

Wine and Food Feb 2018 Report

Function No 326

Wednesday February 28, 2018

### A great start to the year

Function 326 was held in the Long Room with 193 members and guests in attendance. The lunch commenced in the Percy Beames Bar with the members being offered Katnook Founder's Block Sparkling Chardonnay Pinot Noir NV, which accompanied three delicious canapes – chicken jicama taco containing water chestnuts, bamboo shoots and crisp lettuce, a contrasting chow mein noodle cup with roasted cauliflower, sweet potato and red miso mayonnaise, and then the highlight of the day, South Australian crayfish thermidor served on skewers. The wonderful thermidor sauce is made using gruyere, mustard and cognac, and is an Escoffier original.

According to Wikipedia, the recipe for Lobster Thermidor was created around 1880 by Auguste Escoffier when working in Maison Maire, a Parisian restaurant near the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. In March 1896, a successful reprise of the play Thermidor by Victorien Sardou opened in that theatre.

The play took its name from a summer month in the French Republican Calendar, during which the Thermidorian Reaction occurred, overthrowing Robespierre and ending the Reign of Terror. Maison Maire's owner, Paillard, changed the name of this recipe after the play gained in popularity. Due to expensive ingredients and extensive preparation involved, Lobster Thermidor is usually considered a recipe primarily for special occasions.

Chairman Robert Rouch opened proceedings by backgrounding guest chef Shane Freer and guest presenter Anna Aldridge prior to the entrée. While the Lobster Thermidor was a highlight, it was arguably upstaged by the chairman's account of the fifth race at Ungarie in the Riverina. The punchline left those present in stitches. For those not present, ask a friend who was there to recount the story.

For the entrée, Shane created a superbly presented dish – Buxton rainbow trout and smoked eel halo. Unfortunately the multi-coloured and textured plates overpowered the food presentation. It incorporated fried squid crisps, goat's curd, edamame (preparation of immature soybeans in the pod), goji berry crumble, nori crisp and scampi roe plus some others. The dish was accompanied by Katnook Estate Riesling (2015) and the Estate Chardonnay (2016). Those sitting in judgment scored the Riesling the third best wine of the day behind two great reds.

Sean Shortt, executive director of sales and marketing, then spoke about some of the history of Katnook. It lies in the heart of the fabled Coonawarra region, South Australia. With a history stretching back to 1867, Katnook has three wines in the prestigious Langton's Classification of Australian Wines and two Jimmy Watson trophies. In 1861 Riddoch arrived in Coonawarra after successfully operating a trading post in the goldfields.

He purchased vast parcels of land over the years and was impressed with the remarkable rate of growth of fruit trees and vines. In 1867 John commissioned the building of his "Woolshed" which still operates as Katnook's barrel room today. Determined to encourage closer settlement in the south-east, in 1890 Riddoch formed the Coonawarra Fruit Colony, established its administration

headquarters at 'Katnook', and sold off his land in 10-acre blocks. It was here at Katnook that the Coonawarra wine region was born ([website](#)).

The main course was a Tournedos Rossini roasted veal fillet with a duck parfait brioche croute accompanied by baby roasted carrots, cauliflower gratin and sauce Perigueux. This rich, classic sauce is flavored with Madeira and pungent, earthy black truffles which are a specialty of Périgueux, a city in the Perigord region of France. It is often recommended for fillet of beef, fresh foie gras or veal dishes as ways to enjoy the luxury of truffles. The serves were of an appropriate size and universally enjoyed.

To accompany the veal Katnook provided a 2010 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon and a 2015 Estate Merlot. The 2010 Coonawarra vintage was classified as one of the best ever, resulting in a beautifully integrated wine that could be enjoyed for another five to eight years. This wine rated only marginally behind the flagship Odyssey from the 2012 vintage that accompanied the cheese. Katnook described the merlot as from the right vineyard and year, rich and powerful, with 24 months on oak and with a supple finish.

The Tasmanian 'stirred curd' Pyengana Cheddar, accompanied by quince and blue corn chips, was simple but sensational. There has been much discussion amongst members as to a preference for one, two or three cheeses for the cheeses course. This was an example of when just one is a great choice. The cheese was accompanied by the 2012 Katnook Odyssey Cabernet which was considered by most as the wine of the day. It was in their best oak for two years and from their best blocks, with two years of cellaring, and is the current release. It will benefit from another 10 to 15 years' cellaring.

The dessert, blood orange meringue, was beautifully presented and well received, although rated the lowest of the three courses. Katnook chose their 2001 Founder's Block Botrytis to complement the dessert. This was a Chardonnay and the only botrytis Katnook has ever released.

This was the first open function for 2018 and set the bar high for the rest of the year.

**Andrew O'Brien**