



The Ladies Wine and Food Society of Melbourne (Inc.)
REG. No. A0022942F

Mr Bianco 2 March 2021

Food Master's report

On 2 March 2021, the Ladies Wine and Food Society held their first face to face dinner function in a private room at Mister Bianco's in suburban Kew. It followed 12 months of heavily restrictive social activities and uncertainty. It was a wonderful evening enjoyed by 15 ladies (including one guest); a night that we were especially looking forward - seeing familiar faces once again with like-minded people coming together in a COV safe space, sharing their passion for good food and wine.

We enjoyed a four-course dinner showcasing authentic Sicilian cuisine at its finest, paired with our special cellar wines and a Sicilian selection from Mister Bianco. Our dinner comprised three different appetisers, an entrée, a course of duck breast and the finale, a refreshing Sicilian-inspired summer watermelon dessert.

On arrival we were presented with a number of different appetisers: house marinated olives; San Diele prosciutto delicately wrapped around housemade grissini; squid ink cured salmon on a black rice cracker topped with an aioli nero – a small morsel which was not only delicious but beautifully presented. The final appetiser, an arancini of pumpkin and taleggio, was presented to us as we were seated. Such a difficult thing to eat while standing, it was a good decision to sit! The arancini ball, served with a red pepper sauce was a soft texture, full of pumpkin and light on rice, which created a surprisingly light texture. It was the best arancini ball I had tasted.



Our entrée of Cavatelli pasta with a light vegetarian mushroom ragu and sage, used buttermilk as the main ingredient in the sauce. An unusual ingredient, buttermilk is low in fat, creating a perfect light base for the delicate mushrooms. We were told that the variety of mushrooms were farmed specifically for Mister Bianco. The ingredients came together to create a wonderful combination of textures. Cavatelli – is a small rustic pasta resembling slightly elongated shells. It is made from eggless durum wheat semolina dough, giving it quite a chewy texture, which I loved.

Our main course was roasted duck breast served on a bed of pureed carrot and decorated with a grilled plum and a combination of spices creating a strong liquorice flavour. The liquorice powder prepared from star anise, black ground olives, brown sugar and ground almonds gave the dish its sharp flavours which provided an interesting contrast to the tender and subtle taste of the duck.



The dish was accompanied with generous platters of butter lettuce and iceberg salad with mint and ricotta salata and roasted potatoes, rosemary and garlic.

The finale of the evening '*melo gelo*' (watermelon jelly cake) – three classic Sicilian ingredients – watermelon, chocolate and pistachios, came together and created a beautiful dessert. A watermelon-flavoured outer case created the firmness which held the dish together (and created the wow factor); the piece de resistance, however, was the beautiful rich and creamy chocolate centre.



Owner and head chef Joe Vargetto's of Mister Bianco joined us at the end of the evening to answer our questions and generously shared his wonderful stories of his passion for food and his Sicilian ancestry. His staff share his passion. I want to especially thank Jade for her assistance in helping us create such an enjoyable evening.

Athina Georgiou, Food Master

Wine Master's report

Canapés

Veuve Cliquot Ponsardin Brut NV

'Serving Champagne alongside umami-rich food seems to promote its flavour and complexity. Foods with strong umami elements have a magnification effect on the savouriness of a Champagne' (Toni Paterson MW). This was definitely the case with the Veuve Cliquot and it was a great complement to the canapés.

Primi

Wine 1: 2018 Alessandro di camporeale Grillo DOC from Sicily

Wine 2: 2016 Two Degrees Pinot Noir from NZ

The Alessandro is said to have a long and mineral (salty) finish which is why it was chosen to serve with the mushroom pasta. Overall the Ladies thought it a great match for the dish. The Pinot also worked well and was chosen for its fruitiness, earthiness and soft tannins

Main

Wine 2: 2016 Two Degrees Pinot Noir from NZ

Wine 3: 2006 Costa di Bussia Barolo DOCG 'Luigi Arnulfo'

I chose to serve the Pinot Noir over the 2 courses as I felt it would work with both of the dishes. A classic match for duck it also worked with the plum and liquorice notes of the dish. This was the first outing for the 2006 Barolo and it is drinking beautifully now with some cellaring still to go. It will be interesting to see how it continues to evolve. I chose a Barolo to serve with the duck dish for its plum and liquorice notes but also, as it ages the tannins and acidity tend to soften, although still quite evident in this wine they were balanced and sat nicely in the wine.

