

Society of Medical Friends of Wine



A Non-Profit 501(c)(3) Corporation, FEIN 94-6088159

www.medicalfriendsofwine.org

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NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2023

Message from your President

As the year rapidly, too rapidly, draws to a close, I wanted to wish everyone a joyous Thanksgiving and a love-filled Holiday season.

Your Executive Committee and Board of Directors have been hard at work putting together our last two events for 2023, as well as planning for the calendar year, 2024. Last month we had a well-attended and well appreciated event at The French Club, which everyone in attendance felt was simply, "over the top".

Everyone felt that the food and member provided wines were spectacular. The membership dug deeply into their cellars and found rare and exciting wines. The chef and his staff outdid themselves with the accompanying dishes. The service was meticulous as well. All seemed to have a memorable time. We plan on having an event at The French Club again in 2024.

The last event of this year is rapidly approaching, our cheese and wine pairing with Janet Fletcher, which will be on December third. It will again be in Mill Valley. Please plan on attending this event which those who have attended in the past have found interesting, educational and fun. (Please see the announcement at the end of this Newsletter).

The first event that we plan on having in 2024, our **84th Annual Dinner**, will be at Poggio's in Sausalito. The date is **January 14**. Final plans for this event are being worked on as we speak. We also are looking into other events for the upcoming year. What we would really like is to have a lot of member participation in planning next year's events: ideas, venues, themes, etc. The greater the participation, the greater the event. Later in this Newsletter which our Editor, Bob Blumberg, MD, has expertly crafted, is additional information on our most recent past events and our upcoming future events.

As you are all aware, our organization is run by volunteers. It's the efforts of the Executive Committee that has led to our recent successful events for which I want, at this time, to thank them. Without their efforts there would be no current Medical Friends of Wine. I would also like to acknowledge the support from our Board of Directors as well as the support and participation from the general membership.

In closing I would like to again wish you a safe and happy holiday season.

Maynard Johnston, MD, FAAP, CWE

President, The Society of the Medical Friends of Wine

DINNER AT THE FRENCH CLUB

September 22, 2023

By Robert Blumberg, M.D.

For the vast majority of our dinners, we follow the classic task of choosing particular wines to pair with the food. There may be a theme of a particular region or varietal, or a chance to contrast younger wines with well-aged older ones. What to drink that evening is left in the hands of the cellar and dinner chairs.

For a few years now, our annual dinners at the French Club have been different. Each attendee has been invited to bring a bottle, either purchased or from his or her cellar, to enjoy that evening and to share with fellow attendees. As you can imagine, opening and serving dozens of different bottles, keeping track of who brought them, and having adequate glassware at each setting to allow comparison of many different wines at the same time is a formidable task.

It would be hard to find a venue as well equipped and as efficient as the French Club. Their professional staff are adept at dealing with corks of all ages, decanting if necessary, remembering who brought the wine, and providing an abundance of glassware for each guest.

The result is a lovely and unique treat for our guests and members and a chance to try multiple special wines with the classic French cuisine of Chef Lionel Balbastre and Sous-Chef William German. Our great thanks to general manager and wine director Marcus Garcia, Sommelier Captain Brian Bianchi, Captain Yami Rodriguez and their entire staff for making this possible.

Le Menu
September 22, 2023

The Reception

Gougeres, Deviled Quail Eggs, Smoked Salmon on Toast

1st Course

Seared Scallops

Champagne Beurre Blanc

2nd Course

Duck Breast, Wild mushrooms, Black truffle jus

3rd Course

Veal Medallions

Green Peppercorn Cognac Sauce

4th Course

Les Fromages de France

5th Course

White Chocolate Gateau



We started the evening with Champagne provided by the Society's executive committee, Gobillard Cuvee Tradition Brut, a classic French blend of one third each Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier. The former grape added elegance to the wine, the latter two body and fruit, and the ensemble was a sparkling taste of happiness and joy to prepare for what was to follow.

Throughout the meal members' and guests' wines were opened and served. Red Bordeaux dominated, with good representation as well from Sauternes, red and white Burgundies, a few Rhones, as well as prime California bottles.

