

**SOCIETY OF MEDICAL FRIENDS OF WINE
NEWSLETTER
OCTOBER, 2018**

283rd QUARTERLY DINNER

Robert Blumberg, M.D., editor and cellar master

Society of Medical Friends of Wine
SAN FRANCISCO

283rd. QUARTERLY DINNER



**The French Club
Cercle de l'Union**

**San Francisco
September 21st. 2018**

The Society returned for what lately has been an annual gathering at the French Club for another outstanding evening of great food, great wine, great service, and wonderful camaraderie. A huge thanks to Past President Mark LeClerc for sponsoring us at this beautiful venue.

We started with an hors d'oeuvres reception accompanied by the Champagne Blanc de Blancs Cuvee Reserve from Launois, a perfect example of the light, fresh, tart style of a 100% Chardonnay sparkling wine from a small Champagne grower and producer. Truly an appetite enhancing wine. And the only pre-selected wine for the evening, as we were about to embark on an amazing oenological journey made possible by the multitude of wines provided by our members.

As you can see from the menu below, a good appetite was important as we entered the beautiful candelabra-enhanced dining room of the French Club and took our seats around the large oval communal table that is the hallmark of this institution. The wine theme of the evening was to share the table, share your bottle, and each attendee was asked to bring a bottle of French white, red, or Sauternes to share with others. This would give us the opportunity to try and compare a wide variety of wines with food pairings, and most importantly to share and discuss them with our neighbors.

I must admit that when I first heard of this concept, I was skeptical that it would be possible for the serving staff to keep track of and handle so many wines, and it would be distracting to the attendees to have so many choices. I was wrong to be concerned about the service aspect. The staff of the French Club, led by Gerant-Sommelier Marcus Garcia, handled the service impeccably, and I have never seen such efficient exchange of glassware whenever needed.

The food from chef Lionel Balbastre was equally magnificent, in appearance, taste, and service. The foie gras preparation, lightly dusted, seared, and served with peach compote, was one of the best foie gras dishes I have ever had. And the glasses of 1983 Rieussec, 1986 Climens, and 2005 Suduiraut in front of me only enhanced the experience.

The Sole Almandine, magnificently fresh and flakey, allowed us to pair dry white wines, both Bordeaux and Burgundy. The roasted lamb with lemon reduction and the following cheese plate were of course the perfect foil for the reds. Let's see, did I prefer the Musigny from Comtes de Vogue or the lovely bottle of Chateau Palmer with the lamb—decisions, decisions, decisions.

The molten chocolate cake was a grand finale to the meal and literally melted in your mouth, with warm, rich flavors. Any drops of left-over Sauternes were drained, and it occurred to me that a glass of Port would have been an excellent companion as well, but this was a French wine themed event!

SHARE THE TABLE, SHARE YOUR BOTTLE

Dinner

RECEPTION 6:30pm

Launois "Cuvée Reserve" Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne

Passed Hors d'Oeuvres

DINNER 7:00pm

Seared Foie Gras, Fruit Gastrique

*

Local Petrale Sole Almandine

*

Roasted Lamb Noisettes

Lemon-Thyme Reduction, Petite Legumes

*

Fromage et Salade

*

Molten Chocolate Cake

Tasting of Members' French White, Red and Sauternes Wines

Subject to change

The large number and diversity of bottles afforded great opportunities for discussion of preferences and opportunities to see the effects of aging and vintages. The number of white Burgundies outdistanced the dry white Bordeaux, reflecting member preferences, but there were enough of the latter for us to taste the very different style a Sauvignon-based wine has compared to a Chardonnay, even if both were barrel fermented and aged. By coincidence, a number of mini vertical tastings were possible, such as the 1971, 1981, and 1989 vintages from Chateau Palmer. The oldest wine I saw was a 1961 Chateau Pichon Baron Longueville, the youngest just a few years old from one of the highly celebrated recent vintages. Wine prestige varied from a first growth like Chateau Ausone to an over achieving cru Bourgeois. And each wine had a story behind it and a tale to tell—growing in length as the evening grew on in minutes leading to hours.



