

# *Food & Wine*



October 2015

International Wine & Food Society Europe & Africa Committee

Free to European & African Zone Members - one per address - Issue 124

**SAVOIE DECOUVERTE**

**A GOURMET FIVE DAYS IN SAN SEBASTIAN**



Goldlocki

**Champagne à Table: The Gastronomic Position of  
Champagne throughout History**



# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

## Dear Members

I hope you enjoyed all your activities and trips during the last few months, and that your branch has a good forward programme, to keep you involved and busy.

We are now in the cycle where you will receive alternately, every two months, a Food & Wine Online communication by email, and then a printed Food & Wine Magazine. I do hope you enjoyed the Online version we sent out at the end of August. Thanks to those who contributed and to Andrea Warren for putting it together. We stressed how important it is that we have your, up to date, email address, so you receive both the International 'Grapevine' and 'Food & Wine Online', and your home address to receive the magazine. You can check and update your email or home address by logging onto the [www.iwfs.org](http://www.iwfs.org) website, clicking 'My Account' at the top right hand corner, and then Member Details click (edit) or Primary Address Home click (edit). Don't forget to click 'Save Changes' when you have made some! Alternatively contact your branch administrator to update your details.

Some of you missed the email communication because it went from an unfamiliar address and ended up in your spam/junk mail. Please check your spam filter settings, or for more certainty add this address 'International Secretary' email [IntSec@iwfs.org](mailto:IntSec@iwfs.org) to your contacts or address list as a trusted sender/address. Andrea Warren will use this address to send out future online publications. If you did not catch the email then you can view it under the 'Publications' tab on our EAZ website, just as you can, back issues of Food & Wine.

Usually during this period you would receive by post the Society Annual Report, Call to AGM, Branch Directory and possibly a new monograph. Since incorporation there are only now ten members of IWFS Ltd (Council & The President). and only they will get a call to the IWFS AGM. The next IWFSEA Ltd. AGM is being planned for Sept 2016 following the EAZ Edinburgh Festival. You will have a chance to attend or vote on motions by proxy. In the next month you will receive, by post, the updated Branch Directory, for those who like to contact and visit other branches on their travels. The latest monograph entitled 'The Taming of the Screwcap' by Dr Jamie Goode will also be posted to all memberships. I am sure this will be a good read!

Our recent Annual Dinner at the Wax Chandlers Hall had a lower attendance than usual, but those who attended were treated to excellent catering by the Cook and Butler Company, led by Mark Grove and Chef Jean Deillon. The Master, Andrew Mair, gave an interesting insight into the history of the Hall and activities of the Worshipful Company. It appears that many members take holidays in September and the Awayday to Hush Heath Vineyard only attracted 6 takers and had to be cancelled. We are likely to hold the annual dinner at the end of November next year.

On the subject of EAZ events we opened up discussion at the Branch Representatives meeting back in June, and listened to what members had to say. There was general support for the number of events per year, (three great weekends, plus a dinner). One international event and two more affordable events appeared to fit the bill, so that is what is planned next year, and we give early warning of the events in this issue so that you can get them in your holiday plans. The cost of our events is comparable with what you would pay by going through a travel agent but we try and arrange visits or experiences the general public cannot do. Transport or Hotel costs are not usually included (cruises excluded), so that you can choose the level you prefer. An International or Regional festival over 5 or more days is not cheap but presents an opportunity to celebrate a special anniversary with like-minded members and an unforgettable experience. Providing events for those who can no longer travel far is more of a challenge, and we look for your suggestions.

## *Ian Nicol EAZ Chairman*

The Society was formed on 20th October 1933 in London by wine writer André L Simon and bibliophile A. J. Symons. Within a month there were 230 members. Today there are over 6,660 in 133 branches worldwide.

The Society, which is an independent non profit making organisation run by volunteers, is divided into three areas – the European & African Zone, the Asian Pacific Zone and The Americas.

In André's words,

*"The purpose of the Society is to bring together and serve all who believe that a right understanding of good food and wine is an essential part of personal contentment and health and that an intelligent approach to the pleasures and problems of the table offers far greater rewards than mere satisfaction of appetites."*

In the over indulgent society of the 21st century we endeavour to examine some of the excesses of the western diet and to persuade consumers of the need for quality rather than quantity in the food and drink they consume. To this end we support suppliers of quality produce worldwide.

New members are always welcome, please see page three for details.

For more information go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Wine\\_and\\_Food\\_Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Wine_and_Food_Society)



## Food & Wine

Designed In House by  
The International Wine  
& Food Society  
European & African Region

Editor Pam Brunning  
Brunsdon Farm  
Heath Ride  
Wokingham  
Berkshire  
RG40 3QJ  
Tel +44 (0)118 9733287  
E mail  
editor@sidpam.waitrose.com

Printed by  
All Things Print  
Judds Farmhouse  
97, London Road  
Stanway, Colchester  
Essex CO3 ONY  
www.AllThingsPrint.co.uk

The Society welcomes  
application for Membership

For information please contact  
Margaret Chippendale  
EAZ Membership Registrar  
Brindle House  
100 North Road  
Glossop  
SK13 7AX  
Email: [eamembership@outlook.com](mailto:eamembership@outlook.com)

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African Committee of the  
International Wine & Food  
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the Editor

## Editorial

I expect you are wondering at our cover picture this time. Well, I said to my husband Sid, I haven't a clue what to put on the cover and he said what is your main article, I said the trip to Savoie I suppose, so he said well that is easy put a Savoy cabbage on the front! I didn't like the idea but lacking any other inspiration and as it is my last one I decided to let him have his head so that is the reason for the cover.

We have a varied bunch of articles this time from a look at Champagne through the ages to a look at the life of A. J. Symons Andrés partner in forming the Society. Once again I am grateful to Jeffrey Benson for his article on his trip to San Sebastian and to David Chapman for a very colourful report on the trip to Savoie. Alan Harrison continues his look at Andrés table with a look at sauces and our Around the Branches runs to ten pages this time.

I mentioned earlier that this is my last magazine. After eleven years I have decided that is enough and have determined to stand down as Editor. It has been a fun time with some quarters making me tear my hair out for material and others wondering where I am going to put it all but I have enjoyed it and will miss the pressure on the last few days before publication. The new magazine is to be put together by a committee and I am not a committee person so I have decided to resign. You may have noticed this magazine is later this time that is because the committee have decided to cut production to three instead of four a year to save money.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have stood by me over the years and submitted so many useful articles, it is your magazine and will only stand on what you submit for publication so keep it coming in, I am sure the committee will want your comments and input.

A very sincere good bye to you all

Pam Brunning

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## Champagne à Table

**Caroline Henry** who is Based in Hautvillers, in the heart of Champagne, regularly writes champagne related stories for Wine-Searcher, Decanter, Palate Press as well as on her personal blog [www.missinwine.com](http://www.missinwine.com). Further activities include teaching at the local Business School NEOMA and organizing tailor-made Terroir Champagne tastings.



## SAVOIE DECOUVERTE

**David Chapman** is a retired lawyer, a Commandeur of the Commanderie de Bordeaux à Manchester (since 1994) and an Officier of the L'Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne which he joined in 2005. He has been a member of the International Wine & Food Society Manchester Branch since 1987 and was a member of its committee for many years, twice serving as Chairman. He has led branch trips to the Champagne Region, to the Douro Valley and to Jersey. He is also the Hon. President of the Manchester Wine Society, a wine tasting group of which he has been a member for over 30 years



## A Voyage Round My Father

**Carole Goldberg** joined the London Branch in 1975 and managed their Quarterly Programme of Events for 11 years from 2002 to the end of 2013 when she gave it up saying that she and her other half David now looked forward to a life not dominated by copy and print dates!!!

She is still active on the London Branch Committee and organises a wide range of events for the Branch whilst maintaining her alcohol intake by selflessly testing wines to put into these events to ensure they're fit for members to imbibe".



## Our Founder's Voice

**Alan Harrison** is a retired University Dean, a former Head of the Edinburgh Hotel School at Telford College, and a former Lecturer in Gastronomy. His books include "Gastronomy" and one on why we eat what we eat.

His retirement is, in part, a continuation of a career in Britain and across the world. He maintains contact with hospitality and tourism education and aims to keep abreast of development. His current interests have taken him into food-consumer research in the context of our dependency on the forever-exploitative supermarkets. "Healthy eating overlaps the supermarket interest but study of the former presents a much less understood exploitation of its own".



## Five Days in San Sebastian

**Jeffrey Benson** has been in the wine trade for 35 years. He meets producers worldwide as a buyer and wine maker, conveying his knowledge through his lectures and consultancy work.

He was involved in the formation of 'Wines of Canada' and was the only non-North American judge to join their tasting panel at a three day event evaluating over 200 wines to determine medal winners.

For twelve years, Jeffrey ran the annual evening wine school for the Society. He continues to lecture and adjudicate the Wine and Spirit Education Trust examinations and has written and contributed to seven books and many articles on food, wine and travel.

[www.jeffreybenson.net](http://www.jeffreybenson.net)



Dear IWFS members  
Merhaba!

This is "hello" in Turkish which, as my guidebook helpfully advised me is phonetically pronounced "mare hubba" (teşekkür ederim "thank you" was a little harder to master). With a ten day summer holiday booked on the Lycian Coast of Turkey I thought it was a good idea just to get an idea of the basic greetings which would be welcomed by the locals and make daily life a little smoother. I was to find that it was not only the Turkish language which was to be a bit of a challenge, but also the indigenous grape varieties on the wine labels – the whites including Emir and Nerince and the reds Boğazkere and Öküzgözü being among the most reputable (but again tough to pronounce). I did enjoy a number of crisp, fresh and fruity white and rosé wines which made my holiday all the more enjoyable along with the beautiful historic coastline, food and warm Turkish hospitality. So, if offered a glass of Turkish in future I will not be reticent and recommend you definitely give it a try too.

Back to matters nearer to home. The International Council of Management (ICM) held their second meeting of the year in London on 3 July – leaving 4 July for our Council members from the Americas to celebrate, but in true English style (Wimbledon tennis or the Henley Royal Regatta were both in full swing). The meeting was steered by Dave Felton (ICM Chair) and Council members (including directors Ian Nicol, EAZ Chair, Blackpool & Fylde branch and Michael Messent, Wessex branch plus John Nicholas who attended as an alternate) continued to address the international matters that can be developed to benefit all members across the globe. One new initiative is to set up a formal **archive** of IWFS material. Initially we will focus on some of the first Society and branch events, a 1939 register of members, as well as the albums of press cuttings spanning 1933 to 1939 – here's one I came across from May 1939 reporting on an inaugural Manchester branch event (see page 6). This could well be for a Manchester branch which was set up just before the beginning of WW2 and then disbanded – but it is an interesting piece of history of branch events. It is planned that a website will be set up, with a link to our own, so you can then view past documents which may act as inspiration for future events or also be a useful resource for you and/or your branch – and even many of our "young" members. This is very much in its early stages and we are aware that some of you may also have your own archive materials which could also be a valuable addition to the official records for the Society. Watch this space.

We are also looking to produce some new items of IWFS **branded merchandise** the first under review are neoprene bottle bags which will allow you to transport your valuable bottles safely and in style! If you have any ideas of something that you would really like, and think might have an international appeal then do let me know.

The IWFS **Branch Directory 2015/16** is also due to be released any time now and a printed copy will be sent to each member household. Please do use it – if you are planning to travel, check out if there is an IWFS branch contact there who could provide you with great tips about where to dine and places to visit - keep it safe.

As promised the next IWFS **monograph** will focus on the much debated issue of wine closures. It is titled "Taming of the Screwcap – It's origins, evolution and future". The author is Dr Jamie Goode, who is highly regarded for his in-depth knowledge and expertise in this field (as well as an award winning wine writer). He will explore the many options which have been trialled and launched over the years and explain the factors influencing their success or failure. The aim of this monograph is to give clarity to what can be a rather technical topic but at the same time provide an experts' overview of which closure is best, and when. Or maybe the jury is still out? Watch out for your copy which you should receive during October (one per member household). Please remember that copies will be available for you to purchase maybe as a seasonal gift or pass onto others who you know would like to read more about this fascinating topic.

şimdilikgüle("until next time"- I think!) Andrea

## EAZ Annual Branch Representatives Meeting Stratford-upon-Avon June 2015

The Annual Branch Representatives Meeting was held at Stratford-upon-Avon this year, and included a visit to the Royal Shakespeare Company theatre. We started with a pre-theatre dinner in the Rooftop Restaurant, which enjoys great views of the River Avon. Dinner was washed down with an excellent St Emilion 2011 and Meursault 2012 from the Berry Bros wine list. Then we went into the theatre for a preview of Othello – an interesting interpretation in modern dress, which drew mixed reactions from those present.

Next day was the ABRM itself, at the Grosvenor Hotel, followed by lunch. It was a beautiful day, and the reception kicked off in the conservatory with a glass of Canard-Duchêne champagne. Then we sat down to a chicken parfait, with seeds, oats and fruit, with Mercurey Premier Cru 2009 from Jean Michel and Laurent Pillot. Some found this dish a little disappointing: it was not attractively presented and slightly reminiscent of a plate of muesli! This was followed by sea trout, charred little gem lettuce and liquorice carrots, in a light seafood bisque, served with a Pinot Bianco 2013 from the Alto Adige, chosen so as not to overwhelm the delicate flavour of the trout. The dessert was peach melba. This was an excellent short break, and it is a shame that more branches were not represented.



Daily Express 12 May 1939  
Manchester Edition.

## 44 SAT DOWN TO FINE FOOD (WITH SHRIMPS)

**DINERS BELOW** are some of the pioneers in drive to make Manchester a city of "good eaters." Last night they paid a guinea a head for an eight course meal—including shrimps—and drank six different wines. Reason for all this was launching of Manchester branch of the Wine and Food

Society. Originator of idea is chartered accountant Mr Austin Katanagh. He says: "It's time something was done to create better taste. Manchester is backward in this sort of thing." Diners were mostly professional men, barristers, solicitors.



### EATERS—

[in the pictures above]

1. Major Stanley Pearson.
2. The Rev G. H. Gobb, who said grace.
3. Dr M. G. Cardwell.
4. Mrs F. Ingress Bell.
5. M. Andre Simon sips sherry, and
6. Talks to Mr Makepeace Lott.

## —AND THE EATING

Daily Express Staff Reporter

**FORTY-FOUR** men outnumbering women five to one, sat down in a Manchester club last night to a dinner designed as the beginning of an effort to make the city fine-food conscious.

The dinner was the inaugural one of the Manchester branch of the Wine and Food Society, international organisation for gourmets. It was held in the exclusive Clarendon Club, where there is a rule that men and women must take their pre-dinner sherry, cocktails, in separate rooms, meet when they enter to dine.

For last night's dinner Manchester gourmets paid a guinea a head, had an eight course meal that was chosen by a selection committee of experts three weeks ago.

Roughly, 11/6 of the guinea charged was spent on food, 6/6 on wines. The first item on the menu was "Mrs Moor's Southport shrimps."

Oxtail soup was followed by River Dane trout—six of the fish served were hooked by a member of the society.

Then there was roast saddle of

Cheshire lamb with garden peas and new potatoes.

To keep the North country touch, there was asparagus from Farnby, near Liverpool, Bakewell tart, then Leigh toasted cheese which is now made on the Lancashire Fylde, not at Leigh, costs about 100 a lb.

Mr Andre Simon, founder and president of the Wine and Food Society, and No. 1 world food expert, made his speech into a post-mortem on the dinner he, as guest of honour, had just eaten, which he described as an excellent meal. Here are his criticisms, course by course:—

Shrimps—No fault, but for a big dinner small pots would have been better.

Soup—Very good, but the ox-tail must have been rather stiff.

Poached trout—Very good.

Lamb—A bit overdone. Everything young needs less cooking than older meals.