The Bordeaux selections included first growths from our generous members—1967 Margaux and 1990 Latour, along with such outstanding classified growths as 1983 and 1990 Pichon Lalande, 1989 Lynch Bages, and 1982 Beychevelle.

The 1982 Beychevelle stood out for me among the reds. I have had this wine a number of times since its release, and I cannot remember it tasting better than this time. Perfectly mature, soft, fruity, and lovely. Still a hint of the tannins it had in its youth, but oh so graceful on the palate.

What a treat to have followed such a wine throughout 40 years of its evolution. Thank you Mark and Gina Rosenberg.

But my two favorite wines were both dessert wines. The first was the 2001 Chateau d'Yquem. Light golden in the glass, with beautiful aromas of lemon custard and honeyed hazelnuts. Quite sweet, yet also lively and fresh and persistently mouth filling on the aftertaste. What a wine to provoke my memories.

And memories of Chateau d'Yquem I have in abundance. As I explained to the guests that night, my first knowledge of Sauternes came during a class in Introductory Viticulture and Enology that I took from Professors Maynard Amerine and Vernon Singleton during my sophomore year at U.C. Davis. I was so captivated by the magic of botrytis in the production of sweet wine that I wrote my term paper on Sauternes.

The next year was my junior year abroad at the University of Bordeaux, France, where I got to practice what I had learned at Davis. Our student group was taken on bus tours to cultural and historic sites as part of our education and orientation, one of which was wine oriented.

We were first taken to the Lillet plant outside Bordeaux to learn how this aperitif is made from local white and red wines with herbal flavorings. This introduction led to a lifelong affection for Lillet for me.

Next stop was lunch with abundant bottles of generic red and white wines, an unusual treat for a group of 19- and 20-year-olds not used to being served wine in restaurants.

After lunch we pulled up at the famous Chateau d'Yquem, for a guided tour and tasting of this very special wine. I am sorry to remember that for most of my colleagues they wanted to drink, not learn, and the detailed description of how botrytis produces such a unique and expensive sweet wine fell on deaf ears. I suspect I was the only one in our group of 90 who truly appreciated the wine and what made it different from all other sweet wines in the world.

Four years later Marion and I did an elective in Pediatric Radiology in Paris, at the end of which we traveled around France in our newly purchased Volkswagen bug, stopping of course in Bordeaux so I could show her my old haunts and visit some dear friends.

Wine tasting was of course part of the itinerary, so one day, remembering the prior visit to Yquem, we pulled up at the chateau shortly before noon. I knocked on the door, and in a while the door was opened by an elderly gentleman who looked at the two of us and said "*Oui?*"

I said we would like to visit. He looked at his watch and said "but Monsieur, it is almost noon and we are closed from 12 to 2". I said "of course, how silly of me, but would he mind if we ate our picnic lunch on the beautiful grounds while waiting", and he said "*comme vous voulez*", as you wish.

Shortly after 2 p.m. I again knocked on the door and the same elderly gentlemen opened the door, looked at us as if he had never seen us before, and said “*Oui?*”. I reminded him we would like to visit the property, when he asked “Do you have an appointment?”.

If there is one thing that I learned in my year of studies in France it was to be humble in the face of someone who had authority or thought they had authority. Dusting off my best French I said “I’m sorry, I hadn’t thought of booking an appointment and that I had been there before as part of a group, and so thoroughly enjoyed the visit and the wine that I wanted to share the experience again with my lady friend.”

He then said, “Oh yes, you must have an appointment, and anyway we are expecting shortly a bus full of visitors”. I then said, “well could we not wait and quietly attach ourselves to the back of the group?”, to which he replied “why would you want to do that—come with me now”.

For the next two hours we had a personalized visit to the chateau, the winery, the vineyard, with detailed explanation of how the grapes are infected by *Botrytis* when the weather is favorable, the grapes are harvested over multiple passes, and the wine is squeezed literally drop by drop from the shriveled grapes.

They were indeed expecting a tour group, as the banquet tables were set with plates and glassware and bread sticks and there were bottles of 1966 d’Yquem. The tour just did not arrive while we were there.

