sparkling wines – some by Chamat method, others by traditionnelle method. The wine complemented the three canapés – hand-dived scallops with garlic butter and pangrattato, potato tortellini with goat's curd and beurre noisette, and BBQ calamari with spicy chorizo and hummus. Very positive feedback was received on the canapés – the excellent range of flavours, good variety, great contrast - but still some issues with their distribution.

Incoming Chair, Beth Benson, opened the lunch by thanking out-going Chair Robert Rouch for his considerable contribution to the Society, then providing brief backgrounds to our guest chef Brock Lynch and guest wine presenter, Andrew McIntyre. Brock started his apprenticeship at the Rockpool restaurant at Southbank and later headed overseas, cooking and travelling extensively throughout USA and Singapore. He joined Epicure this year and quickly became an integral part of the MCG Culinary Centre brigade, assisting with the preparation and delivery of AFL and cricket functions as well as various special events on non-matchdays. Andrew McIntyre has worked in the wine industry for more than 10 years, initially at Corney & Barrow in London and later with the famous Oddbins organisation, before moving to a small fine wine merchant, Philglas & Swiggot. It was there he accelerated his wine knowledge while working with Australian Master of Wine Justin Knock and eventually gained his Wine & Spirit Education Trust diploma. Returning to his native Australia, Andrew continues to share his passion and love of wine with those keen to learn more at his very own Melbourne Wine School.

Brock's entrée was a spiced mussel and saffron bisque accompanied by toasted sour dough slices. The bisque also included prawn, fish, and calamari. Again, there were numerous positive comments on the variety, flavours, and textures. Beautifully presented and arguably the best course of the day! The entrée was accompanied by Arboleda Chardonnay 2016 (Chile) and Felino Chardonnay 2017 (Argentina). According to Andrew, the Arboleda is quite typical of the area, where grapes benefit from summer sun and sea breezes. This was a strongly flavoured wine, a powerful nose, and lots of body and texture. The Felino is from Mendoza where there is a longer growing period, and the wine had a soft finish although it had more body weight. There was some variation of opinion as to the quality of the two wines. Again, we tend to get accustomed to our local treatment of international wines of the same variety.

The main course was Argentinian-style scotch fillet with char-grilled asparagus, anchovy emulsion and chimichurri. Many claim that 'authentic chimichurri from Uruguay & Argentina' is the best accompaniment to any barbecued or grilled meats! Chimichurri uses olive oil, red wine vinegar, chopped parsley, garlic, red chillies, oregano, salt and pepper to taste. Try some of the recipes at your next BBQ. The main proved a little 'meaty' for some.

The accompanying wines were the Arboleda Carmenere 2016 and the Vina Cobos Felino Malbec 2017. The carmenere variety is a fairly recent discovery in South America, as for about 100 years it was thought to be merlot. Carmenere is capable of producing bold, flavoursome yet balanced and complex wines. It's an unmistakable and unique combination of flavours that has prompted critics internationally to conclude of Chilean Carmenère: 'When they're good, there's really nothing else quite like it'. The Cobos Felino Malbec from Mendoza is from the heartland of malbec country. The big, plump wines are often referred to as the equivalent of Australia's shiraz. However, this example was medium bodies with a fresh finish – well regarded by those present.

The cheese course was the Onetik Ossau Iraty with fresh honeycomb, crisp pear and candied walnuts. This is a smooth, semi-hard cheese with distinctly nutty flavours and a lingering caramel sweetness. Its earthy, aromatic rind is typical of ewe's and goat's milk cheeses made in the Pyrénées. The floral aftertaste is reminiscent of the pastures of wildflowers and fresh grass in the region. A little history - Ossau Iraty is made in the rugged mountains known as the Basque region, on the border between France and Spain. The Basques have their own language that relates to neither French nor Spanish. The black and red-faced Manech ewes, which are renowned for their magnificent curled horns, are milked twice each day from the end of Spring to early Autumn. Onetik collects the milk directly from the farmers every day, then transforms it into cheese using a combination of modern methods and respect for tradition. The method used to make Ossau Iraty is claimed to be one of the oldest surviving and dates back at least 4000 years. Not sure how this fitted into 'South American theme'.

