From: Beckta dining & wine
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Beckta dining & wine

March 2007 Newsletter

"Beckta is the best restaurant in town" Ottawa Magazine, Top Ten Restaurants in Ottawa, November 2006 Issue

As the sun starts to shine a little brighter and the snow starts to melt, we can't help but yearn for Spring and all of the great things that come with it. One such thing is Malivoire's Ladybug Rose. I have just tasted the new release of our perennial favorite spring wine and this vintage is fantastic. Look for it on our wine list in the

To see our latest menu offerings, please visit us at our website.

To make a reservation, please call

next two weeks. For me, drinking this wine is always the first sign of spring, followed closely by ramps, fiddleheads and asparagus. We are chomping at the bit for these great flavours again, but our suppliers have one word for us…patience. In the mean time, Chef Mike Moffatt is surprising us with new and interesting dishes using the best of late Winter products, such as our braised Venison Shank with French Style Lentils that is currently on our Chef's Tasting Menu (see recipe below).

Recipe

Red Wine-Braised Venison Shank (Serves 2)
2 x 3-inch round venison shanks
2 c red wine
4 c chicken stock
½ c celery, chopped
½ c carrots, chopped
1 c onions, diced
3 tbsp dried juniper berries
½ bunch thyme
1 bay leaf
4 tbsp canola oil

In a large pan large enough to hold shanks, heat the oil in until very hot. Sear shanks until caramelized and remove from pan. Deglaze pan with wine. Transfer venison into deep enough pot to enable the liquid to cover the shank. Add wine and remaining ingredients to pot,

613-238-7063 or click here for Online Reservations.

Interested in booking a private dining room event for up to 20 people? Visit the Private Dining Room section of our website or contact Adrienne Potter at 238-7063.

To see some of our reviews or media stories, please visit the Media section of our website

Hours of Operation:

Seven Nights Per Week
5:30 to 10 PM

Closed on all statutory holidays

Chef Michael Moffat

adding more stock if necessary to cover the venison. Bring to a boil on stovetop, then cover and finish in oven at 275F or just warm enough to maintain the barest simmer for 2-3 hours, or until the meat is falling off the bone. For the sauce, strain braising liquid, and reduce until thickened slightly. Finish with ½ oz gin to enhance juniper flavour. Season with salt & pepper.

French-Style Lentils (serves 2 as a side dish)
¼ c carrots, brunoised
½ c onions, brunoised
½ c double smoked bacon, brunoised
1 clove garlic, sliced
2 c du puy lentils
3 c chicken stock

Sweat bacon on low heat until fat renders. Add carrots, garlic and onions and sauté until soft. Add lentils, sauté 1 minute and deglaze with stock. Add stock in small increments until lentils are just cooked through. This is the same cooking method used to cook risotto.

This dish is wonderful with the accompaniment of some sauteed mushrooms, braised or sautéed greens (dandelion greens, arugula, rapini), and / or roasted brussel sprouts.

Welcoming Spring at Beckta
On Sunday May 6th Chef Mike Moffatt will be showcasing the freshest of Spring ingredients, by creating a special three-course menu to celebrate the season. The menu will be paired with three exciting new wines and an aperitif, served in our private dining room around a communal table for 20 people. Our Service Manager, Pieter Van den Weghe will be on hand to facilitate introductions and describe the food and wine pairings. It is a great opportunity to enjoy the season's best with other great people who love wine and food.

The dinner starts promptly at 6 PM with canapés and aperitifs and the cost is $95 per person including wine plus taxes and gratuity. Please contact Adrienne Potter for to book for our *Spring Showcase Dinner*. We hope to see you there!

Wine Article: Does Price Matter?
I was recently asked if I could teach someone to tell the difference between a $20 bottle of wine and a $70 bottle of wine. It took me a while to answer the question. "Did *I* even know the difference?"
I don't consider myself a wine snob in any sense. I am equally happy quaffing a $10 bottle of very basic wine at a pool party

out of a plastic cup as I am debating the virtues of a revered first growth over a multi-course degustation menu. But I do consider it my duty to offer for sale at my restaurant, wines that fill people with joy... regardless of price.
To get back to our question about price let's explore for a moment, the costs associated with producing a more expense, or premium wine. First of all is the cost of the land the grapes are grown on. For the most part, in a good year just about anyone can make decent Cabernet in the best vineyard sites in Napa or a fine Pinot Noir on the majestic slopes of Chambertin in Burgundy. This is why the land there is expensive. The "Terroir" as the French call it, or the taste of the land, is very good in these places.