At the end our now friendly and gracious host said, “and now how about a *petit degustation?*”. I said wonderful, and that I noted they were ready to serve the 1966. He made that “phewt” noise only a Frenchman can make, said 1966 was passable, and instead produced a 1967 for us to taste.

Now it turns out the 1967 is one of the legendary wines from Yquem, and it certainly was the most complex and wonderful wine I had ever had. I continued to taste it in my mind as we were driving around for the next several days, and have never turned down the opportunity to taste a Chateau d’Yquem since then.

As I mentioned, the 2001 was wonderful. Was it as good as the 1967? That would require memory powers greater than exist for me today, but it certainly brought back memories of that day at Chateau d’Yquem, and for that I am grateful to Barry and Joan Boothe for sharing it from their cellar.

My other favorite wine of the evening was also a dessert wine, of an entirely different provenance. My appreciation for vintage Port came later in my wine tasting career than did my affection for Sauternes. Fortunately for me, friends like wine aficionado and wine maker Jim Olsen introduced me to vintage Port and over time I learned to like it and appreciate its great ability to age.

Somehow cold British winters, a roaring fire in the fireplace, and a sublime glass of after dinner Port seem to go so well together. Our weather is not nearly so cold, fires in the fireplace are environmentally frowned upon these days, and by the time dessert is finished I and most of my friends have had their fill of wine, especially if driving home is on the agenda. Thus, my consumption of Port is minuscule these days—but that does not mean I would turn down a special bottle.

Our new member Erin Lamson provided just such a bottle with her 1935 Taylor Port. And the French Club came through as always, supplying enough small dessert glasses so that everyone in attendance could have a taste.

When is the last time you had a wine that is almost 90 years old? And what a wine. Proof in the glass of how well great port ages. If there is something immortal in the wine world, this must be it. The color was light as much of the ruby red pigments had time to precipitate out into sediment during the wine's long slumber in the bottle. The aroma was absolutely elegant, like a rich red fruit *eau de vie*. The palate was elegant, smooth, lingering, and still had enough fruit to tantalize the taste buds. The hotness of spirit the wine most likely had in its youth had become subdued and just another well blended component of such a complex taste. Ah yes, life is good. Thank you so much Erin.

If you were at the French Club, I hope you have your own wonderful tasting memories. If you were not there this year, this is a hint that you should check and clear your calendar when next year's date is announced.



Tales of Chateau d'Yquem



David and Susan Schwartz at the Champagne Reception



Enjoying Dinner amidst a plethora of glasses

Tasting Notes from the September 22nd Dinner at The French Club

by Jim Gallagher, Ph.D.

1989 Chateau Lynch Bages

The 1989 vintage was well regarded and Chateau Lynch Bages was one of the stars. At 23 years it still reflects the promise observed in its youth. It is now showing a medium dark hue, with a slightly browning edge, along with a lovely bouquet of red cherry, light raspberry and hints of plum within a light leather background. With medium body and excellent fruit, its maturity shows as a well-integrated balance of acid, tannin and fruit. Leading to a superb finish with long lingering aftertaste. Most who shared this wine were additionally complimentary. The wine was a wonderful pairing with both the duck and veal entrees,

1975 Chateau Duhart-Milon Rothschild

I was greatly pleased by the showing of this forty-eight-year-old wine. Early in their history the 1975 wines were often described as backward, closed and tannic, and my memories of the Chateau Duhart-Milon fit this, being considerably tannic in its youth. However, back then it did have a compelling bouquet and lovely fruit flavors suggesting a future.

At our dinner this bottle of Duhart finally rewarded the patience in the cellar, showing a rich bouquet of blackberries, plum, truffles and licorice emitting freely from the glass. The body

is now medium-light, with good fruit and an excellent finish: lush and long. This wine also was well paired with both the Veal and the Duck.

2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Rochioli “Old Vines”

While most wines served at our French Club dinner are understandably French, there is always room at our events for comparisons with others. The Rochioli ‘Old Vines’ Sauvignon Blanc is as good a Sauvignon Blanc as is produced in California.

