

HEDONIST'S GAZETTE

Published by Robert Parker, erobertparker.com

Private Dinner to Benefit the Grand Teton Music Festival June, 2006

The food for this meal was prepared by the great French chef, Daniel Boulud, and was, of course, stunning. He deserves even more praise for accomplishing this in the kitchen of a private home. The tuna tartar was sensational, the porcini lobster civet with summer root vegetables rich, but light on its feet, the amazing Pennsylvania squab with figs was incredible, and Daniel's classic short ribs and roasted rib-eye took beef to a level of perfection that matched the wines.

With the delicious hors d'oeuvres we had the enormously promising 1996 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne. The 1995 is probably drinking better at the moment, but in terms of upside potential, the 1996 should ultimately eclipse it. The 1995 is a slightly richer Champagne, and the 1996 is more delineated, elegant, and crisp. We then moved to a fully mature, beautiful 1990 Louis Latour Corton Charlemagne, which is revealing plenty of earthy, almost rustic honeysuckle notes intermixed with orange blossom, caramel, and hazelnut characteristics. A mini-vertical of Harlan Estate began with the 1998. Perhaps the finest wine of that challenging vintage, it is accessible, lighter than usual, but still rich, offering plenty of cedar, cassis, and mocha aromas and flavors, sweet tannin, and a voluptuous mid-palate and finish. It is a tour de force for such a challenging year, and should continue to evolve and drink well for 10-15 years. The 1994 and 1995 Harlan Estates were served with the Pennsylvania squab. The 1994 is one of the monumental Cabernet Sauvignons of our age. It is just beginning to reveal some secondary nuances, including lead pencil, cedar, and spice box along with copious quantities of black currant liqueur intermixed with licorice, flowers, and spice. Voluptuous, rich, and remarkably youthful, it has always been a bigger, more ruggedly constructed wine than the 1995, which is more seamless, but not as complex or rich. The 1995 was more supple and delicious at an earlier age. Both represent the epitome of great California Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines. With the duo of dry aged Pennsylvania beef, we had the young, potentially immortal 2001 and 2002 Harlan Estates. These two wines reveal a contrast in styles, with the 2001 more classically structured, tannic, and seemingly more ageworthy with enormous reserves of fruit and extract. The 2002, a real hussy of a Cabernet Sauvignon, is voluptuous, opulent, in-your-face, flamboyant, and already approachable (much like the 1995 was in its youth). Both are exquisite wines. We finished with the 1984 Château d'Yquem, which made a good, but uninspiring impression.

Food:

Course 1: Tuna tartar with cured lemon and Moroccan spices, minted yogurt, cucumber and fresh garbanzo beans

Course 2: Porcini lobster "civet" with smoked bacon, walnut and summer root vegetables

Course 3: Pennsylvania squab with figs

Course 4: Duo of dry aged Pennsylvania beef: short ribs with braised Boston lettuce, and roasted rib-eye with chanterelle and summer truffle

Dessert: Baked pineapple with vanilla sablé and exotic fruit sabayon

| Vintage | Wine | Rating |
|---------|---------------------------------|--------|
| 1996 | Taittinger Comtes de Champagne | 96+ |
| 1990 | Louis Latour Corton Charlemagne | 93 |
| 1998 | Harlan Estate | 95 |
| 1994 | Harlan Estate (magnum) | 100 |
| 1995 | Harlan Estate (magnum) | 99 |
| 2001 | Harlan Estate | 100 |
| 2002 | Harlan Estate | 100 |
| 1984 | Château d'Yquem | 88 |

Robert Parker

Note to Readers about the Hedonist's Gazette

The abbreviated, spontaneous, and visceral tasting notes and numerical ratings in this section should not be confused with professional, structured tasting notes from specific peer group tastings or cellar tastings. The Hedonist's Gazette notes emerge from casual get-togethers, with the food and company every bit as important as the wines. I do not consider these tasting comments as accurate or as pure in a professional sense, but they are part of a wine's overall record. In short, focus, so critical in a professional tasting without food or other distractions, is clearly on a different level in such "fun gatherings." —Robert M. Parker, Jr.

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