The wine served with the cheese was a Vina Cobos Cocodrilo Red Blend 2017. Vina Cobos is Napa winemaker Paul Hobbs Argentinian project where he fashions new world style styles of wine. Over recent years the flamboyance of the wines has been toned down a few notches to provide the wines with a touch more freshness and polish. The outstanding 2017 Mendoza vintage producing one of the best Cocodrilo's yet. It is a gorgeous cabernet blend that counterpoints a Californian like richness and opulence with the polish of a top flight Bordeaux. It is a blend of 82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Malbec, 5% Petit Verdot and 4% Merlot with the fruit sourced from the Lujan de Cuyo and Valle de Uco appellations. Generally considered the wine of the day.

The dessert was Lemon mousse with almond dacquoise with white chocolate glaze and pith puree. Santa Rita Gewurztraminer Muscatel 2014 (Chile) accompanied dessert. A complex aroma, dominated by ripe fruits such as apricot, quince and honey, mingles with a subtle floral background. On the palate, it is delicate and elegant, with an opulent and persistent finish. Beautiful wine. Nose of tropical fruit, strong mango, herbal hints, canned apricot, sweet pears and lush sweetness that lingers on the tongue. On the palate juicy peaches, apricots, wonderfully sweet and subdued, but with a slight sherberty acidic twang at the end.

The last of our great meals for the year!

Andrew O'Brien

Wine and Food December 2019 Report

Function No 347 - Wednesday December 11, 2019

Another great pre-Christmas function!

Function 347 was held in the Members Dining Room and was attended by 493 members, waiting list members, and their guests. This was some 90 fewer than in 2019 – maybe a reflection on the excesses of the 2018 function? Passing the bar on entering the Members Dining Room, the range of available wines was apparent.

On a cool summer's night there were 30 reds with some 65% of the available wine being consumed. 95% of the available 8 sparkling's (3 red) were consumed. This year there was a considerable increase in the range of whites (21) and 75% were consumed. Being served at the main bar rather than at the far side of the Dining Room may have assisted in the increased consumption compared to last year!

The wines included: 7 shiraz, 12 cabs, 1 pinot, and 9 other red varietals, 3 sparkling red wines including the popular Summerfield Back Block Sparkling Shiraz, and 20 white wines. One had to be in early, and in the right place to get to sample some of the premium wines on offer such as, for the red lovers, wines such as Wynns Michael and John Riddoch, Taylors St Andrews, and Huber Alte Reben Pinot Noir of 2013. There was little interest in some of the less traditional red varieties including some of the South American and Italian wines.

With the ease of access, the better whites went quickly. They included Penfolds Reserve Bin 16A Chardonnay (2015), Tyrells Vat 47 Chardonnay (2015) and the Shaw & Smith M3 Chardonnay (2015). Only 18 bottles of Riesling were on offer. The Coriole Fiano was the only popular lesser known varietal.

Your committee has been pressing to have better conditions for our more senior members there was an increased number of high tables, and also chairs. Even with 90 fewer attendees, there was plenty of competition to use the high tables.

The highlight of the food offerings was, as always, the three oyster choices – Sydney, Tassie, and Coffin Bay (S.A.). Again, this year the oysters were mainly 'pre-shucked' to avoid the long queues of earlier years – well done again Epicure! On a random sample, the Coffin Bay ones appeared to be the winner – but this will always be disputed!

Other than the oysters, Epicure provided a great selection of options – there were 7 canapes, 2 grazing dishes, and a 'sweet'. West Coast prawn tails, free-range chicken roulade, Queensland prawn spring rolls, Wimmera duck spring rolls, grilled Hervey Bay scallops, lamb pies, sweet and sour plum glazed pork belly, marinated Persian feta tartlet, battered whiting tails and squid, with a Zuzu and ginger chocolate tart to finish. My feedback was all food got many compliments.

Chair Beth Benson gave a very brief address welcoming all present, congratulating all involved throughout the year, with special thanks to Robert Rouch, and to Epicure staff for their outstanding efforts throughout the year. During the year we tasted some great wines, and had a number of

memorable meals. We look forward to 2020 with anticipation to more smaller wineries being represented at our functions. This was the last function for 2019, ending a year of fantastic wine and food for the society's members and guests. We hope this event was followed up with a joyous Festive Season.

Andrew O'Brien