Wine and Food Old Bottle Day

Function No. 303
Wednesday January 27, 2016

Expectation is always high when the Long Room Wine and Food Society welcomes the New Year with the popular members-only "Old Bottle Day". Will my wine be slightly corked, disappointing after 20 years of cellaring or an absolute cracker?

This was the 19th OBD since Ian Kerville suggested the concept 20 years ago, and this has resulted in some outstanding old wines being brought out by the members. The average age of the prize winners in the white wine section this year was 32 years old, and all were imported wines, whereas in the red wine section the average was 20 years and all were Australian grown and produced. Over the years the OBD has produced 16 red wine champions (10 Shiraz) and two whites.

Once again we were fortunate to have Jeremy Oliver to taste and appraise the wines presented by the 79 members in attendance. Jeremy has been generous in performing this task since 1999 and was awarded an honorary membership by the committee last year in recognition of his long and devoted service.

Jeremy has said that this task is more difficult than judging at a Royal Show and noted that he really looks forward to the OBD as an opportunity to freshen up his taste buds after the holidays and reconnect with some great wines of past years. He was flying off to the Barossa immediately after the lunch to start appraising the 2016 vintage.

As usual, function 303 was held in the traditional home of the Long Room and the menu and quality of the lunch was up to the usual high standard. The members were greeted by a choice of the Ros Ritchie Cuvee 2012, which had been one of the feature wines at the May 2015 lunch, or a Seppelts Sherry DP 38 Olorosso.

The "meet and greet" was accompanied by five different canapes including hot and cold selections. The entrée, together with your own or another member's white wine, was Spencer Gulf prawns with asparagus and coconut puree, soy and pink grapefruit gel.

We couldn't have an OBD without a decent piece of red meat to go with the aged red wine and the chef didn't disappoint with a medium/rare High Country eye fillet accompanied by red cabbage puree, bull blood beets, purple congo potato, red witlof and cauliflower.

The cheese dish was described as a fine Victorian cheese, cabernet paste, with candied walnuts, lavosh and crackers. By now we were up to our fifth red tasting, walking up and down the table. As Jeremy worked on the wines, we were declaring that we were all experts.

The dessert was a vanilla and raspberry delight, with light Madagascar vanilla mouse, raspberry sorbet and pistachio. It was an excellent meal.

After Jeremy excelled with his commentary on the various wines and vintages of long ago, he announced the long-awaited "winners". In the white section he rated:

First: 1985 Hugel Gewurtztraminer VendangeTardive (Alsace-France) from Dariel Saleeba who has been first past the post three times running.

Second: 1997 Kabinett Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling (Germany) courtesy of Robert Oliphant who bought this bottle in the UK in 2004 for "about three quid"

Third: 1971 Rheingau Eltviller Sonnenberg Riesling Spatlese (Germany) from John Webster, both retaining remarkable colour.

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REDS:

First was the 1999 Henschke Mount Edelstone Shiraz from Colin Taylor, whose father was part of the society's foundation in 1987. Mount Edelstone is situated in the Eden Valley and the historical name is a translation from the German Eldstein meaning gemstone. Mount Edelstone has been entrenched as one of Australia's greatest Shiraz wines since as far back as the 1950s .

Second was Peter Cleary's 1996 Penfolds Bin 389 (Shiraz 50%/Cabernet 50%), described as one of the classic vintages. Fruit may be sourced from any of eight different regions.

Third was Peter Ruby, a new member in 2015, who brought along a 1994 Jasper Hill Georgia's Paddock Shiraz from the Heathcote region. This wine is only released under this label if the grapes are up to a high standard.

The overall champion wine was Colin Taylor's 1999 Henschke Mount Edelstone Shiraz.

It has been said that the standard of the OBD continues to raise the bar of excellence. Perhaps it's a reflection of many members downsizing their house and moving their cellar, often finding old bottles that they had forgotten they ever had, particularly the ones under the house which are harder to get at!

In summary, it seems there are more imported wines coming forward and perhaps an increase in the number with cork taint. Thank goodness for screw caps.

During the luncheon it was noted that it had been 10 years since the introduction of life members and special mention was made of the six life members who had contributed significantly to the ongoing success of the society. So 303 was not a rifle but voted another outstanding and pleasant experience which led to a lot of discussion and good fellowship.

Thanks to all the members who presented such a wide selection of wines and to Epicure staff who worked hard in opening so many old wines and decanting many when the cork broke. We also acknowledge wine and food master Paul Kinross and cellar master Ian Maguire for organising the meet and greet wines for the opening of our New Year program.

Robert Rouch

Wine and Food February 2016 Report

Function 304
Wednesday February 24, 2016

More than 180 members and guests assembled in the traditional Long Room for the first normal monthly luncheon for 2016. It was great to have our chairman John Campbell back at the rostrum and he did an excellent job as master of ceremonies.

John welcomed the Xanadu Winery team headed up by chief executive Darren Rathbone, who is also the chief winemaker for the Rathbone group that together with his father Doug owns Yering Station in the Yarra Valley, Mount Langi Ghiran in western Victoria and finally Xanadu at Margaret River in WA. Darren completed an MBA at the Melbourne Business School in 2011 and has had broad winemaking experience in France.

Xanadu is only five minutes from the township of Margaret River. The first grapes were planted in 1977, making the winery one of the pioneers of the region. In an idyllic setting in the very south-west corner of Australia, 85 hectares of vines on the original Xanadu Estate flourish on rich, free-draining gravel soil. Chef of the day was Epicure's highly regarded Shane Freer who was adjudged the society's Chef of the Year in 2013, and his culinary expertise is demonstrated by the variety and passion that is evident throughout his cooking.