Asparagus—disappointing. Perhaps it is a bit early.

Bakewell tart—excellent, extraordinarily good.

Toasted cheese—very good, but too salty for people with a natural thirst.

Coffee—not good. I am told that it is because of Manchester water.



# Champagne à Table: The Gastronomic Position of Champagne throughout History

By Caroline Henry



We all associate champagne as a festive wine; corks are popped to celebrate a special occasion or to celebrate each other's company. But rarely is champagne served with a meal; instead we tend to drink it as an aperitif before the meal or instead of a cocktail.

Champagne has come a long way as originally it was served at dessert. Philippe II, Duke of Orleans, was the first to regularly include champagne in his nightly suppers. Although, champagne, as we know it today, technically, did not exist. Only after the edict passed by King Louis XV on 25 May 1728, could wine legally be transported in bottle in France.

The first official occasions to include champagne were the Christmas Eve feasts hosted by King Louis XV from the early 1730's through the 1750's. These parties were public and were attended both by the French aristocracy and burgeoning Parisbourgeoisie. It is here that champagne became renowned; everybody was eager to try 'the bubbly wine', so loved by the king himself. Champagne was served after the meal, to accompany the dessert, and from 1745 Madame de Pompadour led the way for women to drink champagne as well.

In the nineteenth century, champagne's gastronomic reputation was further developed. It became a social obligation to serve champagne for the upper classes. Even if in some cases champagne flowed freely throughout the meal, it remained more common to serve champagne at the latter part of the meal. Commonly known as 'vin d'entremet' – a wine to be served with the dish which comes after the roast and before the dessert, it was most commonly drunk through to the end of the meal. The glasses were kept on ice and the champagne was served with a spoon to remove most of the bubbles!

The Marquis de Cussy, chief steward of Emperor Napoleon I and author of "Les classiques de la table" created one of champagne's most successful and lasting pairing at the beginning of the nineteenth century: strawberries and cream. The dish remained until recently on the menu of the Relais & Chateau "Royal Champagne" in Champillon as "Fraises à la Cussy".

By 1825, champagne had also become a main ingredient in the most renowned Parisian restaurants; at least half a bottle was used to prepare delicacies such as "Parisian turtle (tortue à la parisienne)" and "French-style Seine fish (poison de Seine à la française)".

However, in the Code Gourmand published by Horace Raison in 1829, champagne is described as a "*ladies and lovers drink, unsuitable for any fine dining party.*" This is more than likely linked to the excessive champagne consumption in the "cabinets particuliers" by businessmen, artists, poets, actresses and cabaret dancers. The Romantic Bohemians were the first to find pleasure in drinking champagne by itself and most appreciated the bubbles.

When the 'drier' brut champagne became more common, some French followed the English example and started to drink champagne with the soup at the beginning of the meal. It is common belief that when drunk throughout the meal champagne will facilitate the digestion and its flavours can be better enjoyed. This is confirmed by Le Brevaire Gastronomique, in 1870, which stipulated that "*champagne is to be served with the roast, as the sweetness of the dessert tends to override the wine.*"

During the rule of Napoleon III, "meals without fixed hour" became the fashion especially at the end of balls or for hunting party breaks. These meals were particularly suited to champagne which was often served as the only wine to accompany the mixture of dishes. →





At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, around 1905, champagne cocktails saw the light and with them the consumption of champagne before the meal. Champagne was still drunk at supper, but also often in night restaurants at Montmartre. The latter served a “sec” or “brut” champagne, which was also the beverage of choice at the famous Maxime restaurant, where champagne was very often served throughout the meal. Whilst drinking champagne during the whole meal was not frowned upon anymore, most people still associated champagne with dessert. From the twenties onward, it became a custom for the bourgeoisie and aristocracy to also drink champagne in family circles at home on special occasions. Besides the Grandes Marques, a selection of more affordable champagnes, often made by the grape growers themselves, became available for purchase. These wines are often considered to be ordinary or of lesser quality and are best drunk sweet (demi-sec or demi-doux ) at the entremets and the dessert.

However, the push for drier wines continued, mainly by famous food writers such as Édouard Alexandre de Pomiane, who proclaimed from 1922 onward “*drink only brut champagne, for these are the most natural wines of the best quality. Sugar has the wonderful ability to mask all of the wine’s imperfections*”. Slowly but surely the drier style champagnes became more popular in France, and by 1945 half of the consumption was “extra-sec” or “sec”, exclusively distributed by the Grandes Marques. Brut wines remained a niche category.

Things changed drastically after the Second World War, when champagne’s true revival took off. It became the beverage which was drunk at any time of the day by everybody who was anybody. At the same time it also became available to the general public. A 1973 study by SOFRES showed that 77% of the French had already drunk champagne and 58% drank it between one and ten times per year. Its position as a celebration drink now became unrivalled and it was poured at most weddings, christenings, confirmations, birthdays, family get-togethers and end of year celebrations.

Another big change was the development of the brut category. The demand for brut had long begun in the UK, where champagne was often poured throughout the whole meal from the nineteenth century onward. In fact, le gout anglais in the nineteenth century referred to dry or brut champagne with a dosage of only 22-66 g/l. After the Second World War the CIVC defined the brut category as champagnes with a dosage of 0-15g, and by 1978 this category had become the leading category by far; 73.4% of the champagnes sold were then brut. However, champagne was still mostly poured at dessert. The 1973 SOFRET study stipulated that 79% of the French had only drunk champagne with dessert. Now that the wine had significantly dried out, this pairing had become less than ideal, and many producers were contesting it.

Henri Gault and Christian Millau



forever changed champagne’s position at the table by defining it as being the “*ideal aperitif*” in their September 1979 issue. The impact was immediate and from then onward this was when most champagne was consumed.

Champagne dinners once again became more popular, especially at Maxime’s, where 50% of the meals were accompanied by champagne only. However, the majority of the French seemed reluctant to replace Burgundy or Bordeaux wines, often served with the main dish, with champagne; only 9% of the French population had ever tried champagne dinners according to the 1973 SOFRET study.

Perhaps this is why, in 1993 the CIVC oenology department created the project to further develop and promote the possibilities of pouring champagne throughout a whole meal. General pairing suggestions included blanc de blancs with soup, seafood (especially oysters) and white fish,

brut with starters, blanc de noirs with poultry and oily fish. Vintages were recommended with the cheese dish while a rosé or a demi-sec worked well with dessert. The project was closed in 2000, and champagne dinners remain still the exception rather than the norm. Instead we continue to follow the advice of Gault and Millau and let the corks pop at aperitif. A votre santé!





In the following extract from the literary quarterly magazine *Slightly Foxed*, the biographer Gordon Bowker goes in quest of Corvo with one of the founders of the International Wine & Food Society, 'A.J.' Alphonse James Albert Symons.

### *In Search of the Biographer*

'To open Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* or Richard Holmes's *Footsteps* is to embark on a journey of discovery in more ways than one. They not only deal with the lives of writers but are also detective stories, investigative records, travelogues. Such works of biographical exploration have always fascinated me but, excellent though both these books are, I am especially fond of their remarkable predecessor, a book that also set me on the path to becoming a biographer.

The pioneering work in question, *The Quest for Corvo* (1934), was written by an author who published little else of note. It broke all the rules but established a literary sub-genre of its own by revealing the working of the biographer's mind as he struggles to uncover and make sense of the scattered fragments of a life. This experimental work demonstrates how the image of any figure portrayed in a biography is not so much a photograph as a portrait in mosaic, reflecting within it something of the portraitist's own personality and predispositions.

As Julian Symons, the crime writer and brother of its author wrote, it blew the gaff on the genre 'by refusing for a moment to make the customary pretence of detachment'.

Its subject was the delusional Catholic novelist and homosexual Frederick William Rolfe, who was little read at the time and is largely forgotten today. The book of the quest for him, on the other hand, is widely known and well-regarded. But who exactly was the author of this landmark work? Alphonse James Albert Symons (who signed himself 'A. J. A. Symons' but preferred to be known simply as 'A. J.' after his favourite fictional detective, A. J. Raffles) was a self-educated young man who, in the years following the Great War, set out to advance himself in the world of literature. A bibliophile, he founded and ran the First Edition Club (devoted to the appreciation of manuscripts and rare editions) and also organized the selection of the fifty best (finely produced) books of the year. The Club boasted among its members the publishers John Murray and John Lane, the bookseller William Foyle, the press magnate Cecil Harmsworth, the author Wyndham Lewis, and the widow of the author of *Dracula*, Bram Stoker.

*Fin-de-siècle* authors and their works were Symons's particular interest. In the 1920s he compiled a bibliography of Yeats's first editions, published an anthology of Nineties verse and founded the *Book Collector's Quarterly*. Then in 1933, aided by the bookselling brothers William and Gilbert Foyle and a French gastronome, André Simon, he set up the Wine & Food Society, attracting a number of London publishers and writers to its annual dinners. Symons was also a dedicated collector of Victoriana, including a notable collection of music boxes now housed at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford.

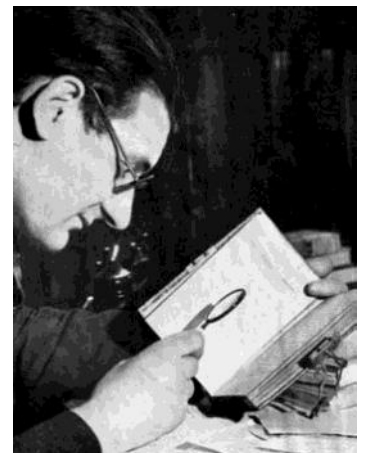
He wrote two conventional biographies – of Emin Pasha and H. M. Stanley. Neither was widely reviewed or is now much read, but in 1934 his minor masterpiece, *The Quest for Corvo*, appeared, and his literary reputation was assured.

At his death in August 1941, a few days after his forty-first birthday, he was working on a biography of Oscar Wilde . . . It's a tragedy that he didn't live long enough to undertake other quests and achieve the further literary honours of which he was undoubtedly capable.

© Gordon Bowker

**Gordon Bowker has written four biographies – of Malcolm Lowry, Lawrence Durrell, George Orwell and James Joyce. They enabled him to become the Sherlock Holmes he liked to pretend he was as a schoolboy.**

A full version of this article appears in *Slightly Foxed* Issue 46, Summer 2015.





**T**hirty nine members of branches from all three zones of the Society met together on a hot (30C+), sunny Monday afternoon at the Hotel Edelweiss in St. Martin-de-Belleville at the start of a three day (four night) event in the heart of the beautiful French Alps. St. Martin lies in one of the three parallel skiing valleys together known as "Les Trois Vallées" at an altitude of about 4500 feet above sea level. Some of the party had arrived over the previous weekend but all were present and correct and ready to walk through part of the village to the restaurant where our first arranged dinner was to be held - "Le Montagnarde". Here, in rustic surroundings, we enjoyed a typical mountain meal. Our welcome drink was the Alpine equivalent of a Kir Royale - using a local sparkling wine rather than Crémant de Bourgogne. This was accompanied by a selection of locally made cheese and cured meats. Dinner started with a cheese called Se-

rac made from the whey after the "proper" hard cheese has first been made. This was served with JF Que-nard Chignin a wine from the village of Chignin made from 100% Jacquère. The next course was Lamelles de diot de Savoie, pommes de terre en émulsion - a mixture of local sausage with potato. The main course was a Ballotine de volaille cuit sous vide - chicken breast with a stuffing encased in cling film and cooked in a vacuum. To accompany these two courses was Mondeuse Arbin, Domaine de L'Idyll, Phillippe et Francoise Tiollier, 2013 - Mondeuse is a local black grape and Arbin perhaps the best village in the Savoie. The red, although quite light, went well with the foods. Dessert was Gratin de fruit rouge frais et sabayon au Génépi. To finish there was an assiette of Mignardises with coffee and



some Génépi as a digestif. This is a liqueur or apéritif, similar in makeup to absinthe; Chartreuse is an augmented form of g népi concocted in the early 18th century. The word is also used to refer to alpine plants of the genus *Artemisia* (commonly called wormwood) that provide the liqueur's flavour, colour and effect. Sleep came easily when we turned in for the night.

Back on the coaches we headed up towards St. Martin but then turned off the main road and really took to the hills. Up and up we went along a very narrow twisting road to the hamlet of Deux Nants which lies at an altitude of just below 5,000 feet. The need for two small coaches soon became obvious and, indeed, it was touch and go whether the slightly larger one would pass through a particularly narrow point. Lunch was a rustic but delicious affair on the terrace of a mountain refuge. An earlier warning had been given about the need to resist clearing the well-filled dishes of a local type of pasta served with a mountain cheese sauce and of meat casserole. These had followed a quiche and salad starter and there was the opportunity to enjoy a dessert for those still feeling the pangs of hunger. In view of the heat - around 35C - copious amounts of chilled water were drunk as well as some tasty white and red local wines. The Belleville valley has a scattering of historic churches and, after lunch, the coaches took us down towards the valley where we had guided visits to three of them. The first, St. Laurent de la Côte, lay almost by itself on the old route from Môtiers to the head of the valley and was built in 1779. It no longer holds regular services but is available for weddings and, with its beautiful and ornate retable, it was easy to see why it might be chosen. Then onwards to the village of St. Marcel where we were able to see the Sanctuaire Notre-Dame-de-la-Vie, but only from the outside (it was "en travaux"), before walking down into the village itself to see the village church. This, again, was historic and beautifully decorated. Back to the hotel by coach to put on our glad rags before on to the gastronomic highlights of the programme at the restaurant La Bouitte. Before this, some with stamina visited the church near the hotel.