The vineyard was planted in 1959 and continues to produce special wine. The “Old Vines” selection is produced in miniscule quantity and highly allocated to the winery’s mailing list. The wine was selected to be paired with the first course of Seared Scallops primarily because of its rich citrus character. Its success was witnessed by many providing accolades for its stand-alone character as well as how it paired with Chef Balbastre’s creation. Alas I had to rely on others’ thoughts on the pairing, as I am unable eat mollusks, but I was quite pleased to drink it with my substitute dish of Quinoa.

This Issue’s Article of Medical Interest

By Dan Bikle, M.D., Ph.D.

Alcohol consumption does not worsen the prognosis of breast cancer survivors, and being overweight might be better

Review of Kwan ML et al, **Alcohol consumption and prognosis and survival in breast cancer survivors: The Pathways Study**. 2023. *Cancer* 2023:1-14

Alcohol consumption is known to predispose to breast cancer. What has not been clear is whether once the diagnosis is made, does alcohol consumption make the prognosis worse. This is a study of 3,659 patients with breast cancer between 2003-2015 enrolled in the Pathways Study by the **Kaiser Permanente Northern California research group**.

Alcohol consumption was evaluated by food frequency questionnaire shortly after diagnosis and then approximately 6 months later. The patients were followed for a mean of 11.2 years, although alcohol consumption was not evaluated during follow-up after the initial evaluation. The patients were grouped according to baseline and post 6- months levels of consumption as nondrinkers (36.9%), occasional drinkers (0.36-<6gr/day, 33.1%), and regular drinkers (>6gr/day, 30%).

Outcome variables were breast cancer recurrence, breast cancer mortality, cardiovascular mortality, and all-cause mortality. Over this time span there were 524 recurrences and 834 deaths, 369 of which were breast cancer specific and 314 CVD (cardiovascular disease) specific

with mean time to recurrence of 4.9 years and to death 6.9 years. With respect to demographics, the mean age was 59.6 years, 68% white, 85% obtaining at least some college and most lived in higher socio-economic neighborhoods. Most were postmenopausal, only 19.5 percent were nulliparous (never having given birth), only 15.8 had ER/PR (estrogen receptor/progesterone receptor) negative tumors, 89.7% had no other comorbidities, only 1.1% had a history of alcohol dependence, and 8.6 exercised regularly. However, there were a few group differences. The regular drinkers tended to be leaner, white, better educated, lived in a higher socio-economic neighborhood, more likely to be nulliparous, more likely to have an ER and/or PR + tumor, more likely to smoke, and have fewer comorbidities at diagnosis.

The bottom line is that whether or not the patients were drinking at the time of diagnosis did not significantly alter their rates of recurrence or death from either breast cancer or CVD. Nor did it matter whether the alcohol came in the form of wine, beer, or liquor. However, when the groups were stratified by menopausal status, ER positivity, or obesity (BMI > 30), obesity did show a significant trend toward reducing the risk of overall mortality in the occasional/regular drinkers (HR 0.67-0.77).

What are we to make of this? The data indicate that in this group of otherwise healthy, primarily white, well educated, active women, continued modest alcohol consumption does not alter their prognosis with respect to recurrence of breast cancer or death from breast cancer and CVD. Whether obesity is protective for those drinkers is less secure but suggestive as these statistics were not corrected for multiple comparisons. Since most of the women in the study were at least occasional drinkers, and we believe modest alcohol consumption contributes to the quality of life, the results of this study are good news.

Sonoma Plaza Wine Tour and Lunch

By David Schwartz MD



On a sunny summer Saturday on August 19th, a group of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine members journeyed to the Sonoma Plaza for a private tasting of Sosie Wines, located just off the Plaza on Vine Alley, and later gathered for lunch at the *girl & the fig* French country restaurant. We were met at Sosie by Scott MacFiggen, co-founder and owner with his wife Regina Bustamante.

Scott and Regina founded Sosie in 2015 with the goal of producing “French-style” wines, employing an “old world” wine making approach with California grape varietals. The name “Sosie” (*pronounced So-zee*) derives from the French meaning – a person having an exact likeness with another, or a Double, such as an identical twin. In Sosie Wines’ concept, this winery is producing identical French style - California twin wines! In 2021, Sosie Wines engaged in a collaboration with master winemaker Phillipe Melka of Atelier Melka, to support Sosie’s winemaking approach.

