

A Wine & Food Component Tasting at Chateau des Charmes by F.G. Couch



In 2003, Sue & Fred Couch and Yvonne Trout (Halliday) & husband, Rob co-founded the Niagara Chapter of the Ontario Wine Society. The first official event was in April, 2003 at the beautiful Chateau des Charmes winery – “Matching Food and Wine” with Dr. Linda Bramble. In 2018, we recreated that initial event at the same venue. Unfortunately, Linda was not able to be the presenter this year but we were lucky enough to have long-time Niagara Chapter member, Barbara Leslie, who led us through an entertaining and educational presentation.



Prior to the presentation, members and guests gathered in the tasting room for some cheese and charcuterie to pair with the two reception wines – the 2016 Gamay Noir and the 2016 Aligoté.



After the reception, President and CEO of Chateau des Charmes, Paul-André Bosc, led the group on a tour of the new underground barrel cellar. Paul-André answered questions about the winery and he also talked about the winery’s long-time relationship with the Ontario Wine Society.



After the barrel cellar tour, we gathered in the St. David's Bench Room for Barb's presentation – "Food and Wine Pairing or: How to Hedge Your Bets". A very colourful "palette" of food components was at each place setting. We learned about the difference between "taste" and "flavour" by biting into a Jelly Belly – first tasting one and then tasting another with our nose plugged. We found out there are only five basic tastes – sweet, sour, bitter, salt and one that's been added in recent years – umami or savoury. With our noses plugged the group tasted mainly sweet and possibly sour from the Jelly Belly. This indicated to us that flavour is something we smell and taste is what we perceive with our tongue.

Barb then continued to tell us about the "rules" of wine and food matching. We found out there are no "rules" only guidelines. We learned that some food just do not go well with wine – artichokes, asparagus, cabbage and mackerel, for example. The "rule" that white wine goes with fish and red wine goes with meat can be broken. Grilled salmon can pair perfectly with a Pinot Noir and an oaked Chardonnay can do very well paired with steak.



It was then time to experiment with how food components affect wine. The first wine we tried was the 2017 Sauvignon Blanc. The wine tasted great when tried on its own but what happens when we take a taste of a lemon which is high in acidity and then try the wine? The result is that the wine now tastes much sweeter than it did before. We then went on to how bitterness affects wine. We tried broccoli with the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon. The bitterness of the broccoli made the wine seem very bitter. This was fixed by dipping the broccoli in salt and then trying the wine. The lesson learned was that salt can remedy a bitter food. Our third experiment was with sweetness. For this we first tried the delicious Vidal Icewine. We then tasted a very sweet cookie. The sweetness of the cookie made the Icewine less sweet. However, when we tried a raspberry instead, the raspberry did not overpower the wine and the sweetness came through much better. The lesson was that the dessert should not be sweeter than the wine. Our final experiment was how something with a lot of heat is paired with a wine high in alcohol. For this we tried the 2015 Chardonnay with a medium

heat salsa. The salsa basically ruined the wine. For a food component with a lot of heat it is recommended that this be paired with an off-dry wine with some residual sugar.

We then had time to experiment with trying different food components with the different wines. The conclusion can be summarized as follows: if it's too bitter...add a little bit of salt! If it's too acidic... add a little bit of lemon! Make sure the wine is sweeter than the food! Be vigilant with high alcohol wines and hot food! And remember, there are no rules!



After this most informative presentation, we then went back to the tasting room for some delicious hors d'oeuvres and more Aligoté and Gamay Noir.



As the sun set over Chateau des Charmes, our evening of wine and food came to an end but we came away with a lot of knowledge and got to try some really great wines. We would like to thank Barb Leslie for her presentation; Vintage Hotels for catering; the staff of Chateau des Charmes for hosting; Sue & Fred Couch for planning this event and Linda Bramble for helping us recreate this very first tasting event of the Niagara Chapter. Cheers!

To see a video of Dr. Linda Bramble's greeting to the members and guests of the Niagara Chapter:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wn5OFIBk-bk>

Photos are by Niagara Chapter photographer, Bruce Jackson. More of Bruce's photos can be seen at:
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/photosophlake/albums/72157690471920230>