

The Society of Medical Friends of Wine

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

www.medicalfriendsofwine.org

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2019

On Sunday, January 20th, 2019, The Society gathered in the beautiful Room of the Dons at the historic Mark Hopkins Hotel atop Nob Hill to honor two milestones in our history.

This evening marked our 80th Anniversary dinner—no small feat in our ever-changing world. Dinner chair Dr. Michael Caplan worked closely with Executive Chef Michael Wong and Executive Sous Chef Milos Ljubomirovic to produce a meal of classical elegance with San Francisco touches. Outgoing President Dan Bikle, M.D., Ph.D., chose accompanying wines, and we were addressed on the subject of “The Future of California Wine” by the Chronicle’s dynamic wine writer, Esther Mobley.



Esther Mobley, San Francisco Chronicle wine writer, addressing the Society at the 80th anniversary dinner

As we walked into the mural clad Room of the Dons, we were greeted by the sounds of a string trio from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and a glass of 2015 Antech “Cuvee Eugenie” Cremant de Limoux. Limoux is located in the southwest of France, in the Languedoc region, an area where the production of sparkling wines reportedly preceded Champagne by a hundred years or so.

Cuvee Eugenie is in honor of Eugenie Limouzy who lived until the age of 96 and ran the Antech estate after her brother was killed in World War I. The property has seen three generations of strong women leaders in the historic male dominated world of French wine making. The region produces two main styles of sparkling wine—Cremant which is very much made in the modern Champagne method from predominantly Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc grapes, with a small contribution of an obscure native varietal called Mauzac (10% in the case of this cuvee). Mauzac is reported to convey a strong green apple flavor to the wines. The second type of sparkling wine from Limoux is called Blanquette, and is made predominantly of the native Mauzac grape. Another fascinating bit of French vinicultural lore that makes the world of wine so intriguing.

With this bit of trivia in mind, the Cuvee Eugenie Cremant de Limoux was about as fine a French non-Champagne sparkler that I can remember, with crispness, fragrance, and freshness all enticing the palate.

We sat down for our first course of Dungeness Crab Chowder, a reminder of how fortunate we are to live in an area famous for this seafood delicacy, and immensely enjoyed it with as beautifully balanced a California Chardonnay as one can wish for in the form of the 2014 Ramey Platt Vineyard from the Sonoma Coast.

The formidable task of pairing salad with wine was then accomplished by a salad of Granny Smith apples and Maytag Blue Cheese with spiced nuts and a pomegranate vinaigrette. Fresh, flavorful, and tart-but not so tart as to clash with the 2016 Franck Millet “Insolite” Sancerre. The Sauvignon Blanc is an amazing and versatile grape when you consider all of the styles and variations produced around the world, with Sancerre being the archetypical example of a wine with a clean, appetite stimulating stony minerality nuanced with aromas of fresh cut grass and finished on the palate with flavors of tart apples and chalkiness.

A cold winter evening begs for a rich and filling main course such as our Wagyu Short Ribs with butternut squash risotto and roasted asparagus. To accompany this Dr. Bikle selected a Syrah based northern Rhone, the 2015 Domaine des Remiozieres “Cuvee Christophe” Crozes-Hermitage. This was a well-endowed wine with adequate body and tannin to support the rich and flavorful meat, while also showing a bit of that intriguing and natural farm yard gaminess that so often distinguishes small producer French wines, particularly from the Rhone region.

If our red wine transported us to the backroads of rural France, the dessert wine brought us back to the classic elegance of chateaux living, well suited for our black-tie clad and elegantly dressed guests of the evening. Stunning 2015 Chateaux Coutet from the Barsac region of

Sauternes and Nob Hill Pecan Pie with Crème-Fraiche left us fortified for the journey home (or the journey upstairs for those who elected to spend the night in our San Francisco hotel version of a chateaux) all the while reflective of the roots of our Society and the long course of history and the multitude of dinners and events we have been so fortunate to experience.



Wines served at the 80th Anniversary Dinner

THE SOCIETY'S HISTORIC FIRST DINNER

The Society of Medical Friends of Wine was founded in 1939 by Leon Adams, a young journalist working with the California Wine Institute. The wine industry at that time was still struggling to overcome the deleterious effects of Prohibition, and Leon had the idea of enlisting the medical profession, at the time a revered and respected component of society, to stimulate the scientific research of wine, develop an understanding of the beneficial effects and encourage an appreciation of the conviviality and good fellowship that are a part of the relaxed and deliberate manner of living that follows its proper use.

At our 80th Anniversary Dinner we had copies of the announcement of the Inaugural Dinner, Friday evening February 24, 1939, at the St. Francis Yacht Club. The list of founding

members included such legendary San Francisco physicians as Salvatore Lucia, Chauncey Leake, and Herbert C Moffett.