Some wonderful bottles of top name Bordeaux

Photo by Marion Koerper Blumberg, M.D.



An end of the evening line up

Photo by Marion Koerper Blumberg, M.D.

I have often felt that for our Society to continue to be successful, we need to offer our members unique events that they could not duplicate in their own home or by bringing a few bottles from their cellar to a favorite restaurant. I like to think that the educational opportunities offered at our events – from vintner Frank Mahoney discussing pioneering the planting of clones of Pinot Noir in Carneros to Janet Fletcher expertly taking us through a wine and cheese tasting to Richard Peterson talking about smoke taint on grapes and the subsequent effect on wine— accomplish this task. In terms of tasting experience, an event like our recent French club evening is truly unique, and I hope you all appreciate the value of your membership in the Society.

And even if you have your own killer wine cellar to dip into and your own personal chef, think of the camaraderie of a Medical Friends of Wine event. To me the highlight of our recent evening was not the wines or the superb food, but the joy in the eyes of our members as they hopped around the table offering tastes of their wine to their friends- new and old.



Dr. Roger Ecker pours a taste for Dr. Richard Geist

Photo by Marion Koerper Blumberg, M.D.

Is zero the safest level of alcohol consumption?

After a glowing description of an evening filled with wine tasting, how can we jump to a scientific article questioning the safety of alcohol consumption? Throughout its history the Society of Medical Friends of Wine has had its object to stimulate 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 wine's proper use. Scientific research is important and of course subject to interpretation. In that spirit (no pun intended) of openness to research, we offer the following review by our President and eminent scientist Dr. Dan Bikle, of an important recent addition to the literature on alcohol and health.

A review of the paper "Alcohol use and burden for 195 countries and territories, 1990-2016: a systematic analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016" published in the Lancet (online). GBD 2016 Alcohol Collaborators.

By Daniel Bikle, MD, PhD

Most of you reading this review have no doubt heard about this study. The headline-grabbing conclusion is that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption above zero. This study reports that globally, alcohol use is the seventh leading risk factor for both deaths and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), and for the 15-49-year-old category, alcohol consumption was the leading risk factor globally in 2016. How was this study done and what does it mean for us in the SMFW?

This study is a world-wide analysis, with a list of contributors as long as the article itself. It was funded by the Gates Foundation, which had no input into its design or publication. It was a retrospective analysis using data sources from the Global Health Data Exchange and PubMed. In all it compiled data from 694 sources with risk estimates from 592 studies. It included a study population of 28 million with 649,000 registered cases of respective outcomes. The data were obtained from location specific surveys and sales data to get estimates of consumption by age and sex. Data were compiled by age in 5-year groupings from ages 15-95. These data were adjusted by estimates of consumption by tourists and of unrecorded (i.e. illicit) alcohol consumption in each location. Dose response estimates of the contribution of alcohol consumption to 23 health outcomes were determined. No distinction was made for type of alcoholic beverage consumed. Less clear at least to this reviewer is how the contribution of alcohol consumption to the various health outcomes was weighted.

Overall globally in 2016, 32.5% of the population were drinkers: 25% female, 39% male. A drink was defined as 10g pure ethanol. This pencils out to about 2.5 oz of a 14% alcohol cabernet sauvignon. The average consumption globally was 0.7 drinks for females and 1.7 drinks for males, but the global distribution varied widely, with Russia, Eastern Europe, and Australia being the biggest consumers, and the Muslim countries in North Africa and the Middle East the lowest consumers. For both males and females, the detrimental health outcomes attributable to alcohol varied with age. In the younger age categories, the leading causes of attributable deaths were tuberculosis (TB) (1.4%), road injuries (1.2%), and self-harm (1.1%). For populations aged over 50 years, cancers accounted for the largest proportion of alcohol-attributable deaths in 2016 (27.1% for females, 18.9% for males), although in low income countries, TB was the primary cause for both sexes, followed by cirrhosis and other chronic liver diseases in the older age groups. In higher income countries, hemorrhagic stroke was a leading cause of alcohol-attributed death for both males and females. The only health outcome for which a J shaped curve was found to be significant was ischemic heart disease, with a minimum relative risk at 0.86 drinks/day for men, 0.82 for women with a trend toward protection for

