

CELLARING, SERVING
AND CREATING SPECIAL
MOMENTS WITH OUR
VINS DE GARDE

by Jodie Morlet



MORLET
Family Vineyards

Spring Newsletter 2021

ISSUE XIV

WEDDING WINES

After completing his graduate studies, Luc brought vintaged Champagnes back to his family's portfolio and also reinstated the use of French oak barrels and puncheons. Prior to moving to the United States, he was hired as the *régisseur* for Château Dauzac, a Classified Margaux Growth. A job offer as the winemaker for Newton Vineyard allowed him to join me in my native California.

It was only fitting that at our wedding we served wines which Luc had crafted. Our guests enjoyed the 1994 Château Dauzac, Newton's 1996 Red Label Chardonnay and the 1992 Pierre Morlet Champagne 'Millésime.' His brothers gifted us a beautiful hand-painted Jéroboam. When it was time for the toast, Luc proudly announced that he would send the cork soaring into the back row of tables. Alas, due to the cabin pressure on the airplane from France to the Golden State, the cork merely sailed a few inches before falling to the ground. Once we had all stopped laughing, Luc served the delicious Champagne to our wedding party, family and friends. Sharing wines which were near and dear to Luc's heart was



Above: Preparing our wines for a very special occasion



Left: Hand-painted Jéroboam served at our wedding

a wonderful way to begin our married life together. (Years later, Luc redeemed himself when he sabered a Champagne bottle and sent the cork flying... into a neighbor's backyard!)

A ROYAL ENCOUNTER

Eight years after our wedding, my mother arrived in town on a Saturday morning to walk Paul and Claire to their soccer matches with me. As we neared our destination, my cell phone rang. "Are you at home?" Luc hurriedly asked, as he was busy working on the crush pad.

I reminded him that "Nana" and I were on our way to the kids' games. He explained that it was pertinent that I go home right away. He had been invited to have dinner with Prince Charles and Duchess Camilla that evening, and someone had to accept the official invitation from the courier. I couldn't fathom that this could be true, but Luc insisted that I return to our house. Thankfully, my mother was able to manage soccer duties for the day.

When the doorbell rang, I was handed an embossed card addressed to Luc which read, "Martin Uden, British Consul General, and Fiona Uden request the pleasure of your company at dinner in the presence of Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall

on Saturday, the fifth of November at seven o'clock." (The prince had asked for Luc to be in attendance upon learning from the Consul General about his organic, biodynamic and sustainable farming practices at Peter Michael Winery.)

Luc had crafted the 2002 'Les Pavots' and planned to present the royal

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couple with a double-magnum of Peter Michael's flagship red blend. Upon arrival at Manka's Inverness Lodge, the security guards joked that they would need to confiscate the large format to ensure that it really was wine! The fourteen dinner guests included Robert and Margrit Mondavi and Chef Alice Waters of Chez Panisse. Luc spent much of the evening conversing with the Duchess about her grandfather's career as a wine merchant in England. The 2002 'Belle Côte' Chardonnay, which Luc had made, was featured during the meal and was wonderfully paired with king salmon, appropriately "crowned" with fronds of frisée.

THREE DAYS WITH DRC

In December of that same year, Luc joined Aubert de Villaine for a three-day tasting of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti La Tâche Grand Cru. As a foreshadowing of the events to come, Friday evening kicked off with a six-course dinner paired with a horizontal of the 2002 vintage! The wines included Montrachet, Vosne-Romanée Premier Cru, Echézeaux, Grands Echézeaux and Romanée-St.-Vivant. The festivities continued on day two with a four-course lunch paired with eight different vintages of La Tâche! These included 1942, 1956, 1966, 1985, 1990, 1993, 1997 and 2002. Not to be outdone, Saturday's six-course dinner featured 12 vintages! The impressive wine line-up consisted of the 1934, 1947, 1957, 1962, 1964, 1971, 1978, 1980, 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1999 La Tâche. Of all of the magnificent vintages poured that weekend, Luc's favorite was the 1990.

A QUINTESSENTIAL LUNCH

In April 2011, Luc was invited to attend an exclusive eleven-course luncheon with Robert M. Parker, Jr. at then three-Michelin-starred Restaurant Daniel in New York. Award-winning Chef Boulud's refined European cuisine would be paired with twenty-four wines from Bob's personal cellar! Fortunately, Prince William and Catherine Middleton's wedding kept me occupied while Luc traveled to the East Coast. (Although watching a ceremony on television wasn't exactly the same as Luc's own royal encounter!)

