

CYPRUS GOURMET WEEKLY



Editor Patrick Skinner

COMMENT

The 100th Edition of Cyprus Gourmet Weekly!

Last week my wife and I boarded a bus and found ourselves surrounded by a cheerful bunch of people mostly speaking at once in the Cyprus village dialect of which we know a little and love a lot. A gent from Platres recognized my wife as the long-time carer of unwanted Cyprus donkeys and me as a friend of Cyprus wine – so we were among friends. Nothing special in this you may think. But we weren't on a Cypriot bus, we were in Malta – a destination which people from this country seem to be flocking to in their thousands and, from our experience having a great time.

There is a variety of tours to choose from, mostly using Emirates Airline. You can go, as we did, in a package providing only air flights and hotel bed and breakfast, or take up one with guided tours showing you the sights. The costs are exceptionally good value for money and Emirates is a super airline. The differences – and similarities – between touring, eating and drinking in Malta and Cyprus are of some interest and I shall write more about this next week.

Patrick

HAPPENINGS

Thursday, November 12 and Friday, November 13, Masi Campofiorin and Amarones tasting by Spectus.

Spectus are celebrating their 12th anniversary with a wine tutored tasting of some of the finest Italian wines with the rare vintages of the legendary Amorone wines of the famous House of Masi. Sandro Boscaini, owner and president of the house of Masi, will present these fine wines.

Nicosia, Thursday 12th November, 7.30 – 9.30p.m., Spectus Shop, Tel: 22511521, Fax: 22511987.

Limassol, Friday, 13th November, 7.30 – 9.30p.m., Four Seasons Hotel, Tel: 25341525, Fax: 25348863.

Participation cost is €55.00 for Spectus Students and €75.00 for the general public. Secure your tickets in advance from the Spectus shops.



Saturday, November 21 and Sunday 22, The Forest Park Platres Classic Car Rally 2009

The 2009 Forest Park Classic Car Rally starts in the village of Kofinou at 11am on the 21st. The routes goes through Lefkara, Kato Mylos, Pelendri, Pera Pedi and Kato Platres, finishing at the Forest Park Hotel Platres at about 4pm. On Sunday 22nd the cars will leave The Forest Park at 10am, following a route to Arsos via Agios Nicolaos and returning via Kato Platres at about 1pm for lunch and prize giving at The Forest Park.

Wednesday, December 2, at Vino Cultura, Nicosia.

Vino Cultura, Nicosia is celebrating the arrival in their wine portfolio of the Campo Viejo wines of Rioja, by organising a rather special diner at the Casa Vieja Spanish Restaurant, where five courses will be matched with different Campo Viejo wines. Places are limited so reservation is essential. €40.00 per person. For information and bookings: 2267 6707

Send food and wine news, events etc.
to publisher@cyprus-gourmet.com
© copyright Palskinner publishing, 2009

The proper way to serve wine

On being invited to be one of the judges at this year's competition to find the best Sommelier in Cyprus, which takes place at the InterContinental Hotel, Aphrodite Hills on Saturday, December 5, it occurred to me that many readers may not know the process that ends when the wine waiter opens a bottle of wine for you. Who better to ask than George Kassianos, the President of the Cyprus Sommeliers' Association? The question and answer session went like this...



What is the Cyprus Sommeliers' Association?

The Association was officially formed in June 2002, through the initiative of La Maison du Vin's Victor Papadopoulos, the Cyprus agent for Ruinart Champagne. At the time Ruinart was organising the European Sommeliers' Competition, which took place in Reims every two years. That competition was established in 1988, reflecting the active contribution of Ruinart, the famous fine Champagne House, towards improving standards in wine service and recognition of the profession of Sommelier.

Cyprus became a full member of the International Association of Sommeliers (ASI) in 2003, which has 44 country members and five observatory countries.

Cyprus's first national competition winner was Christos Parouxis (then at Four Seasons, now at Neon Phaliron). In 2001 George Hadjistilianou (Fat Fish) represented Cyprus at Reims. George also won the Cyprus Competition in 2003. Miroslav Kalinic and George Zaharoglou, both of Le Meridien, followed in 2005 and 2007, respectively.

Who are your members?

The Association now has 90 members. They are the "front line" staff in restaurants and hotels promoting and selling wine, as well as people who are involved with wine merchants and cava, oenologists, academics. Furthermore, the good news is that all our new members are young and active in promoting wine and very keen to learn.

What is a Sommelier?

Sommelier is the wine steward; a man or woman who is trained to be a knowledgeable wine professional who specialises in all aspects of wine service. The principal work of a sommelier is in the area of wine procurement, storage, wine cellar rotation, plus the provision of expert advice to customers. A sommelier may be responsible for the development of wine lists and for the delivery of wine service and training for the other restaurant staff. Working along with the culinary team, they pair and suggest wines that will best complement each particular food menu item. This entails the necessity for a deep knowledge of how food and wine, beer, spirits and other beverages work in harmony. A professional sommelier also works on the floor of the restaurant and is in direct contact with restaurant patrons. The sommelier has a responsibility to work within the taste preference and budget parameters of the patron.