La Bouitte is in the village of St. Marcel. Although it was only 2 kilometres from our

hotel, it was a bit far to walk in our finery. Fortunately a shuttle mini-bus operation took us safely there. The establishment holds 3 Michelin stars and is run by father and son chefs, René and Maxime Meilleur. Seated at table the apéritif was served there. This was a Crémant de Savoie, Domaine Blard et Fils, Cuvée "Brut Alpin" N.V. made of Jacquère 60% and Chardonnay 40%. The Chardonnay gave a little richness on the palate without dampening the fresh acidity of the Jacquère. Alongside the wine, some delicious amuses bouches were served with instructions on the appropriate order of consumption. First was Huître Guillaudeau, voile d'eau de mer, perle de yuzu. This was, as the title suggests, a fresh oyster served in its shell with a little anointment of yuzu - a citrus fruit originating in China which, on the tree, resembles a small grapefruit. Your correspondent, not a lover of the oyster, really enjoyed the combination. Next came a Tartare de boeuf, lamelles de truffes XL. The truffle element of this dish was two thin slices of white or summer truffle and together the dish was a delight. Finally, there was a Velouté d'orties, cubes de pieds de veau, PDT confites. The vivid green soup served in a shot glass proved to be made from nettles and was served with tiny cubes of candied veal foot together with some potato and they together made an interesting and very tasty combination. I ought to say that the wine was able to match the flavours of these three mini-dishes. The next course was Truite fumée, vierge de légumes. It was a small strip of lightly smoked trout seated on some finely cubed vegetables. This was followed by a Bouillon de jambon cru, aromates, and galette croustillante. The wine chosen to accompany these two courses was Apremont, Domaine Jean Masson, "Cuvée Lisa" 2012. Made entirely from the Jacquère grape, the wine is named after the vigneron's daughter and is grown on an especially chalky site. The wine showed flinty, chalky, stony mineral notes along with some zesty citrus flavours and married well with the dishes. On to the main fish dish. This was Féra du Léman, panée de pain croustillant, févettes, beurre blanc mousseux à la Roussette. The fish is a type of pike-perch or sandre caught in Lac Léman - the large lake beside the city of Geneva. Because it has a fragile skin, this was lightly crumbed to protect it from the heat of the pan whilst it was quickly cooked. Served with it were skinned baby broad beans and a beurre blanc sauce using wine made from the local Roussette wine. To accompany the dish, the wine was Vins des Albrogues, Domaine des Ardoisières, Cuvée "Schiste", 2013. The wine was made from Jacquère 40%, Roussanne 30%, Pinot Gris 20% and Mondeuse Blanc 10%. On to the main course which was Pigeonneau Rôti au Poêlon, ragout sur toast, champignons and Chénopodes Bon Henri. The pigeon breast was served pink and was both tender and tasty but the ragout (shredded pigeon leg re-formed into a little tower) was even more so. The Chénopodes (a type of spinach) ornamented the plate in the form of a decorative sweep. The entire dish was well received by those seated at the writer's table ⇨

. The accompanying wine was Arbin Mondeuse, Domaine Louis Magnin, Cuvée "La Brova", 2010. This wine came from vines of an average age of 40 years grown on a steep hillside overlooking the village of Arbin and aged in oak barrels. The wine is intended for keeping rather than drinking when relatively young but the good acidity coupled with the delicate fruit contrasted nicely with the richness of the dish. The cheese course followed and was a fine example of the local Beaufort cheese having been made from summer milk of 2014. Interestingly (for wine anoraks) it was served with a white wine, Chignin Bergeron, Ch. Mérande, Cuvée "Le Grand Blanc" 2013. "Bergeron" is the local name for the well-known Rhône varietal, Roussanne - a component of wines such as Condrieu and Hermitage Blanc. This grape has the propensity to have a fragrance reminiscent of ripe apricots and Bergeron takes its name from a local variety of apricot. A pre-dessert came next. This was Eau de rhubarbe façon bière, sucette glacée à la reine des près. The rhubarb had been stewed and then blended to an almost smooth texture. The reference to beer was because, in its glass, the dish had a "head" of froth. On to the dessert itself which was Mara des bois, baba aux éclats de dragées, infusion by woodland strawberries. A wine, Vin de France, Ch. de Mérande, Cuvée "Délir'ancestral", was poured but, for me, it was more enjoyable on its own rather than along with the dish. This was because of the acidity of the strawberries and the lemon verbena clashed with the sweetness of the wine. But this was not all. Despite the now lateness of the hour, there were a selection of four Mignardises one of each for each diner. Sadly, because we had been so well fed, there was quite a lot unconsumed. There was just time to express our personal thanks to the chefs before we were taxied back to the hotel.

Wednesday morning dawned sunny but cooler. We all boarded a large coach and set off for a wine tour. First stop was the village of Cruet and Domain Philippe Grisard. Here we met our local wine professional and guide, Bernard Vissoud, who led us into the vineyard situated on a steep slope overlooking the valley. He explained to us an advantage of being an alpine vineyard. There is a marked thermic difference between night and day which is very important for the quality of the harvest. In Savoy the vineyards are generally planted on the slopes of the mountains and during the nights the cool air from the mountains and forest above the vine plots runs down to the vineyards. It is why, during the different heat-waves (1976, 2003, 2009 and this year), the quality of the berries was very good and the wines were balanced. Our hosts distributed an ornamented ISO tasting glass to each of us and a useful pouch suspended around one's neck in which to park them. Our glasses were quickly filled with a Brut de Savoie, Méthode Traditionnelle whilst we were serenaded by a local man dressed in the obligatory (?) French beret playing the accordion. The wine was a blend of 40% each of Jacquère and Altesse with the balance Chardonnay. From 2014 the rules have been changed to allow these sparkling



wines to be called Crémant de Savoie. Moving into the cellars we tasted the second wine - a rare Mondeuse Blanc 2013 - this grape is now little grown with just 6 growers with a total area of 5 hectares. I found it delicious, rich on the palate but with good acidity and a long finish. Next was a wine made from 100% Altesse 2014 (un-oaked) to be contrasted by the same but vinified in new oak and then aged in oak. Those to whom I spoke preferred the un-oaked version perhaps because the oaked one needed to be aged in bottle. Fifth was a Chignin Bergeron (Chignon the village and Bergeron the grape - aka Roussanne). This was delicious, beautifully rich on the palate, balanced with good acidity and a very long finish. Reds next - first a 100% Persan (another local grape variety saved from dying out) 2013 which produced a fragrant nose with acidity dominant on the palate although having the suggestion of development with ageing. Potentially up a gear was a Mondeuse Arbin 2013 which was very pale and quite delicate on the palate with some spicy notes but I found it lacked fruit in the finish. Then really up a gear to the 9 month oak-aged Mondeuse "Les Molières" 2013 - much darker, much more berry fruits on the nose and good fruit on the palate with some spicy notes and a long well-balanced finish. It won't have escaped your notice that we had been served 8 wines but then there was a 9th, "Incarnat" Rosé N.V., but this was a light sparkler (made of 100% Gamay with (only) 7.5% alcohol) made in the manner of a Clairette de Die which refreshed the palate. I almost forgot to mention that there were generous plates of pieces of local cheeses with which to enliven the palate between tasting samples. ⇨

Back to the coach and on to our outdoor lunch at local restaurant where we were served a trio of the local delicacy, "diots de Savoie". These are a type of sausage each with a different flavouring and they were helped on their way with plenty of local wines, one of Gamay another of Pinot Noir. After our dessert it was really time to go but members of the group, entranced by a nearby game of pétanque (aka boules), so much so that a set of balls was borrowed and an impromptu match against some locals ensued. We were then taken on a scenic drive through some of the wine producing villages with views of the local mountains until we reached Domaine des Anges at Les Marches for a tasting. Seated outdoors we had what amounted to a tutored tasting of seven wines. First came 2014 Les Aymes made from 100% Jacquère. In the mouth the wine was slightly pétillant and had echoes of citrus and white fruits. It was made from vines with an average age of 45 years and had 11% alcohol. Next came a Crémant N.V. from 100% Jacquère which had 3 years of bottle age and was more substantial on the palate, less acidity and more rounded. Then 2014 Les Aymes "Séduction d'Automne" made from older vines (average age 80 years) but, to me, apart from the absence of pétillance, was much the same as the first example. Fourth and fifth came 2013 Plaisir des Anges, Bourgogne Aligoté which was alright but of no real interest and then the same but "La Douceur" namely from a plot of 120 year old vines which I found rather dull - perhaps I was influenced by my belief that the grape should be full of freshness and the age of the vines had not been beneficial. The penultimate offering was a Gamay Rosé and the finally a Gamay Rouge 2014 both of which were fresh and fruity. Subsequently Bernard explained that we enjoyed this wine tasting session less because it took place after lunch and that because of the digestion our saliva changes and it's very difficult to appreciate wines after a meal. After thanking our hosts we boarded the coach and returned to the hotel for a free evening.



Next day we set off driving down to the Moûtiers' Laïterie for a visit to see the making and upbringing of Beaufort cheese. It is made from the milk of a single breed of cow, the Tarine, which spends the winter indoors but from late Spring until early Autumn they are herded up to the mountain pastures. The milk is collected daily and brought to the creamery where it is heated to 33C, then rennet is added and the milk warmed up to 53C before it starts to separate into cheese and whey. Moulded in a wooden ring, the solids are wrapped in linen cloth, immersed in brine for 20 hours and then pressed hydraulically. Next the cheeses are aged in a cellar where they are matured for between 5 and 12 months. Each one is brushed with brine and turned over twice weekly. The cheeses weigh between 40-45 kilos each. Those created from summer milk attract a greater price than from winter milk. Leaving the cheesy atmosphere and back on to the coach we headed off to the vineyard of Cevins which dates back to Roman times. In the village hall we were hosted by Brice Omont, the vigneron owner of Domaine des Ardoisières, who led a tasting of his wines. First off was Argile Blanc 2014 made of 40% Chardonnay and the same of Jacquère with the balance Mondeuse Blanc. It had a very pale colour with floral notes on the nose and quite a light taste on the palate but well balanced. There was a long finish with steely notes redolent of the terroir. Next came Schiste Blanc 2013 - 40% Jacquère, 30% Roussanne, 20% Pinot Gris and 10% Mondeuse Blanc. This was slightly darker with meadow flower notes on the nose. Although richer on the palate it had good acidity and a long finish. Then on to red wine, Amethyste Rouge 2013 made with 60% Persan and 40% Mondeuse Blanc. A bright colour of medium depth led into black fruits on the nose and good fruit flavours on the palate with some peppery notes. Whilst there was a long finish, the tannin and acidity dominated.

Lunchtime approached so we headed off in the coach to the village of Freterive and Domaine Jean Vullien where we had a tour of the wine making facility followed by a buffet lunch accompanied by some of the estate's wines. Altesse 2014 was followed by another Roussette which boasted a Gold Medal from the Concours de Paris. Then the reds, a Mondeuse Noir Prestige 2013 and Mondeuse Noir "Ch. St. Phillippe" 2011. The wines went really well with the wide variety of tasty tapas-sized portions of food.

After lunch we arrived at the village of Arbin to visit Domaine Louis Magnin to taste what I found to be the most outstanding wines during our various visits - despite it being after lunch. We started with a Roussette De Savoie Altesse 2013 which was both fresh and (at the same time) rich on the palate and delicious. Then on to a Chignin Bergeron "Grand Orgue" and a lovely Chignin Bergeron "Vertigo" 2013. These wines showed not only the typical apricot notes on the nose and palate but also suggestions of bergamot and citrus. The "Vertigo" was



very refined with an almost demi-sec style whilst showing the minerality of the steep hillside on which the vines are grown. We finished with two red wines made from Mondeuse Noir; "La Brova" - from vines with an average age of 50 years, then vinified in stainless steel and finished with 18 months in oak barrels and "La Rouge" from 70 year old vines, hand-harvested then aged in oak barrels for a year on the lees without any racking. Both were really good examples of what can be achieved using this local grape. The one or two party members who elected to wait in the coach (being "wined-out") missed a great treat.



Once back at the hotel we needed to freshen up and change for dinner before we were coached up the valley to Val Thorens and our date with Chef Jean Sulpice at his eponymous two Michelin star restaurant. Many of us took an



immediate opportunity to go out on to the terrace to take in the beautiful mountain views illuminated by the evening sun. Called in for dinner, we took our apéritif, Pétillant de Savoie "Mont Blanc", Domaine Belluard. This sparkling wine is made from another of the unusual local grape varieties, Gringet, and had a floral and fruity nose with hints of plum and was nicely balanced on the palate. The Amuse Bouches, which included a miniature parmesan tart filled with a celery risotto adorned with peas and mushroom, were works of art as well as delicious. Our first course, which soon followed, was a tarte de polenta, légumes d'été. The dish was a real picture decorated with edible flowers and tasted just as good as it looked. The chosen wine to accompany the dish was an IGP Des Allobroges, "Chasselas de Marin", Domaine Lucas 2013 - made, as the name

suggests, from the Chasselas (aka Fendant) grape which is a native of Switzerland but also found in Southern Germany. It certainly went well with the food. The fish course was lobster with nasturtium leaves and a swirl of a sauce flavoured and coloured by the lobster shells. Matching the dish was a Chignin Bergeron, "Comme Avant", Domaine Quenard 2013 served from magnums. This had a good bright appearance in the glass, on the nose it was both powerful and complex with a mixture of exotic fruit and apricot flavours and in the mouth it



was both rich and elegant with a long finish - perfect with the dish. Our main course was duck with a sauce flavoured by caraway and decorated with some baby carrots, it was served with Mondeuse d'Arbin "Comte Rouge", Domaine Genoux



2009 again served from magnums. This wine from the leading wine village is made from a selection of old vines and then aged for up to 15

months in oak barrels. The wine was very fruity on the palate but the freshness given by the good acidity made it a good companion for the duck. Then (a surprise addition to the menu), a Beaufort cheese mousse adorned with a couple of salad leaves, some walnut nibs and a beautiful edible flower. The dessert followed - a meringue in the perfect shape of an apple (even including a stalk), filled with some cooked apple standing on a sauce made from mountain honey and flavoured with liquorice. To eat it, we were directed to crack the meringue shell to expose the inside. Most enjoyable flavours. The wine chosen with it was a Vin de Savoie "Eole", Domaine du Prieuré 2011. This proved to be made from Altesse grapes which undergo 3-7 months of drying indoors after harvesting before being gently pressed, the concentrate obtained is then fermented before aging in barrels. To round off a delicious meal came a small globe of chocolate filed with a blackberry filling over which was poured a small quantity of flaming Chartreuse which had the effect of immediately melting the chocolate and enabling, when the flames went out, its consumption and enjoyment. The dinner was a real tour de force and brought a glorious end to our discovery of Savoy, its scenery, its food and its wines. ✨

# A VOYAGE ROUND MY FATHER A MEMORIAL WINE TASTING TO SERGE HOCHAR by Carole Goldberg



On New Year's Eve 2014 I lost a very dear friend of over 35 years when Serge Hochar was tragically drowned whilst on holiday with his family in Mexico.

1979 was a memorable year. Chateau Musar wines came to public notice during the Bristol Wine Fair when declared "the discovery of the fair" and Serge came into my life when I had my first taste of Chateau Musar. The result was an irresistible combination that resulted in over 35 years' devotion to Chateau Musar wines and to the man himself.

There were many things I loved about Serge, particularly his enthusiasms which were impossible to resist. When Serge talked about anything he loved, his eyes would light up and his whole body would take part – hands, arms, face and even those amazing eyebrows. He was like that about his wine, family and his wife. How do you cope with a man you hardly know but propels you across a room saying "I would like you to meet my wife Tania", introduces you whilst you're bemused by this whirlwind and then whizzes off to promote his wine! Serge also had a great sense of humour and Jane Sowter from Chateau Musar UK recalled a most amusing "Serge-ism" at his London Memorial Service; "www. - there are three unpredictables in life, weather, women and wine!"



In memory of Serge, I asked Gaston to lead a memorial wine tasting in his father's honour and called it "A Voyage Round My Father". This shamelessly borrowed the title of the late Sir John Mortimer's autobiographical play reflecting on the enduring love between father and son and captures the special bond between them. It seemed totally appropriate for this very special wine tasting memorial to Serge during the London Wine Fair in May.

Gaston was accompanied by Tarek Sakr, Chateau Musar's winemaker. Tarek joined them in 1991 and has stayed there for 24 years, taking over as winemaker although Serge made the final decision on blends whilst alive.

Gaston opened the tasting by saying that although a memorial is traditionally a sad occasion, Serge wouldn't have wanted us to be sad tonight. He would have wanted us to be happy, enjoy his wines and recall happy memories of him. With this in mind Gaston wanted there to be laughter and smiles during the tasting. And there was.

The tasting wines were chosen by myself, Gaston and Jane Sowter of Chateau Musar UK to reflect Serge's wine passions as well as the differences in style across key decades which make Chateau Musar unquestionably unique. Additionally Gaston brought a twelfth "surprise wine" as a special memorial gift. Our wines were:

**2012 Chateau Musar Rosé:** Mostly Obaideh plus Merwah with a little Cinsault for colour, this isn't produced every year, only when it's felt the grapes are right. Skins only left in contact with juice for a few hours to give delicate, pale salmon pink colour. The wine is fermented and then matured in Nevers oak for 9 months. A rich fragrant nose of apricots and peaches that carries through onto a fresh palate. This wine is still evolving and Gaston feels it will last for another 6 years.

**2009 Hochar Père & Fils:** First made for Marks & Spencer in late 1980's but now produced in the Chateau's portfolio in a different style. Grapes from a single vineyard and low yielding vines and NOT declassified grapes from the "grand vin". Mostly Cinsault, Grenache with some Carignon and Cab Sauv. After fermenting the wine was matured in oak for 9 months, blended in spring 2011 and bottled a year later. Deep ruby colour with oak and black fruits on nose. Developing secondary aromas now. Black fruits follow through on palate with good tannic structure but less complexity than Ch Musar.