diabetes in older women. In a sensitivity analysis only in populations with very high (60%) levels of diabetes and ischemic heart disease could any level of alcohol consumption be found to be protective.

What are we to make of this study? First of all, this is the most impressive study to date of alcohol and health for both scope and size. That is both a strength and weakness. It is foremost a retrospective study of many association studies and surveys between alcohol consumption and health outcomes. Its global nature does not account for many other variables contributing to health outcomes, including smoking, weight, other dietary components, or quality of health care in the various locations. Nor is any distinction made between type of alcoholic beverage. The figure showing the relationship between relative risk for all health outcomes combined and standard drinks daily barely leaves the bottom line until consumption exceeds 1 drink/day, but does not show reduced overall risk at any level of consumption. Perhaps the message for us in SMFW, French Paradox aside, is that while moderate wine consumption contributes to our quality of life, too much of a good thing is not a good thing, and we should be less confident that moderate wine drinking comes at no cost other than to our pocket book.

WINE AND CHEESE EVENT
THE WORLD OF CHEDDAR with JANET FLETCHER
Sunday November 4, 2018 2 to 4 p.m.
5 Captain Drive, Emeryville, CA

Cheese expert and author Janet Fletcher will return to entertain and educate us this year at our annual wine and cheese seminar. Janet has previously taken us on country-specific adventures; this year we will explore the international world of cheddar. Originating and most famous from England, this style of cheese is now produced in a number of countries including the United States, and Janet will guide us through the similarities and differences of production technique, aging, and taste of seven different cheddars.

England, not being a major wine growing country of its own, has long paired Cheddar with red wines from Bordeaux, a French region historically much influenced by English occupation and trade. We will of course have clarets to try—one more than 40 years old and one from a recent highly acclaimed vintage. We will also pair Port and Madeira, two other wine regions strongly influenced by English trade, along with a home-grown Zinfandel to see if our native varietal is also a natural pair. And we will not forget white wines either. At Janet's suggestion, we will try slightly sweet high acid wines from Germany and from the Loire.

Janet is an excellent speaker. You are guaranteed to learn much and to have a wonderful tasting experience. Please plan on joining us, but also please be aware that this event is likely to sell out, so respond promptly. Initial announcements have already been distributed electronically. If you have questions please email Susan at susanguerqy@sbqglobal.net.

MORE INFORMATION ON SMOKE TAIN AND GRAPES

At our 79th Annual Meeting and Dinner last January, wine chair Fiona Donald, M.D. chose wines from wineries affected by the devastating wine country fires of 2017, and we reflected on the gravity of the event on our friends who live and work in that area.

At our 2018 Vintage Tour our member Richard Peterson, PhD., spoke to us about the scientific effect of smoke on grapes and the resultant smoke taint taste and smell than can carry over into wine.

Unfortunately, wild fires are increasingly prevalent and destructive in California, and it is likely the wine country will be faced with future challenges in years ahead. The Chronicle's excellent wine writer, Esther Mobley, has just written a very thorough article on the subject both from a scientific viewpoint and a commercial one, as many grape growers in counties affected by this year's fires are seeing large wineries refuse their crops. For those of you interested in the subject and those of you wishing to learn more, I strongly recommend this article to you. Just click on or copy and paste the following address into your browser to access the article.

https://www.sfchronicle.com/wine/article/Wineries-vineyards-clash-over-how-to-handle-13285829.php?utm_campaign=email-premium&utm_source=CMS%20Sharing%20Button&utm_medium=social

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