Luc's unforgettable afternoon began with peekytoe and spanner crab salads accompanying a 1997 Domaine J. F. Coche-Dury Meursault 'Les Chevalières' and a 1995



Robert Parker visits with Jodie and Luc at Morlet Family Winery, fall 2014

Puligny-Montrachet 'Les Enseignères.' The wines for the abalone course were the 1992 Domaine Leflaive, Bienvenue-Bâtard-Montrachet and 1983 Domaine Ramonet, Montrachet. The grilled Alaskan king salmon was paired with a 1955 Pierre Ponnelle, Bonnes-Mares, while 'œuf en meurette' with crispy pork belly was served alongside a 1985 Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, La Tâche. Three wines were presented with the red wine-braised octopus: the 1999 Michel Ogier, Côte-Rôtie 'La Belle Hélène,' a 1990 Paul Jaboulet, Hermitage 'La Chapelle' and a 1989 Marc Sorrel, Hermitage 'Le Gréal.'

Approaching the half-way point, the boudin noir, one of Luc's favorite dishes, was highlighted by three vintages of E. Guigal, Côte Rôtie 'La Turquie' (1987, 1988 and 1991). Three more E. Guigals followed with a duck à la presse dish: a 1979 and 1989 'La Landonne' and the 1983 'La Mouline.' (As a side note, Luc's benchmark for our 'Bouquet Garni' Syrah are these three "La La's" – 'La Turquie,' 'La Landonne' & 'La Mouline.')

A 2003 Domaine J. L. Chave, Hermitage was served with roasted duck leg and whole foie gras, followed by three wines for the roasted baby goat: 1988 Biondi Santi,

to surpass being seated next to Robert Parker, enjoying his comradery (in French!), savoring Chef Boulud's cuisine, and tasting those remarkable wines. In December of 2014, Mr. Parker wrote, "Luc Morlet is not only a fabulous winemaking talent, he knows how to bring the French savoir-faire of complexity, elegance and precision to the ripe, concentrated, intense fruit of California." Coming from a man who has tasted multiple vintages of the best wines in the world, that is quite the accolade!

OUR WINES AT THE WHITE HOUSE

I wholeheartedly agree with Robert Parker's praise of Luc's talents. Luc developed an intuitive understanding of viticulture and winemaking while growing up on his family's domaine in Champagne. After receiving graduate degrees in viticulture and oenology, he even went on to earn an MBA in wine business. He utilized Burgundian winemaking techniques while working at Domaine Chanson Père et Fils in Beaune and perfected his skills with Bordeaux varietals under the guidance of acclaimed consultant Jacques Boissenot in Margaux. Upon arriving in the United States, Luc worked with world-renowned

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva, 1985 Tenuta San Guido, Sassicaia, Bolgheri and 1985 Marchesi Antinori, Solaia, Toscana IGT. The 1985 Château Haut-Brion and 1961 Château Mouton Rothschild perfectly complemented the selection of artisanal cheeses. At the conclusion of this amazing experience, dessert was served with a (wait for it...) 1903 Royal Tokaji Company Aszu Eszencia and a 1931 Quinta de Noval Vintage Port! The 1931 port is credited to be one of the best of the 20th century!

Luc often reminisces about this once-in-a-lifetime luncheon, as it is hard



Daniel Shanks visits with Jodie and Luc Morlet Family Winery, summer 2015

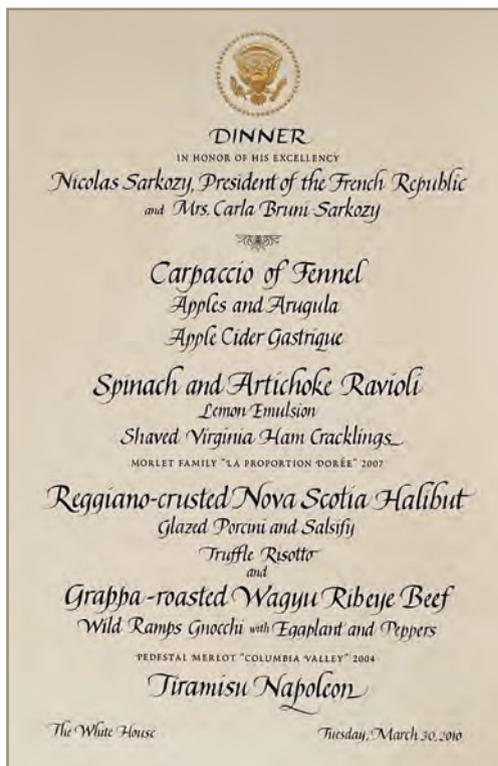
consultant Michel Rolland.