On arrival we were greeted by a 2014 Xanadu 'DSL' Sauvignon Blanc Semillon (alc.12.5%). The grapes were 63% Sauvignon, 35% Semillon and 2% Muscadelle and 90 per cent of the fruit was sourced from the Wallcliffe sub-region, the majority of which is Estate-grown. The wine featured a brilliant pale straw colour and brought out a lively palate of citrus and tropical fruits. It was certainly a change from the traditional sparklings on arrival but went well with the outstanding canapes which comprised king prawn toast with a sweet and sour sauce, a beef tartare sphere with Kewpie mayonnaise, cornichons, capers and baby basil, a cock-a- leek pie with smoky tomato relish and a saffron and cauliflower croquette with red pepper aioli.

Shane was obviously proud of his canapes and carried some of them around personally. He also commented that the entrée was a work of love achieved by combining crayfish, trout and octopus supported by minted pea panna cotta, sesame and cashew pangratto, feta cheese and lemon foam. This was our choice of dish of the day and was very flavoursome and different to most other entrees.

Two whites accompanied the entrée – the 2014 Xanadu Chardonnay (alc.13%) and the special 2013 Xanadu 'Stevens Road' Chardonnay (alc.13%). Darren Rathbone wanted to give us the opportunity to compare the two vintages and discuss the attributes of the different years. The members concluded this as a no-brainer by voting the 2013 Stevens Road chardonnay as the wine of the day. A modern style chardonnay not heavy in oak but medium bodied, all the fruit was from Block 2 of the Stevens Road vineyard. The single-vineyard wine was limited to 160 dozen and it won gold at the 2014 National Wine Show of Australia.

The main course was Victorian lamb loin en papillote. The best cut of lamb is undoubtedly the loin, noted for tenderness, flavour and not carrying a lot of fat. The dish was accompanied by celeriac mousse, mushroom ragout and zucchini tagliatelle with romesco and adobo sauces. The big surprise, however, was the dish came with a fine bread-like "hat" which was beaut when cut up to go with the meal. The dish was well received by the members who recognised the quality of the lamb which was served medium-rare.

The wines to go with the main course were both Cabernets – the 2013 Xanadu Cabernet Sauvignon (alc.14%) and the museum release 2009 Xanadu Cabernet Sauvignon. The younger wine had won a

trophy at the National Wine Show and was an impressive red, comprising 90% Cabernet, 7% Malbec and 3% Petit Verdot. It was an interesting comparison with the 2009 wine which had won a silver medal in 2012 and was rated 95 points by Halliday.

The cheese dish that followed was an unsalted Montgomery's clothbound mature cheddar with parmesan snow, beetroot relish and rosemary flatbread. The Montgomery cheese is produced in the UK at North Cadbury in Somerset. The history goes back to 1911 when Jamie Montgomery's grandfather bought the farm and continued the cheese-making operations through two world wars. The farm milks 200 Friesian cows and has won cheese awards throughout the world. With the cheese was the 2013 Xanadu DJL Shiraz which appealed too many as a fine match. The wine contained a 2% splash of Viognier which has become popular with modern winemaking practices.

Dessert was preserved cherry pudding with deep-fried cardamom custard and banana cream. This provided an excellent conclusion to function 304 as we don't get many puddings these days. The accompanying wine was a 2012 Xanadu 'Cane Cut' Sauvignon Blanc Semillon (alc.11.5%).

This was another fine function thanks to the efforts of the Epicure team, in particular chef Shane Freer. And we appreciated the contribution of Darren Rathbone and his family in showcasing their Margaret River wines, a region from where it is claimed 20 per cent of Australia's finest wines originate.

Robert Rouch.

Wine and Food March 2016 Report

Function 305
March 30, 2016

The full house sign went up for the March function 305 when 182 members and guests gathered for the traditional combination of drinks in the Percy Beames Bar followed by lunch in the Long Room. After chairman John Campbell welcomed winemaker Ian Hollick of Hollick Wines in Coonawarra, Ian commented on what a pleasure it was being back in the prestigious Long Room as his previous appearance had been in August 1996, nearly 20 years ago.

Coonawarra is famous for its terra rossa soil with layers of limestone and with the climate of the area is well recognised as being outstanding for Chardonnay but in particular it is the home of some of the best Cabernet Sauvignon in Australia. Established in 1983, Hollick has won many trophies including the Jimmy Watson Trophy in 1985. In 2014 the Hollick family sold a majority interest in their winery to Hong Kong Yingda Investment Co. of China, part of the Shenzhen Guokeng Trading Co of China which has extensive hospitality operations including five-star hotels.

Our chef of the day was Renee Guymer who is currently sous chef for Epicure events and has been at the Melbourne Cricket Ground since 2004. After completing her apprenticeship with Spotless/Epicure she extended her experience at various restaurants around Melbourne before returning "home". Renee's skills have been appreciated by the society for some years.

Her passion for food was again evidenced by the outstanding combinations of canapes she presented. They comprised a sweet potato, capsicum, zucchini and oven-dried tomato frittata with olive tapenade and lemon crème fraiche, filo chicken with cheese and bacon followed by coconut prawns on sugar cane with chilli dressing and finally rice paper cold BBQ pork with Asian herbs and nahm jam dressing.

The greeting wine was a break in tradition with Hollick's 2015 'The Baird' Sauvignon Blanc (alc.12%) doing the job nicely, although I suggest members would prefer a sparkling.

We then proceeded to the Long Room where two Chardonnays awaited. Ian Hollick later spoke about the processes of Chardonnay production in Australia, some of which were a world first and had been adopted internationally.

Accompanying the entrée were a 2012 Hollick Bond Road Chardonnay (alc.14.5%, James Halliday 91 points) and the younger 2014 Hollick 'The Baird' Chardonnay (alc.13.5%). Coonawarra has a very long growing season for Chardonnay which allows the fruit to develop slowly with sufficient natural acidity for palate balance.
'The Baird' was similar in style to the 2012 Chardonnay and captured a range of citrus and tropical flavours of ripe fruit.

The entrée of seared Hervey Bay scallops was another Renee special. The tasty scallops were served with a pearl barley risotto, caramelised shallots, char-grilled artichokes, basil-infused mascarpone and a sweet potato crisp. The risotto didn't dominate the dish, which was in itself a masterpiece, and allowed the ingredients of the dish to complement each other as well as both the Chardonnays. The good chef's guide was that the plates were clean when they went back to the kitchen.