Inaugural Dinner

of the

SOCIETY OF MEDICAL FRIENDS
OF WINE

Friday Evening, February 24, 1939

ST. FRANCIS YACHT CLUB

San Francisco

Menu

LE VELOUTÉ DE CLAM CHANTILLY

LA LANGOUSTE THERMIDOR

LE FILET MIGNON BORDELAISE

LE CABILLAUD AU FOUR YACHT CLUB

LES PETITS POIS À LA FRANÇAISE

LES POMMES CALVÉ

LA SALADE VIGNERONNE DU DOCTEUR

FROMAGES VARIÉS

CRÊPES SUZETTE

CAFÉ

Wines

(OF VARIOUS VINEYARDS)

California Dry Sherry

California Riesling

California Burgundy

California Sweet Sauterne

Our founding fathers apparently knew how to eat well and abundantly. Despite the French names for all the courses and the French tradition of salad after the main course and coffee at the end of the meal, the wines are distinctly Californian and rather generic and anonymous--California Dry Sherry, California Riesling, California Burgundy, and California Sweet Sauterne (sic). This probably reflected a goal to support the California wine industry first and foremost and to not offend any producer.

As we reflect over the past 80 years and contemplate the next 80 years, it is fitting to compare and contrast the two dinners and their wines. Appetites, tastes, the roll of doctors in society, societal and home demands, finances and time for leisure all have changed dramatically. While still important, physicians no longer automatically ascend to the top pedestal of society. Leisure time for lengthy dinners and adequate financial resources for expensive events are not givens. Half of all new physicians are women and are faced with challenges of having time for career and family. It takes two earners in a household to live in the Bay Area. Commute traffic means that driving across a bridge for a new dining experience is more of a burden than an adventure.

We would not still be here as a Society if we were not aware of these changes and the needs to adapt to modern conditions. While physicians and other health care providers remain the backbone of our membership, we now welcome all individuals who share our interest and goals of wine and health education. The original credo of Leon Adams and our founding members remains very much relevant today.

As much as I would love the experience of being transported back in time to the celebration 80 years ago, I suspect I wined and dined better at our recent dinner than I would have then.

There is much to look forward to. Thank you for being a member of our Society. I do hope you will continue on, participate as much as possible, and recruit friends and colleagues to join us. We just had a stimulating talk from Ester Mobley about the future of California wine. Let us witness that as a thriving Society.

THANK YOU SUSAN GUERGUY

The other milestone we celebrated, with reluctance, January 20,th was the retirement of our Executive Secretary, Susan Guerguy. For more than 15 years Susan has been the heart and soul of our Society, working tirelessly and diligently, to assure our events were successful and all felt welcomed. Her warm smile and attention to detail were acknowledged, and in our hopes of persuading Susan to continue to attend as many events as possible, she was awarded lifetime honorary membership in the Society.



President Dan Bikle thanking Susan



Past President Marion Koerper Blumberg presenting a gift to Susan on behalf of the Society

WELCOME CLAIRE KEISER

After Susan's announcement your Executive Committee set to work formalizing the definition of the role of the Executive Secretary, deciding budgetary matters and compensation for her successor, and setting out the process of attracting and interviewing candidates.

We were fortunate in having three highly qualified candidates express interest in the position, and made the decision to offer the job to Claire Bloomberg Keiser. Claire has already started and you have received communication from her about our upcoming dinner at Poggio Restaurant in Sausalito on March 17th.

Claire sent out an introductory letter to friends and members of the Society, and I have taken the liberty of reproducing it here in case you missed it.



Dear Society of Medical Friends of Wine Members,

I am delighted to be your new Executive Secretary. Thank you for the honor; I've enjoyed attending your events as a guest in the past. The wines are always pleasant on the palate, thought-provoking, and paired with lectures that leave one feeling improved in the body as well as the mind.

Every story starts with a mother. Well, mine was French. Dinners were always accompanied by wine (usually Bordeaux), and consisted of several courses of delicious, lovingly prepared French food. It was there, at that dinner table, that my devotion to food and wine took hold. This devotion continued, and was fostered by travel focused on the pleasures of dining and exploring new flavors, both solid and liquid. A favorite memory

from childhood was attending the Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine festival. I had no idea what it was all about – I just knew I felt elated by all the excitement surrounding the festival. Post college, I worked in Oakville at Miner Family Winery in the tasting room. This was followed by the study of advertising photography (in the hopes of becoming a food and wine photographer), a hope that was realized. During my ten-year period as a food and wine photographer, I honed my wine tasting skills during trips to France with my sister and father while visiting the regions of Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, the Rhône, the Jura, and Alsace (to name a few).