Over the years, our wines have received international recognition, yet we were especially honored when Daniel Shanks, the Director of Food & Beverage for the Executive Residence, expressed his desire to feature our wines at The White House. Subsequently, our wines were served on numerous occasions under the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, with Mr. Shanks declaring, "It is a personal pleasure and honor to serve Morlet wines in the Executive Residence." Our 2006 'La Proportion Dorée' White Bordeaux-style Blend was served during President and Mrs. Bush's holiday dinner for distinguished guests. Mr. Shanks recalled that our wine "was a wonderful choice to showcase the sunchoke-truffle tortellini with truffle oil emulsion" and that "the wine's incredibly complex display of flavor served perfectly the varied flavors of

the dish." When describing how this same vintage paired during a dinner which President Bush and the first lady hosted for the Combatant Commanders, he explained that the wine "was the guardian of the gratin Chesapeake crab and was another perfect marriage of flavors."

Our 2007 Pessac-Léognan-inspired wine was highlighted on three occasions during visits by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, and Mrs. Carla Bruni-Sarkozy to the Obama White House. Mr. Shanks wrote to us that, during a luncheon with both first ladies, the wine "set a stage for the varied flavors of field lettuce with lemon dressing to seared sockeye salmon with fennel, citrus and star anise broth." For a working lunch with both presidents, Mr. Shanks "selected a wine that carried the gravitas of the meal and the moment." Our 2007 provided "the depth and structure called for by the menu – and the conversation... The wine offered elegant fruit with a long, satisfying finish." During a social dinner in honor of the French president and his wife, Mr. Shanks recollected, "Such an evening shows the White House at its best, and was ideal for the timeless grace of Morlet Family wines. We couldn't have found a better match for the varied menu we offered the President's guests." The State Dinner for French President François Holland, began with our 2011 'La Proportion Dorée' enhancing the American Osetra caviar, fingerling potato velouté and quail eggs.

Our 2006 'Joli Cœur' was poured when President Obama hosted Hu Jintao, the President of the People's Republic of China. This Pinot Noir was chosen "to carry the main course of potato crusted red grouper with roasted garlis coulis" with "the evocative fruit of the wine carrying the dish." The 2010 vintage of this wine was paired with American wagyu beef tenderloin during the State Dinner for Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister of Japan. On yet another occasion, our 2009 'Mon



Chevalier' Cabernet Sauvignon was presented alongside a grilled ribeye steak with blue cheese and summer bean almondine.

While we have yet to procure an invitation to one of these stately meals, Luc did receive a private tour of the White House as a show of gratitude for the wines he crafts.

CELLAR, SERVE & SANTÉ!

As appreciative as Luc is to have been included in unforgettable tastings and meals, his fondest memories involve experiencing fine wines with family and friends.

Samantha Steinwand, assistant sommelier for Chef Thomas Keller's Michelin-starred Bouchon Bistro, takes pleasure in serving our wines and believes that Luc's passion for quality "translates to the wine in the glass." Alexandria Sarovich, sommelier at three-Michelin-starred SingleThread, welcomes the opportunity to communicate the story behind our wines with patrons of the restaurant. She recently reminisced, "Morlet has always had a special place in my heart."

Trusting that our wines will shine on their own, pair perfectly with the featured cuisine, and act as a centerpiece for your conversations, we invite you to share our wines with your friends and loved ones to create special moments of your own, now and in the years to come. *A Votre Santé!*



*Sommelier Samantha Steinwand
Sommelier Alexandria Sarovich*

Spring 2021 Release, Featuring the 100-point 2018 'Passionnement'



2018

'PASSIONNEMENT'

OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Crafted with the passionate, uncompromised and ongoing pursuit of quality, this judicious blend comes from the finest barrels of our manicured vineyards in the Oakville appellation and on the foothills of Knights Valley and St. Helena. As the French say, "Je t'aime, un peu, beaucoup, passionnément!" (I love you, a little, a lot, passionately!) This special wine is dedicated to my wife, Jodie Morlet. It is 'Passionately' or 'Passionnement.'