Next was the main course of braised veal osso bucco with confit kipfler potatoes, crisp pancetta, autumn vegetables and smoked marrow sauce. The slow-cooked and braised meat is a feature of Melburnian restaurants at this time and the dish was well presented and the quality very evident, particularly the autumn vegetables which were just right. However, perhaps many members are ready to return to the BBQ.

The reds complementing the veal were a 2013 Hollick Cabernet Sauvignon (alc.14.5%) and the flagship 2010 Hollick Ravenswood Cabernet Sauvignon (alc.14.5% and given 96 points by Halliday). First vintaged in 1988, the

Ravenswood is only released when the wine satisfies the very exacting parameters set by the Hollick team and that usually comes from the oldest vines growing in very shallow terra rossa soil. Many thought this wine was the wine of the day.

The cheese was Swiss gruyere vieux with macerated fruit, peanut brittle and wafer biscuits. This cheese is a natural product produced from raw milk without any preservatives. Twelve litres of raw milk is required to produce 1kg of gruyere and more than 400 litres is needed to go into a single wheel. Gruyere vieux is aged over 16 months and under Swiss regulations this cheese must stay within the AOC area of Switzerland throughout the aging process.

Paired with the cheese was the 2010 Hollick Wilgha Shiraz (alc. 14.5%, Halliday 93 points). The best Hollick Shiraz is from the Wilgha vineyard and it generally comes from the 1975 plantings. The resultant wine is deep crimson in colour, showing typical spice and the white pepper aromas and flavours of a cool climate shiraz.

The dessert was another demonstration of Renee's expertise. It was a crème brulee tart with almond ice cream and, boy, this was good. We do like a good tart, particularly when it is accompanied by 2012 Hollick Nectar (alc.11.5%). To many this was the surprise of the day with freshness of flavours that produced a rich and luscious palate culminating in a refreshingly pleasant and lingering finish.

Once again we thank all of the Epicure staff and in this case the kitchen crew led by Renee Guymer, while we greatly appreciated Ian Hollick's excellent summaries of the wines and his comments on the industry in general.

Robert Rouch

Wine and Food 2016 April Dinner report

Function No. 306
Wednesday April 27, 2016

The dinner suits and gala dresses were brought out for the society's 2016 Annual Dinner, which was held in the Members Dining Room after canapes in the Long Room.

The annual awards presentation is always a feature of this evening and we were pleased to have well-known food and wine writer, broadcaster and judge, Robert Hicks, as guest speaker. We were also pleased that he praised the selection of wines from the society's cellar, highlighted by a trio of reds from the 2005 vintage.
Society chairman John Campbell hosted the dinner and conducted the presentations for Winery of the Year, Chef of the Year and the Chairman's Award for (in alternate years) apprentice cook of the year or most promising oenology student, both of which carry an encouragement award of $1500 from society funds.

Winery of the Year was Howard Park Wines from Margaret River for the outstanding wines presented at the March 2015 lunch. Established in 1986 and now under the Burch Family Wines banner, Howard Park was represented by Richard Burch, son of founder and company principal Jeff Burch.

Chef of the Year was Travis Dines, executive chef for the MCG and an Epicure events veteran of 20 years-plus. His entrée at the October 2015 luncheon, titled "From the sea", was magnificent and in our monthly report it was noted that this meal and in particular the presentation was equal to or better than most top restaurants. His name will be added to the honour board in the MCG Culinary Centre.

The winner of the Chairman's Award was Caroline Ding, who was nominated by the University of Adelaide (Viticultural and Oenology) as the outstanding first year student. Caroline came to Australia in 2011 from North China where her uncle managed the highly regarded Quingdao Winery. Caroline is also developing an interest in graphic art and design, which is so important in wine labelling these days.

So with 260 attendees we welcomed the opportunity to catch up with old friends over the 2007 Clover Hill Vintage Brut together with excellent canapes including the Pipe Clay Lagoon oyster with finger lime, wakame and salmon pearls. This was followed by yellowfin tuna, spanner crab and avocado with wasabi and coriander. Finally we enjoyed a sweet potato, okra and cashew curry puff with turmeric and mint yoghurt. The members were very complimentary about all of the canapes.

It was time to move to the Members Dining Room for an entrée of antipasto of Victorian produce that featured prosciutto-wrapped fig, bresaola, zucchini, and mint soufflé, slow-roasted cherry tomato and fennel, Mt Zero marinated olives, char-grilled capsicum and eggplant and Yarra Valley Persian feta. This entrée was full of various flavours and obviously selected to go with the white wines.

The whites were a 2013 Moorilla Muse Sauvignon from Tasmania and a 2012 Brokenwood Indigo Vineyard Chardonnay from the Beechworth region. In his commentary Robert Hicks was very impressed with both these wines.

The main course was a trio of High Country pork utilising the neck, loin and belly. The dish was accompanied by cauliflower, king mushroom, Brussels sprouts and toasted almond pangrattato. The presentation of the dish and quality of the vegetables was to be admired, however some thought that the trio of pork missed the mark slightly.

The reds certainly endorsed the society's push to have its own cellar when the big redevelopment started in 2002. Both the Majella Mallea Cabernet Shiraz and the Leasingham Schobers Cabernet Sauvignon were 11 years old and ageing had added to the depth and character of the wines. Which of the two was best? It was up to the individual and it was a good debate.

However, many thought the red wine of the evening was the 2005 Shingleback D Block Reserve Shiraz (alc.14.5%) which accompanied the cheese. The Shiraz's stablemate, the 2005 Shingleback Cabernet, won the Jimmy Watson Trophy in 2006.

The cheese was Occelli Testun Al Barolo "grape must" with pears calvados and toasted walnut bread. This is an ancient Italian mountain cheese made from a mix of sheep and goat's milk. The hard cheese is packed in grape must resulting from the production of Barolo wine, infusing the cheese with an amazing vinous flavour.
Next came the dessert and the Chateau Reynella 16yo Rare Old Tawny. The dish of caramelised quince tarte tatin with passionfruit sorbet, baby lemon balm and wild strawberry and ginger coulis was terrific. Loved it!