Next, there are yields. It is easy in hot regions of the world with rich soils to harvest 12 tonnes of grapes per acre of land with sparsely planted wines.
However, the wine that will be produced from these vines will be alcoholic water with very little flavour. To concentrate the wine one must plant densely (each vine costs money), in order to have them compete for the water and nutrients in the soil. One must also "green harvest". This is the process of cutting off bunches of grapes early in the year so that

the vine can put all of its efforts into the remaining bunches, resulting in more concentrated and ripe fruit. Next there is the very expensive hand-sorting of only the best grapes, without rot or mildew, from the rest of the harvest so that only the healthiest are allowed into your great wine. After that, the grapes must be pressed very gently, lowering your yield even more (the more you press, the more juice you get, along with bitter tastes and textures of the skins and seeds). Finally, for many wines, you need to invest in new, $1000 French oak barrels to properly age and season your wine in. And please don′t forget about the fancy marketing budgets, nice labels, storing the wines and paying the salespeople while carrying incredible inventory costs.

So now you know how to make an expensive wine. But do you know how to tell the difference between a bad wine and a great wine? It′s usually not related to price. Even when first being released to the public, some of the most expensive wines can sometimes have flavour, but not soul. They just taste…dead. It′s the difference between eating a freshly picked tomato out of your mother′s garden, versus the pieces of chopped tomato on top of a slice of pizza that has been

sitting under a heat lamp in the local pizza joint for a few hours. One makes you feel more alive; the other offers you mere calories.

So how do you spot the wines with soul? I wish they listed it on the label. There is no sure-fire way of picking them out of a wine-store lineup, but here is a little help:

Small is better. It's very hard to make great food for a million people at the same time. The same is true for wine.

Buy the producer, not the region. Great winemakers and wine growers exist because they intervene very little in process. Very little spraying, fertilizing, irrigating, filtering the wine or adding anything to it in the winery. If they don't have the best vineyard, they can still deliver very good wine at a reasonable price from a modest vineyard. Just because a wine comes from a great vineyard or region doesn't mean that the winemaker knew how to bring out the life in the wine.

Trust your palate, not your preconception. There are countless times a label has caused me to like or dislike a wine based upon what I am supposed to do. You are *supposed* to like expensive Bordeaux. You

are *not supposed to* like a basic country wine as much. Be open to the fact that the local country wine, such as a simple Minervois, might offer more in the glass than the *Grand Chateau* and it just might.

How to tell the difference between a $20 wine and a $70 wine? The one that has more soul should cost $70…but often, it doesn′t.
Here are a few wines with soul that I have found lately:

Sacred Hill Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand 2005 (LCBO General List $15)

Bon Courage Shiraz, Robertson, South Africa 2004 (Consignment, $17, gskeggs@sympatico.ca)

Minervois "La Liviniere", Domaine des Aires Hautes Rouge 2004 (Vintages Release March 17th $20)

This article originally appeared in Diplomat Magazine

Purveyor Profile
Christophe Marineau of *Le Coprin*, purveyor of Wild and Cultivated Mushrooms, located in Farrellton, Quebec.

Christophe is a long-time supplier of ours. His mushrooms are famous in the Ottawa area,

appearing on many of the city's better restaurant menus. Christophe is a unique supplier in that our chef deals exclusively with him from ordering to delivery. If we have questions about a product he is always a phone call away, or we see him personally twice a week. It is Christophe himself that is out in the cold and damp weather to forage or harvest his great products. While we are always looking for great new suppliers, Christophe endures because his commitment to quality is second to none and we consider him a friend. Some of the chef's favorites from Christophe are his foraged Morels, Hon Shimeji and King Eryngii (the large ones are great for grilling on the BBQ!) Please check his website for stores in the Ottawa area that carry his fantastic mushrooms.

Thank you on behalf of Africare

On behalf of our own Kristy Gaetz and Africare Canada I would like to thank everyone who attended the fundraiser held at Beckta on February 25th or sent donations along to help with this incredible project. Kristy raised more than $6000 personally, even beating her own lofty goals. She is now in Southern Tanzania helping to build the school that she and others have raised money for. We hope to welcome her back to

Beckta when she returns to Canada after the project is complete. Way to go Kristy!

We hope to be able to welcome you into Beckta again sometime soon.

Cheers!

Steve and the family at Beckta dining & wine

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