

Beckta dining & wine

August 2008 Newsletter

WELCOME FROM STEPHEN BECKTA



Ah, summertime and the living is easy. Or at least it should be. I hope you are all enjoying your summertime and all of the great things that come with it...warm weather, more relaxation, wonderful markets teeming with the best produce of the year, and of course great meals with loved ones. I sure am. But I must confess that I have been a little consumed this summer with thoughts of winter and what food and wine to serve when we are aching for simple comforts from the snow and cold. As some of you may have heard, we are planning on opening a new restaurant on York Street in Ottawa's Byward Market in January. While many plans are still being formalized, we can share a few details about this exciting new project with you in this newsletter, as well as directing you to Ron Eade's blog from the Ottawa Citizen for his take on the new enterprise.

Also, to add a little fun to your summertime reading, we offer you an article from our resident cheese guru, Steve Whittaker, and a little piece by me about local wines. I hope you enjoy them. We also have our fabulous Late Summer Showcase dinner coming up to capture the very best of this great season on the plate for you on August 29th. It's a very busy and exciting time for us, but we wanted to take a minute out to connect and wish you a very happy and relaxing rest of the summer and we hope to see you all soon. *Cheers!*

Steve Beckta and the Staff of Beckta dining & wine

A WORD FROM OUR CHEF

I find myself facing the same question a lot recently; "Chef, what's your signature dish"? My answer never varies. I tell people that I pride myself on not having one signature dish, but I hope that all my dishes are of equal caliber. I do, however, have some favourite ingredients that I would like to share with all of you. They include: cured meats, French fries, beautifully aged cheese, corn, heirloom tomatoes and wild blueberries.

These and many other of our simple, favourite things will be the focus of the menu at our new restaurant. They will all be presented in tasting portions, to allow you to try lots of them on each visit. I look forward to sharing many other personal favorites with you in the years to come at both venues.



A publication for the friends and guests of Beckta dining & wine

AUGUST 2008 NEWSLETTER



L A T E S U M M E R S H O W C A S E D I N N E R

We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to take part in our latest venture: Beckta's Late Summer Showcase Dinner. One night of every season we will be offering you a sneak peek of exciting new menu items paired with some of our most interesting new wines. It's a chance not only to have an amazing dinner featuring the freshest ingredients of the season, but to share your experience with like-minded

"foodies" who often dine with us at Beckta. The evening will start with canapés at 7:00 PM with a fabulous aperitif, followed by a four course menu including Steve Whittaker's famous cheese presentation, all paired with individual wines. This dinner will only be offered at our 20-person communal table in our private dining room. The Late Summer Showcase will take place on Friday, August 29th, and is open to groups of any size to a maximum of 20 people.

The cost will be \$120 per person plus taxes and gratuity. If you are interested in joining us for this unique dining experience, please contact us at 238-7063 or email Jennifer Pitt at : jpitt@beckta.com. We hope to see you there!



D E T A I L S O N T H E N E W P L A C E . . .



In case you have not seen it yet, Ron Eade, the food Editor of the Ottawa Citizen, has a fabulous new blog on the Citizen's website that chronicles many of the goings on and gossip in the Ottawa food scene. This format allows him to write more, and with more freedom, than in the print edition of the paper. He offers more great stories about food, restaurants and culture than ever before. There are also many great photos and videos on the site in addition to a very quick turnaround on the latest news and events. This is why we chose to reveal our new location for our upcoming restaurant and some details about the place with Ron on his site, "Omnivore's Ottawa". We encourage you to check it out here and go back often for updates on all things food in Ottawa.



To see the article

<http://communities.canada.com/ottawacitizen/blogs/omnivore/default.aspx>

E D I B L E N A T I O N 1 0 1 R E A S O N S T O L O V E C A N A D I A N F O O D

16 WINE WIZARD

Owner-sommelier of Ottawa's Beckta, Stephen Beckta (formerly of Café Boulud, New York) and Chef Mike Moffatt offer an ambitious, local and organic focus on contemporary French food, perfectly paired with an international food-friendly wine list that includes small producers and the best of Canadian wines—in a modest Victorian house.

Originally appeared in WINEACCESS Canada's Wine & Food Magazine

AUGUST 2008 NEWSLETTER

SAY CHEESE!

by Steve Whittaker

So, you've come to the end of your meal and you've hit a crossroads. Do you go for the sweet decadent dessert or try the road less traveled, the savoury classic finish...cheese. As the consumption of cheese continues to rise in Canada so does the desire to try those funky moulds that appear at great restaurants around the world. While the cheese course



has become increasingly common in many fine dining restaurants, I find that guests often don't have enough information to make an educated decision to venture down that cheesy path. My role at Beckta is to make cheese accessible by bringing the board tableside to present each cheese in an informative and enticing way. This allows our guests a visual preview to what is ahead of them, as well as some taste descriptions and a little history behind each cheese. I take great pride in choosing and caring for the cheeses that I bring into Beckta, ensuring that they are "a pointe" and ideal for consumption when served. This is really the difference between a good and great cheese plate.

