

2022 President's Dinner

Wednesday 25th May.

Ocha Japanese Restaurant

Wine and Food Function Report

The 2022 President's dinner was to was a welcome in our new President Jenny Pullar. The restaurant was a buzz with conversations and the vide was wonderful. We had 17 members and 7 guests in a private area within the restaurant. To move the conversation along Jenny and I provide questions relating to the food and wine and 'fun food facts'. There was keen interest between the tables.

Our chef Yasu Yoshida out did himself with a wonderful menu coordinated with Mika and myself. We were treated to crunchy prawn balls and vegetarian dumplings to start and these tiny morsels were accompanied by Piper-Heidsieck NV Champagne.



The sushi/sashimi platter was an assortment of delicate portions of fish, vinegared rice and vegetables with accompaniments, these were presented beautifully. Melt in the mouth red miso eggplant and grilled black cod made up the entrée.

Wine notes:

Presented with shared plates of food so different in flavour and texture I chose to serve a white and a red wine. Seppelt Drumborg Riesling 2009 for the sushi/sashimi platter and the grilled black Cod. Domaine de la Pousse d'Or Volnay 1er Cru 'Clos de la Bousse d'Or' Monopole 2007 specifically for the red miso eggplant. This dish was an umami bomb!

Umami-rich foods go well with wines that are fruit forward with good acidity and soft tannins. Volnay burgundies tend to be more fruit forward with good acidity and with

delicate, smooth tannins in contrast with its more “masculine” neighbours, Pommard and Meursault.

For the **main course** we were presented with Teriyaki duck, bok choi and eye fillet steak with a seaweed butter sauce and rice. The duck was tender pink and the steak was deliciously tender with the seaweed butter sauce had wonderful umami flavour enhancing the beef.

Wine notes:

There were two wines served with the main course Marcarini Barolo Brunate 2008 and Valenciso Rioja Reserva 2011. Both these wines complimented the main course dishes. I was pleasantly surprised by how well the Barolo worked with the food probably because of its age, the tannins had softened off but it still retained good acidity and fruit. It was the first outing for the Rioja. The Rioja is a new addition to our cellar and it received a positive response on the night.



Our members who do not eat seafood were not forgotten they received vegetable tempura as part of their entrée and mountain vegetable and tofu puff soba noodle for main.

Dessert was an assortment of pavlova, crème brûlée, ice cream and a selection of fruits. I wonder if anyone noticed Japan’s national fruit on the platter – permission.

At the trail lunch we were delighted with the Japanese plum wine so Jenny decided to showcase it with the dessert. It was a Kuromotono Umeshu.



Food Master: Julee Andersen

Wine Master: Jenny Pullar

Menu

Mini crunchy prawn ball, green tea salt

Tofu & Water chestnut dumpling

- *Piper-Heidsiech Brut NV*

Sushi/Sashimi platter

Miso marinated grilled black cod, salad

Grilled eggplant, red miso

- *2009 Seppelt Drumborg Riesling*

- *2007 Domain de la Pousse d'Or Volnay 1er Cru 'Clos de la Bousse d'Or' Monopole*

Teriyaki duck, bok choy

Eye fillet steak, seaweed butter sauce, greens

Steamed Rice

- *2008 Marcarini Barolo 'Brunate' DOCG*

- *20011 Valencisco Rioja Reserva*

Caramelised banana pavlova, miso caramel sauce, nuts

Yuzu crème brûlée, vanilla ice cream

Selection of fruits

Kuramoto Umesu

Rioja

Spanish Tempranillo delivers contrasting flavours of leather and cherries. The finer the wine, the more balance there is between earth and fruit with a smooth finish.

Tempranillo Characteristics: Cherry, plum, tomato and dried fig with cedar, leather, tobacco, vanilla, fennel and dill. Medium plus tannins, medium acidity typically aged in oak for 6-18 months

If you're buying Rioja, it's helpful to understand the labelling requirements and how they affect the flavour. There are 4 legal ageing terms that are listed on most bottles of Spanish wine.

- **Vin Joven:** Rarely aged in oak, Vin Jovens are released young and meant to be consumed right away. These are uncommon outside of Spain.
- **Crianza:** These reds require 2 years of ageing, with 6 months in oak. Traditionally, producers use American oak, which is much stronger than other types of oak (such as French oak).
- **Reserva:** These are reds that are aged 3 years, with 1 year in oak. These wines are a big step up in quality and have rich, round flavours because of the minimum oak requirement.
- **Gran Reserva:** Reserved for wines from phenomenal vintages and aged a minimum of 5 years before release with 18 months of oak ageing, most producers will do 20-30 months in barrel to create the outstanding flavour.

Rioja Region

Rioja is in North Central Spain. It's about 2 hours drive from Bilbao in a valley along the Ebro River.

The entire valley is moderated by the Sierra Cantabria, a small but jagged mountain range that stops clouds from coming into the Rioja valley. Besides wine, the area is known for its delicious tiny artichokes, white asparagus and piquillo peppers.

For wine, the area is split into 3 sections: there's Rioja Oriental (formerly Baja), Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa (next to Alava).

- **Rioja Oriental:** Formerly the Rioja Baja, the name was changed to indicate this region being the most eastern of the three (which is the meaning of Oriental). The wines from this region are more fruit-forward and the new wineries in the region focus on a richer style wine that's rounder and more lush. You can still find the characteristic fig flavours in older wines from this region, but generally the wines are designed to drink right away.
- **Rioja Alta:** Thanks to elevation and cool temperatures, wines from Rioja Alta have higher tannin and acidity than Rioja Oriental – they also tend to be more elegant.
- **Rioja Alavesa:** This region's wines bear a high resemblance to the wines of Rioja Alta – high tannins and acidity.

Rioja is one of the easiest wines to match with food. It pairs particularly well with Spanish food especially lamb and pork and recipes that contain red peppers, pimento, garlic and saffron. The main thing to bear in mind is the style of the wine - a young (joven) rioja can handle quite robust, even spicy dishes, or an older (reserva or gran reserva) one with more simply prepared food. Riojas that are made in a more modern style can handle more spice than more traditional ones. Young or old, modern or traditional it is a great wine to serve with tapas and shared plates.

20011 Valencisco Rioja Reserva

Valenciso's flagship Reserva is a selection of handpicked Tempranillo from the clay/limestone soils around Haro. The grapes are from 18 plots including Villalba, Rodezno, Briones and Ollauri, which are all managed organically and cropped at well below the regional limits. The youngest vines that make the grade here are 60 years old!

The Reserva naturally fermented in cement vats and the wine was then aged for 19 months in (mostly) low-toast Radoux French oak barriques (roughly one-third new). In recent vintages, 10% of the wine has also been raised in low-toast Caucasus oak, further lessening the wine's already minimal wood influence. Following ageing in barrel, the wine was transferred back to concrete vats to settle for a further 24 months before release, the wine clarifies so well in concrete that there is no need to fine or filter the wine before bottling.

This is an outstanding, multi-layered and complex wine. It's still youthful, with bright plum, dark cherry, spice and plenty of soft tannin. It has modern purity but classical finesse and structure and still has decades ahead of it.

The fruit, medium acidity and soft tannins made it an easy choice to serve with the umami of the Teriyaki duck, Eye fillet steak with seaweed butter sauce served at Ocha.

References: Wine Folly and Valencisco