

Wine and Food Christmas 2017

Christmas Party – Wednesday December 13, 2017

**A great pre-Christmas function!**

The fourteenth pre-Christmas function in the Members Dining Room was attended by a record crowd of 499 members, waiting list nominees and guests. This was some 40 more attendees than in 2016 and perhaps a reflection of the ever-growing waiting list.

Passing the bar on entering the big room, the huge range of available wines was apparent. There were at least 17 reds plus six sparklings available for tasting or more serious consumption. To indulge in any of the 13 whites, one had to cross to the far side of the room!

The wines included nine Shirazes, four Cabernets, five Pinots, four sparkling wines including a Sparkling Shiraz and 19 whites. One had to be quick, or lucky, to get to sample some of the premium wines on offer such as these fine bubblyies – 2007 Jansz Vintage Cuvee, a 2011 Nicholson River Pinot-Chardonnay and a favorite for some, a NV Seppelt Sparkling Shiraz.

For the red lovers the best included a 2004 Brands Laira Patron Cab/Sav, 2010 Hollick Ravenswood Cabernet, 2004 Seppelt Mt Ida Shiraz, 2006 Heathcote Winery Curagee Shiraz and 2012 The Paringa Shiraz, plus 2003 and 2013 bottles of Huber Alte Reben Pinot Noir.

To search out a white wine might have meant passing two of the oyster bars but some gems awaited, particularly the 2010 Grosset Springvale Riesling, a 2011 Jeanneret Watervale Riesling and the mature 2006 Brookland Valley Semillon from Margaret River.

Of interest was the slightly sparkling, slightly sweet Marcarini Moscato d'Asti, a DOCG sparkling white wine produced mainly in the province of Asti, north-west Italy, and in smaller nearby regions in the provinces of Alessandria and Cuneo.

The wine is sweet and low in alcohol and is considered a dessert wine. It is from the Moscato Bianco grape. Grown in the hilltop town of Asti in Montferrat, Piedmont, Moscato d'Asti is made by small producers in small batches. Moscato is named such because of its earthy musk aroma. The ancient Romans called it the Apiana.

It was pleasing to see more high tables and chairs in the room. Your committee has been pressing for better conditions for our more senior members. This brings us to the food offerings. As always, the highlight of the evening was the range of oysters – take your choice of either Sydney, Tassie or Coffin Bay (SA).

Some 9000 oysters were consumed, and there were still some left over! Do the maths and you'll find an average of 18 per attendee (but some had none). This time the oysters were mainly pre-shucked to avoid the long queues of recent years, so well done Epicure.

Oysters aside, Epicure provided a great selection of options comprising seven canapes, two grazing dishes and a sweet. The cold canapes were coconut-poached west coast prawn tails with hot and sour salad and chilli caramel dressing, smoked salmon with beetroot blini, crème fraiche and Yarra Valley caviare and some Wimmera duck breast.

The delicious hot canapes included grilled Hervey Bay scallops, sweet and sour plum-glazed pork belly, braised lamb shank pie and a quiche tartlet. For grazing we enjoyed gnocchi and a lamb cutlet, both of which received many compliments. The sweets dish was a lovely amarello and raspberry cheesecake.

Chairman Robert Rouch gave a brief address to welcome guests, congratulating all involved throughout the year and with special thanks to Epicure for their outstanding efforts in 2017. We tasted some great wines and had memorable meals through the year. We look forward to 2018 with anticipation. This was the last function for 2017, rounding off a great year for the society's members. We hope you were able to attend and followed up with a joyous Festive Season.

**Andrew O'Brien**