

WINE BRIEFS

Stanton petite sirah wins accolades

Stanton Vineyards 2009 St. Helena Petite Sirah was named the "Best Petite Sirah" and received a Double Gold Award at the recent San Francisco International Wine Competition.

The wine was elevated to "Double Gold" status when all judges on a particular panel unanimously agreed that it deserved a gold medal, according to a news release. More than 4,500 wines from 1,300 wineries were judged as part of the competition, which was held June 15-17.

The Stanton Vineyards Petite Sirah is 100 percent estate grown on the Stanton Ranch in St. Helena. The wine was aged for 20 months in American and French oak barrels and is 15.3 percent alcohol by volume. Production was 340 cases and the winemaker is Dave Phinney of Orin Swift Wines. The wine retails for \$45. For more information, visit StantonVineyards.com.

Home Winemakers Classic is July 21

The 30th annual Home Winemakers Classic will be from 4 to 6:30 p.m. Saturday, July 21 at Charles Krug Winery, 2800 Main St., St. Helena.

Dubbed "the poor man's wine auction" and also "the ultimate cult wine event," it features fine foods, live music, a silent auction and raffle, all complementing the 50 to 60 home winemakers pouring their creations. Tyler Anderson Catering will provide the food, and music will be performed by a local group, John Kelly & Friends.

The classic raises money for the Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Department, located in the western hills of Napa County and serving the area on and around Redwood, Mount Veeder, Dry Creek, Partrick, and Wall Roads as well as other towns in Napa County.

Admission is \$35 presale and \$45 the day of the event. An engraved wine glass is included. Presale admission tickets may be purchased at DryCreek.org or at Napa Fermentation Supplies, 573 Third St., Napa, 255-6372.

Kelly Fleming Winery begins companion label

"Big Pour" is the new companion label to Calistoga's Kelly Fleming Winery. The blended wine is 84 percent cabernet sauvignon from the winery's estate vineyard and 16 percent merlot from an Oakville vineyard. The wine sells for \$60 per 750-ml bottle and is available only at the winery.

Each vintage of Big Pour features a different black-and-white photograph from Debbie Fleming Cafery. The 2009 vintage features the photograph "Shadow Drinking," showing a man with his shadow on the wall in a cantina in the town of Olinala, Guerrero in Mexico.

Kelly Fleming Wines is located at 2339 Pickett Road, 2 miles south of Calistoga. Proprietor Kelly Fleming acquired the 300-acre property in 1998 and began planting vineyards in 1999. Today 12 acres are planted entirely to cabernet sauvignon.

The 5,000-square-foot stone winery, designed by Taylor Lombardo Architects of San Francisco, was completed in 2010. The winery's first release was the 2002 cabernet. The winery's team includes Winemaker Celia Welch, Assistant Winemaker Becky George, Hospitality Manager Colleen Fleming and General Manager Ryan Clark.

For more information, call 942-6849 or visit BigPourWine.com.



Submitted photos
The recently renovated dining room and gleaming white, 3,000-square-foot kitchen show off a more contemporary look than before, with room for a line of chefs to work their magic on signature dishes.

Ménage à Meadowood

Kostow creates captivating canapés, enticing entrées and sweet satisfaction at renovated restaurant

By Laura Rafaty

FOR THE STAR

You may have heard of the "slow food" movement, which refers to a healthy and sustainable approach to eating and not, as I originally thought, to a diet consisting of creatures moving so slowly you can easily chase them down and hit them over the head with a hammer.

At The Restaurant at Meadowood, Chef Christopher Kostow is leading his own "slow seduction" movement. Far from hitting you over the head, he entices you, bite by bite, with a progression of food flirtations that — in the aggregate — pack a wallop.

It starts, tellingly, with the "Pillow on a Pillow," a tiny fromage blanc-filled pastry presented on a pouf, bursting with savory-salty flavor. Next comes a collection of canapés: a crudité of locally grown carrot and radish with crème fraîche, romaine puree and tomato water "snow"; a mouth-watering geoduck clam fritter, made from Pacific Northwest clam chowder encased in saltines and deep fried with lemon zest and Old Bay seasoning; a full-bodied mustard shrimp toast (I had flowery chickpea panisse, due to allergies); and the inventive "Brown Butter Rocks on a Rock" with huckleberry jam and sea salt.