**2008 Chateau Musar Red :** The brand new vintage and only available the day before at the London Wine Fair so a special preview for us. An amazing vintage due to remarkable weather – no rain from late February onwards and a massive heat-wave late August for 5 days! Grapes all ripened together so harvesting was a daily decision. Released 7 years later, this is a very concentrated wine. Dense colour and youthful purple-red at rim. Lovely notes of leather and black fruits on nose; quite tannic and intensely concentrated rich black fruits on palate. Huge finish. This is a wine to keep and certainly one to watch for the future. →

**2000 Chateau Musar:** Vintage more “Bordeaux” in style. Not as dense in colour as usual; superb rich gamey, meaty nose following through on palate, good fruit long aftertaste but quite tannic. Very approachable now.

**1999 Chateau Musar:** Again colour not as dense. Nose vegetal, meaty and maturing but not a typical Musar nose. On palate initially think it’s dying but then suddenly bursts with life; a veritable fruit bomb in the mouth of rich ripe red fruits and very long-lasting aftertaste. Superb delicious wine.

**1997 Chateau Musar:** This vintage Musar’s slowest ever fermentation. Medium intense colour – can see bottom of glass – and rosy brown ageing at rim. Typical Musar nose, slightly stinky and maturing. Well developed gamey aromas that leap out of glass! Massive fruit on palate, gamey and meaty with rich red fruits, good body and softening tannins. Lovely wine and will develop well. (NB – opened a bottle some weeks later and superb with mixed game, venison, ostrich and kangaroo.)

**1993 Chateau Musar:** My favourite vintage, third only to 1977 and 1980. Superb ruby garnet colour – still lots of red. Mellow and supple, showing signs of age but massive complex earthy fruit with excellent body and length and a classic pungent Musar nose of spices, nuts, meat and leather. An outstanding wine with years left. Will go on and on.....

**1991 Chateau Musar:** Another favourite vintage but hugely disappointing. Distinct bottle variation; one reasonable but drying out whilst the other was very brown tawny colour and well aged. Nose unpleasant to say the least! Palate was fast losing fruit and lacked depth. Just before copy date a bottle opened from my store and found it good. Light tawny colour & nose like rich meaty leather. Good red fruits on palate but as went further down bottle fruit eclipsed by tannin & acid. In 2006 thought this would be a vintage to rival 1993 but not same depth; drink up rather than hang on.

**1980 Chateau Musar:** Best wine of the evening for many including myself. A very elegant Musar vintage – one person described it as a “feminine vintage” which Serge would have loved. He once described his wines to me as “...like women. **They are all different and all beautiful and intriguing in their own way, but some are softer than others**”! A light tawny colour and looked as though it would be dead but was wonderful. A soft gamey, meaty nose, soft tannins with superb body and massive fruit. Fabulous length. A complete and classy wine still with plenty of life. **Near perfection: 9.9/10 for me.** (NB In July 1998 Wine Spectator said “...the colour and aromas seem mature ... should age graciously”. Some 17 years later it’s still going strong and will last even longer!)

We then turned to Chateau Musar White wines, made from two ancient Lebanese varieties Obaideh and Merwah that date back thousands of years and are reputedly the ancestors of Chardonnay and Semillon.

We began with the newly released **2007 Chateau Musar White:** Despite strange weather conditions (snow, heat, snow!) Obaideh and Merwah both in excellent condition and one of their best years ever. Pale lemon gold colour, aromatic nose of peaches & pears with palate of tropical fruits; fresh acidity excellent body and long finish. Promises well.

**1999 Chateau Musar White:** Showing beautifully. Lovely aromatic honeyed nutty nose, slightly waxy; may seem sweet but isn’t. Concentrated fruit on palate almost like aged Meursault but with a bite on finish. Great potential so bought some!

Gaston’s surprise wine courtesy of Ch Musar was **1981 Chateau Musar White** and was amazing. It showed the ability of Chateau Musar White to age. This was the last white vintage to be produced solely with the Merwah grape. A very deep golden treacle colour like a deep rich mature Sauternes. Pure caramel and honey on the nose and carried through to a glorious dense rich fruity palate quite unlike anything else I’d ever tasted. Exquisite and a real treat. The three wines were a gradation in colour which reflected their maturity as seen by the bottles here.

The next day I was given “the leftovers” of a **1970 Musar White.** Much like the 1980 this was more intense and even deeper in colour as the wines show in the glasses.

I cannot imagine Chateau Musar without my dearest Serge but life must go on. Gaston and Tarek, together with the family team will take Chateau Musar forward. “Chateau Musar is greater than the individual” says Gaston “and we will all strive to bring you the very best wines we can in the future.



# Our founder's voice: on sauces

Extracts from *A Concise Encyclopaedia of Gastronomy* by André Simon.

Compiled by Prof. Alan F. Harrison



*In England there are sixty different religions, and only one sauce.*

'SAUCE' is one of those French words that came over with the Normans and remains unchanged to this day. It still retains its original meaning of a relish to make our food more appetizing, but, whilst that is the only meaning of 'sauce' in France, the Elizabethans took 'sauce' out of the field of gastronomy, in England, and endowed it with a new meaning: a refreshingly impudent rejoinder was in a 'saucy' manner 'saucily' said; petulance became 'sauciness'; an impertinent fellow a 'saucebox'. And in England to-day 'sauce' is still used in the jocular and vernacular mood in the 'None of your sauce', which would be quite the wrong way to decline the bread-crumbs-soaked-in-milk mess proffered with roast chicken by well-meaning dining-car attendants.

In all mediaeval household accounts of lordly feasts and homely meals, 'salt and sauce' are shown almost invariably as a single entry, a proof that sauce was then mostly, if not exclusively, a savoury relish served with fish and meat to make them more palatable, or more acceptable, when they had suffered in transit or storage. Present-day rapid methods of transport and modern means of refrigeration have banished the need to sauce over unpleasant reminders of incipient mortification in highly perishable foodstuffs. Sauces are no longer the spicy pickles which they were originally. Their chief object today is to make our food look and taste better, to make it at the same time more appetizing and more nutritious.

A good appetite may be called the best of all sauces, and meat gravy as good a sauce as any roast requires. In both instances, however, the name 'Sauce' is used more figuratively than literally. Strictly speaking, sauces are liquid or semi-liquid foods devised to make other foods look, smell, and taste better, and hence be more easily digested and more beneficial. There are a few sauces which are quite simple, such as melted butter, an emollient, or mint sauce, a stimulant. But the majority of sauces are combinations of various elements affording to every cook a chance of displaying his or her own individuality, even when adhering to the main directions laid down in cookery books.

Most sauces have as a basis some nourishing substance, be it cream, butter, milk, olive oil or an 'essence', that is a concentrated form of meat or fish stock. Then there is the binding, mostly eggs, and, lastly, the flavouring agent or agents, one or more of the many varieties of herbs, spices, condiments and wines. Hence the possibility of countless combinations in sauces that will be different in colour, flavour, taste and consistency; sauces that will make us enjoy, digest and be duly grateful for boiled cod and baked beans.

Sauces, like all else, are continually changing in details whilst the foundations upon which they are built change but little if at all. There are five foundation sauces or basic sauces, called in French *Grandes Sauces* or *Sauces Meres*. Two of them have a record of two hundred years behind them; they are the *Bechamelle* and the *Mayonnaise*. They have lasted so long, not only because they are very good, but because they are so adaptable and provide a fine basis for a considerable number of other sauces. The other three, which also date back to the eighteenth century, are the *Velouté*, the *Brune* and the *Blonde*; Carême called these last two *Notre Espagnole* and *Notre Allemande*, to emphasize that both were French sauces and that their names were due to their dark and fair complexions. ((Carême was an early exponent of *grande cuisine* - the high art of French cooking. He is considered one of the first celebrity chefs.))  
(More about the book in the June 2015 article.) ⇨



Antonin Carême  
1784 - 1833

These five sauces still provide the basis for the making of many modern sauces, but no longer of most of them. Modern sauces may be divided into two classes: the Carême and Escoffier classes. Among the faithful, in the great kitchens of the world, Escoffier is to Carême what the New Testament is to the Old.

Carême and his disciples produced sauces that were works of art: beautiful and delicious, but complicated. Their chief concern might have been - and probably was - to camouflage as much as possible the meat, game or fish served with some sauce. Many of the sauces which Carême used or introduced were strong and spicy sauces, such as the *vert-pré*, *Périgieux*, *matelote*, *bourguignotte* (now called *bourguignonne*), *chevreuil*, *aigre-doux*, *piquante*, *salmis*, *Robert*, *raifort*, etc. Of course, there were others, such as the *Sauce Suprême* and the *Sauce Hollandaise*, for instance, as great favourites today as they were a hundred years ago. But, on the whole, Carême sauces killed more than they helped the flavour of the meat or game, fish or poultry with which they were served.

Escoffier took a different view: he was the apostle of simplicity; he wanted his sauces to help and not to hide the flavour of whatever dish they adorned. He introduced, and he had the greatest faith in, *fumets* and *essences*, that is, evaporated stock obtained by allowing the water, milk or wine in which meat, fish or vegetables happen to be cooked, to steam away slowly so as to leave behind a fragrant concentrate as a basis for whatever sauce will be served with them.



Escoffier 1846—1935

Grimod de la Reynière (1758-1837, left), the author of *L'Almanach des Gourmands*, and a contemporary of Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826, right), allowed his enthusiasm once upon a time to run away with his discretion, when he exclaimed: 'I would eat my own father with such a sauce'. Escoffier would not have approved of such a sauce: he was not even too keen about the old French proverb: *C'est la sauce qui fait manger le poisson*. Fish that one cannot eat unless it be buried under a rich sauce had better be buried in the ground, but the fine flavour of a fresh Dover sole



cooked in white wine is helped, not blurred, when served with a sauce made from the greatly 'reduced' wine in which the fish was cooked.

*Espagnole* and *Allemande*, the *roux brun* and *blond*, and all flour sauces, are less and less popular today; *fumets* and *essences*, which are of much more easy digestion, more delicate, lighter, and altogether better, are the greatest favourites, and they deserve to be.

Imagination and wit are gifts which are only too easily dulled by dull food and dull company, whether we be young or old. We cannot always choose the company, but we can, or should be able, to choose our sauces and banish dullness from our meals.

Far too long has England lain under the jibe that she has a hundred religions, but only one sauce. The reverse would be ever so much better for everybody, and as there are signs of a desire for greater religious unity, let us hope that the desire may also grow for more and better sauces. There is but one serious obstacle in the path of a 'sauce-conscious' England, and it is the sauce inferiority complex of the race.

The belief is deep-rooted in English minds that the making of a French sauce is far too difficult a task to be attempted with any hope of success. But it is not the case. Most classical sauces, called French sauces, are well within the understanding and achievement of most of us. There are, of course, a number of complicated sauces, in the making of which strange ingredients, rarely available, are indispensable, and such sauces are better left alone or ordered at hotels and restaurants where they happen to be obtainable. But they are exceptions to the rule, and if they are mentioned in the following pages, it is merely as a matter of general interest.

On the other hand, all the sauces for which detailed recipes have been given can normally be made in most households in England or the United States of America just as well as in France. The making of sauces is not confined to any nationality, and it offers a field which is positively unlimited to the cook who possesses imagination and taste.

Besides the names of the better-known sauces, there will be found in this Section the names of the *Garnitures* or garnishings which usually adorn the sauces themselves or dishes served with their own particular sauce; also various dressings and stuffings.

Read about those items and more from the Sauce chapter at <http://gastronomyext.yolasite.com/alssaucues.php>

# A GOURMET FIVE DAYS IN SAN SEBASTIAN

## BY JEFFREY BENSON – CHAIRMAN OF LONDON BRANCH

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May

A taxi arrives at 6am for Heathrow terminal 1 to catch the BA 466 for the 90 minute flight to Bilbao departing at 8.30. A so called breakfast was served; a small carton of over-sweet orange juice, a bacon and cheese croissant that must have just been removed straight from the deep-freeze as it still had icicles hanging from it, then a cardboard cup of stewed coffee.

We arrive at 11am local time and encounter a ridiculous delay at passport control causing us to miss the bus leaving at 11.45 to San Sebastian which leaves every hour, but fortunately there is a very good tapas bar at the airport where we have some delicious Iberico Bellota ham rolls and few glasses of a good red Rioja wine.

The weather sadly is overcast for the 70 minute bus ride which is a pleasant journey (through the countryside reminiscent of Bavaria with verdant green hills and chalet style houses nestled into the hillside albeit on the main road straight through to San Sebastian).

San Sebastian, known locally as Donostia, boasts one of the best-in-city beaches in Europe. It has a shimmering scallop-shaped bay replete with crescents of golden sand and turquoise water with a spruced-up seaside four mile ocean front promenade of three beaches all dominated by Mount Urgull, the wooded peak crowned with a statue of Jesus.

The city is quite small and divided into: Parte Vieja (Old Town), Gros, Centro and Iete.

We check into the delightful Hotel Londres Y Ingleterra, built in 1865 originally as a town-house, now completely renovated in 2012/13 retaining all the original features.


We are allocated 211, the magnificent Le Blon Suite (named after the famous racing driver) overlooking La Concha beach and the Atlantic Ocean. The suite is full of his photographs and memorabilia including his spectacles, knife, watch, compass and cigarette case.

The weather has now improved and is sunny and warm, so we walk to the Parte Vieja (old town) which is most attractive and mainly pedestrianised with many Pintxos (pronounced ‘Pinchos’) tapas bars with all the dishes laid out on the bar counters. As we intend to visit a number of these later, we stop at the Txurut bar in the Plaza de Constitucion which is an attractive large square with seven outdoor bars and surrounded by three story apartments with orange painted numbers above the French doors from 1-147 which all open onto the square.

We sample some local wines –Sila Godello, which was earthy and heavyweight and Txakoli Ganeta which was light, young and slightly fizzy.

We then walk further into the old town noting the pintxos bars that had been recommended for later visits, then back to the hotels ‘Swing Bar’ with its superb views across the ocean and have more Txakoli pronounced ‘Chakoli’ which curiously is served in water tumblers – most odd. We are told that this is the way this particular wine should be served from a great height into the glass as it is a very young wine – a sort of decanting

After a well-deserved rest we take a very pleasant 10 minute walk along the ocean front back to the old town for Txikiteo – the Basque term for Pintxos-Pincho-Bar-Hop and make our first stop at Gandarias 31 de Agosto 23 where we thoroughly enjoy the pintxos which are spread out all along the bar – Anchovy and Prawn, Salt Cod, Herring and Onion, Mushroom and Garlic Tart and glasses of Beronia Crianza Vinho Tinto – A highly recommended Pintxos Bar.

Then onto Cuchara at Plaza Valle Lersunai which is just off the 31 de Augusto and quite difficult to find, but well worth the effort. This Pintxos bar serves typically local food where all the dishes are written daily on a blackboard and you order giving your name, so when all the freshly prepared dishes are ready your name is called out to collect them. We have superb Ravioli Brandia stuffed with cheese, Bucalao Contlado - salt cod in a Pequiko emulsion. Carrilleba de Ternera – slow cooked ox cheek with a sort of Polenta, Suckling Pig, and another glass of local Vinho Tinto, all very delicious. This place is a must to visit. We then soujourn to an outside bar in the Plaza de Constiticion for a glass of Txa- koli.

Still feeling slightly peckish we stroll to another Pintxos bar - Borda Berri where again all the dishes are on the blackboard and freshly prepared to order, we have Galmo Rejo - Pork Belly Rib, Oreja Cerdo – Crispy Pigs Ear which I found not to be crispy: the plate consisted of a large glutinous complete ear, finishing with Chocolate Ganache with Cointreau. This is a very authentic superb Pintxos bar particularly if you like offal. All the Pintxos are traditionally fairly small and priced at 2-3 euros each. Feeling replete we walk back to the hotel bar and enjoy another glass of Vinho Tinto overlooking the ocean.

