

EAT DRINK

A GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE



ANTHONY GISMONDI
IN THE CELLAR

FOOD AND DRINK

A week of great wine pairings

BY ANTHONY GISMONDI

The wines of Spain will be the centre of attention at the Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival. And after the amazing show of energy by Argentina and New Zealand, Iberian peninsula producers, known for their individuality, are going to have to pull together and use all of what's left of the next 11 months to prepare for their week in Vancouver.

A boatload of high-quality, moderately-priced wine from both Argentina and New Zealand made the International Tasting Room a delight to wander this year and, while Spanish wine boasts diversity, it's going to take more than *jamón* and flamenco dancers to make us forget the Southern Hemisphere.

But before we worry too much about 2011, a few highlights from my week at the Playhouse festival that has few peers on this continent.

A Monday afternoon kickoff at Earls Hornby involved Villa Maria and Finca Flichman and some nifty pairings by Reuben Major, director of culinary and bar development. The best match: braised short rib and mushrooms with salted potato chips served with **Finca Flichman Gestos Shiraz 2007**, a blend of grapes grown at 700 and 1,100 metres at Mendoza, Argentina. The palate is soft and open but with bright acidity and plenty of black fruit and smoky, meaty, licorice mineral flavours. There is more concentration and weight than finesse here but at this price it over delivers. Best with grilled beef, or cellar for 18 months.

Later that same night, chef Josh Wolfe at Coast Restaurant put on a show working with wines of Dona Paula. After an amazing flight of whites, including the delicious Naked Pulp Viognier (not listed), the **Dona Paula 2008 Malbec**



In the winemaking region of Mendoza, Argentina, the Andes add drama and the snowmelt waters the vineyards.

was served alongside a chimichurri rubbed striploin with sweet potato and yam puree and zucchini pave. The '08 malbec is the best yet from the Dona Paula. The palate is round and fresh with a mix of chocolate, vanilla, dried herbs, black cherry, plum and flecks of orange flavours with a pinch of poultry spice. The chimichurri and the meat were made for Malbec.

A quick off-site vertical tasting of Cheval des Andes with general manager Hervé Bernie-Scott confirms why this wine may be one of the finest world red wines made in the world today. With a French sensibility courtesy of director Pierre Lartion (in charge of St. Emilion's Cheval Blanc and Sauternes Chateau d'Yquem), **Cheval des Andes 2003** sings the terroir of Las Compuertas, Luján de Cuyo. The '03 Cheval des Andes blends 41 malbec, 41 cabernet sauvignon

and 18 petit verdot into what is a giant wine. Its release was delayed until after 2005 to give it more time to settle down in the bottle, which has turned out to be a bonus for consumers. Look for chocolate and licorice throughout its mineral and red fruit palate flecked with tobacco, dried herbs and figs in the finish. Drink it now with a T-bone steak.

A late night dinner at Oru (Fairmont Pacific Rim) on Saturday was built around the **Laurenz V. Und Sophie Singing Grüner Veltliner 2008** from Austria. The story goes this wine sings on the palate and when you taste its fresh acidity, creamy flavours and blatant minerality you will agree. I paired it with halibut in green Thai curry, a fabulous nasi goreng dish and tandoori oven bread. If you haven't experienced the pan Asian delights of Oru you are missing out. Executive chef David Wong, former

Because D'Or culinary competitor, has resurfaced and his nod to ancient culinary traditions of the East is, well, impressive to say the least. At a Saturday lunch, A Celebration of Passion, there was an amazing sushi station run by the chefs at the Vancouver Convention Centre. The hand-rolled cones of sushi rice, fish and vegetables wrapped in seaweed shouted for sauvignon blanc. My choice is the **No. 8 Wire Sauvignon Blanc 2009**, from Marlborough, New Zealand. At \$17, it delivers all the ripe passion fruit, melon, gooseberry and kiwi aromas you want along with plenty of grassy, lemon, nettle, canned asparagus, passion fruit, grapefruit flavours. The finish is juicy with smoky citrus highlights. As for the No. 8 wire, it is a reference to the type or gauge of the wire used to tie the vines to the trellis in the vineyard.

On Sunday night, the final evening of festival week, I joined Panther Creek winery assistant winemaker Bill Hansen at DB Moderne Bistro. The Oregon winemaker's dinner was a tour de force of Willamette Valley wines paired with chef Daniel Bould's inventive menu perfectly executed by chef de cuisine Nathan Guggenheimer. The wine service of the city's classiest sommelier, Kelowna-born Kevin Hullebush, was perfect. The star pairing was herb-crusted halibut with fresh peas, pearl onions and a morel velouté served alongside **Panther Creek Verde Vineyards Pinot Noir 2007**. This Willamette-based Pinot comes off the palate and when you taste its freshness and when you taste its aromatic, the palate is silky smooth and long with a warm black raspberry and cloves and earthy forest floor tones. Well-shaped at 13-per-cent alcohol. Bring it on, Spain.