Typically you'll find six cheeses on the board at Beckta of varying milk types, textures and strengths. I like to guide you through the flight in the order of mildest to strongest, and I'm happy to suggest a nice wine to compliment the whole plate. The hardest part of my job is deciding what six cheeses should appear on the board at any given time as there are so many fantastic varieties out there. I try to appeal to as many palates as possible. The rule of thumb I follow is to represent each milk variety and have a good range of different textures (soft, semi-soft, firm, triple cream, etc). Then I arrange them in order so that the flavours intensify as you eat across the plate. Many of our cheeses are sourced out of Quebec and bought to us by one of our local distributors, Mariposa Farms. We then take the extra steps to ripen them fully and even cure some in house to help them reach their peak. Many of Quebec's cheese makers are masters of their craft, bringing European traditions to a modern environment and truly putting the "art" in artisan. We will soon be serving cheese from another local artisan on the Ontario side, Jim Keith's Back Forty Dairy, which is located just outside of Lanark. Made from Icelandic sheep's milk, Jim's cheeses are produced in small quantities and are rare and truly remarkable.

You will also see one or two gourmet cheeses from outside of Canada rounding out the board with a chance to taste something that may be hard to find at your local cheese store. For these gems, I turn to Afrim at the Cheese Boutique in Toronto. Currently at Beckta we are featuring a beautiful cheese from Spain, "Montenebro", which is a goat's milk cheese with a spicy vegetable ash covering. The paste (the centre of the cheese) is silky smooth, not chalky like other goat's milk cheeses can be. The taste lingers with a mild fruitiness and when you get a taste of the rind it will remind you of a spicy blue cheese that has that little piquant kick to finish it off.



As many of you know we are opening a second restaurant at 1 York St. in the Byward Market this winter. I am very excited with the new venture as it will feature a glass walled cheese cave where the cheeses can be stored in climate controlled environments on display. This will allow us to develop these cheesy delights to their full potential and flavour. I can't wait! I hope to be ageing 50 to 60 wheels of cheese at any given time. The cheeses will be sold at both the new restaurant as well as at Beckta. So, when you are contemplating something terrific and savoury after dinner – just ask for me. I'd love to come by your table and talk to you about what is new on the board. Just say Cheese!

Steve Whittaker
Service Manager / Cheese Director

LOCAL GRAPES ?

by Steve Beckta

People often ask me about local wines. With it's relatively mild climate due to the moderating effect of the large and deep Lake Ontario just to the North, the Niagara Peninsula is in many ways the perfect place to grow grapes in Ontario. Many professional wine folks initially scoffed at the idea of growing serious grapes in Niagara due to the harsh winter climate, but the wine industry that is now flourishing there along with the many award-winning bottles that have been produced have proven the skeptics wrong. Now, there is a new frontier even closer to home that has similar skeptics scoffing...Prince Edward County.



Located at the Northern tip of Lake Ontario near the sleepy town of Picton, it's much colder than Niagara. So cold in fact, that it is considered suicide by most growers not to bury the canes of their vines in the ground every fall to prevent total loss due to the extreme winter conditions. This process is called "hilling up" and is required for areas that regularly get winter temperatures in the minus 25 degrees Celsius range. At minus 21 degrees, most grape vines lose the primary node on the cane, affecting production in the following growing season. At minus 26 degrees C. you can lose the whole bud and the vine will quickly die due to frostbite. And to make it just a little more challenging, most grapes need to be netted in mid-August to prevent the local Robins from making off with the whole harvest in their cute little beaks. There are not

many areas in the world that people would be crazy enough to put up with these hardships and dangers in order to try to grow wine grapes. Why do it? Why not just go two or so hours south where things are proven and the weather is so much nicer you ask? Limestone.

Considered the gold standard of grape growing soils, limestone makes up the bulk of the Cote d'Or in Burgundy...the spiritual home of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Prince Edward County is the only moderately temperate place in Canada with a bunch of limestone. Actually, most of the limestone that makes up our Parliament Buildings in Ottawa came from the neighbourhood back in the day. This soil offers a minerally flavour and silky texture to wine that is quite captivating.

Waupoos winery was the first to plant grapes in the county back in 1993 and opened the first winery in 2001. Until recently they specialized in Hybrid grape varietals that are more winter hardy but yield lesser wines than traditional grapes like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Since then 13 more wineries have opened up in the county with the best being Huff Estates, Clossen Chase, Sandbanks, Rosehall Run and Norman Hardie. Almost everyone brings in grapes from Niagara to supplement their meager production, at least for the moment. Personally, I see nothing wrong with this practice if the wines are bottled separately and marketed as such. Many wineries however choose to blend Niagara juice with PEC juice and call their wines "Ontario", which I believe hurts their up and coming brand.



2007 was the first year that wineries could put the designation "Prince Edward County" on their labels, having recently been accredited VQA status as an official winegrowing region. They needed to grow 500 tonnes of grapes locally in order to get the designation, and this small group of wineries is very proud. But to me, the gem in the lot has to be Norm Hardie. Not only are his wines the standouts in terms of quality and price, but he has the depth of experience to be able to mentor many winemakers in the county to their full potential. Norm spent six years traveling the world's great wine regions, many times sleeping on floors and working for little or no money in order to learn his craft from the best growers and winemakers. Couple this with his seven years as sommelier at the esteemed Truffles Restaurant at the Toronto Four Seasons Hotel which gave him a incredible palate and broad consumer perspective, and you have a huge fish in a very small pond.

To listen to Norm, Prince Edward County is the next Burgundy and the weather and critics be damned. Take a (short) drive to the limestone coasts of Lake Ontario one beautiful summer day, meet the growers in your neighbourhood over a glass of their finest Pinot Noir and you might just agree.

Cheers!