We were introduced to several varietals and vintages for which Scott provided brief background comments and fielded questions and compliments from our experienced participants. Here are a few of my notes (and Sosie's website, in quotations) regarding the selections that we sampled:

The 2019 Sparkling Roussanne, Method Champenoise, was bright, crisp and fruity with a moderately yeasty finish at 12% alcohol. This dry sparkler spent 30 months on the lees prior to its late disgorgement (removal of yeast deposits). The yield was a 150-case production. This Roussanne was fruity with a long finish and a pleasant yeastiness. Sosie's website describes the varietal as "the aromas of apricot and orange wrapped in a brioche bouquet." Malolactic secondary fermentation contributed a creaminess to the wine that rounded out the mouthfeel.

The 2021 Roussanne was a very small production (4 barrels) with flavors of apricots, stone fruit, honey and macadamia nuts. The small batch of grapes came from Bennett Valley vineyard, known for a cooler climate and clearly a sweet spot for this varietal. Sosie describes the bouquet as "honey almond marzipan."

The 2022 Rose of Syrah emerged from a hot growing season with strawberry and raspberry fruit flavors. Scott reported that the grapes were pressed longer to achieve the colors and flavor. Sosie describes "floral, watermelon and vanilla," and "lime zest & white pepper" flavors.

The 2019 Pinot Noir Petaluma Gap echoed back to our tour of this region in Summer, 2022. The grapes for this varietal were grown two miles west of downtown Petaluma. Their size is smaller, compared to the larger pinot noir grapes from the Russian River Valley AVA. The flavor profile included cloves and nutmeg. This varietal was produced with 30% whole cluster fermentation.

The 2021 Grenache-Syrah-Mourvèdre, (GSM) Rossi Red Ranch, was a co-fermentation of three southern Rhone grapes with emphasis on the Syrah, leading to a darker color and flavors of "red fruits, spices, black cherry, strawberry and chocolate." The Syrah gives a deeper color to the blend. We learned that when the grenache grape was ready to be picked, all three fruits were picked at the same time, proceeding through production with 20% whole cluster fermentation.

The 2016 Cabernet Franc from the Stagecoach Vineyard on Atlas Peak, located 1800 feet above the Napa Valley floor, with "volcanic and loamy soil" conditions and grapes that mature 10-14

days after those of the valley floor, yielding “smaller berries with thick skins, big tannins and complex flavors.” I found this wine to be elegant, complex and very drinkable.

I first recommended a visit to the Sosie Wines tasting room for the Society after meeting Scott MacFiggan at the Premier Napa Valley Portfolio Tasting of Atelier Melka wineries in February, 2023 at Brasswood Napa Valley Vineyards. French-American winemaker Phillippe Melka featured thirty vintners with whom he has consulted. Near the end of the event, I encountered Scott and Regina at the Sosie Wines table and was impressed with the complexity, balance and flavors of their wines. Months later when I contacted Scott to propose the Society’s visit, he was very receptive and flexible in opening his tasting room an hour before business for our group’s exclusive experience. As we aim to offer with all Society sponsored wine tours, the value of each member’s tasting fee was applied to the (optional) purchase of Sosie Wines.

Throughout our visit, Scott appreciated the nature of our questions, which were a reflection of our members’ eagerness to learn, our history and winemaking knowledge and experience. We also learned about the intricate factors and challenges inherent in wine production from Scott’s perspective. If other Society members are visiting the Sonoma Plaza, the Sosie Wines tasting room is a pleasant, attractive and comfortable (air conditioned) site for wine tasting offering a unique, French informed wine appreciation experience.

Following the Sosie tasting, we proceeded to either walk through the Sonoma Plaza or relocate our cars just two blocks away at the *girl & the fig* French country restaurant in the historic Sonoma Hotel. Our group was seated together in the covered, outdoor garden patio and proceeded to enjoy the restaurant’s famous fig & arugula salad with port vinaigrette, followed by our choice of luncheon entrees and desserts. This was a first time and very positive visit for those in our group. Lunch at *girl & the fig* gave us a chance to reflect on the Sosie experience, enjoy the French inspired cuisine and the restaurant’s warm and breezy patio ambience before we embarked on our individual plans for the remainder of the day.

