

Meanwhile Back At The Ranch

Our acclaimed Alberta chef, Blair Lebsack, from “Range Road – Untamed Cuisine” www.rgerd.ca was on the phone with Aldourie Castle chef extraordinaire Richard Turner figuring out what we would be eating & drinking.



Blair is one of the wildest Alberta chefs we know. Here he is talking about a gourmet dinner party he threw for 70 people in the middle of a prairie cow pasture just outside of Edmonton. Made entirely without a drop of electricity. <http://vimeo.com/48021648?action=share&ref=nf>

We were so pleased and grateful to learn that The City of Edm. Economic Development Corp. agreed to fly Blair, along with some specialty ingredients, over for our Gala Dinner. Thank you D'Arcy Vane, Director Enterprise Edm. and Film Commissioner Brad Stromberg. They also helped us edit some short promotional vids shown throughout the dinner eve. Here's one of them. A two min. teaser of an Oscar nominated animated short that sprang from the Edmonton National Film Board of Canada offices. It's about Brits who arrived in Alberta when it was in its infancy. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/igb6ijjv8rhyemb/Wild%20Life.mov?n=28128571>

We were also pleased to learn that Range Road was sending the fabulous Caitlin Fulton along to Scotland as well. Among many things, she mixed killer Victoria Gin 'French 75' cocktails and anchored me at the other end of the table, regaling guests with her prairie foodie stories. Thank you Range Road & Caitlin (above R. Pic).

As well, my generous and kind-hearted sister, Lori, owns and operates a business called Full Course Strategies in Edmonton, Alberta. She supplies specialty ingredients to *the* best chefs in the area (like Blair) - a distributor who essentially bridges the gap between restaurants and local farms. All of her locally produced, natural meats are raised antibiotic and hormone free, including bison, elk, wild turkey, pheasants, and specialty sausages. www.edmontonjournal.com/life/Culinary+matchmaking+links+Alberta+producers+chefs/4643565/story.html

She graciously donated the:

- Muscox (from the North West Territories)
- Bison (from Pilatus farms in Alberta) and
- the Salmon, which she caught herself deep sea fishing off the coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands (now known as Haida Gwaii <http://www.gohaidagwaii.ca/>) in our gorgeous neighbouring province of B.C.

Thank you Lori for your never-ending support. So proud of you and what you do.

Drum Roll Please



Thank you also to the following Canadian gin & wine co.'s who contributed the above cited drink pairings:

1. Victoria Gin – Canada's first premium artisanal gin, still 'handmade with love in small batches in a gleaming copper pot on Vancouver Island'. <http://www.victoriaspirits.com/> Merci Valerie Murray.
2. Ex Nihilo, Merlot Ice Wine – Grapes picked at the precise coldest moment net the world's best ice wine. <http://exnihilovineyards.com/wines/journey-of-hope> Thank you Tyler Yachyshen.
3. Le Vieux Pin, Syrah – vineyard strategy is based on 'Old World techniques with a dusting of New World modernism added on top'. <https://www.levieuxpin.ca/dp.asp?Name=147> Merci Rasoul Salehi.

A Scottish Sensory Explosion

Props to Aldourie Castle Estate's General Manager Lavinia Turner for saving the day on the haggis front. Within just a handful of hours she miraculously produced 'Spud the Piper' for us – pic below. (Btw, he's the bagpiper to the stars - Madonna even wrote about him in one of her books). Didn't know it was a major faux pas not to have our haggis piped in and properly addressed. Whew, a close one. Etiquette disaster averted courtesy LT @ ACE.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burns_supper#22Piping_22_of_the_haggis

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16zKgnSbGb4>

And... didn't expect to be riveted by Spud's performance and this ritual the way I was. The surprisingly bold theatrics of it all, and the stunning bagpipe music, and the glowing faces of my elegantly dressed new Scottish friends, and the gorgeous Aldourie dining room snugly cocooning us all in, and the risky drama of my first ever mouthful of *delicious* haggis (with 'neeps' or turnips), and the extremely rare and extraordinary 18 yr old Glenmorangie christening it all, and... and... and...well, it all ranks this scene as one of the most memorable culinary moments of my life. But then to be so swiftly followed up by Richard's masterfully designed Scallops from the Summer Isles with Cullen Skink...well, that was it. My palate was rendered helpless. A dreamy Highlands spell was cast and I was in a blissful trance. It was a Scottish sensory overload in every right way.



The Aldourie and Alberta chef pairing of Richard Turner and Blair Lebsack were proving spectacular alchemists. They surprised and rocked our culinary worlds at every turn. The Alberta Bison entree was also exquisitely prepared and flanked by sprouting broccoli. It was paired with a Le Vieux Pin 2010 Syrah. Black peppercorn, grilled herb crusted game meat, wild berries, bacon and smoke form the aromatic and flavour profiles of this wine, so a perfect pairing. They were up next and swept us away in a thundering storm of delight! While the Haggis was new for me, the Bison & wine pairing blew the Scottish guests away as most had not tried before. This put them in their own trance. I could sense it. Thanks again to Rasoul Salehi at Le Vieux Pin for supplying for us a fabulous wine pairing from the gorgeous South Okanagan in record time – it was a big hit with the crowd.



Surely Turnips and Sprouting Broccoli would whisper, if they could; 'We're honoured to support the stars tonight at your feast praising all that's good.'