Finally, we're indebted to chef Patrice Merdy and the Epicure staff, our committeemen Paul Kinross and Ian Maguire and the MCC for ensuring the society's special presentation and annual dinner was a successful and pleasant evening.

Robert Rouch

Wine and Food May 2016 Report

Function No. 307
Wednesday May 25, 2016

Function #307 will be remembered as one of the outstanding society luncheons and we will be very happy to welcome highly credentialed chef Sharn Greiner back to the Long Room. Our voting panel scores each function on a variety of points and this meal was rated as outstanding in all them!

Sharn, a very recent addition to the Epicure stable, has had extensive experience among the high-end dining venues across Melbourne having worked with Ian Curley and Teage Ezard, and this experience and expertise was evident throughout the meal. It could be described as the "clean plate day" as the members left nothing, devouring every course with appreciation and fascination.

The wines were from Kellybrook in the Yarra Valley and were presented by winemaker Phil Kelly who grew up on his father's vineyard at Wonga Park. Having travelled extensively in wine-producing countries, Phil then worked with his father and completed his winemaking course at Charles Sturt University.

The origins of Kellybrook go back to 1935 when the property was bought by the Kellys as an orchard and they still produce apple cider, sparkling cider and apple brandy as well as their fine range of table wines.
About 160 members and guests gathered in the Percy Beames Bar for the "meet and greet" sparkling wine, a 2010 Kellybrook Pinot Noir Chardonnay Brut which was made from 50% Pinot Noir and 50% Chardonnay grapes. It was a good choice as a starter to go with the canapes which comprised fish and chips with malt vinegar crème fraiche and salmon roe, coconut prawns on sugarcane with red nam jim and a pear, pecorino and pea tartlet.

The entrée was a most impressive plate presentation featuring tuna with white tea jelly, miso mustard, pickled kohlrabi and puff rice. The various flavours of this dish were delicious and what an entrée should be – enticing, not too filling and leaving you wondering what's to follow!
Two whites accompanied, a 2015 Kellybrook Riesling (alc.11%) which went well with the tuna but perhaps lacked the complexity of some other Rieslings, and a 2012 Kellybrook Estate Chardonnay (alc.13%) that was rated 95 points by James Halliday. It was a true varietal Chardonnay with Yarra Valley flavours and some nice age on it.

On to the main course, which featured Clover Valley beef with nettle, onion cream, potato terrine and a native pepper jus. This would rank with the best beef that we have ever had. Tender, flavoursome and cooked to perfection. The pink colour was even throughout and so tender it would melt in your mouth, and the native pepper jus just couldn't be left on the plate.
Complementing the beef were two reds, firstly a 2013 Kellybrook Cabernet Sauvignon (alc.12.5%, Halliday 94 pts). This was considered by many as the best red of the day. It was paired with a 2013 Kellybrook Estate Shiraz (alc.13%) which was a pleasant drop but didn't have the power of the Cabernet.

The cheese dish – a Yarra Valley Dairy black savourine – was a semi-matured ashed goat's cheese. Sharn selected quince paste, muscatels and lavosh with a nutty flavour to go with the cheese, which was very good.
The cheese wine was a 2013 Kellybrook Estate Pinot Noir (alc.13.0%), a lighter style wine with true varietal characters of Yarra Valley Pinots, showing fresh aromas of cherry and raspberry.

Dessert was yet again a divine dish and full marks to the chef for the chocolate and chestnut bavarois sphere with dehydrated chocolate soil and lemon curd ice cream. "Brilliant" is the only way to describe the dish.

The luncheon finished with coffee and a Kellybrook Tawny Port NV, produced from grapes grown on the estate comprising Shiraz and Cabernet and aged in oak for approximately six years.
The bar of excellence keeps going up, and this meal has to rate very highly. Well done Sharn Greiner and thanks to Phil Kelly for adding to our experience of Yarra Valley wineries.
Robert Rouch

Wine and Food June 2016 Report

Function No 308
Wednesday June 29, 2016

There must have been a lot talk about the successful May luncheon because a full house plus a waiting list nominated for the June lunch in the traditional Long Room and the Percy Beames Bar combination. Or was it to celebrate the end of the financial year?

Whatever the spur, the wines came from Paringa Estate which is situated in the heart of the Mornington Peninsula at Red Hill. The vineyard is now 55 acres and planted with Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Shiraz and Pinot Gris. A feature of the estate is the award-winning a la carte restaurant that was built in 1988.

The winemaker and owner, Lindsay McCall, gave a most interesting address on his journey from teaching to, first, part-time growing grapes and then to full-time grower and winemaker as well as finding time to market Paringa Estate wines. Today Paringa is a strong Australian brand with exports to Singapore, UK, Denmark, Poland, Ukraine, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. Paringa has been recognised by a James Halliday "Winery of the Year" award and more than 60 show trophies.

Guest chef Sam Calderone is well known for his craft at society functions and had the distinction of preparing last year's annual dinner. Sam did his apprenticeship with Spotless then extended his experience outside the group at the Hotel Regent, Crown, Hayman Island and the Melbourne Convention Centre before returning to the fold in 2011. This June lunch was right up there with the best that we've enjoyed, so congratulations, Sam.

It was pleasant in the Percy Beames Bar on a cold Melbourne winter's day to enjoy an excellent 2014 Paringa Estate Pinot Gris (alc.13.5%). The canapes accompanying were an assortment of Asian dumplings with dripping sauce (sorry about the tie), then mini pizettes and braised beef cheek wrapped in brioche.

Chairman John Campbell welcomed us in the Long Room and laid out the order of the day, together with his "joke of the day". The entrée came quickly but it didn't last long as it was delicious. Titled Risotto ai fruitti di mare, which in plain English means seafood risotto, many members doubted that a seafood risotto could be this good. But it was outstanding and probably the dish of the day.

