

# Iona Food and Wine Lunch at Aubergine

*The Stuff Food and Wine dreams are made of...*

*After the recent Iona Flight Tasting of 10 vintages at Auslese, we were invited to lunch at Aubergine – the restaurant portion of Harald Bresselschmidt's food and wine empire in Gardens. Voted one of the San Pellegrino Top 100 Restaurants in 2009 and voted Eat Out Top 100 Restaurants 2010 - If ever you get a chance to go: please do. The food is exquisite gourmet creations, the wines will knock your socks off, service top notch and the restaurant itself is that comfortable classiness that seems effortless!*



Rozy Gunn, Jackie Henderson and me outside

Whilst we were mingling before lunch was served we indulged in canapé portions of oysters with wild mushrooms whilst sipping on a glass of the Iona Sauvignon Blanc 2010.



Delicious canapes of oysters, tiny cauliflower and wild mushrooms

We were then lead into the main dining room flanked by the wine fridge filled with vintages to lust over. Leading smoothly into lunch was the Iona Chardonnay 2009 matched to the steamed King Klip paupiette with shellfish farce accompanied by lime butter with broccoli and roasted beetroot. The Chardonnay 2009 – a rich, creamy, nutty palate and mouth feel obtained from lees stirring and minimal use of oak.



Iona Chardonnay 2009 accompanied by steamed King Klip with shellfish paupiette, lime butter and roasted beetroot & broccoli

I was delighted to be seated at the table with Graham Howe, Jessica Gibson, Kevin Watt, Winnie Bowman, Brett Garner and Karin Visser – it was fantastic to gain an insight into the wine industry and to hear the opinions of the wines.



Viticulturist Kevin Watt and myself



Bloggist Jo-ann Gibson and Habitat Editor Graham Howe

Main course was a Venison Mignon with bittersweet chocolate, potato ravioli filled with pear and turnip accompanied by French beans and turnip. Two wines – the Gunnar 2006 and Syrah 2007 accompanied the meal to superb effect. The Gunnar 2006: a Bordeaux style blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot - is a wine that you can rightly curl into and linger over. It was drinking superbly well on the day having been decanted, but it will be very interesting to see the how it develops in the next ten years. The Iona Syrah 2007 – a plump, ripe delicious red berry fruit on the palate with a hint of all spice, caramel, cinnamon and cardamom – was the product of a mistaken order by the nursery. What was thought to be Cabernet Sauvignon was in fact Shiraz – only discovered when the vines started to bear fruit. The vines were then marked off and harvested separately. This is a resounding success story of an experimental 4 barrels, which has developed into a structured planting of more Shiraz and Mouvedre, resulting in the Iona Syrah available today. **Delicious!**



Blesbok venison mignon with potato ravioli, french beans and turnip



Pouring the Syrah 2007 accompanied by the The Gunnar 2006 on the right

Dessert was an interesting goat's cheese soufflé with apple and sweet potato pomme paille with raspberry ice-cream. Not to be disparaging but sweet potato with a dessert? I was pleasantly surprised with the combination but still thought a tuile would have been better. The real star of the dessert was the stellar (pun excused) Noble Iona – a 100% Botrytis Sauvignon Late Harvest. It was truly sublime – aromas of dried apricots, elderflower, honey comb, vanilla pod and yellow cling peaches melting away in your mouth....Like a master piece painting – many will try and copy it, but it will never be the original!



The Noble Iona 2007 accompanied the dessert of goats cheese soufflé, sweet apple & potato pomme paille and raspberry coulis & parfait

Petit Fours followed afterwards and I can personally vouch for the combination of the tiny oat, white chocolate and cranberry cookies to match the Noble Iona – in fact the whole plate was just perfect!



Petit fours.....small delicate yummy little things



The line-up of wines - Noble Iona, The Gunner 2006, Syrah 2007 and the Chardonnay 2009

Excellent wines, exquisite gourmet food, old regal charm of both venues, superb company all added up to a very memorable event. At the end, I would have quite happily curled up on own of the benches near the window to wax lyrical about the wines – unfortunately unbeknown to me: I had left my car lights on and the ignition wouldn't start. What followed were *hilarious (?)* attempts to kick start the car by rolling it down Hope Street by Jackie, me hanging onto the window one arm stretched out to warn any cars passing there might be a wee-bitty problem, with Andrew and Rozy Gunn following behind....