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May

My wife Clare's birthday.

The weather today is slightly cloudy but a very pleasant 17 degrees. We have been recommended to take breakfast at Café Kanto, Calbeton 41 which is a great place to have freshly squeezed orange juice, croissants, brioche and delicious café solo all for 4.5 euros and very popular with the locals.

We take a long walk to La Zurriola beach area to the east of the old town and river. This is a popular surf beach, then over the Puente Santa Catalina. It is sad to see so many ugly modern buildings set amongst classic Basque architecture.

At midday we walk along the Playa de Concha and stop at the Perla Bar which is on an open terrace right on the ocean where we have a refreshing glass of Cava sparkling wine. Dark clouds appear and it starts to rain, so we then take a taxi to where we have booked a table at 2pm at Restaurante Arzak, Avda Alcade Jose Elosequi 273 where we meet the chef/proprietor Juan Mari Arzak who has three Michelin stars. This is a 28 seater restaurant where we are given a superb corner table and both choose the tasting menu. I ask the sommelier to select various wines to accompany the food as the wine list is a tome of virtually every wine from every region of Spain and a superb selection of the best from the rest of the world.

Menu:

Kabararka pudding with kataifi

Gyoza of prawns and moringa

Black pudding and beer

Lentil cookie with ssam-jang

Anchovies with pickled strawberry

Crispy manioc hydrated with huitacoche stuffed with a preparation of onion, green tea and foie gras

Apple injected with beetroot accompanied by creamy foie gras and potato 'mother of pearl'

Sautéed lobster with fresh pollen, sweet and acidic flavours with blue honeycomb

Fish of the day – mackerel with patxaran and purple corn

Red egg cooked at 65 degrees centigrade, red peppers, cereal ferments and crispy pig's trotters

Crispy colourful fallen leaves accompany red mullet fillet and crustacean stock

Monkfish with rhubarb and lilies

Pigeon with nuts and Armagnac served with manioc and 'guitar' shavings enveloped with light cypress aromas

Over a lotus leaf, Lamb served with lotus root, quinoa and its juice

Lunar chocolate cube with a fluid core of mint, neroli and kiwi

Large cocoa and sugar truffle with a creamy chocolate and carob filling

Crispy black lemon image with a sweet citrus cream interior sprinkled with the same fruit

Wines:

Elkano Cava

Jose Pariente Verdejo

Lagar de Cervera

Erre Punto Blanco

Grimau Chardonnay Barrica

D.Luis R Crianza

Moscatel M.R

We say good bye to Juan and his charming daughter Elena at 5.30

This was one of the finest meals I have ever had. 



A taxi takes us back to the hotel for a well-earned rest. Later we go the hotel bar where, having consulted the drinks menu find they have two pages of 17 different Gins which appear to be their speciality. I select a Spanish Gin - M.G and tonic which is hand-poured into a large goblet filled with ice, lime and juniper berries. The measure of gin poured is heroic.

As the weather is clement and feeling slightly peckish we walk to the Parte Vieja and visit some Pintxos bars starting with Casa Vergara, Calle Mayor where we share a delicious plate of Jamon Iberico with a glass of Ramon Bilbao Crianza, which curiously seems to have stimulated our appetite so we venture next door to Casa Alcalde where the long bar counter is laden with the most exquisite range of tempting Pintxos. We sample croquettes filled with ham, then what can only be described as mini hamburgers of wagyu beef topped with a tiny fried egg, anchovies with garlic, herrings and onions, again washed down with some local Vinho Tinto. Having reluctantly decided we had enough we walk back to the hotel encountering a very strong wind and heavy rain and arrive back quite wet when we decide to have a final glass of Vinho Tinto in the bar before retiring.

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> may

A most disturbed night as there was a violent storm with a howling gale. Although calmed down it is still cloudy and overcast. After a light breakfast in the hotel bar and as the wind is beginning to drop clearing the skies we book a one hour city bus tour which takes us through the Playa de Onderreta with its elegant houses then through the centre of town and the Gros area of smart shops and magnificent cathedral and over the ornate Puente de Santa Christina. The trip is well worthwhile for the first visit to San Sebastian.

We have reserved a table for 1.30 at Restauarant Martin Berastegui, Ioidi Kalea 4, 20160 Lasarte-Oria and he also has three Michelin stars. This 38 seater is set in an ultra-modern building in the suburbs 7 kms out of San Sebastian. It is very elegant with well-spaced tables, quite pretentious though with white-gloved staff and embossed cutlery and glasses all bearing his name.

We both choose 'The Great Tasting Menu' which has the date against each dish when it was introduced

Menu  
Sea crunch tempura with Txakoli wine mayonnaise and citrus gel - 2014

Kumquat, potato firewater, olive and anchovy - 2014

Mille-feuille of smoked eel, foie-gras, spring onions and green apple - 1995

Red Shrimp Royale and dill with a 'Vente del Baron' oil - 2014

Lightly marinated warm oyster with iced cucumber slush and K5, and spicy apple - 2015

Monkfish liver marinated in sea chlorophyll and served with anchovies and seaweed salad - 2015

'The Truffle' stuffed with chicken foie gras with fermented mushrooms and a foam of collard greens with 'Alma de Jerez' oil - 2015

Vegetable hearts salad with seafood, cream of lettuce and iodised juice - 2001

'Gorrotxategi' egg resting on a liquid herb salad and dewlap carpaccio - 2011

Crispy golden Swiss chard stems with scallops in their own aniseed-flavoured sea juice - 2015

Red mullet with its scale crystals in red wine, celeriac veloute and ale beer - 2015

Suckling lamb chop with Parmesan whey, fritter and asparagus with citrus dressing - 2015

Saffron veil with melt-in-your-mouth macaroons and tea flower ice cream - 2015

Smoked sponge with cocoa crunch, frozen whisky cream, crushed ice, green beans and mint - 2014

Wines:

2012 Guimaro - 100% Godello, Ribeira Sacra

2011 Sin Rumba - 100% Verdejo, V.T Castilla Y Leon, Segovia

2011 Pezas Da Portela - 100% Godello, Valdeorras

2011 Clio - 100% Monastrell, D.O. Jumilla

2012 Aalto PS - 100% Tinta Fina, D.O Ribera del Duero

2011 Itsasmendi Uretzi - 100% Hondarrabi Zuri, D.O. Bizkaiko Txakolina

2012 Tintilla de Rota - 100% Tintilla de Rota, D.O. Jerez



The dishes were very interesting and innovative with portions that were larger than at Arzak, and it is quite a struggle to get through the endless courses.

We were then invited into the large, modern and well-equipped kitchen, which has a staff of 40

Having said good bye to Martin Berastegui at 6pm we take a taxi back to our hotel.

After a well-earned rest, we decide as it is raining and not feeling in the least peckish settle into the hotel bar with a well-chilled bottle of Mumm champagne. →

## Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May

The weather is still overcast but looks as though it is clearing so after a light breakfast we take a long walk hugging the beach line where there are 15 football pitches marked out in the sand where young boys and girl teams are competing. We continue to the far west end of the Playa de Onderrata to 'Piene del Viento' (The wind Comb), this was created by a local artist and has become somewhat of a symbol for the town. After seeing a strange apparition of a naked man venturing out of the ocean we take the well-worn funicular to the top of Mount Igeldo which sports the most spectacular views of the town. The place is an antiquated amusement park full of old-fashioned retro children's rides such as a Ghost Train, House of Horrors and a carousel dated 1902. Thank goodness we are out of season as it must be an absolute nightmare in the summer months. We partake of a half bottle of refreshing Cava at the El Karrusel bar before descending the 10 minute journey.

We then walk back to the old town to the busy Astelana bar on the corner of the Plaza de la Constitucion for a glass of local Vinho Blanco and a good assortment of Pintxos.

At last the sun is shining so we take another drink sitting at the Bar Txurut in the Plaza. As it is Saturday, the bands are playing, the bars are full and the streets are buzzing with crowds of people enjoying the weather.

We have reserved a table for 8.30pm at Akelare, yet another three Michelin star restaurant, Pso del Padre Orcalaga 56 where the chef Pedro Subijana has a very high reputation. The 20 minute taxi ride takes us up high up Mount Igeldo, but sadly not only is it raining but there is a very heavy cloud which obscures what would have been the most amazing views over the ocean from our table.

The restaurant is very modern and unpretentious and what is most odd is that they offer three tasting menus – ARANORI – BEKARKI – THE AKELARE'S CLASSICS and A La Carte, one can order either of the menus without the other person ordering the same menu, so a table of four can order the three separate tasting menus and al la Carte. We both choose the BEKARKI menu.

### Menu:

Prawns and French beans cooked in 'Orujo' Fireplace at the table

Asparagus cured milk, fava beans and little peas

Pasta carpaccio, Piquillo and Iberic

Red Scorpion fish 'Unami'

Desalted 'Cod Box' with edible shavings and cod tripe in tomato water

Grilled Iberic 'Secreto' with pepper seeds and garlic in three different versions

Roasted baby lamb, salad in skein 'Sissas' and sweetbreads

Melting cupcake made of yoghurt foam, coffee and chestnut

Orange 'Tocino de Cielo' sheet with fruit leaves

Wines

2011 Raventos Blanc de la Finca, Conca del Riu Anoia

2011 Benguetxe Bereia, Getariako Txakolina

2011 Trico, Rias Baixas

2012 Taleia, Castell d'Encas, Costers del Sepre

2007 Vin Jaune, Jaques Puffeney, Arbois

2013 Ixilane, Pachere du V.C Bilh Sec

2012 Ossian Segovias, La Cueva del Contador Rioja

Mathusalem Oloroso Dulce, Gonzalez Byass

Caligo Vicle Boiza, Catalunya.

The food overall was disappointing

## Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May

The weather remains overcast but the beach is set out this time for rugby pitches and after a light breakfast we walk to the vegetable market and around the local shops. We wander into the five star Maria Christina Hotel which is very pretentious and over the top, featuring its own gourmet deli shop and has nothing like the views from our hotel.

We check out of our lovely hotel at 12.30 and take a taxi to Karlos Arguinano Restaurant, Calle de Mendilauta 13, Zarautz some 20 kms from San Sebastian on the way to Bilbao. This hotel restaurant is located right on the beach packed with local clientele. This place was recommended to us by the concierge at our hotel. We choose their tasting menu.

Pickled Partridge Salad with Quinoa Vinaigrette

Low temperature egg with consommé and leek soup wafer

Roast cod with baby squid black sauce

Iberico sirloin, celeriac sauce and vegetables

Mandarin Sundae with fruits of the forest mousse

And a bottle of K5 Arginano – 100% Hondarribi Zuri

The whole meal was well cooked and presented

A taxi then takes us to Bilbao airport for the 19.40 flight to Heathrow.

On reflection San Sebastian is a gourmand's paradise and worth a four day visit, only off season



## around the branches - St James's



### The Pavilion and Penthouse Suite the Dorchester

On 2nd July the St James's Branch held a black-tie dinner at The Pavilion and Penthouse Suite of The Dorchester, in the presence of a few Council members who were in London for their annual meeting. We have been holding this event year after year for over 12 years as the magical setting, impeccable service, delicious food and superb wines (donated by our members) always conspire to create a magical evening. Towards the end of the dinner, we took the opportunity to present The Dorchester with our Society's Award for Excellence which they had earned for the dinner they served us on 17th July last year (see attached menu). Ian Nicol, Chairman of the EAZ Committee, presented the Award Certificate to Roger Olsson, Executive Sous-Chef, who prepared both last year's and this year's dinners and achieved an even higher standard of perfection than before, not only in the execution of each dish, but also in the matching with our wines. This year's dinner was actually just as perfect as last year's and would have qualified for an Award as well, both truly memorable events!

*Ari Safianos*

## around the branches - London



### Dinner at the Innholders'

Following the excellent EAC dinner at The Innholders' Hall in November 2014, London Branch paid a return visit in May 2015 in order to present chef Herbert Berger with the Society's Restaurant Award. On this occasion we opted to bring our own wines. Our reception commenced with an interesting Reserve Grand Cru Champagne from Marguet Pere et Fils, a small up-and-coming producer in Ambonnay. This was followed by a Salad of English Asparagus and Devon Crab, with asparagus vinaigrette and herb, accompanied by Chateau Rahoul Graves, 2010. The Sauvignon Blanc base was a good match for the asparagus, while the Semillion Blanc together with a slight touch of oak gave it strength to complement the crab. This proved to be an excellent combination.

For the main course, Herbert served a Fillet of Lamb, with wild mushroom crust, mint veloute, seasonal greens and truffle oil mash. This was accompanied by Chateau Lingoa Barton, St Julien 2001 very kindly provided by member Richard Duncan. For the dessert, we had a Rhubarb and Strawberry Eton Mess, with rhubarb and crême fraiche sorbet. The wine, again from Richard Duncan, was Chateau Coutet, Sauternes-Barsac 2003, and absolutely delicious.

Stephanie Shepherd presented The Society's Restaurant Award to Herbert Berger on behalf of the EAZ. All agreed that this had been another superb meal, and that the award was well-deserved. We hope to be paying Herbert another visit before too long.

*Alan Shepherd*



### Society Restaurant Awards

Has your branch presented a restaurant award in the last year, if not why not? You must have enjoyed at least one memorable restaurant meal. Top class restaurant owners, managers and chefs need to be encouraged with a Society award. Most importantly an appropriately mounted and framed certificate on a restaurant wall gives the Society publicity and widens our profile.

Applying for an award is simple. You can either contact the EAC Awards officer (details below) to request a form or you can download one from [www.iwfs.org](http://www.iwfs.org). On the website log into the members section with your password, in the European & African area hover over 'Resources' on the drop down menu, click on 'Branch Resources', click on 'Restaurant Award Form' and print it off. You will see you need signatures of supporting members, these are best collected at your next meeting. Important, make sure that names of the restaurant owner, manager, chef etc are correct as these will appear on the certificate. Any extra information you have such as a menu is useful when the Awards Committee are considering your application.

Please remember when you are presenting the award, invite the local media, get as much publicity as possible for the Society. Also contact F&W editor with details and photos and inform the restaurant that they are entitled to a free advert and to contact the Editor.

**Awards Officer:** Ron Barker Bluebell Barn Lady Green Court Ince Blundell Merseyside L38 6JE email [ronbarker@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ronbarker@hotmail.co.uk)



## The Chairman's Lunch 2015

In mid-summer you hope for fair weather when planning a lunch out-of-doors, but it was too much to expect a few days' absence of rain to last until our so-called 'Chairman's lunch', an annual fixture on the branch's calendar. Our hosts awakened early in the morning to the sound of gales, and promptly made an executive decision to re-route the event indoors. Their hard work and the graceful surroundings in which we lunched were much admired. About 30 guests attended with a sizeable showing from our friends in the neighbouring Bath and Bristol branch. Members were greeted with canapés and a choice of apertifs- Saumur Brut, Saumur Rosé and a Gratién and Meyer sparkling non-alcoholic drink, alternatives to the customary Prosecco or orange juice. A printed menu was available with accompanying brief notes about the wines, nearly all of which came via The Wine Society.

Lunch was served in four separate but connected rooms; each looked inviting, as did the presentation of the tables. Our hostess, an



accomplished chef, first offered a fish flan with a pea and mint puree. This was served with the Wine Society's Exhibition Alsace Riesling, a biodynamically-produced wine which the Society modestly claims is 'Alsace Riesling at its best' Rather than going straight into the main course, the chairman encouraged a pause as a result of the sun deigning to make an appearance. An exodus therefore began to the terrace surrounding the swimming pool, which had been the original choice of venue. Meanwhile from a contraption resembling Stephenson's 'Rocket', our host skillfully produced beef smoked over a wooden fire.