The first of the wines to go with the entrée was a 2015 Estate Chardonnay (alc.13.5%). Typically a cool climate chardonnay with stone fruit flavours, good texture and a persistent long finish, it would probably develop with more time in the cellar.

It was paired with a 2012 The Paringa WB Chardonnay (alc.13%). This was of the newer style of chardonnay with the same fruit characters of the other wine but with finer acidity. The fruit for this wine comes from 2/3 of an acre in the house block and there are only 100 cases produced annually.

The main course featured slow-cooked Victorian lamb with roasted winter vegetables, spinach and lamb jus. Slow-cooked beef or lamb is on the menu at nearly all leading restaurants at the moment, perhaps a reflection of Melbourne's very cold winter or because of the price of meat. Nevertheless the lamb was very tender and flavoursome and the roasted vegetables are what we are all about at this time of the year.

Both the Pinots went well with the lamb and so they should have because they were products of the 2012 vintage which Paringa regarded as among their greats. This was due to an Indian summer which resulted in yields being down 20-30 per cent with great concentration of flavours and excellent overall quality. The Estate Pinot Noir (alc.13.5%) was shaded by The Paringa Pinot Noir which spent 14 days on skins in open fermenters with gentle plunging. All this resulted in a palate showing wonderful fruit with fine tannins and excellent length.

The cheese was a mouthful – a perenzin ubriaco di capra which is an Italian cheese made from goat's milk of a semi-hard consistency. Ubriaco translates to "drunken" a common group name for cheese cured in wine and must. It is a cheese-making process inspired by the centuries-old custom of hiding cheeses in fermenting grape must to conceal them from raiders in time of war, or from the master's

accounting ledger. The cheese came with fig and walnut log, quince paste and fresh grapes, as well as the 2012 Estate Shiraz (alc.14%). This wine, which will develop with further cellaring, featured blackberry and licorice flavours with black pepper spice.

The dessert was macchiato chocolate cake with tonka bean ice cream, salted caramel, hazelnuts and cocao nibs. This was a typical finish to a winter lunch, filling and with a special ice cream. It was unusual to find a red wine teamed with dessert, in this case a 2012 The Paringa Shiraz (alc.14%), but there were few complaints. The name "The Paringa" denotes the single vineyard origin of the Shiraz grapes grown on the original block planted in 1985 on red volcanic soil.

We thank Lindsay McCall from Paringa Estate for his contribution and Sam Calderone for a wonderful winter lunch.

Robert Rouch

Wine and Food July 2016 Report

FUNCTION No 309
WEDNESDAY 27 JULY 2016

July is a special month for the society as it is highlighted by a double-header – the monthly luncheon in the Long Room on the Wednesday followed by the same menu and wines for the waiting list dinner on the Thursday evening in the Members Dining Room. A grand total of 425 attended the two functions.

And what functions they were with the skill and artistry of chef Tony Cimmino complemented by some outstanding wines from Taylors, based in SA's Clare Valley.

At the luncheon Taylors were represented by Cherry Stowman whose experience ranges from manager of a London wine bar in the 1990s to senior ambassador for Taylors wines, along the way completing a bachelor of business degree and a Wine Executive Program at Monash University. Cherry's presentation was brilliant and her passion for the industry very evident.

At the dinner the next night we were fortunate to have Mitchell Taylor as presenter. A third generation managing director of the family company, Mitchell worked as a stockbroker in London before returning to Australia and obtaining an oenology degree before gradually taking over all aspects of the business. Mitchell gave an interesting address on the history of his firm, commenting as an aside that he would have loved to have played on the MCG but accepted that his role in the dining room that evening was as close as he would get!

How fortunate was the society to have someone of the experience of Tony Cimmino to mastermind our functions in July. Following eight years of restaurant experience, Tony joined Epicure in 1999 and in 2005 became head chef of culinary development, based at the MCG. He later assumed important head office roles with Epicure before returning to the MCG in December last year as chef de cuisine – members' restaurants. No wonder we had such an excellent meal.

We were greeted by a non-vintage Taylors Estate Pinot Chardonnay Brut Cuvee, a pleasant sparkling with fresh clean citrus flavours that was paired with the trio of canapes – a Woodside goat's curd beignet with sweetcorn and chive, rare seared Victorian lamb with hibiscus, avocado and horseradish on black rice crackers and finally the highlight, a pan-fried Hervey Bay scallop with crisp coconut and goji crumbs, mango, chilli and lime.

The entrée was outstanding in presentation and flavours. It was a seafood combination of warm confit of cured Huon salmon with butter poached prawns, beetroot textures, watercress, yoghurt and hazelnuts. This entrée had it all and went particularly well with the white wines.

The first white was the 2015 St Andrews Riesling (alc.12.5%) which had already won five gold medals, double gold and a great gold. This was a true Clare Valley Riesling, dry with lime sherbet aromas and flavours with natural acidity leading to a great finish.

The other white was the 2014 St Andrews Chardonnay 2014 (alc.13.5%), the winner of 11 gold medals that showed a silky texture with exceptional length and flavours. There was much discussion as to which wine went best with the seafood entrée. The verdict? The chardonnay by a nose!

We were starting to appreciate why Taylors have had such success on the show circuit, with 5100 medals including 64 trophies, 787 gold and 1415 silver medals.

The main course of roasted Clover Valley beef cooked medium-rare came in small portions with mushroom puree, king brown mushroom, pommes anna, truffled pea and chestnut. We have had Clover Valley beef recently and it is reliably tender while retaining all the flavour.

Clover Valley Meats is part of the Wrights the Butchers family that has taken their wholesale business to a new level both in Australia and internationally. The company was the first to supply Rangers Valley beef to the Australian market and also established their Flinders Island milk-fed lamb business. They have opened the doors of USA and Asia for Australia's Sher Wagyu and are now the largest exporters of Wagyu into North America. Clover Valley also supplies cruise ships throughout the world.

