



Chef Alain Ivaldi's wine soup sparked animated dinner conversation. Photo courtesy of Peter Wesley Brown Photography.



# My Winemakers

by Traci O'Dea

## SEVEN COURSES AND FOURTEEN (OOPS, SIXTEEN) GLASSES OF WINE

Somehow I end up on the VIP boat from Trellis Bay to Guana Island for the July 19th Winemakers Dinner. I quietly sit across from the Deputy Premier and pretend I belong there. I smile when members of the international press snap photos and ask the crew the names of the sandy coves we pass—Long Bay, Josiah's, Lambert. My smile broadens. I live here.

**We arrive at Guana with the rain. Dressed in a black and gold kurta, co-chair Ajit George corrals the crowd under tents until covered golf carts haul us up to the top of the hill. Under a small wooden pagoda, Guana's General Manager Jason Goldberg serves me a glass of Weingut Kirsten's sparkling Riesling and a small cup of Chef Dwight Hutchinson's watermelon gazpacho, and the sun returns.**

The gazpacho, seasoned with kaffir lime leaves, mint, galanga root and salt, surprises me by tasting savoury like soup and not the sweet watermelon juice I expected. Dishes and drinks that please me most are those that shatter my expectations instead of simply living up to them. The hostess from Guana refills my flute of bubbly as a hubcap-sized tortoise shuffles by. I have another gazpacho, sip the last of my wine, and follow a stone path to Jost House for dinner.

After listening to the VIPs' opening remarks, I sit beside Joel Brillert, Special Events Coordinator at Nail Bay. To my delight, the tan, young and fashionable Portuguese winemaking couple Sandra Tavares da Silva and Jorge Seródio Borges join us at our table. I'm excited because, along with Pio Cesare's 2004 Barolo, Sandra and Jorge's 2006 Pintas Character Douro Red from their wine&soul vineyard is one of the wines I've been most excited to taste.

Joel informs me that two glasses of wine will accompany each of the seven courses. Someone should've warned me before I topped up my sparkling at the pagoda. But I promise to rally and sample all the wines, even if I don't drain every glass. No one can possibly finish fourteen glasses of wine, right?

For the first course, Chef Carla Pernambuco plated two juicy, pink shrimp atop a salad of fresh hearts of palm (brought in from Hawaii by Executive Chef Vikram Garg) and a spicy, moist cornbread mini-muffin. I want a dozen more of those muffins. And not just to soak up all the wine. I notice our tablemates Sandra and Jorge don't empty their glasses. Clearly, they've done this before. Clearly, I have not.

Chef Alain Ivaldi's duck foie gras with spicy chutney cherries is accompanied by a wine soup in the next course. After she samples it, Sandra exclaims something in Portuguese to her husband then tries to explain "Pop Rocks" to us without knowing the English word for them. I have a spoonful of the soup and feel the candies ricochet off the roof of my mouth. We keep tasting the soup and giggling. This isn't exactly what I meant by having my expectations shattered, but I will certainly never forget Pop Rocks soup.

The next course, for me, is all about the wine. 2006 Pintas Character Douro Red by wine&soul is up as well as Pio Cesare's 2004 Barolo, voted Number Six on *Wine Spectator's* Top 100 Wines of 2008. I'm certain that Sandra and Jorge's modest, contemporary wine cannot compete with Pio Cesare's superstar, but I'm wrong. The Barolo is a wine to savour. The Pintas is a wine to drink. And smile while you're doing so. And then think about your lovely day of VIP boat rides, deserted beaches, watermelon gazpacho, tortoises, mini-muffins and Pop Rocks and keep smiling until you remember that you still have eight more glasses of wine to taste. [X]



OHMS's Martin Dindos offers his expertise to two guests. Photo courtesy of Sarka Duskova.



Winemaking couple Sandra Tavares da Silva and Jorge Seródio Borges from Portugal.

Photo courtesy of Peter Wesley Brown Photography.

### Spaces are still available for the December 2009 Winemakers Dinners

- Wed Dec 02** VIP Reception—Norman Island
- Thu Dec 03** Baraka Point Dinner
- Fri Dec 04** Frenchmans Lookout Dinner
- Sat Dec 05** Giorgio's Table Dinner
- Sun Dec 06** Golden Pavilion Dinner

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