Jeb Dunnuck 100 points: *The ripest, most sexy, and opulent in the lineup, the 2018 'Passionnement' is pure magic in a glass and tops out on my scale. Reminding me of some of the older Harlan Estate releases with its massive yet seamless style, this beauty boasts a monster bouquet of chocolate covered blackcurrants, lavender, crushed violets, new leather, unsmoked tobacco, and flowery incense. Coming from a selection of the top barrels in the vintage, this full-bodied, masterful Cabernet is gorgeously textured and has a stacked, layered mid-palate, perfectly ripe tannins, and a great finish. I followed this bottle for multiple days and it never grew tired or oxidized (which is rare). It's one of those wines that's going to drink brilliantly for all of its life. Enjoy this beauty any time over the coming 20-30 years.* – January 2021



2018

'CŒUR DE VALLÉE'

OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Located in the world-renowned Oakville appellation, in the heart of the Napa Valley, our vineyard lies within an alluvial fan and borders the banks of the To Kalon Creek. The Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc vines benefit from gravelly and loamy Bale soil in this warm yet temperate climate. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques, this wine is dedicated to Drs. Richard Johnson and Nancy Hampel who have always demonstrated their kindness of heart. It is 'Heart of the Valley' or 'Cœur de Vallée.'

Jeb Dunnuck 98 points: *All four of the flagship Cabernets from Morlet are absolutely world class. The 2018 'Cœur de Vallée' reveals a dense ruby/purple color as well as a flat-out awesome nose of crème de cassis, black raspberries, flowery incense, dried tobacco, and classy new leather; this carries to a full-bodied, opulent, seamless 2018 with incredible tannins, flawless balance, and a blockbuster of a finish. It's classic To Kalon with its rich, powerful, yet weightless style. While unquestionably very different wines, I kept thinking of a great 1982 Bordeaux while tasting this beauty, as those show a similar level of class, richness, and balance. Enjoy bottles any time over the coming 2-3 decades. This is the finest vintage I've tasted for this cuvée.* – January 2021

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MANICURED
VINEYARDS,
CLASSICAL
WINEMAKING
& CREATIVE
ARTISANSHIP



Like the First Growths of Bordeaux,
our wines age gracefully for decades



2019

'LA PROPORTION DORÉE'

SONOMA COUNTY
PROPRIETARY
WHITE BORDEAUX-
STYLE BLEND

A harmonious blend of the three classic white Bordeaux varietals, this unique cuvée was inspired from the finest producers of Pessac-Léognan. The Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle come from dry-farmed vineyards in the Golden State's Sonoma County. Classical winemaking techniques such as *élevage sur lies* (aging on the lees) and *bâtonnage* (stirring) contribute to this true *vin de garde*. As in architectural arts, it is 'The Golden Ratio' or 'La Proportion Dorée.'

Robert Parker Wine Advocate 97-99 points: *Luc Morlet has 100 Muscadelle vines, planted in 1953, which he co-ferments with the Sauvignon Blanc to produce this stunning wine. This is all barrel fermented with native yeast. The 2019 'La Proportion Dorée' is composed of 69% Sémillon, 30% Sauvignon Blanc and 1% Muscadelle. It prances out of the glass with gregarious scents of white peaches, pear tart and preserved lemons plus nuances of lime leaves, crushed rocks and honeycomb. The medium to full-bodied palate is tightly wound at this nascent stage, revealing layers of stone fruit and citrusy flavors with mineral accents and a long, savory finish.* – Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW, January 2021



2019

'MA PRINCESSE'

RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY
CHARDONNAY

Located on the river bench of Sonoma County's Russian River, this vineyard benefits from Goldridge soil containing metamorphic rock. The cuttings come from the Old Wente field selection, renowned for excellent quality and minerality. Its concentration originates from the typically petite size of the berries. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, this wine is dedicated to our daughter, Claire Morlet. It is 'My Princess' or 'Ma Princesse.'

