



Wellington Branch Christmas Function and Ladies Summer Lunch:

Our final function for last year was again an excellent lunch at Hippopotamus in the QT Museum Hotel. Geoff chose a Framingham Classic Riesling 2019 as the aperitif which was much enjoyed and surprisingly widely unidentified. Old vines and some barrel aging make for a very appealing wine from a top producer. A good turnout sat down to a very tasty first course of Le Crudo D'Albacore -Awatoru Wildfood's Albacore Tuna, Pastrami with salted Pollack Roe Aioli, Cucumber, Mint, Wood Sorrel, Radish & Parmesan Oil matched deliciously with Ott Am Berg Gruner Veltliner 2017 from Austria. Given how often this varietal is punted up at our lunches on this occasion it also mystified us.

To follow, with excellent Le Filet de Boeuf Rossini – convincingly rare Prime Angus Beef Fillet, Truffle Pomme mousseline, Spinach, Crostini, Portobello & Foie Gras Pate we savoured a fine Tuscan Red, Tenuta San Guido Le Difese 2016 – 70% Cabernet and 30% Sangiovese. Once revealed we all knew it, but sadly it also was a challenge however enjoyable. This wine also coped quite well as well structured reds often do with L'Opera – Classic French Opera Cake, Almond Sponge Cake, Dark Chocolate Gamache – a fine conclusion to another stylish lunch. Executive Chef Jiwon Do spoke well to his creations while Florent Souche and his team's service again reinforced how good Hippopotamus continues to be.

Last weekend we gathered along with partners and pleasingly five ladies whose partners are no longer active or have passed away, to enjoy a very busy day in Martinborough at the Luna Estate Blue Rock Winery complex. Due to there being no trains on the day 30 of us travelled very comfortably by coach thanks to Andrew Meehan's arrangements.

While some went to Luna's Cellar Door in Puruatanga Road initially once we were all united we enjoyed scones, jam, cream and tea or coffee before setting about the serious business. On offer, a cooking demonstration by Chef Nick Arnold who's fare for the lunch was just excellent. In parallel passionate winemaker Joel Watson from Luna showed a range of wines before we all gathered for Luna Rose en Magnum and canapes.

The generous and delicious platter menu included the dish Nick had demonstrated - Slow roasted Martinborough Lamb, Moroccan style with harissa and Tzatziki; succulent Crispy pork belly, caramelised apples, crispy sage and a aioli; roasted new potatoes with garlic, rosemary and sea salt; char-grilled Mediterranean vegetables, basil and caper aioli, and a cos, baby spinach and rocket salad with roast pear, date and labneh & sesame seeds.

This was accompanied by magnums of Luna's top wines, some from their aged cellar which we were able to compare. Eclipse Chardonnay 2017, Eclipse Pinot Noir 2015 and Blue Rock Pinot Noir 2015 were all discussed and enjoyed with a weighting on the blue Rock Pinot of that pair.

As it was very hot on the day Joel invited us into the Barrel Hall to cool off – a first as far as I know for the Club and most welcome. Returning we enjoyed a deconstructed plated dessert – The basic apple; Calavados Crème Brulee, apple panna cotta with apple jelly, apple and blue berry crumble along with more tea or coffee to wrap up. Throughout Nick's wife Susan and her team along with Joel looked after us extremely well and we departed feeling replete and happy.