

INTERNATIONAL GRAND CHAPTER & GALA DINNER in INVERNESS

by Ormond Smith

The Confrerie in Scotland celebrated its **11th International Grand Chapter** on **Saturday 14th May** with a colourful ceremony held in the sumptuous surroundings of the New Drumossie Hotel on the outskirts of the city with spectacular views over the Inner Moray Firth, the Black Isle and the mountains beyond. Traditionally held in the grandeur of the Town Hall, this building is currently undergoing an extensive restoration programme, rendering it unsuitable for our Induction Ceremony. The excellent turnout of Scottish members was added to by a strong representation from the Conseils of **France, Germany** and the **United States** and expectation rose with the skirl of the pipes heralding the procession of the Scottish Conseil, colourfully enrobed.



The International Conseil members

Connetable Nicol Manson welcomed the assembly before inviting the overseas Conseils to join him on the podium, individually and accompanied by the pipes.



Nicol congratulates Donald Macdonald on being inducted as Baron d'Honneur of the 11th Chapitre

The Ceremony of Induction commenced and being welcomed into the Confrerie as Ecuyers were **Ian Johnston** (Inverness); **Finlay Kerr** (Inverness); **John Robins** (Beaulieu); **Quintin Stevens** (Kirkhill) and **Hugh Watt** (Drumnadrochit) while the Damoselles were **Anne-Marie Meldrum** (Kilmacolm); **Michelle Stevens** (Kirkhill) and **Ann Watt** (Drumnadrochit). Receiving promotion to Chevalier was **Brian Forsyth** (Kirriemuir), Goustevin Scotland's web-master and also gaining promotion to Dame were **Doreen Caldwell** (Inverness) and **Linda Hay** (Kintore). Long standing London member **Mike Mudie** was elevated to Baron after many years membership and accorded promotion to Noble Dame was **Jean Slater** (Inverness) in recognition of her loyal support of Goustevin Scotland both at home and overseas. The accolade of Baron d'Honneur was granted to **Donald J. Macdonald**, chairman of Macdonald Hotels and a passionate advocate of fresh, well produced natural food to the highest quality.

Following a reception in the Culloden Suite, the assembled members and guests moved on to a welcoming glass of champagne as they took their seats for the Gala Dinner in the spacious Drumossie Suite where, after a few welcoming words from Connetable Nicol, he invited Grand Connetable Christian Pellenc (speaking in French) to say a few words, ably translated by Grand

Maitre des Ambassades Manuel Chanavaz. The final speaker was Baron d'Honneur Donald Macdonald who spoke appreciably of the honour newly received and also of his philosophy of staying loyal to his roots with regard to the high standard of produce which his hotels strive to attain at all times for their kitchens. There then was a brief discourse on the wines which we were about to enjoy with the Gala Dinner by Ecuyer Malcolm Ogilvie of Wine Importers (Edin) Ltd.

The six course culinary experience commenced with a Ceviche of John Ross Smoked Salmon with Candied Beetroot, Wasabi Mayonnaise, Charred Cucumber and Samphire Kalamata Loaf and this opening dish was accompanied, rather splendidly, by a 2014 Vermentino di Bolgheri from Tuscany, crisp with engaging acidity and a long mineral finish.....a perfect pairing. The Ceviche was followed by a Wild Mushroom Tortellini with Madeira Consommé, Feves and Morels, very well received and again accompanied by the Vermentino. A refreshing Dandelion & Burdock Sorbet with Ginger Jelly was a perfect palate "cleanser" before the main course was served.

This was Maple Roasted Gressingham Duck Breast with Juniper Smoked Jersey Royals, Pak Choi, Squash and New Season Asparagus on a Quince Jus.....succulent, delicious and testament to **Executive Chef Kenny MacMillan's** vision. This most appetising dish was accompanied by a 2011 Nautilus Pinot Noir from Marlborough, New Zealand.....a carefully selected blend from four premium vineyard sites, dark ruby in the glass with enticing aromas of pomegranate, star anise and cinnamon on the nose while the palate was medium bodied, refined and balanced with fine grained tannins. Then.....the lights dimmed.....



The succulent Maple Roasted Gressingham Duck Breast with accompanying vegetables



the function suite doors opened and in a swirl of mist, the **Ardross Pipe Band** marched in to give a rousing selection of music which was much appreciated by our overseas guests. On completion of their set and having marched out, the Cheese Selection was served to the tables, a selection of Highland Cheeses highlighting the quality and range of locally produced cheeses and the wine choice was a 2011 Beaune du Chateau from Burgundy. This Pinot Noir, made from grapes selected

from 17 Premier Cru vineyards and matured for eighteen months in French oak was extremely well structured with a tantalising velvetiness on the palate.....a most interesting comparison with the Kiwi offering sampled with the main course.

The Dinner culminated with the dessert, a Dark Chocolate Marquise, with Mandarin Gel, Puff Candy, White Chocolate & Madagascan Ice Cream (yes, rather decadent!) and accompanied by a simply outstanding 2014 Yalumba "FSW8B" Botrytis Viognier from Wrattobully, South Australia.....yellow gold in the glass with powerful rich and elegant aromas of candied fruit and flowers, yet clean on the palate without any cloying sweetness.....perfect harmony!

As coffee was being served, the **Strathnairn Ceilidh Band** struck up and soon the floor was full of swirling couples, dancing to a selection of music.....the culmination of all that makes the Confrerie, the combination of good food, good wine and good company.....what more could one ask?

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