Appropriately, the Taylors reds accompanying the beef were also outstanding. First was the 2013 St Andrews Cabernet Sauvignon (alc.14.5%), the winner of seven gold medals and we'd suggest there are more in store. The Cabernet came with the 2013 St Andrews Shiraz (alc.14.5%) that has racked up 23 gold medals and a trophy. It was enormously flavoursome and Taylors believe it will cellar to 2030. Both of these reds were top-shelf wines.

The cheese was a Mountain Man washed rind from Timboon. It came with apple and mustard seed confit, muscatels and a brazil nut crumble. Red wine, cheese and muscatels are a favourite of many and in this case the red was a 2013 Taylor's Project 2013, rated 94 points by James Halliday. The winemaker's philosophy is to select the best examples of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc to create a wine that is greater than the sum of the parts. The 'Project' has won six gold medals, 12 silver and international acclaim.

The dessert was a poached pear and chocolate tart with almond and cocoa soil, Gewürztraminer jelly and pear sorbet. The accompanying wine was a 2012 Taylors Estate Gewurztraminer which some thought may not have paired so well with the dominant chocolate dish. However, overall we were fortunate to enjoy several top drops and the Taylor's wines were magnificent.

Chef Tony Cimmino produced a menu of the highest order and we thank him for his and his kitchen staff's hard work and commitment in putting together two such quality functions. We're also indebted to the MCC for making available the Percy Beames Bar, the Long Room and the Members Dining Room for the twin functions.

Robert Rouch

Wine and Food August 2016 Report

Function No. 310
Wednesday August 31, 2016

On the last day of August, Melbourne is all about the forthcoming finals series and discussion at the 'G is all about match-ups – who'll be matched with Buddy or is there a possible match up with Dangerfield.

However, at Function 310 the match-up of food and wine was the topic of the day and this was one of the best, with the dishes and the wine being in absolute harmony and complementary to each other. So well done to those who planned the day.

The chef of the day was Stephen Moloney who last presented his talents to the society at Function No. 216 in February 2008. Stephen has been at the MCG for 18 years and is currently chef de cuisine in the MCG Culinary Centre, where he and his team are responsible for all production including match day dining, functions and special events.

It is not surprising that Stephen likes to use traditional cooking techniques in a contemporary way and matching wine with food, given the menu we enjoyed so much.

The wines of the day were from the Bellarine Peninsula property of Scotchmans Hill that was founded by David Browne in 1982. The winery's labels include Cornelius, Swan Bay and Scotchmans Hill and the function was very much a Bellarine Peninsula affair with most of the menu ingredients being sourced from the same region as the wine.

Scotchman's Hill was represented by the chief winemaker Robin Brockett, a New Zealander who graduated from Charles Stuart University after an early stint at a winery near Christchurch. Robin joined Scotchman's Hill in 1988, and since then has adapted his winemaking to get the best out of the region, but has also been willing to change with the times as consumer demands move to fresher and lighter wines.

The function attracted 161 members and guests to the Percy Beames Bar to be welcomed by the 2015 Swan Bay Chardonnay Pinot Noir Vintage Brut which heralded the aforementioned match-ups with the excellent canapes – Lark-cured salmon followed by foie gras and chicken liver pate on brioche and finally a macaroni and cheese croquette. They were delicious.

As usual, the Long Room looked most attractive and it got better with the arrival of the Bellarine Peninsula seafood consommé comprising King George Whiting, Portarlington mussels, Queenscliff calamari, scallop ravioli and sea herbs. The freshness of the combination was very evident with all the flavours featuring, and the consommé was pleasantly accompanied by a pair of white wines.
We enjoyed both the 2011 Scotchmans Hill Pinot Gris (alc.13.5%) with pear and grapefruit flavours on the palate and the 2014 Scotchmans Hill Chardonnay 2014 (alc.13.5%), which was an intense yet refined with nectarine, melon and citrus characters.

Which of these wines went best with the seafood combination? We will leave that to the stewards in a photo finish. Not surprisingly, the entrée and the white wines were voted best and fairest for the day.
The main course was free range Hazeldene chicken with eryngii mushroom, choy sum and charred corn. Given how us amateurs struggle to have a chicken breast cooked through while retaining its flavour and moisture, members questioned the chef about how he managed to achieve this.

The chicken dish was accompanied by a 2013 Scotchmans Hill Pinot Noir (alc.13.5%, 94 points from James Halliday) and a 2013 Scotchmans Hill Shiraz (alc.14.5%, 96 points). Both were food-friendly wines with a bit of class and were marked accordingly by our judging panel.

Next was the Snow White goat cheddar with quince jam and candied walnuts, another interesting cheese that comes from the Carr Valley in Wisconsin and is the winner of many awards in America. It is made to a traditional cheddar recipe and matured under cloth-bound rind for 15 months.
The 2011 Cornelius Syrah (alc.13.5%, 93 points) was the final red wine. Light to medium-bodied, it boasted excellent structure and length.

Finally, we were spoilt by one of best desserts in memory. It may be a touch rich, but what a dish was the chocolate yuzu comprising chocolate mousse, yuzu curd, salted caramel and sunflower sable.
We do need a good sticky to go with this dish and the winemaker selected the Sotchmans Hill Late Harvest Riesling (alc.7.5%) to do the job.

Robin Brockett's philosophy rang true after this excellent lunch: "Good wine can be made in the winery, but great wine is made in the vineyard. We focus on managing the vineyard to produce the healthiest, clean and intense fruit characters possible."

And we wonder why it's been eight years since we have had the pleasure of appreciating Stephen Moloney's outstanding skills.

This was not just a lunch it was an experience, thank you to all the Epicure people for making it possible.

Robert Rouch

Wine and Food Sept 2016 Report

Function 311
Wednesday September 28, 2016

It was grand final week in Melbourne and the discussion was all about whether the underdogs could beat the favourites Sydney. Thus the traditional society lunch on the Wednesday beforehand had a full house in the Members Dining Room with canapes served in the Long Room. The wines of the day were selected from our cellar by wine and food master Paul Kinross together with cellar master Ian Maguire, and the members were most impressed by the wines with the oldest red being 12 years of age.