Lacking a touch of faith in the outcome of these arrangements, our hostess had prepared a leg of lamb, in reserve, as it were. She need not have doubted. The beef was succulent and delicious, as of course was the lamb. They were eaten with an orange salad and dauphinoise potatoes in garlic and cream. With this main course, members could experiment by sampling three less familiar red wines. The first came from Uruguay: Atlantico Sur Garzon Vineyard Seleccion Especial MalanadoTannat 2011. Uruguay is a country of steak connoisseurs –



with six times as many cows as people – and the Tannat, the national grape is well suited to beef. Our members agreed. The second came from the Lebanon: Château Ksara 2011, similar in style to a claret but, as the Wine Society added, 'a claret with a Lebanese twist'. This twist seemed to appeal to many who sampled the wine with roast lamb. The third red was Patrimonio Rouge, Clos Alivu, 2013, a wine made in Corsica from 100% Nielluccio grapes, the most widely planted grape in that country and similar to the Tuscan grape Sangiovese. Perhaps because the chairman rashly linked the rising star of the young Napoleon Bonaparte to this wine, its take-up and rating were modest compared with the other two reds.



This time, the absence of rain was not the only spur to encourage members to venture outside for an interlude of enjoyment of the surroundings. Tempting puddings were on offer –velvet chocolate torte, blackcurrant Fool, and mango, frangipane and chilli tart – and appetites and space had to be created. Most took advantage, but a few remained in their seats; the absence of fresh air and stretching of limbs appeared not to have the slightest effect on their subsequent appetites. Cheeses followed, all from the immediate vicinity or wider region: two from Cardiganshire –Perl Las, a soft, creamy blue with a gentle flavour, and Perl Wen, an organic Brie-style cheese; Red Fox from neighbouring Shropshire, both sweet and savoury, and also crunchy; and finally a great favourite of our members – Black Bomber, from Snowdonia, a Welsh cheddar with a deep flavour.

Appreciative responses, including from wine cognoscenti in our midst, were volunteered for the Wine Society's Exhibition Alsace Gewurztraminer which was brought out for the cheeses alongside the available reds.

By this time, our lunch was passing its fourth hour. As a conclusion, we gave a nod to Italy by ending with a choice of digestifs. Limoncello is often set before diners in Italian restaurants at the end of a meal, often without prompting and certainly not for payment. We offered this refreshing lemon-flavoured liqueur as one option, and for the other a rare example from western Sicily of a low alcohol (16%) liqueur using the aromatic grape zibibbo, named after the Arabic word for grape, zibib.



Altogether different from Marsala, its full title was far too long for anyone to remember at the end of an apocalyptic feast.

*Stephen Bennion*



# around the branches - Zurich

## The Zurich summer BBQ, a social, team building and learning event

The 'cheer leaders' Ruth and Edy Hug, assisted by the 'commis' Magy and Urs Dietler and 12 other motivated three-star-cooks gathered for a BBQ event at the Hug's place just outside Zurich.

Having hoped that the bad weather forecast would be wrong, we faced heavy rain in the garden kitchen. But large umbrellas, good humour and the firm will to prepare an outstanding BBQ meal inspired the participants to prepare a wonderful meal from scratch. The ingredients were brought together and the fires were set. Marinating the meat started the exercise. The basic recipes were constantly improved by the 'cooks' (more garlic, more pepper, more of this and that). Finally, everything was on one of the grills. Meanwhile the rest of the cooks were chopping and rolling to prepare a selection of salads, potato gratin and delicious desserts.

Now, there was ample time to taste a marvellous Prosecco and Federweisser, a local Rosé wine, with several amuse bouches and to exchange views over the recipes. Then came the moment of truth, the buffet with all the results were ready. Everything was really outstanding. Was it the basic teaching of the chefs and their commis, or was it the individual improvements by the enthusiastic cooks. We will never know, but the event was another success for the participants of the Zurich Branch. The food was accompanied by great wine choices by our host, including a Malbec from a vineyard in Argentina in which he has an interest and dividends are "paid" in wine. Good food, good wines and good company.

The mouthwatering menu included:

### Amuse bouches

- Dates stuffed with Cheese
- Shrimp Cocktails

### Meat

- US Filet of Beef marinated in herbs
- Chicken Legs marinated with mustard, garlic, honey, soy sauce, etc.
- 'Drunk' Chicken' steamed and finally cooked in beer
- Spare Ribs of Veal glazed Western Style

### Accompanying sides

- Potato Gratin
- Various salads

### Dessert

- Swiss Trifle
- Coffee/Tea

### Wines

- Prosecco,selezione sconosciuto
- Meilener Federweisser (Schwarzenbach)
- Merlot Lavertezzo , Ticino, Selezione Hug
- Soluna Primus, Malbec, Argentina



# around the branches - London

## Great Sweet Wines from Two Worlds

At the Naval Club on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 21 people were able to compare six wines from the commercial world, all from excellent makers and years, with five from the world of home-made wines, from those who have won firsts in the national show. It was non-competitive, with no votes taken. There were two absolutely perfect wines, the 1999 Tokay and the 1968 Madeira. The general consensus was that the home-made wines were comparable in quality to the other four commercial wines. The quality differences were so small that I marked the wines out of 100 instead of 10.

**Schloss Vollrads 2001 Spätlese Rheingau Riesling.** 8% alcohol. Gold. Lovely bouquet with no petrol. Less acid than a corresponding Mosel wine. Very pleasant. One expert on German wines rated it extremely highly, 90%.

**Bothy Vineyards The Paradox 2007, Oxfordshire Regional Wine.** Ortega (Müller-Thurgau x Siegerrebe) and Findling (mutation of Müller-Thurgau). A unique early harvest dessert wine from the Liwicki family. Only 1,218 bottles (50 cl) were made. 10.5%. Medium-sweet. July storms resulted in very small seedless grapes with a lot of sugar and flavour. Early harvesting gave a superb acid/sugar balance. Light gold, slightly oily appearance. Legs. Very good aromatic bouquet and a delicious flavour. Hints of lemon. Good length. Lovely! 93%.

**B. Lamb, Peach and Apricot Wine 2012, London.** About 12%? Sweet. SG 1.038. From a small producer making about 90 bottles of different wines a year, mainly non-grape. Very ripe peaches, soft dried apricots, sugar, Gervin No. 3 yeast, smashed washed sultanas. Small amounts of grape tannin and tartaric acid were added before bottling. Not fined or filtered. Gold-amber. Legs. Big bouquet, mainly apricot. Good body. Delicious. Much liked. Satisfying. 93%.

**White After-dinner Wine, not fortified, the National winners, 2009.** Perhaps 16%? Brown with amber edges. Legs. Big fruity bouquet, apricots and dried fruits. Lovely body and length. Sweet but well balanced. Excellent all round. Probably the best-liked home-made wine. 97%.

**B. Lamb, Red After-dinner Wine, not fortified, 2007, London.** Perhaps 16%? Sweet. SG 1.040. I like complexity, so I made it with elderberries, blackcurrants, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, sloes, sultanas, red grape juice, dried apricots and Polish bilberries. Pasteurised to 60°C. Young's dessert/high alcohol yeast. Sugar. Glycerine before bottling. Unfined, unfiltered. Deep red-brown, amber edges. Big legs. Big fruity bouquet. Packed with fruit flavours, with some detectable strawberry and sultana coming through. Very long and complex. 95%.

**Château Suduiraut 1970 Sauternes.** First growth, Premier Cru Classé. Perhaps 14%. Sweet. Pleasant gold. Legs. Unctuous bouquet, barley sugar. Good balance and length. Lighter in style than the after-dinner wines. Quite elegant but one taster said that it was not as good as expected. 94%.

**Marcel Deiss Gewurztraminer 1989 Vendange Tardif, Bergheim, Alsace.** 14%. Sweet. Deiss is famous for very good but expensive sweet wines. Gold. Big bouquet with noble rot. Sweet but not very. Good length. Elegant and complex but to everyone's astonishment, no trace at all of Gewurztraminer smell or taste! 93%.

**Tokaj Classic Tokaji Aszu 1999, 6 puttonyos.** 11%. Sweet. The yield was less than 3 hl/ha, compared with about 7 for Yquem and up to 25 for most Sauternes. Gold. Big legs. Big rich noble-rot bouquet. Huge body. Very sweet but balanced. Very complex and concentrated. Absolutely perfect! 100%. (£65 for 50 cl, Harrods)

**Fortified Sweet Sherry-style, the National winners, 2011.** Perhaps 20%. Brown-amber. Big legs. Excellent fruity bouquet expressing dried fruits. Big body. Luscious. Good length. An excellent sweet wine, but it could have done with more sherry characteristics. 93%.

**Fortified Madeira-style After-dinner Wine, the National winners, 2009.** Perhaps 20%. Brown-amber. Big legs. Big fruity bouquet with some dried fruit character. Big body, good length. Lovely balance, strongly sweet but not cloying. Slight maderisation, as expected. 93%.

**Pereira D'Oliveiras Reserva Boal 1968 Madeira.** 20%, labelled medium sweet. Brown/deep amber. Big legs. Lovely rich, satisfying bouquet with dried fruit, not noble rot. Sweet, delicious. Really long and very complex. Definitely happiness-inducing. Absolutely perfect. 100%.

**An 'out-of-this world' special mystery drink.** 29.9%. Sweet. English. This was served blind, for fun. It was Thunder Toffee + Vodka, from Scream Retail Ltd. Deep gold. Huge legs. Strong butterscotch/toffee bouquet. Sweet. Very pleasant all round. 85%. It can be served with mixers or over ice. This unusual tasting was completed by Brenda Lamb with a cold supper and four puddings.

**Bernard Lamb, organiser and speaker.**



# around the branches - Berkshire

## Japanese Evening – Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2015

The Berkshire Branch is a very open-minded group and is always ready to try something different. On this occasion it was our members Chris and Yoko Gutch, working closely with Charlotte Turner, who transported 37 members to Japan for a few hours to sample food & drink in a memorable and spectacular way.

So “Japanese” means raw fish Sushi and are not all Sakes the same? Absolutely not, as clearly demonstrated by our three presenters. The evening structure was set around a tasting of seven different Sakes with eleven separate dishes selected to complement the flavours.

Although Sake is often described as “Rice Wine”, the process for producing it has more similarities with brewing a beer. Like barley, rice contains starch but little in the way of sugars. Also, it is basically dry and so the liquid has to come from water. The first challenge is to convert the starch to sugars and to ferment the sugars to alcohol. In the case of Sake, the first part is carried out by a mould called ‘Koji’ (technically *aspergillus oryzae*) and the second part by selected yeasts.

A key part of the process is milling the rice after which it is washed and steam-cooked. Premium Sake is brewed with special rice in which the starch component (the *shinpaku* or “white heart”) is concentrated at the centre of the grain, with proteins, fats, and amino acids located toward the outside. By milling the rice, one can remove some of the fats, proteins, and amino acids that lead to unwanted flavours and aromas in the brewing process. In general, the more you polish the rice, the higher the grade of Sake. Some Sakes use 100% of the rice, others 65% or 60% and for the higher qualities only 40% of the rice grain is used, 60% having been milled away.

Koji is sprinkled on steamed rice and encouraged to multiply over a period of 3 days. A ‘Starter Mix’ is prepared by mixing some of the koji incubated rice with steamed rice, yeast and water, and allowing it to ferment for about 14 days. The ‘Starter Mix’ is transferred to a larger vessel for the main fermentation. More rice, koji incubated rice and water are added. Over the next three days two further additions of rice, koji incubated rice and water are added. The mixture then continues to ferment for a further 18 to 32 days when the fermentation stops. It is then pressed, filtered and blended.

Another difference between grades of Sake is whether or not additional alcohol has been added during the fermentation process. This is added not so much to increase the level of alcohol in the final product but rather it is claimed that the use of alcohol in a very controlled manner helps to pull out from the fermenting mash more aromatic and flavourful compounds that are soluble in alcohol. The final alcoholic strength of a Sake is determined by dilution with water. This leads to the designation of 6 “Special Designated Sakes” of which we tasted 4 on the evening. Altogether 7 different sakes were tasted. These were drunk hot, cold or at room temperature depending on the course and recommendation of the maker.

For me two Sakes stood out. Firstly the **Honjozo Genshu Akashi-Tai** at 19% alcohol is described as “The undiluted Honjozo Akashi-Tai (i.e. no water added) is a satisfyingly full-bodied Sake. This is the drink the brew masters reach for at the end of a working day. This is perhaps the most direct way to savour the full palate of our Sake. The flavour continues to mellow pleasingly over time.” Secondly the **Genmai Yamadanishiki Akashi-Tai 2012** at 17% alcohol is described thus: “The Genmai Akashi-Tai was first created in 2002 using the finest of rices for Sake — Yamada Nishiki — in an almost entirely unpolished form. Because unpolished brown rice was used, this Sake required extra special attention to detail, such as double-steaming of the rice. Bottled after being allowed to age, the Genmai Akashi-Tai will continue to grow in delicious complexity if allowed to age further. Newly fermented Sake cannot provide this kind of mature complexity of flavours. The 2012 vintage brings out all the nuances of fragrance and flavour inherent in rice.”

The food which accompanied the Sakes started with the most succulent and tender **Beef Tataki** which had been lightly seared and then marinated in a citrus sauce for 3 hours. Two types of beef were compared, both from Scotland; one was **Wagyu**, literally “Japanese cow” and the other well hung Scottish rib eye. Both melted in the mouth but the marbling of the Wagyu beef, the best known of which comes from Kobe, resulted in the finer flavour. These were served with **Edamame** beans whose contents are eaten directly from the pod and **Ohitashi** which is par-boiled vegetables (in our case spinach) dipped in dashi, a stock and Shoyu (Soy) sauce.

Then came warm **Buta no Kakuni**, pork belly, which was delicious, followed by cold Tofu (**Hiyayakko**). A taster of battered courgettes preceded small chicken kebabs called **Yakitori**, followed by **Gyoza** ground meat and vegetable dumplings wrapped in thin rice dough (actually Chinese but very popular in Japan).

At this point of the evening we switched from sake to Japanese beer (Asahi Super Dry, available from Waitrose and Tesco!) and/or Japanese Green Tea to accompany **Sushi** made from vinegared rice, vegetables and cooked seafood, wrapped in **Nori** dried seaweed (**Makizushi**), which was excellent. Sushi is often prepared from raw fish but many common varieties use cooked ingredients or are vegetarian. Raw fish sliced and served without rice is called sashimi. We were then supplied with squares of nori and a plate of various ingredients to make our own mini cones of makizushi, called **Te-makizushi**.

Finally we were treated to two delicious deserts: a **Matcha** (powdered green tea) roulade, and a white peach (from Charlotte’s garden) agar jelly.

The etiquette for eating in Japan is very complex. For instance, when eating from small bowls, it is correct to pick up the bowl and hold it close to your mouth but larger dishes should not be picked up. You should always empty your bowl to the last grain of rice. Blowing your nose or burping at the table is considered bad manners and never refill your own Sake glass, always refill others and let someone else refill yours. The rules for using chopsticks are also very well defined!

The tableware provided by our presenters matched the food perfectly and the tables themselves were decorated with origami pieces by Yoko and floral arrangements in the Japanese style by Coreen. Unfortunately we had, in the end, to come back to earth, or more properly Waltham St Lawrence, having experienced in one evening more styles of Sake, more Japanese dishes and learned more about an aspect of Japanese culture than seemed possible at the start.

Our sincere thanks go to Yoko, Charlotte and Chris for all the very hard work and preparation which

went into the event. This article can only offer a small window into what we experienced and the Branch website <http://www.iwfsberkshire.org/> will have full descriptions of all parts of the event.