When I had my daughter in 2016, these trips abroad became impossible. I filled the void in my wine education with tasting trips to Napa and Sonoma, and occasional tastings with the esteemed Society of Medical Friends of Wine. Again, I thank you for the opportunity to advance my learning and satisfy my curiosity about the wines that one cannot taste without a group such as yours. I'm eager to make your tastings and events as rewarding as possible. Please email, call, or address me directly with any and all input -- I'm at your service!

Sincerely yours,

Claire Bloomberg Keiser

THE YEAR AHEAD

At the annual dinner meeting incoming President Jack McElroy, D.V.M., outlined an exciting year of events planned for the Society. Our spring dinner will quickly be at hand, and is described below. Later events will include a joint dinner with the Chaine des Rotisseurs at Alfred's Steak House in San Francisco and our annual wine country tour to the Russian River Valley. In the fall we will return to the French Club for what is always our yearly highlight, and then later in the year look for our annual Cheese and Wine Seminar with Janet Fletcher. More information on all of these events will be forthcoming.



Outgoing President Dan Bikle passes the gavel to incoming President Jack McElroy

DINNER AT POGGIO RESTAURANT, SAUSALITO

March 17, 2019

HOT OFF THE PRESS: 1989 CHATEAU COUTET TO BE SERVED WITH DESSERT

Our next quarterly meeting and dinner will be Sunday March 17th at Poggio Restaurant in Sausalito. While our anniversary dinner at the Mark was quite formal to fit the occasion, our upcoming event at Poggio will be more informal, with very tasty food and superb wines to match. We attended the trial dinner supervised by dinner chair Dan Bikle M.D., Ph.D with wines selected by wine chair, Jim Gallagher, Ph.D.

You will have a choice between Mt. Lassen trout and grilled half chicken. If you like fish, don't miss the exquisite trout. If you're not a fish person, you will find the chicken far superior to average restaurant fare. I consider myself a reasonably good cook and by chance the evening before the trial dinner I had roasted a chicken. The difference in flavor between my version and Poggio's was so dramatic that I considered handing in my toque.

Jim has selected some outstanding wines that won everyone over at the trial dinner. From an unusual, for California, Vermentino by Francis Mahoney (host of one of our 2018 vintage tour venues) to what may be California's finest Sauvignon Blanc from Merry Edwards (whose winery has just been purchased by Roederer), and then featuring both Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Dutton Goldfield as both will be versatile enough to accompany either the trout or the chicken.

We were less successful at finding a dessert wine at the trial dinner, but I have just learned that due to the **generosity of members Barry and Joan Boothe**, we will be offering glasses of the 1989 Chateau Coutet to accompany the warm bittersweet chocolate cake with buffalo gelato. Sauternes changes dramatically during its life in the bottle—from a fresh and fruity and very sweet yellow wine in its youth to a mahogany hued drier but very complex beverage in its advanced age. From wines from an excellent vintage, 30 years is often thought to be the apex of quality of a fine Sauternes, marrying persistent sweetness with layers of glycerin induced unctuousness and marzipan flavored complexity. I can't wait to see how this wine shows. It should add a French twist to an evening of wonderful California wine.

You have received your announcement and sign up form from Claire. Please do come and join us for a festive celebration of wine and food. I am sure St. Patrick will forgive you for choosing something other than corned beef and stout for his day, and our camaraderie will be fitting for a St. Pat's Day celebration.



A large number of wines must be tried at the "Trial" dinner. Your committee hard at work.

WINE INFLATION?

No, not inflation in terms of the price of wine, but rather inflation in terms of the scoring of wine. I am always trying to think of topics for this newsletter that might entertain or stimulate discussion, and I am thinking of sharing my thoughts on wine scoring and wine marketing in the next issue.

The creation of the 100 point wine scoring system, popularized by Mr. Robert Parker, was a genius in marketing, no matter what your thoughts might be about turning wine appreciation into a numbers game. At one point a wine receiving a score above 90 received attention. A 100 point wine was indeed a rarity.

Recently I saw a headline in a wine magazine touting "thousands of 90 plus point wines". 100 point wines are proliferating. As is the number of wine critics using the system, so even if one critic might be less generous in an appraisal of a particular wine there is likely someone else out there who has given a high score that can be used in marketing.

We have all heard about grade inflation. A 3.5 grade point used to get you serious consideration for Medical School. Now a days GPA's above 4 (including honors or advanced placement classes) are common and may be necessary. Are we in the midst of some serious wine grade inflation as well?

Look to our next newsletter for further thoughts on navigating the world of wine judging, sales, and marketing. At our 80th anniversary dinner we enjoyed the talk on the future of California wines. Will that include 105 point wines? Stay tuned.

Bob Blumberg, M.D.
Cellar Master and Editor
Society of Medical Friends of Wine