

The CLUB

Enjoying the finest food & wine, fun and fellowship with not a vegan in sight.

It would be too much for Adam Barrington Spencer, a Sydney-based comedian, media personality and internationally-acclaimed mathematician to calculate how much money the Beefsteak & Burgundy Club has poured into the hospitality industry since it was formed in Adelaide in 1954. We suggest tens of millions, and as for the glasses of red, well, let's settle on a google of grapes given that there are 291 clubs worldwide each with a limit of 30 members that meet monthly. But please, let's not visualise their meetings as being hedonistic-like gatherings of men of rotund stature staining their crested ties before mains. There has been much frivolity since the starting days as the Foundation Club at the Ambassadors Hotel on King William Street, city, but always with



decorum. The Beefsteak & Burgundy Club is, after all, now for the every-day gentleman and since 1976 also the lady. These meticulously-planned lunches or dinners are based on the club's constitution: "...to encourage the appreciation and temperate consumption of fine wine and other beverages in conjunction with the serving and enjoyment of food in an environment of good fellowship." They're also about information and education whilst bearing elements of the writings of Eton School principal William Horman, who in the 15th century told us that '*manners maketh man*'. It comes with a twist of rivalry during comment on the wines and courses, but always with humour and humility. From those luncheons when bottles of red in brown paper bags were plonked on the restaurant table and those attending had to guess what they were, it has become an amazing organisation with 4500 members worldwide. There are Beefsteak & Burgundy clubs in 14 countries including across Australia from the women's-only Troppo Femmes in Darwin, The Never Never Ladies in Katherine and five clubs on the Fleurieu Peninsula – Aldinga (men), Goolwa (men), Fleurieu Friends (mixed), McLaren District (mixed) and Victor Harbor (men).

Events



Under the club's constitution the president of the Formation Club in Adelaide is also the international president, as with the secretary who becomes general secretary, a most important appointment held by Craig Thornquest for the past 14 years. He was also president in 2003-04. One can imagine Craig, who now resides on Hindmarsh Island and is also a member of the local Goolwa club, sitting at the home dinner table and offering his guesses and critique of the lovely meal his wife, Marita, has prepared. "I always say, 'it's a lovely meal darling, well done' (he laughs)," Craig said. "If I didn't the sauce would be over my head. "But seriously, what the Beefsteak & Burgundy Club has done is make me appreciate everything I eat and drink. Isn't it wonderful that you can sit down and analyse a glass of wine instead of just



Left: Members and guests at the Goolwa Beefsteak & Burgundy Club dinner at Blues, Middleton. Craig Thornquest is at the front far left next to Goolwa club president Joel Cousins (in blue) with club secretary Brian Horewood behind his left shoulder.

Below: The commemorative menu from the inaugural meeting of the Goolwa branch of the Beefsteak & Burgundy Club on October 1981, which still remains on the wall of The Whistlestop restaurant, Hays St. The late - and great - Peter Rankine, the club's first vice-president and later president, hosted numerous dinners here. They say these 'formal meetings' were legendary.



drinking it?

“You can cerebrally think about a wine, analyse it, drink and taste it. That's what I enjoy about these gatherings. You are discussing it with friends. Who would want to open a bottle of Grange by themselves? You want to drink it with friends, think about it and talk about it.”

The typical challenge was presented to the Goolwa club at arguably the finest restaurant across our south coast – Blues, on the Middleton-Goolwa Road. The club will celebrate 40 years in 2021, and the very first menu remains on the wall of the inaugural dinner at The Whistle Stop in Goolwa.

On this occasion, the club's president Joel Cousins, and the meeting's convenor Pete Ferraro who chose an Italian theme, met Blues' part-owner Mark Harlow and chef/part-owner Kevin Tungle to devilishly

create this night of culinary and wine suspense.

A Spritz Veneziano, an Italian wine-based cocktail complemented the opening serve – Coffin Bay oysters with Wakeme, Asian dressing and smoked salmon pearls. The mystery deepened beyond one's belief. Even the club's astute cellar master Steve Uppington was at wits' end with the reds. They started with two, sneakily a 2017 Precious Little Nero D'avola, but made months apart to give a different but equally stunning flavour.

And how could one realise that the entree – Ciotechino, puy lentils, fried basil, borage flowers, horse radish cream, EVOO foods and vincotto was basically a boiled pork sausage? It was amazing, cooked in traditional Italian style.

And so more serves came out. Mains: Venison loin with celeriac puree, smoked

eggplant, dressed rocket, spring pea puree and green beans with basil infused jus.

Dessert: Sticky date pudding with vanilla bean ice cream, butter scotch sauce and lemon – again superb and with the finest of wines.

Members had their guesses without much success, although when local racehorse trainer David Jolly was asked to have a go he was interrupted by those wanting to know more about whether his horse Behemoth would win The Everest, a \$15 million race at Randwick on October 17.

It was a fabulous night; the bus brought in the troops in their suits/jacket and ties at 6.45pm and took them home safely three hours later – all in fine shape.

Craig said that at every Beefsteak & Burgundy Club around the world the members enjoy and understand wine.

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People

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“They know what to look for with the nuance of wine, but it's not overly snobbish,” he said.

“We are all here to learn. With new members we are there to support and to get them to look for the same nuances that we seek in wines.

“There is a lot of camaraderie, but no pressure. It's not about needing to know a lot about wines; it's about being with friends over fine wine and fine food.

“Membership dictates that you can have up to 30 members, and the reason for that is if you have any more you can lose the chance for everyone to stand up and voice their opinion or suggest their identification of the food and wine.

“With unlimited members you can get drowned out... that was a very good strategic insertion in our constitution to make us all accountable to our friends we talk about wine.”

As to be expected, in Craig's position as general secretary there are a lot of invites to luncheons and dinners. “I appreciate and enjoy every one of them because the beauty of this club is that it's the getting together of like-minded people who like good fellowship and fun times, all with the enjoyment of wine. It is the great mix,” Craig said.

“Any member can travel the world and be welcomed red-in-hand by the organisation. It's that sort of club.

“I can understand that some people from the outside have formed an image of our club having had lunches that perhaps were considered unruly, but I think everyone has long grown up from those days of the 70s and 80s.

“It's not about snobbery or money either. We have those from all walks of



Pictured top: Goolwa club president Joel Cousins (left) with Craig Thornquest. Above: The Blues team (from left) Binnie Roberts, part-owner/chef Kevin Tungle (owner), part-owner/manager Mark Harlow and Ebony Pritchard.

life from all suburbs from Adelaide and from all countries across the world. Our international president Ian Coker said at our last committee meeting that the only continent that we didn't have a Beefsteak & Burgundy club was Antarctica, and we're working on that.”

WHERE YOU WILL FIND A BEEFSTEAK & BURGUNDY CLUB

Australia
Brazil
Cambodia
Canada(2)
China / Hong Kong (8)
Denmark
Japan
New Zealand (7)
Philippines
Malaysia
Singapore
Taiwan
Thailand
Sweden

South Australia (47)
including:

Aldinga (men)
Fleurieu Friends (mixed)
Goolwa (men)
Fleurieu Friends (mixed)
McLaren District (mixed)

Imagine that; Antarctica. The Beefsteak & Burgundy clubs, all 291 of them that evolved from a lunch at the Ambassadors Hotel 66 years ago, are full of surprises. They're all good people, and not one vegan amongst them. 🌍

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