Special to The Sun

OUR PICKS



Finca Flichman Gestos Shiraz 2007, Mendoza, Argentina
Price: \$23, private wine shops
UPC: 07790470083698
Score: 89/100
Remarks: Enjoy the black fruit, pepper and smoky, meaty, licorice flavours.



Doña Paula Malbec Estate 2008, Lujan de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina
Price: \$22
UPC: 00836950000056
Score: 90/100
Remarks: Sage, tobacco, dried herbs, black cherries and orange flavours.



Cheval des Andes 2003, Las Compuertas, Lujan de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina
Price: \$83
UPC: 007790975018492
Score: 94/100
Remarks: Chocolate, licorice, red fruit palate.



Laurenz V. Und Sophie Singing Grüner Veltliner 2008, Niederösterreich, Austria
Price: \$22
UPC: 00877397000391
Score: 89/100
Remarks: Fresh acidity, creamy flavours and blatant minerality.



No. 8 Wire Sauvignon Blanc 2009, Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand
Price: \$17
UPC: 00621926300014
Score: 88/100
Remarks: Grassy, lemon, nettle, canned asparagus, passion fruit, grapefruit flavours.



Panther Creek Verde Vineyards Pinot Noir 2007, Willamette Valley, Oregon, U.S.
Price: \$45, private wine shops
UPC: N/A
Score: 90/100
Remarks: The palate is silky smooth. Well-shaped at only 13-per-cent alcohol.

B.C. WINE OF THE WEEK

Quails' Gate 2007 Maréchal Foch Limited Release Fortified Vintage, Okanagan Valley, \$23



Rich, warm and smoky, this fortified version comes with moderate sweetness and flavours of Oxo, gamey, meaty, resin and licorice with stewed prunes and coffee flavours. FVF, as it is referred to, is made in a traditional fortified Port style using super-ripe maréchal foch grapes.

NEWS AND EVENTS

The French government is contemplating support of French wines abroad, plus research and development, to the tune of 23 million euros, or \$30 million Cdn, annually over the next five years. Looking forward, it supports the reduction of trade bodies to 10 — or one for each of the country's main wine regions — and it would like a single body to represent wines without a geographical indication. Canada, listen up.



Potato Bacon Cheddar Tart

Bacon love is heating up. Here's a dish from Canadian chef Michael Smith, who's made this many times. It looks complicated until you try it and quickly realize how simple it is to master, he says. Don't ask about the fat! If you're concerned, make it into appetizer portions because even then, it'll go a long way. From *The Best of Chef at Home*.
— Mia Stainsby



2 pounds room-temperature bacon
Lots of freshly ground pepper
4 cups shredded aged cheddar
5 or 6 large baking potatoes, unpeeled
A sprinkle or two of sea salt and freshly ground pepper
1 onion, minced
4 cloves of garlic, minced
Preheat oven to 350 F.
Carefully arrange the bacon in a radial pattern from the centre of a 10 or 12-inch round non-stick pan; arrange the bacon so that it fits along the bottom of the pan, continuing up and over the sides. Let the ends hang over.
The slices should overlap

slightly around the sides of the pan. To reduce the thickness of the bacon in the centre, stagger, every other piece, starting 2 inches from the centre and extending it further than the adjacent slices.
With the palm of your hand, flatten the centre area, leaving no gaps in the bacon. Season the bacon with lots of pepper and then sprinkle on several spoonfuls of the shredded cheddar.
Slice the potatoes as thinly and uniformly as you can, about 1/4 inch thick. Arrange a circular pattern of overlapping slices around the inside bottom edge of the pan. Continue arranging overlapping layers of the potatoes until the bottom is evenly covered. Season the potatoes

with salt and pepper.
Mix together the onion and garlic and sprinkle some of the mixture onto the potatoes. Continue with a layer of the shredded cheese. Cover with another layer of the potatoes, pressing it down firmly before continuing with alternate layers of the potatoes, onion mixture and cheese, inserting each a bit from the edge of the pan until the top is 1 inch or so higher than the pan's rim. Fold the overhanging bacon neatly up and over the top of the potatoes.
Trim a small piece of parchment paper and place it in between an ovenproof lid and the bacon. This will prevent the bacon ends from pulling back and shrinking during cooking.
Place the pan on a baking sheet and bake for at least 2 1/2 to 3 hours. You'll know it's done when a small, thin bladed knife inserts easily.
Pour off as much of the fat as possible. Let the tart stand for 15 minutes and then invert it onto a cutting surface.
Slice into wedges and serve immediately.
Makes 8 servings.

MATCH | MAKER

Fatty appetizer needs fruity, fresh white

As an appetizer, this flavourful, if fatty, bite is best accompanied by a glass of fruity, fresh white wine.
— Anthony Gismondi

Fork in the Road Oliver Block 212 White 2008, Okanagan Valley, \$18

Trim a small piece of green apple, melon, orange and grapefruit flavours flecked with ginger flavours should fight through the bacon and cheese.

Fuzion Chenin-Torrontés 2009, Argentina, \$9
Plenty of fat-fighting fruit with lime, ginger, green apple, lemon and floral flavours should be a match. Good value and under screw cap.

FEELING THE HEAT