Robert Parker Wine Advocate 96-98+ points: *The 2019 'Ma Princesse' needs a little swirling to unlock gorgeous scents of lemon meringue pie, lime cordial and honeydew melon with wafts of toasted almonds, brioche and nutmeg. The medium to full-bodied palate has a decadent oiliness to the texture with just enough freshness to lift the ripe, rich melon and toast flavors with a long finish.* – Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW, January 2021



2019

'MA DOUCE'

FORT ROSS - SEAVIEW
CHARDONNAY

Located on the Sonoma Coast, on the second ridge from the Pacific Ocean, this hillside vineyard is comprised of Goldridge soil and benefits from both the cool maritime breeze (*douce brise*) and the mild and sunny mountain climate. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, this wine is dedicated to my wife, Jodie Morlet. It is 'My Sweet' or 'Ma Douce.'

Robert Parker Wine Advocate 95-97+ points: *The 2019 'Ma Douce' charges out of the gate with exuberant notes of ripe Bosc pears, green guava and applesauce with suggestions of powdered ginger, honeycomb and peach blossoms. The medium to full-bodied palate delivers mouth-coating apple and pear layers with loads of spicy accents and balanced freshness, finishing long and fragrant.* – Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW, January 2021



2019

'EN FAMILLE'

FORT ROSS - SEAVIEW
PINOT NOIR

For generations, our family has been growing the Pinot Noir grape in France. Each harvest, we celebrate this time-honored commitment while our children stomp a small vat of Pinot Noir from California's Sonoma Coast. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, this special wine is dedicated to our grandparents, parents and relatives from both countries. As with any family celebration or casual gathering, this wine is to be appreciated 'En Famille.'

Robert Parker Wine Advocate 94-96+ points: *The 2019 'En Famille' displays a medium ruby-purple color and fragrant notes of freshly crushed black cherries, black raspberries and mulberries, plus hints of candied violets, chocolate box and spearmint. The full-bodied, richly fruited palate is packed with juicy black berry flavors, framed by plush tannins and seamless freshness, finishing on a lingering cool-mint note.* – Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW, January 2021



2019

'CÔTEAUX NOBLES'

FORT ROSS - SEAVIEW
PINOT NOIR

Located on the Sonoma Coast, on the eastern slope (Côte) of the second ridge from the Pacific Ocean, this hillside vineyard (Côteau) benefits from the cool maritime breeze and the mild and sunny mountain climate. The noble site's natural conditions are ideal for growing excellent Pinot Noir in the Goldridge soil. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, it is the 'Noble Hillside' or 'Côteaux Nobles.'

Robert Parker Wine Advocate 94-96+ points: *The pale to medium ruby-purple colored 2019 'Côteaux Nobles' slips sensuously out of the glass with a provocative perfume of red currant jelly, raspberry preserves and rhubarb crumble with suggestions of violets and fallen leaves plus a waft of mossy tree bark. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is packed with juicy red berry layers, supported by plush tannins and seamless freshness, finishing on a lingering earthy note.* – Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW, January 2021

CELLARING & SERVING RECOMMENDATIONS

While the enjoyment of a wine is based on one's personal preferences, Luc offers his cellaring and serving recommendations to enhance the ageability and expression of our handcrafted wines.

REASONABLE REST

Wine is a living organism and can therefore become "travel-shocked" during transit. When a shipment is received, Luc recommends allowing the wine to rest for at least one month.



CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Ideally, wines should be stored between 50-55°F with a relative humidity of 60%. If one does not have access to a cellar or wine cooler, finding a place in the home with the most consistent and coolest temperature is key. Large fluctuations between hot and cold can put stress on the cork and prematurely age a wine.



CARING FOR CORKS

We source the best corks from Portugal. These extra-long dense corks (54mm in our 750ml bottles) reduce the



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head space and limit the transfer of oxygen. They also undergo the innovative One by One™ testing, which virtually eliminates corked or off bottles. To preserve the longevity of the wines, all size formats should be stored on their sides to impede the corks from drying out. For very old vintages, the blades on a Durand help to secure a fragile cork and create space between it and the interior neck of the bottle.

ELUDING LIGHT

Luc only uses the highest quality of glass for all of the wines in our portfolio. Although this glass blocks 98% of ultraviolet light, it is still paramount that the wines are stored in a dark environment.



