

A Post-Taste3 Posting
by Katy Budge

What do extruded triple cream cheese, molecular archeology, slam poetry, the word “fizzy,” Cuban cuisine, a boar named Boris, the Medeci archives, electrolysis, global warming, paella compote, foods of the Americas, the White House kitchen, the culture of Starbucks, and the 40th anniversary of Robert Mondavi Winery have in common?

As of 8:30 a.m. on July 14, 2006, nothing, really. As of 5:30 p.m. on July 15, 2006, everything, really. All these topics and many more were uncorked at the inaugural “Taste3” conference held at Copia in Napa Valley. Wine, food, and art were the official themes, a triad that proved capable of embracing everything the 40-plus presenters and hosts had to offer throughout the weekend.

Prior to the event, details were pretty scarce. We knew the names and backgrounds of all the speakers – which, admittedly, were pretty compelling in their own right -- and we knew the rather vague, but enticing titles of the eight seminars: “Point of View,” “New Frontiers,” “Mavericks + Moguls,” “Time,” “Method,” “Interfacing,” “Secrets,” and “Countdown.” Other than that, it was all a mystery, but the mystery turned into a dance of delight fairly quickly, as the lineup of presenters offered up various pearls of wisdom, hope, genius, insight, humor, and provocation – all in 18 minute segments each. They showed us what they have done, are doing, and hope to do, and by their example, challenged us to go forth and do as well.

The entire spectrum of Taste3 is too vast to fully describe here, but here’s a brief snapshot to spark your curiosity ...

Dan Barber – the dilemma of a boar too old to sow his wild oats with his sows (“Attach stories.”).

Ari Weinzwieg -- the vision you need to be a small giant (“Paint a picture of the future you want.”).

Peter Menzel & Faith D’Aluisio – pictures of the world’s pantries and how to use a satellite dish to dry chiles.

Leo McCloskey -- why a 94-point rating means so much and why it shouldn’t (“Identify issues before they become challenges.”).

Marie Wright -- the elusive and evocative nature of taste and smell.

Tim Hanni -- why his mother-in-law should be able to enjoy White Zinfandel with steak (“The wine industry has become about “trying to convince someone else that your shoes are the best shoes for them to wear.”).

Hugo Liu -- how deconstruction can construct limitless possibilities.

Rives -- the power of imagination and ethereal performance.

Carl Doumani -- the rewards of sheer tenacity.

Drew Nieporent -- the guiding principles behind developing a restaurant empire (“Respect and loyalty – if you give them, you will get them.”).

Paul Draper -- the guiding principles behind developing a premium wine brand (“Wine needs to taste good.”).

Ursula Hermancinski -- why it takes two to gavel.

Margrit Mondavi -- her amazing life at Robert’s side (about the Great Chefs Program “there was a presence of genius”, “and this is only the beginning.”).

Victor Geraci -- the evolving history of California wine.
Patrick McGovern -- the history of wine and humanity.
Pilobolus Dance Company -- the magic of human synchronicity (Co-founder Robby Barnett, "We had the incredible power of ignorance").
Homaro Cantu -- the food of the future that is already here ("Innovation is everywhere").
Loretta Oden -- the food of the past that is with us still ("To get to know a person or a people. all you have to do is share a table with them"),
David Arnold -- extreme bartending.
Hiroshi Tanaka -- the ions of wine (guiding principle: the best way to create the future is to create it ... yourself.).
Bryant Simon -- why you pay more for a half-caf venti with room for cream (Starbucks opens a store somewhere in the world every 6 hours).
Meg Hourihan -- the world wide web of wondrous food and wine.
Ian Bunch -- the technology that brings the world of food and wine to your table.
Joshua Wesson -- the sheer simplicity of deciding what you like and buying it.
Maricel Presilla -- the dizzying array of Latin and Spanish cuisines.
Giuliano Bugialli -- what the Italian grand dukes already knew about the health benefits of wine.
Augustin Huneeus & Richard Sands -- the power of the consumer and of the company ("The numerical rating is an idea past prime. It is not true, it is an aberration, and it will go away." AH).
Walter Scheib -- the challenges of feeding American cuisine to the world's leaders ("About 1985, a precocious young child known as American cuisine was born in California ... by 1992, it had become an audacious adult that had decided it was ready to sit at the table.").
Greg Jones -- the crisis heating up on the horizon.
Tom Rielly -- the power of listening and of not taking yourself too seriously.
Thomas Keller -- the power of vision and determination.

Also worth mentioning are the session hosts, all of whom added their own measured thoughts: Andrea Immer Robinson (who opened and closed the event), Amanda Berne, Karen MacNeil, Antonia Allegra, Harold McGee, Chris Fehrstrom, and Jean-Michel Valette

... and the event organizers, who not only put together countless logistics, but also kept everything breezily running ON TIME all weekend: Robert Mondavi Winery, Icon Estates, Procreation Design Works, Heidi Swanson, and certainly many others behind the scenes.

The next Taste3 is already slated for May 6-9, 2007. Registration is open and early bird discounts are available at www.taste3.com, where you can still find out more details about the 2006 speakers and hosts as well.