We eventually managed to get some jump leads from t he local garage on Buitenkant street, with the garage assistant hopping into the 4x4, to help! *Lesson to be learnt from that day for damsels in distress like me: always switch your lights off, always have your jump leads in the car and don't just always rely on the AA.*



A hilarious (?) attempt to kick-start my Tazz down Hope Street with Jackie Henderson and Rozy Gunn...

\* Notes\*

### *Iona Vineyards*

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wine tastings by appointment

### *Aubergine Restaurant*

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14

## Iona Flight Tasting - a Decade of Delight

### The Benefit of Age

The question that I always ask myself, when faced with a myriad of choices and trends in technology, fashion, décor, art and wine is this: Is the newest and latest, necessarily the best? The wine industry is lot like fashion – far too often governed by the latest stylish trend and dictations by the market place for the newest vintage. The latest release is not necessarily the best, and the classics of years gone by, need to be appreciated more – as was demonstrated at the recent **Iona Sauvignon Blanc Flight Tasting** covering **10 vintages from 2001 – 2010**.

It was to be a lesson in the potential of aged Sauvignon Blancs - 10 years worth - produced by Andrew and Rozy Gunn, proprietors of Iona, the Elgin wine farm situated at 450m above sea level making it one of the coolest vineyard sites in South Africa. Their **2005** is considered to be one of the best Sauvignon Blancs in the world by Matthew Jukes – and this is truly deserving of the title!

Upon arrival at Auslese - the new wine and food pairing centre run by Harald Bresselschmidt on Hope Street, I was immediately wrapped into a big bear of a handshake by Andrew Gunn – exuding a warm welcome. We were shown into where to the tasting room – a very grand stretch of a room dominated by the long table able to seat 40 people. Amongst the invited guests was **Allan Mullins, Ivan Oertle, Allan Forrester, Winnie**

**Bowman, Niels Verburg, Werner Muller and others.** I strategically seated myself across from Ivan Oertle, furiously wrote down notes from what he was saying trying to guess the vintages.



The long table at Auslese - the new food and wine pairing centre run by Harald Bresselschmidt



Tasting 10 vintages in two flights of five - a lesson in taste and age



Comparing the Sauvignons

Blind tasting the ten vintages in two flights of five, we were all astounded by the freshness, structure, lively palate profile and undeniable sheer outstanding quality of each of the vintages. Choosing a favourite proved equally as difficult as spotting the vintages (*2 out of 10 wines correct: after a bit of contemplation and luck*). Eventually I had to settle for the 2007 & 2006 – aged sauvignons which had 4-5 years ageing and were remarkable still in their structure and flavour profile. In Andrew Gunns' words: *'This wine won't disappoint you. If left to bottle age you will be rewarded by a beautiful melding of rich flavours, with good acidity keeping it surprisingly youthful in character; if drunk immediately you will be refreshed by its balance and subtlety of flavour. It is a finely tuned wine, of which you will not tire'*.

The wines were remarkably different and the styles surprisingly varied, but the vein of quality that ran through the flight remained obvious. Some of the difference could be ascribed to the individual characteristics of the grapes year-on-year and some to the wine maker's inclination to a particular expression based on those characteristics. From the almost racy Sancerre style, with full minerality, mouth-puckering acidity and lashings of green grassy flavours to the more tropical style, with notes of mango, ripe guavas and zesty grapefruit, mineola and orange, each brought nods of approval and considered deliberation.

With a new wine maker, Werner Muller (ex-Chamonix), at the helm from May this year, it will be interesting to see what the 2012 vintage brings to the fore. With predecessors such as Luddite's Neils Verburg, you'd think Werner would be feeling the heat, but the humble wine maker is every modest as he describes himself as "just a wine maker" and points to the vines as the real stars of the show. Here's to star-studded New Year at Iona.

My lesson learnt from the Flight Tasting is that don't be afraid of age in white wines – embrace it, explore it, learn from it and enjoy it!



Head of the table with Allan Mullins, Graham Howe, Rozy and Andrew Gunn.



Winnie Bowman, Brett Garner and Kevin Watt in conversation, Werner Muller (ex-Chamonix) - the new winemaker for Iona