From left to right: 0%; 50%; 98% UV filtration

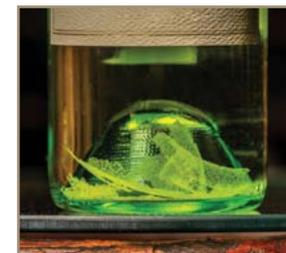
EASY ON THE ICE

To uphold the natural quality of the wines, Luc chooses not to utilize any treatments. Thus, our wines are bottled unfiltered and unfiltered, yet are very stable under normal conditions. The white wines may become shocked and muted if put in ice. Likewise, if overly chilled, they may appear cloudy. This "chill haze" is reversible and merely visual. When the wine warms at room temperature, the clarity will return and the wine's aromatic and flavor profile will be fully expressive. Luc recommends preparing our white wines at the proper temperature and then allowing them to gently warm up prior to serving; however, if the environment is too warm and a wine needs to be maintained at the correct temperature, then placing the bottle on top of the ice is preferred. Bottles can also be placed briefly in a regular refrigerator to lower them to 45-49°F. Luc's suggested serving temperatures are: *Chardonnay & White Bordeaux-style Blend* 55-59°F; *Pinot Noir & Syrah* 59-61°F; *Cabernet Sauvignon & Cabernet Franc*; 61-64°F; *Late Harvest White Wine* 43°F.



WINE DIAMONDS

Tiny "wine diamonds" may form on the underside of a cork and on the inside surfaces of a bottle. These naturally forming tartrate crystals are safe and can be removed through decanting.



Some producers cold stabilize their wines which causes the tartrate acid to solidify and fall to the bottom of a vessel. The wine is then filtered to remove the crystals. While this process ensures a wine's clarity, it also strips much of the flavors and hinders the ability to age. The presence of these "gems" in our wines is an indication that they are handcrafted with the utmost quality and without manipulation, thus preserving their flavor profile and graceful aging capability.



Sommelier Thomas Smith double decants one of our Cabernet Sauvignons



Cradle and basket pourers

shapes of stemware. The thickness, quality and shape of the glass can influence both the bouquet and the manner in which the acidity, tannins and alcohol affect the palate. It is ideal for a glass to have a long stem. This avoids heating the wine with one's hand. Further, a broad base allows the wine to open and reveal itself, while a tapered top keeps the aromas inside, focusing on the bouquet. Luc prefers: Burgundy glass - Chardonnay, Pinot Noir & Syrah; Bordeaux glass - Sémillon-Sauvignon Blanc blend, Cabernet Sauvignon & Cabernet Franc; Smaller Bordeaux glass - Late Harvest white wine.

SMELL, SWIRL & SANTÉ!

With any wine, when a cork is first pulled, one should sniff it to ensure that the wine is not corked. Smelling the wine in

TO DECANT OR NOT TO DECANT

The process of decanting serves three purposes. First, careful decanting allows the natural sediment to remain in a bottle. Having a candle or other light source can facilitate this process. Second, it aerates a wine, which helps to

release aromatics and flavors. Thomas Smith, an advanced certified sommelier and former wine buyer for two-Michelin-starred Coi restaurant, cautions against decanting aged Pinot Noirs, as they may be too fragile and can lose intensity and expressiveness. Luc concurs, adding that for older wines, he suggests using a cradle. This restricts the sediment from being disturbed and integrating with the wine but also prevents a wine from being overly aerated causing its bouquet to fade. Finally, decanting raises the temperature of a wine. Double decanting results in even more exposure to air, and can speed up both aeration and an increase in temperature. Luc recommends decanting our Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignons and Cabernet Franc one hour prior to serving and our Late Harvest White Wine two hours in advance. Our young Chardonnays also benefit from decanting. He also suggests "seasoning" a decanter by pouring a small amount of the wine inside and swirling it around. Once emptied, the decanter is ready for use.

the bottle also assesses if it is reduced and should therefore be decanted. Luc crafts multi-dimensional wines that are harmonious in their intensity, richness, complexity and refinement. Prior to swirling, he enjoys smelling a wine to experience its initial bouquet. The aromatics of each of our wines will continue to evolve throughout the course of a meal, yet when there is only enough wine left to barely coat the wall of the tapered glass, Luc finds that the wine reveals itself even more. He then smiles and says, "It's time for another pour!" Santé!



SELECTING STEMWARE

Luc's expertise in both Burgundian and Bordeaux winemaking techniques led to the creation of our extensive portfolio. Wines from these regions are traditionally served in different sizes and

