

## WINE DINNERS

# Double Eagle Wine Dinner: *A Night of Wine and Orchids*

***The food was scrumptious; the wines were great. All perfectly paired and quite first-rate!***

Just a little rhyme to sum up a delightful evening of fine wine and food, graciously hosted by Double Eagle owner Buddy Ritter and his son, Win. Through National Distributors, Double Eagle arranged to bring in some of California's well-known wines from Kenwood and Valley of the Moon. A pleasant surprise was the attendance of Steve Reud, winemaker for Valley of the Moon. His eloquent, expert descriptions of each wine served added an excellent dimension to the dinner.

The Double Eagle's Isabella room was a perfect venue. The ambience and elegant décor, including orchids on each table (cultivated by Buddy himself), set a charming mood in which to enjoy the meal and the guests.

Upon arrival, guests were served a Valley of the Moon Pinot Blanc. Well received, this wine is the traditional Alsatian style varietal blended from grapes harvested in the Russian River Valley. Its lime zest, citrus blossom aroma, and melon taste went well with the hors d'oeuvre of melon wrapped with prosciutto.

Chef Lauro Campos, a graduate of the Culinary Institute in San Francisco, outdid himself in the preparation of this exciting meal. The first course was a salad of mixed greens with a creamy dressing, served with a Kenwood Reserve Chardonnay. I found this Chardonnay average. It reflects the typical California oak-aged wine, with fruity aromas of pear and some vanilla notes from the French oak barrels used for aging.

Following the salad was a delightful Gazpacho. This regional dish combining tomatoes, garlic, cucumbers, and spices, was topped with a slice of ripe avocado. Only a bold wine such as Kenwood's Jack London Series Zinfandel would pair well with this spicy dish. The Zinfandel had aromas of blackberries and cassis. The



By Bobby Lee Lawrence    Photography by Russell Bamert



Buddy Ritter and Jerry Harrell

flavor of cherries and hint of pepper, with a lingering finish, made this wine an evening favorite.

For the main course, Chef Campos prepared a melt-in-your-mouth filet mignon\*, topped with a cream sauce; a medley of steamed vegetables and mashed potatoes completed the main dish. The wine served was Kenwood's Artist Series Cabernet Sauvignon\*\*. Both the 1999 and 2000 releases were available for tasting. I found the 1999 carried slightly more complexity and depth. Initially, you are met with aromas of figs and cherries, along with notes of herbs and mint. Both releases were aged thirty-two months in French oak and will certainly continue to improve in the bottle for the next decade.

Dessert was an excellent tiramisu, served with Valley of the Moon Port. This particular port is unique because aged brandy is added in the fermentation process. There were varying opinions as to how well the port stood up to the rich dessert. Personally, I felt the port struggled against the deep chocolate flavor. This port is only available at the winery, so if you are a fan, plan a trip to Sonoma and enjoy all of the other Kenwood and Valley of the Moon wines while you are there. However, Steve did indicate that if you call the winery, they will ship.

\* You may have seen advertisements recently that the Double Eagle is now serving aged beef. I must tell you that as one of the only restaurants in the area to take this bold step, it is a step in the right direction.

\*\* Just a note on the artist who created the beautiful labels for Kenwood's Artist Series bottles. Andres Morillo, born in the Philippines, settled in United States as a young man. Initially a watercolorist, he became well versed in pastels and oils. The painting on the Cabernet Sauvignon label is titled "Saint Ives Harbor".

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