The canapés were accompanied by decadent sparkling wines, the first installment in a series of wine pairings devised by Wine Director Michael Ireland, and thoughtfully evaluated by my dinner companion and wine coach, writer Catherine Seda. In deference to our spoiled-locals status, the wines were all European (I requested and was served one St. Helena wine). Seda seemed impressed by the 1,200-label wine list and the caliber of the pairings, even while noting that my preferred bubbly (a Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé, Champagne, France) cost \$42 a glass.

The progression of small plates showcased subtle but complex flavors, and included an exotic whipped yogurt custard with black sesame rocks, purple shiso salt, and pickled plum; summer squash



Three-star Michelin chef Christopher Kostow puts the finishing touches on an enticing entrée during a recent meal at The Restaurant at Meadowood.

cannoli with mojama and raisins; grilled cuttlefish in bean cumin broth; coal-roasted sturgeon with assorted onions and chive blossom vinaigrette; and strips of veal, potato and sorrel, in white veal soup, with trout caviar.

The showstopper was a creative vine-like composition called "Salmon in Late Spring" with small bits of fish done five ways. We tasted our first goat meat, poached and roasted, with sunflower seed risotto, fresh sunflower petals and roasted sunflower hearts; it had a gamey flavor that washed down well with Wind Gap Syrah. A goat's-milk cheese course included an assortment of unusual radishes and radish pods. Accompanied by lovely little sourdough and pumpernickel buns, the dishes were all modestly sized, but intense and satisfying.

The dining room was full, befitting the restaurant's three-star Michelin status,

See MEADOWOOD, Page A8

Meadowood: A wine adventure like no other

By Catherine Seda

FOR THE STAR

Choose to pair your multi-course dinner at The Restaurant at Meadowood with wines, and the adventure begins. With a constantly changing menu, the wines chosen change as well, but one thing is certain: By the end of the evening, you will have had a cellar's worth of tastes of top wines of the world.

Our recent journey began with glasses of Roederer Estate, "l'Ermitage," Brut from Anderson Valley and Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé Champagne: perfect with the savory canapés.

Next came the sherry: the Jerez Cortado Hidalgo, Manzanilla from Sanlúcar de Barrameda in Spain. There is everything to love about this wine's toffee-nut aromas.

Meet the late Didier Dagueneau through a sip of his "Silex," 2009 from Pouilly-fumé in France's Loire Valley. Staggeringly good sauvignon blanc.

The Scholium Project (In Greek, "scholium" shares the same root as "scholarship") is a wine project by a former philosophy professor, and he produces a rich cinsault called "Rhododactylos" from the second-oldest vineyard in California.

Next is a Châteauneuf du-Pape from France's Rhone Valley, the 2011 Domaine du Pegau, Valley, followed by the "wow" wine of the evening, the 1991 Lopez de Heredia, "Viña Tondonia," Gran Reserva from Rioja, Spain — a taste of traditional Spain.

See WINE, Page A8

Pink Fiddle Pinot Noir Rosé, 2011

How does this sound: bites of coconut fried prawns, mango, cucumber and greens served with a sesame-citrus vinaigrette eaten between sips of a crisp rosé wine?

It's been more than a week, and I have been craving this combination constantly since.

Celadon in Napa delivered up this incredible lunch, and with a smiling staff to boot. People could not have been nicer, and owner Greg Cole stopped by every table to say hello. The refreshing and fruity rosé was the Pink Fiddle Pinot Noir Rosé, and you'll need to get it at Celadon or another restaurant since this vintage has already sold out. But trust me, the meal is worth the restaurant trip.

Kathy Joseph is owner of Fiddlehead Cellars and only makes wines from the pinot noir and sauvignon blanc grapes at her winery in Lompoc. For details, visit FiddleheadCellars.com.

If you'd like to submit a Napa Valley wine for this column, please bring it to the St. Helena Star office, 1200 Main St., Suite C during regular business hours. There's no guarantee your wine will be chosen to be featured, but all wines will be evaluated and considered. With questions, concerns, contact Catherine Seda, 707-337-6840 or catseda@gmail.com.

