

Victoria's "Break-out of Covid" Champagne Extravaganza Event September 12, 2021.



There were some long faces among the team as rain fell in Victoria just hours before our long-anticipated Champagne event was due to begin. But right on cue, slivers of blue sky started to appear on the horizon, just as canopies were being erected on decks and the lawn, the catering crew arrived, Chaine flags and banners were unfurled and dozens of bottles of Champagne were lolling patiently in the chilly depths of Jack Littlepage's huge fridge. A sigh of relief from me, as no "Plan B" had to rear its ugly head!

The first "Bubble", a Jacques Laurent Brut, was poured by retired Echanson Honoraire, Larry Arnold, as platters of charcuterie, cheeses and delicious savoury preserves were sampled.



Wide smiles told the story as 48 Members and guests arrived and greeted friends whom they had not seen for 18 months since our last actual event on March 1st, last year. With great enthusiasm, we welcomed guests from Bailliages in Vancouver, Bangkok, Calgary and Houston Texas, as well as several new Bailliage Members whom we do hope will be inducted into the International Chaine in December, (you-know-what-permitting).

Our traditional oysters on the half shell, Pate de Foie Gras and Steak Tartare were, as usual, superb, the latter two being the creations of retired Chef Marcel Guichard and Deborah Mantell. Larry provided his excellent and informative commentary after each wine was served. His depth of wine industry knowledge covering regions, key players and production techniques is always amazing.

Chef Castro Boateng and his team were outstanding, serving one exquisite hors oeuvre after another while Chef Moto did his ocean-side magic, with risotto and a delectable array of toppings from which to choose. My favourite was the duck confit and parmesan shavings.



Getting back to the wines --- For the past several years we have been interested in featuring lesser known Champagnes. This year, the focus was on “non-dosé”, “brut nature”, and “low-to-zero dosage” style wines. While this practice has its detractors, today’s very innovative supporters are keen to create Champagne that is authentic and reflects their terroir. It is well known that a dosage can mask a multitude of problems in a wine.

Interestingly, in 1889, Madame Mathilde Perrier of Laurent-Perrier debuted a zero dosage Champagne. It was called a “Grand Vin sans Sucre” and shocked the aficionados of the time when demi-sec and doux Champagnes were all the rage. The practice died out in the early 20th century and has been revived again as the move toward low intervention viticulture and viniculture has gained traction in several Champagne Houses.

All six of the wines served today reflected this low-to-zero dosage style, including our “mystery” selection, which was in fact an Italian Berlucchi Franciacorta 61 Brut, a Methode Champenoise from 90% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Nero, 24 months on the lees and a further 2 months resting after disgorgement. While I savored each wine, I would say that if I had any preferences, they were for the Fleury, the Mathieu and the Berlucchi, each having its own unique appeal. (The menu and full wine list follows this report and additional information on these wines can be obtained by contacting the Bailli. Not all are readily available).

Sometimes odd things can happen at Chaine events. It was noticed that several present were sporting rather unique footwear. For the ladies this ranged from fine purple suede high heeled mules to strappy black stilettos.. Not to be outdone, one male guest was shod with metallic gold-coloured brogues! A competition was probably inevitable.

At about the serving of the fifth Champagne I had to chuckle, seeing a line of “best feet thrust forward” with cell phone cameras clicking wildly. There must be a picture here worth 1,000 words! Or maybe it was all about that 5th flute of Champagne?



The sun was now shining brightly, but rather inconveniently, as we could not have our group photo taken in front of our Chaine banner. Nonetheless we regrouped on the lawn and David Izard was finally able to take the shot.



It was time for a flute of delish, Taittinger Brut Reserve to complement a dessert of piquant little lemon tarts and a buttery shortbread, and, somewhat sadly, to bring closure to our most memorable Champagne event yet.

Gail Gabel.

MENU

**La Chaine des Rotisseurs - Victoria Bailliage
Champagne Extravaganza, September 12, 2021**

Oysters on the half shell

Hot Sauce, Mignonette, Lemons, Horseradish, Caviar

Canapes

Salmon Cornet

Mini Sesame Cone, Salmon Tartar, Capers, Pickled Red Onion, Lemon Sour Cream

Open Face Beet Cured Sable Fish, Macaron Cilantro Crème Fraiche & Jalapeno Jerk Chicken

Empanada, HOB “Jerkup” Sauce

BBQ Braised Pork Belly, Cornbread & Pepper Jam Mini Duck Wellington, Pistachio & Cranberry Dressing

Tempura Cauliflower “Wings”, Harissa Aioli Coconut Crusted Prawns, Sweet Chili Sauce

Pate de Foie Gras au Chef Marcel Guichard & HOB Crostini

Steak Tartare au Mantell

Charcuterie & Fromage

Selection of Local & International Cheese, array of Cured & Smoked Meats, Chutney, Pickled Vegetables, Crispy Bread, Olives, Spiced Nuts

HOB Café Exotic Chips

Lotus Root, Purple Yam, Plantain, Taro Root

Chef Risotto Station

Protein: Crab, Wild Mushrooms, Confit Duck

Garnish: Shaved Truffles, Fennel & Radish, Pesto, Red Wine Poached Figs Cheese: Goat Cheese, Smoked Cheddar, Parmesan Cheese

And to finish.....

Lemon Tarts & Millionaire Shortbread

Executive Chef: Maître Rotisseur, Castro Boateng

Bubbles

BEAUMONT DES CRAYERS JAUCQUES LORENT BRUT

FLEURY BLANC DE NOIRS BRUT

SERGE MATHIEU BRUT PRESTIGE

DUVAL-LEROY PREMIER CRU BRUT

TAITTINGER BRUT RESERVE

MYSTERY SPARKLING