The Society will continue to organize wine education tours in the coming year, mindful that some members prefer weekend to weekday schedules, and others are interested in venturing beyond the Bay Area. As organizer of the (June) Urban Wine Tour in Berkeley and Alameda, and the Sonoma Plaza visit in August to a select tasting room followed by a seated lunch, I am more familiar with what we can accomplish together in a matter of hours, and look forward to talking with members about your interests for specific winery tours. Please contact me through the society’s e-mail and the Executive Committee will keep you posted on wine tour events in 2024!

A Sante,
David



SMFW Members and guest enjoying the presentation at Sosie

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

CALLING ALL DONORS!

The Society welcomes Sasha Nichols and his wife Anne Busacca-Ryan, our newest 2023 members; both attorneys and recent Bay Area residents. Sasha and Anne enjoy exploring wine, viticulture, and the type of educational opportunities offered by SMFW. Sasha and Anne were invited to become members by our Cellarmaster and Newsletter Editor, Robert Blumberg.

We encourage current members to *welcome new members* into our organization. Inviting guests to SMFW events such as the upcoming Cheese & Wine tasting introduces them to our wine education programs and to other members. There are two categories of membership for

active new members: *Individual*, or *Family*. Currently, just over half of our members share a *Family* membership, and nearly half of our group are *Individual* members. Fully retired persons who have been members for at least ten years are eligible to pay dues as *Emeritus* members. Prospective members may apply using the digital application on the SMFW website, or by using the printable pdf provided on the website
<https://www.medicalfriendsofwine.org/application.php>.

At this time of year when we reflect on what adds meaning and enjoyment to our everyday lives, we invite active members to consider making a cash donation gift *in any amount* that will support the Society as we enter our 86th year! Please help with continuing the SMFW mission to develop an understanding of wine's beneficial effects and to encourage an appreciation of conviviality and good fellowship, complemented by the informed and appropriate use of wine.

We express appreciation to those members who have donated or who plan to donate wines for 2023-2024 SFMW events. We thank Erin Lamson of Adventures in Wine for her donation of the 1935 Taylor Port for everyone's enjoyment at the French Club dinner, as well as the Executive Committee that sponsored the champagne reception. Additional members are planning to contribute specific wines to the Cheese and Wine event on December 3rd. Donations of wine in excellent condition from a vendor or a member's cellar are always appreciated and can be used for future events, thereby reducing the overall event costs to members. Any gift in kind (donated wines) will be acknowledged with a Donor Form for your records.

Donations of cash, or from charitable funds or securities help to support the Society's non-profit operating costs while keeping member dues at the same as several years ago. Cash donations help to close the gap between income and operating expense. Checks may be sent to the Society of Medical Friends of Wine or you may pay with Zelle. *Please mail donation checks to this address: SMFW, 4460 Redwood Highway, Suite 16-110, San Rafael, CA 94903.* Please remember the Susan Guerguy Memorial Fund as you consider your donation. (Ms. Guerguy was formerly the SMFW executive secretary and a colleague to numerous members).

There are several tax-related options for issuing contributions to a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization such as SMFW; please consult with your tax advisor. Prospective donors may contact Susan Schwartz for questions: societyofmedicalfriendsofwine@gmail.com. All gifts will be acknowledged for the donor's tax records and in a future issue of the SMFW newsletter.

CHEESE AND WINE EVENT WITH JANET FLETCHER

Mill Valley Community Center

December 3, 2023

2:00=4:00 p.m.



One of our most popular events will soon be here—our annual cheese and wine tasting on Sunday afternoon December 3 led by renowned cheese expert and author Janet Fletcher.

This year's cheese theme will be locally produced artisan cheeses. To accompany the cheeses, we will be offering generous tasting pours of a number of interesting wines. This is a great opportunity to learn from Janet, discover cheese tasting techniques, and explore some very small production and hard to find cheeses that can readily compete with many of the world's most renowned products.

It is also a great opportunity to taste wines you may never have heard of, and to discover how different wines pair with different styles and flavors of cheese.

More information on the event and the opportunity to sign up will be coming your way shortly. Keep your eyes on your electronic in-boxes.