Dessert

2000 Domaine des Baumard Quarts de Chaum

"What can I say watermelon and notes of bitter dark chocolate this wine may not work but perhaps you can enjoy the dessert and wine separately." Those were my initial thoughts, however I was pleasantly surprised by the Quarts de Chaum which was a lovely match for the unusual watermelon dessert. Discussion points for the evening were around Umami and wine (see notes below). How the wines worked with the Umaminess of the dishes. Did it increase the perception of bitterness and acidity? Did the wine seem less sweet and fruity? NB: All the wines served were from the 'Ladies' cellar except for the 2018 Alessandro di camporeale Grillo DOC from Sicily which was purchased from the Restaurant.

Jennifer Pullar, Wine Master

Umami

Umami is the fifth taste. Scientists identified umami taste receptors on the human tongue in 2002 (alongside the sweet, sour, bitter, and salty taste buds), meaning that umami is an inherent taste. What is umami? Taking its name from Japanese, umami is a pleasant savoury taste imparted by glutamate (a type of amino acid), and ribonucleotides (including inosinate and guanylate), which occur naturally in many foods including meat, fish, vegetables and dairy products. Foods that have a strong umami flavour include broths, gravies, soups, shellfish, fish (including fish sauce and preserved fish), tomatoes, mushrooms, meats, yeast extract, cheeses, and soy sauce to list just a few. Foods with Umami are satisfying to the palate and support satiety or fullness.

Umami and Wine

- Umami increases the perception of bitterness, acidity and alcohol burn in the wine. It decreases the perception of body, sweetness and fruitiness in the wine.
- Difficult to pair foods which have lots of Umami with no salt eg's: Asparagus, eggs, mushrooms and ripe soft cheese.
- Easier to pair foods with Umami eg's: meat, smoked seafood and hard cheeses.
- Salt and acid counteract the effect of Umami.
- Take care pairing Umami rich food or dishes with wines with high levels of tannins and/or oak characters.
- A good combination to match an umami rich food is with a wine that is low in tannin but relatively high acid

Mister Bianca wine report March 2021

CANAPÉS

Veuve Cliquot Ponsardin Brut NV

'Serving Champagne alongside umami-rich food seems to promote its flavour and complexity. Foods with strong umami elements have a magnification effect on the savouriness of a Champagne.' (Toni Paterson MW)

This was definitely the case with the Veuve Cliquot it was a great compliment to the Canapés.

PRIMI

Wine 1: 2018 Alessandro di camporeale *Grillo* DOC from Sicily

Wine 2: 2016 Two Degrees Pinot Noir from NZ

The Alessandro is said to have a long and mineral (salty) finish which is why it was chosen to serve with the mushroom pasta. Overall the Ladies thought it a great match for the dish.

The Pinot also worked well and was chosen for its fruitiness, earthiness and soft tannins

MAIN

Wine 2: 2016 Two Degrees Pinot Noir from NZ

Wine 3: 2006 Costa di Bussia Barolo DOCG 'Luigi Arnulfo'

I chose to serve the Pinot Noir over the 2 courses as I felt it would work with both of the dishes. A classic match for duck it also worked with the plum and liquorice notes of the dish.

This was the first outing for the 2006 Barolo and it is drinking beautifully now with some cellaring still to go. It will be interesting to see how it continues to evolve. I chose a Barolo for its plum and liquorice notes but also, as it ages the tannins and acidity tend to soften, although still quite evident in this wine they were balanced and sat nicely in the wine.

DESSERT

2000 Domaine des Baumard Quarts de Chaum

"What can I say watermelon and notes of bitter dark chocolate this wine may not work but perhaps you can enjoy the dessert and wine separately." These were my initial thoughts, however I was pleasantly surprised by the Quarts de Chaum it was a lovely match for the unusual watermelon dessert.

Discussion points for the evening were around Umami and wine (notes to follow)

How the wines worked with the Umaminess of the dishes. Did it increase the perception of bitterness and acidity? Did the wine seem less sweet and fruity?

NB: All the wines served were from the 'Ladies' cellar except for the 2018 Alessandro di camporeale *Grillo* DOC from Sicily which was purchased from the Restaurant.