

There always seems to be something different at society functions and our August meeting was different with the canapes and the pre-luncheon drinks served in the front bar of the Members Dining Room before we moved into the traditional Long Room.

Chef of the day was Sharn Greiner whose past experience is a culinary travel guide to fine dining restaurants in Melbourne, namely Rospars, known for classic French dishes, The Point at Albert Park, contemporary Japanese at Verge, Gingerboy for Teague Ezard and then on to Ezard@Levantine Hill in the Yarra Valley before heading to Epicure at the MCG. No wonder the canapes were absolutely brilliant and plentiful. They comprised squid ink, horseradish and caviar, gingerbread and foie gras and cauliflower, tahini fataya and sesame seed.

Once again we were greeted with a nice Riesling rather than a sparkling, this time from Plantagenet in the Mount Barker region of Western Australia. Established in 1973, the winery is highly regarded for its cool climate Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. The vineyard benefits from its coastal proximity, abundant rainfall and cool breezes from the Southern Ocean. Winemaker Luke Eckersley presented us with an interesting talk on the Great Southern Region and also his company's five vineyards in different locations covering 126 hectares of vines.

After filling ourselves with the delicious canapes we proceeded to the Long Room to be greeted by an interesting entrée of cured salmon with smoked yoghurt, olive oil jam and salmon roe. This dish was outstanding for flavours and presentation, which was reflected by our judging panel.

Matching the entrée were two Chardonnays – a 2016 Plantagenet Three Lions Chardonnay (alc.13%) made in the modern style and a Plantagenet 'York' Chardonnay (alc.13%). After discussing preferences it was like a soccer game – a nil-all draw. They were similar but the 'York' showed a golden straw colour which indicated more oak.

Our chef really shone with his main course receiving a lot of accolades. Sharn's lavender honey-roasted duck accompanied by parsnip, turnip and cherries carried real French characters and there was also a centre plate of seasonal salad with herbs to enjoy.

The main course reds pitched relative youth against an aged example of Cabernet. The 2014 Plantagenet 'Aquitaine' Cabernet Sauvignon showed fine tannins and good length – one to put down – while the 2007 Plantagenet Cabernet (alc.14.5%, James Halliday 94 points) showed the benefits of ageing for a decade and was a beauty. The older cabernet won by a nose.

Our members appreciate the varieties of different cheeses at our functions and this was another outstanding cheese – a Colston Bassett blue stilton together with quince, figs and lavosh. This "king of English cheese" is the only one of that country's cheeses to enjoy trademark protection.

In fact there are only five dairies located in three counties licensed to produce milk for the blue stilton and, with only four cheesemakers in the past 100 years, Colston Bassett has maintained a tradition and quality of cheesemaking that is unparalleled in the world of stilton. A 2008 Plantagenet Shiraz (alc.14.2%, Halliday 94 points) complemented the cheese and was well matched.

The dessert was another MCG culinary delight titled simply chocolate and raspberry. It was luscious and sweet and the chocoholics were on a high, particularly when washed down with the Plantagenet Liqueur Musket to add to the flavour and sweetness.

Thus the meal and the wines were what the society continues to be about in raising the bar of excellence. Sharn Greiner is to be complimented on the quality and presentation of his dishes while Luke Eckersley gave us a thorough understanding of Plantagenet's Great Southern Region and the wines he presented.

Perhaps I could conclude with the Plantagenet motto: "Our wines reflect a sense of place, our story is of vision, our culture is one of sustainability". Our thanks are extended to all who made this very successful function possible.

Robert Rouch