# around the branches - Devon



*David Redhead*

## Report on the Visit to the Greedy Goose 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015

The Greedy Goose is situated in an ancient building which miraculously survived the intense bombing of Plymouth in the second World War. It is full of rustic charm including a well, lit from below in one of the ante rooms.

The Devon Branch took the tasting menu with the attached flight of wines. A charming amuse bouche consisting of deep fried coated mussels with an accompanying Aioli dressing. A wonderful starter accompanied by Joseph Perrier Cuvee Royal Brut Champagne. There followed a mini assortment of cauliflower, pickled cucumber and razor clam all presented in a razor clam shell on an oblong slate plate.

There followed a slow cooked duck egg, all yolk and no white with asparagus, gnocci and summer truffle beautifully presented with a crisp 2013 Chablis by Dom Seguinot-Bordet, perhaps not quite as steely as it should be.

A fish course followed with perfectly cooked John Dory with a Nicoise garnish and Hollandaise Sauce, with a soft boiled quails egg in a coating of fine bread crumbs. It was accompanied by a 2012 Neudorf Sauvignon Blanc from Nelson in New Zealand. This wine was fragrant with a soft and inviting aroma of gooseberry with a touch of asparagus. The gooseberry pie flavours were slightly overlaid by the limey acidity which is as it should be and finished with a slightly sweeter finish than the attack. A lovely course.

The next course presented three delicious morsels of pork, all different cuts and all cooked differently and all tender with a garnish of vegetables. The accompanying wine was a superb 2013 Pinot Noir from New Zealand. A soft wine with very mature ripe tannins almost below the ample fruit filled palate of red berried soft fruit, mainly raspberries with a hint of strawberries.

An amusing mini sweet next was a custard based one presented in an eggshell in a bed of straw. The real sweet course was a dissected strawberry mess with separate mini strawberries and a tasty middle. The wine was a 2013 Elysium black Muscat from the USA. It was quite pruneey and the sweetness was leavened by a delicious streak of acidity which balanced it nicely.

The last course was Devon cheeses with pickles and Chutney with fruit and nut bread. Sweet and sour in a good combination. It was accompanied by a Ramos Pintos Ruby Port not quite as intense as some but with delectable Christmas Cake flavours.

A further amuse bouche followed with a dressed banana slice on a bed of cake. What a wonderful meal

## Starters and Puds

We are always pleased to meet in Kip and Susie's lovely garden in Mayford, but this time the rain defeated them and us but we were able to use the Village Hall just down the road from them through the good offices of our hosts, Kip and Susie, with their local connection with the Hall. We welcomed two new chefs Diana Mineck and Mathias Kayser; Susie's Cherry Tomato Canapés welcomed us with a glass of Champagne Monsigny. The Cauliflower Panna Cotta with toasted Pitta Bread fingers was also Susie's; this was followed by Stephanie's Mackerel, Orange and Labneh with Black Onion Seeds and Chili on a bed of Baby Gem Lettuce leaves with Cucumber and Mint. The third Starter was Diana's Thai Beef in Lettuce Cups. Mathias's Pud was Hazelnut Cake with homemade Coffee Ice Cream, followed by Bernard Lamb's Blackberry Fool. Diana's Baklava rounded off the meal. Alan Shepherd organised the wines which were: St Aubin premier Cru, Murgers des Dents de Chien, Domaine Gerard Thomas 2013 and Mercurey Premier Cru, en Sazenay, Domaine Jean Michel et Laurent Pillot 2008. Graham Lovelock brought along the Noble Sauvignon Blanc 2013/14 to accompany the Puds. Over tea and coffee everyone had a chance to mingle and talk with old friends and make new ones. As always we thank the chefs, not forgetting Alan and of course Kip and Susie for all their all their hard work, dedication and organisation

*Helen Mills  
Chairman*



## Wine Dinner at Hawksmoor Guildhall.

TUESDAY 23<sup>th</sup> JUNE

London branch returned for a big bottle tasting to Hawksmoor in the City and had a well lubricated evening with some very fine wine! We dined on:-

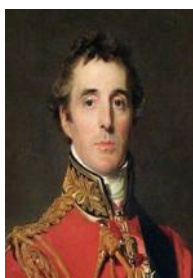
**Tamworth Belly Ribs – Hawksmoor Smoked Salmon  
Baked Beetroot with Hazelnut & Horseradish  
Hugel Cuvee Jubilee 2009 Riesling Magnum**

**Prime Rib – Porterhouse – Rump  
Selection of Sides & Sauces  
Chateau Langoa Barton 2001 Salamanazar**

**Sticky Toffee Pudding - Ice Cream - Sorbet - Neal's Yard Cheeses  
coffee**

Our thanks goes to member Paul Rhodes for sourcing the bottles!

*Andrew Brodie*



## London Branch Celebrate 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Battle of Waterloo Dinner Featuring a Vintage 1815 Bual Madeira Tuesday July 14<sup>th</sup>

The **Battle of Waterloo** was fought on Sunday, 18 June 1815, near Waterloo in present-day Belgium, then part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. A French army under the command of Napoleon was defeated by the armies of the Seventh Coalition, comprising an Anglo-allied army under the command of the Duke of Wellington.

This was despite Napoleon's view that, "Just because you have all been beaten by Wellington, you think he's a good general. I tell you Wellington is a bad general, the English are bad troops, and this affair is nothing more than eating breakfast". According to Wellington, the battle was "The nearest-run thing you ever saw in your life". Nonetheless we won, and the rest is history.

Chairman of London Branch Jeffrey Benson just happened to have 1815 Madeira in his cellar and Andrew Brodie & Carole Goldberg made it all happen, for 27 members, at The Naval Club in Mayfair. We gathered with South Ridge (UK) Cuvée Merret Brut.

Our specially arranged menu was as follows:

**English Smoked Eel, Crispy Braised Pigs Head, Apple Sauce**

*2014 Bolney Estate Bacchus*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Fillet of Beef Wellington, Fondant Potato, Seasonal Vegetables and Thyme Jus**

*2014 Bonley Estate Pinot Noir, 2009 Wickham Special Reserve,*

*As a sop to the French*

*2006 Ch Tronquoy-Lalande*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dark Belgian Chocolate Marquise, Griottine Cherries**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Waterloo Cheese and Cornish Yarg served with assorted Biscuits 2009 Taylors Late bottled Vintage Port**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Vintage 1815 Bual Madeira*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Coffee and Mints**

The food and wines were excellent, the 1815 Bual was simply stunning! Another great privilege IWFS event.

# around the branches - Herefordshire & Monmouthshire



## Discovery in North Wales

Late May proved to be an excellent choice of date and season to visit the lesser known delights of north Wales and the Shropshire border. We were delighted to be joined by several members from Bath & Bristol in our party of 15 and we met at a small country hotel near Oswestry - The Pen-y-Dyffryn - a converted 19<sup>th</sup> century rectory where the chef has been awarded 2 rosettes for more than 10 consecutive years. We would stay for two nights leaving the menu entirely to the chef to create from the best local market products. As we arrived we were offered home-made scones with home-made jam and local cream which satisfied our appetites until we met for a pre dinner drink and nibbles. Our first dinner : Smoked Haddock Velouté with snipped chives as an appetiser.

A choice of Tian of Devon Crab with Beef Tomato , Avocado, Coriander & Spring Onions or ; Wye Valley Asparagus with Poached local duck egg & Hollandaise sauce accompanied by Parfait of Bryn Dewi Farm free range chicken livers with Quince Jelly & toasted Brioché.

Two main courses were offered - Herb Crusted Best end of Welsh Spring Lamb with Ragout of Baby Gem leaves , Pancetta , Peas & Garlic , Dauphinoise Potatoes or ; Angelsey Sea Bass Fillet with buttered Baby Spinach & Tomato, Basil & white wine cream sauce. Desserts; Crème Brulée served with poached rhubarb and hibiscus, brandy snap & rhubarb sorbet  
O :- Steamed chocolate pudding with chocolate sauce , vanilla ice cream and warm Welsh cakes with poached plums & mascarpone cream

A selection of Welsh cheeses followed the wines :

Several of our guests commented that the lamb was undercooked but otherwise delicious.



The following day we visited the Welsh Food Centre at Bodnant in the spectacular Conwy Valley which showcases Welsh food products in its delicatessen outlet and in the Hay-loft Restaurant where we were hosted at lunch by "Dai the Chef " who had designed a collage of local meats and cheeses served with locally baked breads. . Dai has been *chef de cuisine* at Bodnant for many years and he has passed his enthusiasm and expertise to his son who is now a sommelier at Cliveden House hotel in Buckinghamshire. Dai proved to be a wizard with a whisk - which he portrayed as " *the vigorous motion of a hand holding a fork* " and he created a fresh fruit and whipped cream trifle at our tables. Fortuitously he had prepared a few earlier and our calorie counts left the scales.

We drank a Welsh Chardonnay from Montgomeryshire which had won international prizes. The Welsh Food Centre is also the home of the National Beekeeping Centre for Wales where our party was introduced to several different varieties of honey from diligent Welsh Bees.

On returning to the hotel for our second dinner we met for pre dinner drinks and the Celtic weather being clement encouraged a few to stroll in the gardens.

The appetiser - Cream of tomato soup with basil oil

To start: Home cured salmon with dill , dressed mixed leaves with a dill & honey sauce – or ; Pansygawn Goats Cheese & Maple syrup mousse with poached pears, walnuts & red wine syrup.

The two main course choices were haunch steak of Shropshire venison with parsnip purée, buttered cabbage , wild mushroom & game jus - or ; grilled plaice fillet with Morecambe Bay brown shrimps, parsley butter, roasted baby fennel & broad beans. Accompany-

ing vegetables : roast potatoes with thyme & garlic , buttered carrots with lemon & mange tout.

The most popular of the desserts offered was crème caramel with poached blackberries & tuille biscuit with an alternative, warm Welsh cakes with roasted baby apricots & vanilla mascarpone cream.

After the feast we shared platters of Welsh cheese and savoured Colombian fair trade coffee.

The wines :Gavi la Battistina Viognier 2013 and Jean Balmont Merlot Vin de France 2102

Overall verdict – couldn't fault it.

**Peter McGahey**



# around the branches - Manchester



## Lunch at *The Hawksmoor*

Deansgate, Manchester

Monday 13th July 2015

Lunch at Hawksmoor turned out to be a jolly affair. Spurred on by excellent reports from the London Branch visit to Hawksmoor Guildhall, 38 of our members visited the latest addition to the Manchester gastronomic scene at the refurbished Victorian courthouse. The architectural changes are fascinating and create an ambience of comfort and tradition which like the no fuss menu will appeal to the Manchester business community.

We parted from our usual format and were offered a surprise three course menu with choices :-

*Potted mackerel*

*Bone marrow with onions*

*Heritage tomato salad with Graceburn*

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*Rump Steak*

*House cured salmon*

*Grilled courgette with pear, walnut & Colston Bassett*

*Plus one side: Fries- Chips or Greens - Salad*

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*Sticky toffee pudding*

*Honeycomb sundae*

*Raspberry & Yoghurt Eton mess*

Excellent ingredients cooked simply with flare and no nonsense service.

On this occasion members were invited to take in their own wines. As most were expecting to choose the steak, there was on the table a fine selection of reds ranging from Pillastrò Italy 2010, Tarras Pinot Noir NZ 2009, to Clos du Chateau de Puligny-Montrachet Bourgogne 2007, choices which encouraged much chatter and happy banter. All in all a most enjoyable lunch

***Christine Redman***

## The Summer Garden Party

Manchester Branch held their Annual Summer Garden Party at the lovely home of Derek and Tricia Fletcher. The event was attended by 48 members in a marquee which was erected in their magnificent garden, with sloping lawns, colourful floral beds and the River Irwell flowing lazily alongside! The day was blessed with stunningly sunny weather and as always this was one of the most popular and enjoyable social events of the year.

The members, in their sun hats, were welcomed with an aperitif of Champagne *Autreau Roualet Brut Reserve*, which was sipped in the sunbathed garden.

Then followed a delicious summery lunch, which was as follows:-

Smoked Salmon with prawns and a light dill sauce

*Chablis Domaine du Colombier 2013 G. Mothe*

\*\*\*\*\*

Roasted stuffed chicken breast, tomato and cucumber salad, green salad and new potatoes

*Beaujolais Domaine de la Cote 2013 Domaine bottled C. Chatelus*

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Cheese board

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Summer fruits served with a Chantilly sauce

The food, which was devoured enthusiastically, was prepared by the Branch Committee and members. Everyone agreed that they had done a sterling job. The wines, which were chosen by Bob Lloyd, were drunk with equal appreciation.

A big thank you must go to all the team involved, especially our hosts, Derek and Tricia, for making this once again a memorable occasion.



# around the branches - Leicester



## The White Swan

Inspired by Ron Barker's article in the September 2014 issue of Food and Wine Sally Moore, Past Chairman and John Hind, Leicester's present Chairman, visited the White Swan, Shawell, with a view to arranging our joint meeting with Northampton there. It was Leicester's turn following a very successful meeting at Roade House last year. They were very impressed and so Sally went ahead and arranged a luncheon on Wednesday August 26<sup>th</sup>. Thirteen members from Leicester and twenty-five from Northampton attended.

It was a drizzly morning and so we didn't have our aperitifs on the terrace behind the pub but squashed into the entrance area with its magnificent glass cooled cabinet for white and sparkling wines, where we were warmly welcomed.

We drank Le Dolce Colline Prosecco, extra dry and enjoyed delicious tiny, elegant canapés – tiny Yorkshire puddings with roast beef and horseradish cream, goat's cheese with beetroot and fresh anchovies in batter.

We were seated at four long tables and served with a superb slice of warm bread and a glass of house Chardonnay – Thomas Macon Villages – lightly oaked with citrus fruits. It perfectly complemented the two fish courses on our five course tasting menu. The first course was an Orkney scallop served in a shell with a piece of pork belly, scorched apple puree, spring onion and caviar beurre blanc. This was followed by three ravioli topped with a little braised venison, decorated with tiny squares of beetroot and turnip and topped with watercress – elegantly served on a black plate. Next we enjoyed pan-fried sea bass, perfectly cooked with heirloom tomatoes and little balls of goat's cheese arancini with a delicious herby green sauce. I thought 'heirloom tomatoes' must

be exaggerated menu speak but a Northampton lady gardener on our table said that they were a special variety difficult to obtain, producing tomatoes of different colours and shapes on the same plant. We enjoyed red and yellow tomato slices.

The main course was sliced lamb rump with a crispy croquette of braised shoulder, tiny mounds of smoked mashed potato, peas and girolles. The red wine accompanying it beautifully was a house Merlot - Domaine de la Baume - said to show dark berry fruits with spice and oak. We scarcely had room for pudding but rallied to enjoy a small slice of cherry and almond semi-freddo a perfect end to a superb meal.

We had to wait rather a long time between courses but I expect this was because the chefs were unused to producing a tasting menu for 38 people to be served simultaneously. When the first dishes of a course came from the kitchen the rest followed quickly and the waitresses were charming and helpful. The front of house manager was away ill but I think they coped admirably without him. Some people had to go before the coffee but when it came it was

also of a very high standard.

The Chairmen of both branches made short speeches and resolved to repeat this most enjoyable event next year. The four chefs came from the kitchen and we congratulated them warmly on an excellent and memorable meal.



## Visit to Hambleton Hall in Summertime.

Tony Willis, our treasurer, arranged another very successful visit to Hambleton Hall on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July. He negotiated a very good deal for luncheon including wines and impeccable service for only £63. Twenty of us attended. We were invited to have exclusive use of the bar for aperitifs and canapés but suddenly the sun came out and we were able to enjoy the terrace instead.

