LFW Grapevine

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12/4/10 – Claret Dinner!

by LFW President, Christopher Blunden

Mark your calendar, select your holiday duds and ties, and prepare for excellent wine, food and fun.

The Lawyer Friends of Wine annual Holiday Claret Dinner is our club's signature event, and this year, as is our tradition, it will occur on the first Saturday in December.

Last year the event sold out within two days, and we had a waiting list of many members who could not attend.

In our member survey, 88% of our respondents listed the December Claret Dinner among their top three preferred events. Our members also informed your Board of Directors, "Sold out events resulting in a waiting list" was the item most needing improvement.

We have 95 members. If 88% sign up to come *alone*, that's 84 people. But since most of us don't come alone to this wonderful launch of the holiday season, we should be able to accommodate twice that number: 168. And we have never had room to bring additional guests to our favorite festive event.

Your Board works for you; we listened. We reached out to our members to help us discover an appropriate venue to surpass the limitations of a windowless room with a capacity of 65 that we traditionally had at Harris' in San Francisco.

Our program committee invested countless hours on our club's behalf to find a qualifying venue to meet criteria of: availability on an appropriate date, at a convenient and suitable location, that will maximize attendance accommodating all Lawyer Friends of Wine members who want to attend, and that will include great food to pair with our stellar cellar wine, all for a reasonable cost.

Special thanks are owed to Linda Ross, Paul Gutierrez, Steve Martin, and Michael Carbone for helping us discover what we needed to know. Although we applied exhaustive efforts to find an alternative venue in San Francisco, none met our criteria.

Fortunately, LFW member Mark Penskar, came up with the winning suggestion that we have vetted and selected for this year: the Sky Room of Sequoyah Country Club**.**

It is a private, member-owned 160-acre retreat with a rich history dating back more than 90 years with recently remodeled facilities for our special evening.

Location: We have a diverse membership residing throughout the Bay Area.

Using Google Maps as a reference, the venue we selected is 30 minutes from downtown San Francisco, 41 minutes from San Rafael, 26 minutes from Walnut Creek, and 35 minutes from San Mateo.

Previously, in holiday traffic, many of us required 1½ hours or more to get to the event; if it rained, it required even more time, plus additional time for parking.

This year's venue avoids the congested holiday traffic patterns for most of us.

(It is furthest from Marin, but year after year, our Marin members are favored with front door bus service for every single bus trip, plus annual local Marin events for Blast by the Bay and the Winter Follies, so it works out.)

Sequoyah Country Club's address is 4550 Heafey Road, Oakland, CA 94605, it is easy to find, and it is only 4 minutes (1.2 miles) from its freeway off-ramp.

We'll also enjoy time-and-money-saving adjacent private free parking.

And the $120 per person price is less than last year!

Watch for the upcoming flyer arriving soon with details on this fabulous LFW cellar wine, food, and holiday fun event coming your way, which this time will be inclusive of all of members who want to attend.

No more scrambling to get your reply in first only to be shut out. (And unlike prior Claret dinners, we'll even have room for guests.)

Outstanding 21st Harvest Moon!

By Mike Marron (adapted from his e-mail)

I can attest to our September Harvest Moon event at Long Meadow Ranch in Saint Helena being outstanding for many reasons.

It was entirely different, beginning with Dick Katz providing a tasting of White Syrah to those on our chartered bus journey.

As a bonus surprise, we stopped at a small park in Yountville. Cellar Master Rod Santos and wife Lisa greeted and treated us with excellent sparkling wine which we consumed under redwood trees as we listened to some of Rod's fascinating personal stories of his early days in Napa. We mingled with fellow members and guests and were then driven to the beautiful Long Meadow Ranch tasting room and Farmstead in St. Helena.

Every parking place in the surrounding lot was crammed, but our LFW troop had our own private tasting room experience, including a short history talk by one of the family owners. We drank some very nice Sauvignon Blanc followed by three different vintage/vineyard smooth cabs and a very enjoyable Sangiovese – all accompanied by excellent hors d'oeuvres buffet style.

Our next indulgence was our private outdoor garden patio dinner al fresco attended by gorgeous weather and a nearly full moon (to which we sang the chorus of "Shine On Harvest Moon").

As the meal continued, spontaneous oohs and ahhs could be heard throughout our group savoring what some declared to be the best food they ever had at an LFW event.

The food was served family style (with minimal waitperson involvement needed) to three long tables at which we sat, dined and further mingled.

Wishing we had more appetite capacity, but stuffed to the max, with wine and olive oil purchases having been made during our earlier tasting, our bus carried us and our bounty back to our original pick-up points in

Marin and San Francisco. On the return journey, Sharon Marron treated us to some of the winery's "Ranch House Red" (being a blend of cab, Sangiovese and petite Syrah).

In all, it was a thoroughly enjoyable, worth the price, outing with a convivial, Lawyer Friends of Wine group.

Great Events – Were You There?

Our October Blast on the Bay fling occurred at the historic Sausalito Cruising Club in Sausalito on a converted vintage ammunition barge that offered spectacular views of San Francisco, Angel Island, Alcatraz Island, and Mt. Tamalpais.

Member Dave Anderson arranged our invitation to this unique venue accompanied by enjoyable unlimited tastings of a vast variety of wonderful B.R. Cohn Winery offerings, including a unique 100% Petit Verdot.

As we moved inside for post hors d'oeuvre surf and turf dining, many attendees enjoyed sipping, dining, and watching the Giants win.

Our cozy gathering was then treated to entertainment by a truly remarkable live band that spurred the dancing and very appreciative listening. Yet another fun Lawyer Friends of Wine event!

May: California Culinary Academy

June: Spring Sojourn to Napa Valley: Cakebread Cellars, Rutherford

Regusci Winery

And August Luncheon: Montemaggiore. We'll recap these in our next newsletter.

Welcome New Members!

Julie Ebert, sponsored by Paul Curry; ***Pamela Marraccini***, sponsored by Ray Bergez; ***Ed Nevin***, sponsored by Mike Marron.