

Tasting fine wines with dinner at the Red Clover Inn

Mendon, Vermont



Note: This review is available as a [pdf document](#)



Do you enjoy fine wines but worry about spending too much on something that you don't like? If you are like me, the wine dinner is often a nice alternative, especially when the food and atmosphere are outstanding. That's what the Red Clover Inn, near Killington offers you in its ongoing series of wine dinners. Argentine and Chilean wines, some of them retailing for nearly \$30.00 in Vermont were on the menu for the April event in 2005. (Note: When you stay at the inn and attend the dinner you can

get a package price.)

I learned two things at the Red Clover wine dinner:

Argentine wines with the "Q" label are liable to be fantastic and especially the Familia Zuccardi 2000 Chardonnay.

Fine cuisine doesn't have to contain loads of butter or other rich and fatty ingredients.

The Dinner

Our dinner was a set menu designed to complement the wines. We began with Crab, Fennel and Salsify pâté with baby greens and Caraway Vinaigrette. Some people might have called this appetizer, crab cakes, but these were no ordinary crab cakes. They contained no flour or bread crumbs. One actually got to taste and enjoy real crab meat that hadn't been ground up into some unidentifiable paste. To accompany this we were served a wonderful Argentine "Q" Familia Zuccardi 2000 Chardonnay which has a honey and buttery flavor. No one seemed to like the Chilean Araucano Chardonnay 2002 which had been paired with the same course as a

contrast.

Our next course was lamb and oven-dried tomato canapé served with goat cheese quenelle. The lamb was cut from a rack. It was remarkably tender and delicate. I was surprised by the fact there was only a hint of that strong lamb taste one usually experiences. We learned later on that it had come from Colorado. Once again, most people at the table liked the Argentine "Q" Tempranillo 2001 red wine over the Chilean Araucano Carmenere 2003. The Tempranillo is similar to Red Zinfandel with a heavy nose but actually very light.



To cleanse our palates before the main course, we were served a homemade mint-saffron-vodka intermezzo, then it was onto the entrée, grilled petit Filet Mignon with marinated and smoked Sea Bass over a sauté of fiddlehead ferns. The fiddleheads had been shipped in from the West Coast because even in mid-April, native Vermont fiddleheads just aren't available. The meat and fish combination was delicious. The Bass was light and the Filet Mignon tasty. We weren't served large portions, but then who wants large portions when you are going through a four course meal and drinking seven types of wines! We were served two cabernets, the Argentina Santa Julia Reserva Cabernet 2002 and the Chilean Araucano Cabernet Sauvignon 2003. To tell you the truth, I couldn't tell a lot of difference between these two. Cabernets are usually heavy with a strong taste and these certainly reached that mark.

Desert was a Strawberry - Maple terrine which was served with our last wine, the Santa Julia Tardio 2004. This desert wine has a wonderful gold yellow color. It has an intense aroma of ripe fruits, honey and dried fruits as pears, apricots and peaches, orange peel and chamomile.

Overall, the creations of Chef Frederic Byarm were fantastic. His style is sophisticated and creative without being overpowering. In addition, I think everyone got up from the meal feeling satisfied but not that we'd overeat. To my mind, it was haute cuisine at its best complemented by some wine education from Shelly Saunders, the Northeast representative of Wine Sellers Ltd. Shelley's commentary on the wines was helpful and informative.

The Inn

The Red Clover Inn used to be a farmhouse, built in the 1870s. There are still some old farm buildings standing, including a barn. There's a pond teeming with wildlife. In fact the peepers and ducks are quite vociferous at times. The Inn is a bit difficult to find. It's located about five miles west of Killington and down an old farm road. Because of Vermont's road sign laws, there is poor signage for the Inn. Instead, look for the Woodward Road sign as you come down from Killington. Turn left onto Woodward Road and drive



about an 1/8th of a mile to the inn. You will probably hear the ducks quacking.

The Inn has a wonderful country atmosphere, with Pico and Killington off in the distance, and 13 acres of lawns and woods. There are 14 guest rooms, six with fireplaces, five with whirlpool baths, and all with A/C and wireless internet. There are several dining areas, which makes the Inn suitable for private functions.

The staff

The Inn employs about 19 people including the chef. Most of the staff have been working here for years, and through several owners. They are well trained and courteous. For example, our waitress at the dinner poured our wine correctly with the wine label facing the guest. I wonder how many restaurant staff overlook this little nicety. Staff were warm and courteous but not obvious or bothersome which is the way it should be. Our hosts, Tricia Treen Pedersen and Bill Pedersen say they bought the inn in 2004 after looking at more than 70 New England properties. Bill is from the Midwest and Tricia is from England. Before coming to Vermont they lived in California. Tricia is an experienced "people manager." Both come from the corporate world and possess the organizational abilities to carry off large events as well as cater to the individual whims of their guests.

Conclusion

Some people may find the Inn a bit pricey, but haute cuisine and luxury accommodations (including some classy bathrobes!) always comes at a price. They say that a chef often makes an inn, and in this case, this is definitely true. I challenge anyone to find better dining in the Killington area and yes, I have dined at some of the other top restaurants here. If you are budget conscious, keep checking the [the Red Clover Inn's web site](#). Specials are frequently offered.

Timothy Palmer-Benson, April 23rd, 2005

[Red Clover Inn](#)

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