



Bleu Provence French Restaurant

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Robert Parker

I was introduced to this terrific, casual restaurant during my visit to Florida for the 2007 Naples Winter Wine and Food Festival. In fact, I enjoyed my first meal so much, I returned the next evening for more of the soulful, well-prepared food of the French owners Jacques and Lysielle Cariot. In addition to the superb cuisine, there is a wine cellar of over 14,000 bottles and a wine list that is packed with treasures, many of which are priced well below the market value. For the sake of simplicity, I have combined the two dinners' food and wines into one Hedonist Gazette.

The delicious food was full of flavor and soul. The wonderful appetizers included beautiful snails, crispy frog legs, lobster crème brûlée, and tartar of tuna. The main courses consisted of a superb ahi tuna au poivre, crisp duck leg confit, and the sensationally decadent Kobi beef short ribs cooked in red wine. A friend who accompanied us had a gorgeous looking free range chicken stuffed with truffles and served with mashed potatoes and forest mushrooms.

The wines began with an oxidized bottle of Pierre Peters 1998 Blancs de Blanc Brut Grand Cru and a gorgeous non-vintage Jules Lassalle Brut Rosé. Those were followed by two spectacular offerings, including the fully mature, opulent, voluptuous, pure honeysuckle-filled 1982 DRC Montrachet from magnum. This stunning, rich cuvée is nearly over the top in terms of its thickness and unctuousity. Another great wine is the much younger 2003 Jean-Louis Chave Hermitage Blanc. This unusual vintage has produced a wine that represents the essence of minerals with huge power, richness, and definition - an anomaly given the vintage conditions, especially for a white wine.

The only disappointing red was the badly corked bottle of 1947 Château Latour. That let-down was made up for by the two extraordinary Châteauneuf du Papes, the 2003 Marcoux Vieilles Vignes and the double magnum of 2003 Clos des Papes (which I think was owned by one of two well-known board members, John Vega or Ted Hudgins, who were generous enough to send a large glassful to our table). With amazing concentration and precision, the Clos des Papes was pure kirsch liqueur, herbs, pepper, and spice. Nearly as good was André Romero's Rasteau, the Soumade 2003 Fleur de Confiance. One of the guests at the table, Château Latour's administrator, Frédéric Engerer, was astonished by how great this wine was. When I asked him to guess the alcohol content, he said 14.5%, when in fact it is closer to 16.7%! It is a stunningly rich Rasteau showing no heat, but gorgeous chocolatey/kirsch-like fruit offered in a full-bodied, expansive style. Since Manfred Krankl was with us, we had the good fortune to open a bottle of the unreleased 2004 Syrah Poker Face, which appears capable of challenging his perfect 2002 Just For The Love Of It Syrah. Decanted well in advance, it revealed an inky/blue/purple color along with a sumptuous bouquet of crème de cassis, blackberries, black truffles, pain grillé, and espresso notes. Nuanced, rich, and full-bodied, but built like a ballerina in terms of elegance, this

extraordinary Syrah should evolve beautifully for 15 or more years. Among all of the hand-painted and etched labels Krankl has created over the years, this is one of the more provocative and mysterious.

Food:

Appetizers: Snails, Lobster crème brûlée, Crispy frog legs sautéed with garlic and parsley, Tartar of tuna and tomato served with a pistou sauce

Main Courses: Seared ahi tuna au poivre, Crispy duck leg confit with potato gratin, Kobe beef short ribs with mashed potatoes and tomato comfit

Wine:

N.V. Champagne Lassalle Brut Rosé 91
1998 Pierre Peters Blancs de Blanc Brut Grand Cru ?
1982 Domaine de la Romanée-Conti Montrachet (magnum) 95
2003 J. L. Chave Hermitage Blanc 96
2003 Marcoux Châteauneuf du Pape Vieilles Vignes 98
2004 Sine Qua Non Syrah Poker Face 99+
1993 Château Rayas Châteauneuf du Pape 86
2003 Clos des Papes Châteauneuf du Pape (double magnum) 98
1947 Château Latour (corked) ?
2003 La Soumade Rasteau Fleur de Confiance 95

Bleu Provence – great wines and delicious food! Too bad it's so far from Baltimore!

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Reference: <https://www.erobertparker.com/info/whatsnew.asp>