What about being a Sommelier in informal Cyprus?

Sommeliers used to work mainly in fine restaurants. Fine restaurants are a rarity here, so why do we need sommeliers in an informal place like Cyprus? Because in modern times the role of the sommelier is broader than working only with wines, and may encompass all aspects of the restaurant service, with an enhanced focus on wines, beers, spirits, soft drinks, cocktails, mineral waters and tobacco. Imagine even in a single tavern to have a person with a basic knowledge on how to keep, suggest and serve the right wines. Basic but necessary if we want to continue to claim that we are a destination for quality tourism. Knowledge is essential since we produce wine; many visitors would like their waiters/wine stewards to know about Cyprus wine even in informal places.

What are the objectives of the Sommeliers' Association?

The prime purpose is wine education about local and imported wines and spirits. In a society where we are only now beginning to develop wine culture it is essential to train the staff to understand and respect wine. Wine lists need to be improved – like the menu the list should represent the establishment, its theme and be part of the ambience. The selection of the wines must be based on the food of the establishment and the targeted revenue from sales.

Storage conditions are essential. No more warm reds and frozen whites or vice versa!

Pairing wine with food, to add excitement to the patrons' meal experience, helping them discover and learn more, in a friendly manner.

Proper wine service (basics and decanting level) help the patrons enjoy wine and enhances the general philosophy of wine with food and the dining experience.

Make things correct but simple – not all wine needs decanting, promote the motto that price is not an indicator of quality, local food with local wine. Promote the good wine of Cyprus – but first learn about it.

From my experience wine education helps you to have happy customers, justifies some mark ups and increases sales.

Who are the judges this year?

The judges are: Michele Chantôme from ASI Technical Committee and Andreas Matthidis, President of the Greek Association of Sommeliers. Hopefully Michele's husband Hans Astrom Vice President of Hess Group and major sponsor of the World and European Competitions will be our guest of honor and hopefully for the first time the Minister of Agriculture

will attend.

To these we add Thoukis Georgiou (Ministry of Agriculture Oenological Dept.) and George Hadjistilianou (Fat Fish Sommelier) with Spyridon Stivaros (secretary of the association's committee) who will prepare all the technical aspects and to complete the panel of the judges are oenologists Sophocles Vlassides (Vlassides winery), Nicos Nicolaides (Domaine Nicolaides), Marcos Zambartas (Zambartas Winery), Minas Mina (Kyperounda Winery), and from the media world: Patrick Skinner (Director of "The Cyprus Gourmet"), Nina Theocharidou (Editor – Phileleftheros Media Group), and Florentia Kythreotou.

Present from the committee – George Kassianos President, Iralis Christophorou Treasurer, Dr. Andreas Emanuel and Marios Hadjistilianou members (Barolo) as well as Christos Hadjitoolis our liaison with Aphrodite Hills

The event will take place on December 5 at Aphrodite Hills

How does the competition work?

The competition is in three stages.

Firstly, at 09.00 candidates will have to participate in a written examination and answer 40 questions in an hour and a half. Eight of those questions will be related to Cyprus. The questions cover the following areas: the vine, viticulture, grape, must, wine, wine list (drawing up and categorization), wines and vineyards of the world, liqueurs and brandies, legislation relative to wines and spirits, cellar organisation, management and stock rotation, drinks usually served in restaurants, the best known cigars, their characteristics and how to serve them.

At 10.45 a blind tasting of two wines with analytical written sensor analysis, and identification of two spirits.

The top six will then participate in the semi-final at 14.30 in decanting red wine where the top three will be selected.

These sessions take place in private. The final is open to the public, live on stage the three candidates in half an hour will be judges on:

- taking the order, choosing and advising on the most suitable wines for the courses selected by the customer;
- decanting of red wine and service of Champagne;
- blind tasting of two wines with analytical commentary;
- identifying 5 spirits from black glasses;
- correcting a wine list;
- their efficiency, professionalism and social/selling skills will be judged.

This will be followed by a Champagne reception hosted by Louis Roederer at 20.30 and the Four Course gala dinner at 21.00. The cost for the public is €70.00 per person including selected wines matched with the menu, SODAP, KEO and ETKO, and Hennessy Cognac

Who are the sponsors?

KEO are our major sponsor including the magazine that commemorates the event (1500 copies will be distributed).

Aphrodite Hills, Intercontinental Hotel, Aphrodite Hills Village Square, Aphrodite Hills Holiday Rentals, Retreat Spa, Aphrodite Hills Golf, Aphrodite Hills Property Management and Real Estate.

Hennessy (Photiades Distributors); SODAP; Eurobank; Louis Roederer Champagne; Unique; Aes Ambelis; La Maison du Vin.

For those wishing to stay overnight the hotel offers pool and garden view rooms at €110 per room per night.