We drank an excellent sparkling wine – NV Varichon & Clerc Blanc de Blanc [Methode Traditionelle] and ate unusual canapés before being ushered into one of their private dining rooms with a view of the lake. The table looked very elegant. Mushroom Raviolo with a delicious Artichoke soup was the first course. Then we

chose between Confit of Duck leg with Cucumber, Plums and Black Beans or Fillet of Seabass with a tomato and basil flavoured Cous Cous and a Bouillabaisse Sauce. I chose duck with its excellent sauce. We enjoyed Tony's favourite soufflé dish for desert – this time Chocolate and Orange with an Orange Sorbet. I can't think how the chef manages to produce twenty perfect soufflés all at one time. We stayed at the table for Coffee and Sweet Delights.

We drank plentiful supplies of a 2014 Macon Uchizy Gérard Talmard and a 2012 Mourgues du Gres "Les Galets Rouges" Costières de Nîmes.

We left for home between 3.30 and 4pm feeling very happy.

**Mary Jewell**



# IWFS EAZ Weekend NORTH WALES 15th - 18th May 2016

**DRESS CODE:** Smart Casual (Jacket & Tie for the gentlemen in the evenings, please.)



For our Regional Weekend in 2016 Val Brookfield-Bishop has arranged a visit to North Wales. Val is well-known to many IWFS members as Secretary (recently retired) of Mid-Cheshire Branch but perhaps better for the holidays she organises for members in Europe and beyond. This time she is on home-turf, showcasing what North Wales has to offer. It should be a memorable visit.

We have chosen the St Georges' Hotel, Llandudno as our base for this event. Built as one of the original luxury hotels in Llandudno, the St Georges underwent an extensive refurbishment in 2006. Situated on the promenade, many of its rooms offer views across the bay. The hotel is about 10 minutes walk from Llandudno Station and a similar distance from the Great Orme Tramway. We will have dinner at the hotel on our first evening.

The next day we will visit to Bodnant Garden, one of the most magnificent gardens in the UK. In mid-May we may be too early to see the famous Laburnum Arch - all 50 metres of it - in its full glory, but the rhododendrons, azaleas and late magnolias should not disappoint. After a morning in the garden we will be visiting the Welsh Food

Centre for a demonstration and lunch.

The Food Centre is part of the Bodnant Estate so we won't have far to travel. It was set up to showcase Welsh produce, meat comes from local farms, cheese and bread are made on site. Lunch over we will return to Llandudno where we will have some free time to explore the town before a short coach ride to The Quay at Deganwy for dinner.



On the next day we will visit Gwillan Pant Du Vineyard near Caernarfon for a tour and tasting before taking lunch at Chateau Rhianfa, Beaumaris, Anglesey. In addition to lunch we will have a guided tour of the Chateau and its wine cellars before returning to Llandudno in the afternoon.

Dinner on our last evening will be at Bodysgallen Hall Hotel. Bodysgallen is a National Trust Property with stunning gardens which we will be able to explore before dinner. The hotel is a great favourite of Mid-Cheshire Branch and Val and her husband Paul in particular.

As usual we would like members to book their accommodation direct with the St George's hotel in Llandudno. The rates we have been offered are £70.00 per person for double occupancy, single supplement £35.00 per night and include full breakfast. Room upgrades are available. Please remember to quote **The International Wine & Food Society** when making your booking. The Hotel telephone number is: 01492 862 174 or email: [reservations@stgeorgeswales.co.uk](mailto:reservations@stgeorgeswales.co.uk)

The cost for the event itself **without** hotel accommodation but including meals with wine, coach transport and entry fees - where applicable - is £445.00 for members and £495.00 for non-members and guests.

Bookings for this event should be made through John Nicholas, EAZ Treasurer

as usual. The booking reference for this event is **North Wales**. Please use this reference to identify your payment when paying by electronic transfer.

**To book this event**, please email the EAC Treasurer John Nicholas at [johnsnicholas@aol.com](mailto:johnsnicholas@aol.com) with the following information:

Your full name, address, phone number and the name of your Branch

The event or events you wish to book

The full names of others in your party.

and any dietary or special requirements.

We would prefer payment by electronic transfer in GBP (£ sterling); if you wish to pay by credit card please contact John either by email or telephone: (00) 41 79 753 68 81. Payments by credit card will incur a 3% surcharge.

**For payments in GBP:**

Bank: **HSBC** Branch:

**Witney**

Sort Code: **40-47-07**

Account Number: **41699075**

Account Name: **IWFS Europe Africa Ltd**

**Reference: North Wales**

The IBAN and BIC/Swift codes for payments from overseas are as follows:

IBAN: **GB48MIDL40470741699075**

SWIFT Code: **MIDLGB22**

**If you prefer to book by post**, please send the same information with your cheque to the address below:

Mr. J. S. Nicholas (for IWFS EAC) c/o Mrs G S Moore, 2 Stevenson Close, East Hanney Oxfordshire OX12 0FF

**Cancellation Policy:**

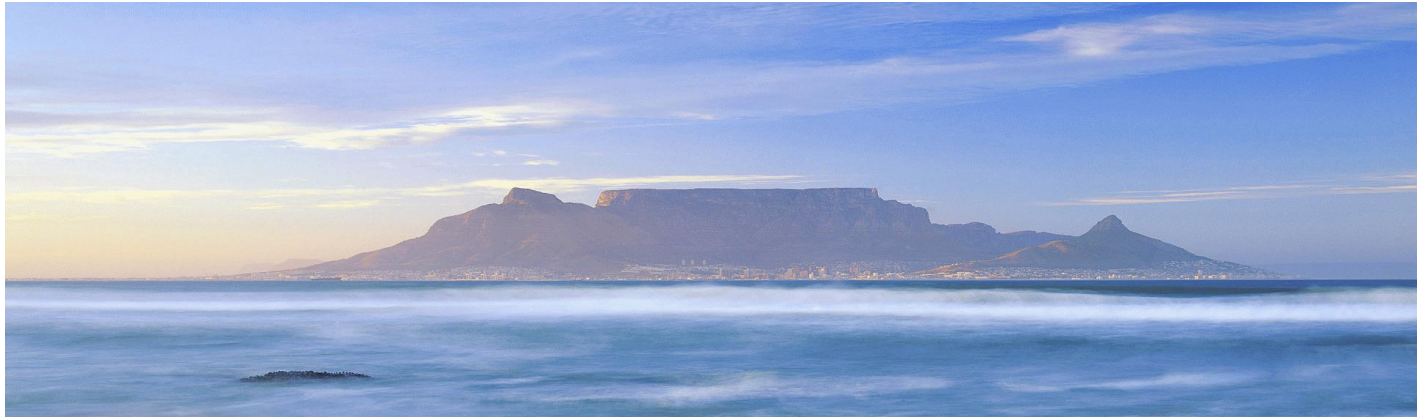
Members will have a 14 day cooling off period from receipt of their payment during which they can cancel and receive a full refund.

After the 14 day cooling off period, payments will not be refunded unless a replacement registration is received.

You are advised to have full insurance to cover cancellation

# Capetown Festival and John Avery Dinner.

23 - 25 February 2016



The late John Avery needs no introduction to members of our society. It is a great honour for the Cape Town branch to welcome you to the Mother City of South Africa to celebrate his life. He was very fond of Cape Town and so it's fitting that she has been chosen as one of a selected few destinations to host this special occasion.

## **Tuesday 23 February**

A fast growing reputation for producing quirky, interesting and lip-smackingly good wines has earned the West Coast of South Africa the privilege of hosting the first day of your visit. You'll spend a day in the Swartland wine area, enjoying a tasting of its best wines, hosted by a number of the winemakers of the area. This will be followed by lunch at one of the wine farms while continuing to enjoy wines of the region.

You'll have the evening at leisure to unwind and relax.

## **Wednesday 24 February**

Sit back on a luxury coach to enjoy an exclusive tour of the Cape Peninsula, stopping here and there at famous sites for photo opportunities and short visits. Lunch is included of course.

You'll have time for a short "Turn around" at your hotel before being whisked off to a "Dine around" at members' homes – a function which is always considered a highlight!

## **Thursday 25 February**

A morning tutored tasting of South Africa's most prestigious wines will set you up nicely for lunch and an afternoon at leisure. This in turn will allow you time to get ready for – Ta daa! – the (a)very reason for your visit...

The John Avery Memorial Dinner will be held at the award-winning 5-star Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa, a majestic hotel set on an equally majestic coastline.

All transport to and from all functions will be provided from a central point in the Waterfront. We

have therefore decided not to select a particular Festival hotel.

The Twelve Apostles hotel ([www.12apostleshotel.com](http://www.12apostleshotel.com)), where we will hold the John Avery Dinner, is offering us a special rate on its classic rooms of R3927.00 per room depending on availability. However, it is located in Camps Bay some distance from the Waterfront. They do provide a complimentary shuttle bus. If you would like to stay there, our contact is Rabia Brey [banqueting@12apostles.co.za](mailto:banqueting@12apostles.co.za) and quote "Accommodation: John Avery"

On the other hand there are several hotels close to the Waterfront where you might prefer to stay, including:

CapeGraceHotel [www.capegrace.com](http://www.capegrace.com)

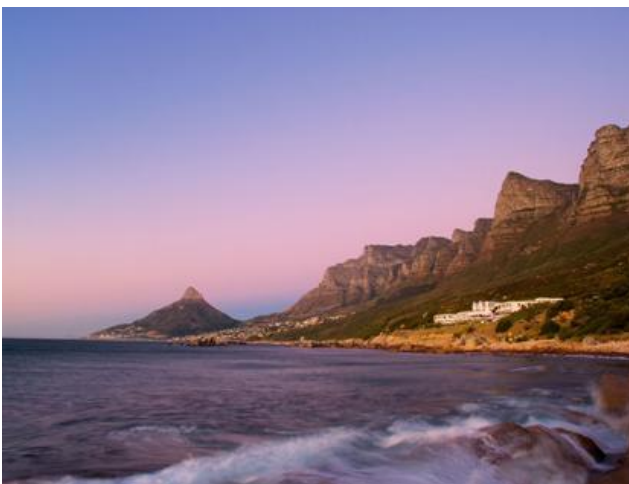


Table Bay Hotel [www.suninternational.com/table-bay](http://www.suninternational.com/table-bay)

Victoria and Alfred Hotel [www.newmarkhotels.com/accomodation/hotels/victoria-alfred-hotel](http://www.newmarkhotels.com/accomodation/hotels/victoria-alfred-hotel)

The Portswood Hotel [www.legacyhotels.co.za/portswood](http://www.legacyhotels.co.za/portswood)

You will need to make your own accommodation booking with the hotel of your choice.

### Pre and Post event tours:

There are numerous opportunities for pre and post event tours. Operators we suggest include: Classic Escapes [www.classic-escapes.com](http://www.classic-escapes.com) +27 832558227 contact person Caroline Bayly Link Travel [david@linktravel.co.za](mailto:david@linktravel.co.za) +27216743160 contact person David Baron. Cederberg Travel [www.cederberg-travel.com](http://www.cederberg-travel.com)

They have all been used successfully by IWFS members on previous visits to South Africa.

### MAKING YOUR RESERVATION:

The cost for members, **excluding accommodation and flights**, will be **GBP 445 per person**. There is a surcharge of GBP 50 for non-members, including partners of members, making a total of **GBP 495 per non-member**. To confirm your interest, please communicate as follows and make a **deposit payment of GBP 200 per person**. Numbers for this event are restricted and the date of receipt of the deposit payment will determine the timing of your application. Final payment will be required by 30 November 2015.

Please book by sending an email to **Hilton Kuck**, the Cape Town branch contact organiser, at [hjkuck@cyberserv.co.za](mailto:hjkuck@cyberserv.co.za) with a copy to the EAZ Treasurer, John Nicholas, at [johnsnicholas@aol.com](mailto:johnsnicholas@aol.com) stating the name of your Branch, the full name of each person for whom you are reserving a place, a telephone number and whether or not any of the party are non-members. **Please also indicate any special dietary requirements.**

Payment may be made in one of the following ways:

**1. We would prefer payment by electronic transfer**, in GBP (£ sterling) to HSBC Bank, Witney Branch, Sort Code **40-47-07**, Account IWFS Europe Africa Ltd., no. **41699075**, or for international transfers: IBAN: **GB48MIDL40470741699075**; BIC: **MIDLGB22**; please ensure that all transfer costs (both your bank and our bank) are for your account

**Please include the reference: Cape Town 2016 deposit**

**2. If you wish to pay by credit card**, please contact John Nicholas either by email at the address above, or by mobile on (00) 41 79 753 68 81. Payments by credit card will incur a 3 percent surcharge.

**3. If you prefer to pay by cheque**, please send it to:

**J S Nicholas (for IWFS EAZ), c/o Mrs G S Moore, 2 Stevenson Close, East Hanney, Oxfordshire OX12 0FF**

### Cancellation Policy

- You may cancel within 7 days of your payment and receive a full refund up to 30th November 2015. If you cancel after 7 days but before 30 September 2015, your deposit per person will be refunded less an administration fee of £50 per person

- If you cancel after 7 days and between 30 September 2015 and 30 November 2015, your deposit in total will be forfeit, but the final balance, if you have paid it, will be refunded in full.

If you cancel after 30 November, no refund will be possible.

**You are advised to have personal cancellation insurance**



# EAZ EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

## 20 -23 September 2016

This is your opportunity to participate in a three night Wine and Food Festival in Edinburgh, the inspiring political and cultural capital of Scotland, where centuries of history meet a vibrant, cosmopolitan city in an unforgettable setting. Discover stunning scenery, striking architecture and fine food.



Our closing meal will be on board the “Royal Yacht, Britannia”, dining in the State Dining room after a reception in the State Drawing Room. There will be an opportunity to tour the vessel. We confidently expect the same high standards as when it was in Royal service.

The event will include two other memorable dinners, one of which will be in a Michelin starred establishment. We will also have the opportunity to visit some of the historic buildings and sample quality Scottish products.

The Festival ends at the Britannia dinner on Thursday evening, but on the Friday morning we will hold the Annual General Meeting of the European and African Zone. Following the AGM there will be an opportunity, for those who wish, to taste some special Scottish Malt Whisky and attend a farewell luncheon at extra cost.

The Festival hotel is the 5\* The Balmoral on Princes Street in the heart of the city. There is a Michelin starred restaurant (The Number One) in the basement. Grand Hotels in Capital Cities



Are never cheap but we believe it gives good value . Other options include 4\* hotels The George Hotel (400yards) and Apex Waterloo Place Hotel and two economy hotels. (Travel Lodge and Premier Inns) both within 250 yards . Members are responsible for their own hotel bookings but all transport to events will be from the Balmoral. Details of the hotels are available on the website.

The cost of the festival for members , excluding accommodation and flights for the three day event will be GBP 850per member . There is a surcharge of GBP 85 for non-members including partners of members, making a total of GBP 935 per non-member. There will be an additional charge for the events following the AGM on Friday 23rd September,

To confirm your interest please email Ron Barker (ronbarker@hotmail.co.uk), the event organiser, with a copy to John Nicholas (johnnicholas@aol.com), the EAZ Treasurer, stating exactly which parts of the festival and post-festival event you wish to attend, the name of your Branch, the full name of each person for whom you are registering, a telephone number and whether or not any of the party are non-members. Please also indicate any special dietary requirements.



Full details of how to make payments are on the website <http://www.iwfs.org/europe-africa/events/edinburgh-festival-2016>), together with our cancellation policy. Numbers for this event are restricted and the date of receipt of the deposit payment will determine the time of your application.

It may be possible to accommodate additional participants at the Royal Yacht Britannia Dinner, depending on how many delegates book for the festival, but the cost for the tour, reception and dinner *will be not less than GBP 225 per person GBP 250 per non-member*).

To see many of the attractions in Edinburgh go to the Sky-Scanner website: <http://www.skyscanner.net/news/24-hours-edinburgh-video-city-guide>. We look forward to sharing with you the wonderful hospitality this city has to offer.