The MC for the function was society chairman John Campbell who in his introduction made special mention of Epicure winning two industry awards for their catering services at the MCG culminating in the award as "Caterer of the Year" at the 2016 Savour Australia Restaurant and Catering Hostplus Awards for Excellence. More than 550 hospitality businesses competed and were judged across 32 categories in the nationally recognised awards. Epicure was recognised for their performance at a black-tie dinner in the Members Dining Room.

Chef of the day was Paul Johnson, whose background of working in Vietnam was evident in some of the flavours of the meal, particularly in the canapes which were outstanding. Paul had previously cooked for us in July 2015 and September 2014. Those lovely canapes comprised jerk chicken, Tequila prawns and an asparagus and goat's cheese tartlet, and despite the large numbers attending there was a good supply with the waiting staff doing an excellent job of circulating.

The greeting wine was a real surprise as it was from the Barossa Valley, a 2012 Chateau Tanunda Blanc de Blanc Brut (alc.12.5%) and it matched the food with a fresh crisp flavour and a clean finish. This wine won a silver medal at the Champagne and Sparkling Wine World Championships in 2014.

It has been commented that the entrée perhaps was the dish of the day – yellow duck with green tea noodles. Paul later told us that the duck, which was tender and full of flavour, had been cooked in a lemongrass and coconut base.

The two white wines chosen to match the entrée were a 2008 Alkoomi Sauvignon Blanc (alc.12.5%) from Frankland River and a 2012 Seppelt Jaluka Chardonnay (alc.12.5%) from Henty in south-western Victoria. With eight years on the clock the Alkoomi sav blanc was a delightful surprise but most would have preferred the Chardonnay.

The main course featured the arrival of spring and what else but spring rack of lamb with pea puree and potato. The dish was certainly well presented on the plate and the lamb was succulent and flavoursome. The reds accompanying the main course were magnificent. First was the 2008 Bress Heathcote Shiraz. After making wine in all parts of the world, owner/winemaker Adam Marks established a vineyard at Harcourt in the Heathcote region and he has produced some outstanding vintages. This was no exception and it was awarded 95 points by James Halliday.

The second red wine with the main course was the 2009 Turkey Flat Shiraz, also an excellent drop. The Turkey Flat vineyard boasts some of the oldest Shiraz vines in the world, planted in 1847, and these hard-working, gnarled old vines are still producing fantastic grapes. They are dry grown with their roots extending metres into the soil in search of moisture.

Much of the credit for the best Shiraz made in the Barossa is due to old vines such as these. The fact that these still exist is largely due to the far-sighted quarantine scheme in which South Australia was spared the phylloxera outbreak which devastated the vineyards of Europe, America and subsequently parts of Australia in the 1880s.

The cheese dish that followed had many admirers and some thought it was the best they had experienced at our lunches. It was Brillat-Savarin served with dry apricots. As Paul explained, this cheese orginated in Normanby in the 18th century. More recently it was re-created in the 1950s by Parisian affiner Pierre Androuet. Deliciously creamy with a chalky centre when young, the texture gradually breaks down. The other comment was that the cheese was a perfect match with the

Coonawarra's 2004 Brands Laira 'The Patron' Cabernet Sauvignon (alc.15%, Halliday 94 points, two gold medals).

The dessert to finish was described as "three milk cake with blueberries and white chocolate" with ginger added to the blueberries. This was a good choice to go with the 2010 Angove Vintage Fortified Shiraz (alc.18%), a McLaren Vale wine that was awarded 90pts by both Halliday and Jeremy Oliver.

The society has been treated to outstanding dining experiences recently and it is no wonder that the hospitality industry have voted Epicure "Caterer of the Year". We congratulate all concerned and thank chef Paul Johnson and his team for their efforts in September and the Melbourne Cricket Club for use of the Members Dining Room on such an important week in Melbourne and Australia's sporting calendar.

Robert Rouch

Wine and Food Oct 2016 Report

Function No. 312
Wednesday October 26, 2016

With last month's function a prelude to the AFL Grand Final and our October luncheon heralding the Spring Carnival, the society certainly has the pick of the calendar prior to the big events. So it was doubly fitting that the canapes featured exquisite Australian oysters from Pipe Clay Lagoon, South Australian Angasi and Sydney Rock oysters, with accompaniments of beach herb essence and finger lime.

They were washed down with an NV Shottesbrooke 1337 Heritage Blanc de Blanc (alc.12%, 100% Chardonnay) from the Adelaide Hills, ideal as an aperitif or with fresh oysters. The other canapes were seared Wimmera duck breast with toasted brioche and beetroot flavours, followed by bourbon-glazed pork belly with sticky chilli jam. All the canapes were excellent and the supply plentiful, including the oysters served by very busy Epicure staff at two stations. The old-timers say that it is only the second time that society lunches have had unlimited oysters outside of the Christmas party.

With 188 attendees, chairman John Campbell in his opening address welcomed Beth Benson to the lunch and announced that she had accepted an appointment to join the society's committee.

The wines were from McLaren Vale's Shottesbrooke Vineyard which was represented by their general manager and chief winemaker Hamish Maguire. Hamish was raised in the McLaren Vale district and had his first taste of the industry as a trainee cellar hand at Ryecroft Wines. Science and business degrees followed before he joined his family at Shottesbrooke. He later worked several vintages in France and Spain. After lunch Hamish was off to the airport to fly to China, his thirteenth visit to that country.

Chef of the day was Blair Humphrey supported by five apprentices, each of whom made a significant contribution to the construction of the menu. It was the eleventh time Blair, a 10-year veteran with Epicure, has cooked for us.

There were two Chardonnays accompanying the entrée, one from the Adelaide Hills (which we preferred) and the other from McLaren Vale. Both wines paired very nicely with the entrée of chicken Waldorf redux with pink lady and granny smith apples, candied walnut, yoghurt crème fraiche and drunken raisins. The 2014 Estate Series Chardonnay (alc.13%) from McLaren Vale was soft and approachable with peach and nectarine characters while the 2015 Single Vineyard Series Chardonnay (alc.13%) from the Adelaide Hills was a lovely, true varietal style.