— Catherine Seda is the Star's tasting panel writer.



Meadowood

FROM PAGE A4

and hosted slightly sunburned hotel guests, several canoodling couples, and a celebrated wine consultant. Recently renovated with a more contemporary feel, muted tones and darker woods, the environment was elegant in a quiet, unobtrusive way that kept the spotlight on the menu. Our server, Olin Harris, explained that Chef Kostow sought to create a multi-layered American melting pot of different cuisines, using French techniques, albeit with a light touch.

"He's not going to clobber you upside the head with any one flavor," Harris promised. Rather, "the various textures ... and flavors of your dinner were meant to be tasted together to create a symphony."

The restaurant does not use printed menus, so the chef can accommodate diners' restrictions and preferences and "have some fun doing it," Harris said.

Plate presentation was rustically playful, with rocks and stones serving as backdrop for refined delicacies. We coveted the ceramic serving dishes and chargers, designed by St. Helena and Angwin artisans to the chef's specifications. The charming, informative staff seemed to materialize magically as needed, and then shimmer away.

Chef Kostow paid a fleeting, friendly visit, but quickly returned to the kitchen to cook up his next gastronomic proposition.

After being captivated by the canapés, and



Submitted photo

Plate presentation at The Restaurant at Meadowood was rustically playful, with rocks, stones, pine tree needles and other outdoor elements serving as backdrop for refined delicacies.

enticed by the entrees, we were ready for some sweet satisfaction. The charred berries with effervescence, blueberry buttermilk bowl, and voluptuous dark chocolate with beet and violet, did not disappoint. Having happily consumed the final sugary spoonful, we were surprised when Harris appeared with a mysterious hand-carved wooden box. What lay inside, we wondered, to cap off this evening of dining debauchery? An engage-

ment ring or diamond bracelet, perhaps?

No, it contained "forest mignardises," from the French word "mignard," meaning graceful, pretty and delicate. We were invited to forage inside for small sweet bites nestled in grass, including a rosemary gel honeycomb from Meadowood's apiary, the "dirty caramel" with eucalyptus and pine, a maple leaf of whipped fudge and maple syrup dusted with dried mushrooms, and a coffee brown-butter twig. We promptly polished them off, accompanied by a La Cave de l'Abbe Rous Banyuls Grand Cru Cuvée Christian Reynal from France that nearly swept my wine-wise friend off her feet.

All this culinary carousing comes at a price. The nine- to ten-course Chef's Tasting Menu costs \$225 per person; \$450 with wine pairings (corkage is \$50 a bottle, limited to two). If you seek a more intimate epicurean experience, you might consider the Chef's Counter menu. For \$500 per person (plus \$350 with wine pairing), voyeuristic gourmets can observe Kostow and his team prepare dinner inside the newly renovated 3,000-square-foot gleaming white kitchen, while being hand-served a 15- to 20-course fantasy feast.

I doubt that dining under the bright kitchen lights and eager-to-please scrutiny of the staff would have the desired sensual effect on me. Although watching this chef in action would be thrilling, I much prefer such culinary seduction to be done in the dimly lit privacy of the dining room, where temptation beckons and no one can see you drool.

(Laura Rafaty is a regular contributor to the Star. Her award-winning "Up the Valley" humor column appears twice monthly. Read more at LauraRafaty.com.)

Wine

FROM PAGE A4

The 2009 Wind Gap, "Griffin's Lair," Syrah from Sonoma Coast adds some hedonistic flair to the evening, and then it's time for a complex chenin blanc from the Loire, the 2006 Chateau Pierre-Bise, Savennières-aux-Roche-aux-Moines.

The next wine could explain why wine lovers become wine lovers: Cave de l'Abbe Rous, the 1998 "Cuvée Christian Reynal," Banyuls Grand Cru, France, which was pure ecstasy.

Finally, Napa Valley's Vineyard 29 makes a late harvest zin, the "Aida Estate," which closes the evening on a very sweet note.

(Catherine Seda is the St. Helena Star's tasting panel writer and works for Balzac Communications & Marketing in Napa. She holds a diploma in wine and spirits from the Wine & Spirits Education Trust, and enjoys all things wine. Contact her at catseda@gmail.com.)