WORLD CHAÎNE DAY APRIL 21 2024

The elegant Marriott Hotel on Victoria's Inner Harbour welcomed 35 Members and guests, to celebrate World Chaîne Day. The timing was perfect as it coincided with the Bailliage celebrating the 40th anniversary of its founding. Our event also kicked off the Marriott's week of festivities commemorating its 20th year since opening in Victoria.

Our traditional glass of "Bubbles", this time a Bailly Lapierre Crémant, and the Chef's platters of seafood hors d'oeuvres fueled lively conversation and two new Members were introduced to their Bailliage colleagues.

The Hotel's General Manager, Michelle LeSage, is well known to our Bailliage as a host at earlier Chaîne events, at Canada's premier resort hotel, also in Victoria. Michelle introduced her guest, David Roberts, now resident in Victoria, following his career with Fairmont in some of the world's most exotic locations.

The Bailli's special guests were Colin Southcombe and his wife Joanne. Colin was one of the founding members of the Victoria Bailliage. His long career in hospitality included positions as sommelier, internationally accredited Chef and management of hotels in Canada and overseas.

Colin had a major influence on the development of fine dining in Victoria through his active leadership in the Chaîne and as a champion of fine wine appreciation. (As I fondly remember!)

Jumping forward to the present and the first meeting with the Marriott's staff it was gratifying to see how keen and interested all were to maintain Chaîne standards. As a result the food and service provided was outstanding, especially from a young team that had not worked on a Chaîne event before.

Executive Chef Neil Antolin, with the hotel since its opening, had cooked for a Chaîne event in his earlier career. Those dining at my table definitely "waxed poetic" over the silkiness of his Lobster Bisque with its delicate froth of chive meringue garnish. The Sicilian wine pairing was perfect.

Following the next course of Crispy Firecracker glazed Duck Leg Confit, the Bailli's usual between-course cruise among the diners elicited the same comment from many: "Hmmm, if I were home, I would be able to pick this up with, and lick my fingers" …… Too true, and most did their best with their knife and fork, resigned to leaving delicious little slivers of duck meat escape on the bone, as plates quietly disappeared. Finishing the last of the Rioja Reserva pairing, was somewhat of a tiny compensation. (The complete menu and wine list appears at the end of this report.)

Not often seen on menus in North America is a reference to *Le trou normand* (literally, a "Norman hole"). This is a pause between dishes in a multi-course meal during which diners may enjoy a glass of Calvados or Calvados-soaked apple sorbet, Normandy being famous for its apple harvest. It is said that the brandy not only helps make room for the remaining courses, but also aids in digestion.

Chef Antolin's take on this "palate cleanser" resulted in a superb mango sorbet and Campari drizzle

The theme for the World Chaîne Day photo competition this year has a focus on local produce. Most restaurants in Victoria are strong supporters of local farms. The main course featured locally grown lamb, from Parry Bay Farm, and there was no hesitation to use fingers, as Frenched lamb rack chop bones were delicately nibbled. The accompanying vegetables, especially the chanterelle and leek ragout were plentiful, and the various flavours incorporated into the course were very well balanced. From our cellar came an Australian 2009 Peter Lehmann Shiraz, definitely a star wine pairing that garnered many compliments.

The Caramelized White Chocolate Pot de Crème was beautifully presented, and its richness was nicely addressed by the frizzante of an Italian Moscato d 'Asti.

Officier Maître Rotisseur, Castro Boateng, gave the Accolade to the fifteen Marriott staff who participated in delivering this World Chaîne Day event, presenting each with a Chaîne Certificate of Appreciation and Chaîne badge.

Executive Chef, Neil Antolin, and Food and Beverage Manager, Boyan Lesov, also received a gift from the Bailliage as did General Manager Michelle LeSage, and Bailli Honoraire and Bailliage Founder, Colin Southcombe.









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