

Member report on End-of-year Lunch at The Oaks on Piper, Kyneton Sunday December 3 , 2023

'A feast to be festive' by Graeme Turner

It could have been a choice of the beef tartare for some of our Wine Guild members, but some did not realize the meat was actually raw. There were four people brave enough to take on this precious delicacy. I wasn't one of them. This was the initial experience, at least for some, in attending the end-of-year festive lunch at The Oaks Grill on Piper, situated in the charming Macedon Ranges town of Kyneton.

I must admit, I was a little sceptical of an event located in Kyneton, which seemed to be not much closer to home than the planet Mars. However, once we arrived and settled into the Oaks, we were welcomed into a warm and inviting venue. Let the party begin.

The presenter, co-owner and winemaker of Bress Wines, Chris McCormack, splashed out initially with the Bress 2021 Blanc De Blancs sparkling. Such a lovely drop added a fizz to everyone's already happy mood.

For those courageous enough to tackle the beef tartare, the paired wine to tempt the tastebuds was the Bress 2022 Le Grand Coq Noi Pinot Noir. My entrée comprised Coffin Bay oysters natural, although I also tasted my wife's fried cauliflower with grapes, pickled onion and capers. While I am not a huge fan of rosé, the pairing of the Lome 2022 Rosé with both the oysters and cauliflower proved to be quite satisfactory. This drop was quite light enough to enhance both dishes.

Being the committed carnivore I am, I pounced on a Scotch fillet, cooked to my choice of medium rare. This dish was beautifully enhanced by the recommended Bress 2022 Le Grand Coq Noir Shiraz. The meat was full firm but tender. The wine featured fine berry notes with a delightful pepper finish. I cannot speak for the blue eye fillet paired with the Lome 2022 Viognier Roussanne, although others seemed to appreciate this combination. Pumpkin gnocchi was also on the menu for those of a vegetarian persuasion, but no one selected this dish.

For dessert, I selected the Kyneton Mess meringue over the cheeses and dried fruit. The choice of wine for dessert was between the Bress 2022 Le Grand Coq Noir Chardonnay and the Lome 2017 Santo. While not being big on sweet wines, I chose the latter, figuring it might make a better match. It was effective in that pairing.

Wine sales were brisk after lunch, possibly due to the healthy 15 per cent discount. Such a surge in sales was perhaps not necessarily because of the amount of cheery nectar consumed. Still, all ventured into the sunshine afterwards, mellow and appropriately festive. People were satisfied with a fine celebratory repast to end the year. Apart from those picking the beef tartare, I don't believe too many of our revelling members received a raw deal.