The presentation of the main course was immediately impressive. It comprised excellent Murray Valley spring lamb loin with maple, cavolo nero, olive pangrattato and French red sorrel. The loin of lamb is the premium cut and it was tender and possibly marinated. The dish was accompanied by two very good reds.

First was the 2013 Single Vineyard Series 'Blewitt Springs' Shiraz (alc.14.5%, awarded 97 points by James Halliday). Grown dry on the north facing Blewitt Springs at McLaren Vale this was a true McLaren Vale Shiraz. It was partnered by a 2012 Single Vineyard Series 'McLaren Flat' Cabernet Sauvignon (alc.14.5%, Halliday 93 pts), a wine that appears on the list of first class restaurants such as Rockpool in Sydney.

The cheese dish contained two offerings, a Cropwell Bishop Shropshire blue and a Swiss First Konig semi-hard with truffle honey, fresh rye and roasted grape. The combination of the two cheeses was well commented upon and received with pleasure. Both cheeses were excellent and true to their description.

The Shiraz selected for the cheese was the 2012 Reserve Series 'Eliza' Shiraz (alc.14.5%, 95 points). The Eliza is only released in years of exceptional quality and this was one out of the box.

The apprentices had a big hand in the dessert, a raspberry and coconut bavarois with coconut cremeux and a raspberry and basil sorbet. Oh, it was delicious! The finishing wine was the 1337 Heritage Series Botrytis Sauvignon Blanc 2011 (alc.12%).

We thank winemaker Hamish Maguire who must be commended for his impressive and informative presentations on behalf of Shottesbrooke, while Blair Humphrey and his apprentices were brilliant in preparing and executing the menu and matching the food to the wines.

Robert Rouch

Wine and Food Nov 2016 Report

Function No 313
Wednesday November 30, 2016

The AGM of the MCC Long Room Wine and Food Society preceded the lunch and all the office bearers were re-elected.

Function 313 was held in the Long Room with 192 members and guests in attendance. Chairman John Campbell opened the event by announcing that the country selected for our annual international day was Germany and then surprised everyone by speaking in German. We don't know what he said but it was very impressive.

The society was honoured to have the German Consul, Michael Pearce, address the gathering. Later, MCC CEO Stephen Gough spoke on the direction of the club, particularly in regard to the sporting sections and the various interest groups. He kindly noted the outstanding success of our society.

Chef of the day was German-born dessert master Deniz Karaca, who put in a lot of work to create this comprehensive meal of German-style dishes. The wines were selected by Patrick Walsh who established his CellarHand distribution business 17 years ago. His portfolio features some of the most sought-after estates in Europe.

The lunch got off to a most unusual start with the members being offered a German beer or a sparkling Riesling. Napolene Helles, produced at Coldstream, was a classic malt lager while the Dr Loosen Brut was made from Riesling grapes, unusual for a sparkling wine but refreshing and fruity.

The three canapes were titled in German on the menu but for this report we'll stick with the English translation which appeared below. We enjoyed mini grilled sausages with 'semmel' roll, sauerkraut and horseradish, seasoned beef tartare on a sourdough crust with pickled shallots and house-smoked Tasmania salmon on pumpernickel with dill mayonnaise.

The entrée, Maultaschen, was Swabian-style yabby ravioli with veal bouillon, tarragon foam and chives. It was an excellent dish and the flavours went well with the two Rieslings. However, we had to use our dessert spoons to enjoy the resultant soup as it really added to the enjoyment of the entrée. The accompanying whites were interesting.

Firsts was a 2014 Georg Breuer Terra Montosa Riesling (alc.11.5%). This winery was founded in 1880 by Peter Breuer, a partner of the German shipping firm Scholl and Hillebrand. The vineyard has remained in the Breuer family ever since and it is now 60 acres in the steepest, most drained vineyard of the Rheingau. The name Terra Montosa comes from the Latin for steep slopes and was found in a certificate dated 1074 which records the original wine growing history of the vineyards in the area.

The 2014 Donnhoff Oberhauser Leistenberg Riesling Kabinett (alc.9.0%) is from a world-renowned and highly decorated producer that the prestigious Eichelmann wine guide rated as having the "best white wine collection" in 2012.

The main course, titled Schwein Zweierlei, was a pork knuckle crepinette with 16-hour crispy confit pork belly, potato and celeriac puree and rotkohl. This dish illustrated clearly how much work Deniz had put into this lunch. Sides were Koo Wee Rup asparagus and a warm cauliflower salad and all this added up to an impressive main course.

Two Pinot Noirs, both from the Huber stable and from the same year accompanied. Huber is located in the wine-growing region of Baden in the foothills of the Black Forest in Germany's southwest. Pinot Noir has been cultivated in the village for well over 700 years, having been bought there from Burgundy by the Cistercian monks. The Pinot Noirs were a 2013 Huber Malterdinger (alc.13%) from 25-year-old vines and a 2013 Huber Alte Reben (alc.13%) from 40-year-old vines. Both were pleasant drinking.

We were again treated to a double act with the cheese dish which featured both a Rogue Creamery Caveman Blue and a Haxaire Munster washed rind with quittengelee and house-made lavosh. The wine accompanying was – surprise – a 2009 Gunderloch Nackenheimer Rothenberg Riesling Spatlese

(alc.9%). About 85 per cent of the 24-hectare vineyard, founded in 1890, is devoted to Riesling. The comment was made that the wine might have matched up better with the dessert.

The Schwarz Walder Kirsch, another Deniz Karaca dessert masterpiece, featured kirsch crème, tonka bean chocolate mousse, macerated Morello cherries and cherry sorbet. There were so many flavours in this dish but chocolate was dominant. The sweet was matched with a 2003 Huber Alte Reben Pinot Noir (alc.13.5%) which might have been overshadowed by the earlier Pinots from the same stable.

So that was the last seated function for 2016 with the Christmas party set to round off what has been a most successful year. Merry Christmas to all.

Robert Rouch