

Farmer's Market Dinner for 070309 Jim Sikes

When it came time to select a theme for the June special dinner at Jimmy's, goodies from the local farmer's markets was an easy choice. Fresh from the garden is such a treat.

It was truly a special night as three couples were celebrating anniversaries. One was a first timer. Congrats again to the Collins, Pasche and Salisburys.

After sipping some Chardonnay, we settled in to be treated. The wine was Star Lane Sauvignon Blanc. This California wine was quite good. It had a citrus bite but a soft edge. It reminded me of a white Bordeaux that has some Semilion added to the blend. This is a good one for summer.

Our first course was two different kinds of eggplant. The larger one was grilled with thyme. The small ones were sautéed with dill. On top were slices of freshly roasted red peppers. Tart capers and olive oil were strewn around. A couple of slices of herb crostini added just the right touch.

The grilled veggies and bright wine got us off to a great start.

The next course was what I called shrimp succotash. It was fresh tender butter beans and pink eye peas cooked separately and then simmered in lobster stock. Shrimp were simmered in an aromatic broth until just tender. Cooked shrimp should have a translucence about them.

The stock and beans were put in a bowl and the shrimp added on top with a touch of their cooking liquid. Fresh white corn kernels were sprinkled around and the whole was topped with fresh basil.

This dish was a winner. The tastes and textures were great and the sweet of the corn was perfect.

Our wine was a nice fruity red – Moobuzz Pinot Noir. This is another good one for summer from Don Sebastiani.

A salad of fresh Bibb lettuce followed. Fresh herbs – basil, thyme, oregano and marjoram were mixed in. This was dressed with olive oil

only. It was topped with red and yellow plum tomatoes that were marinated in salt, lemon juice and olive oil.

The salad was great. It had a pepperiness that was very satisfying. The tomatoes were bursting with sweetness.

We went back to a white wine for this course. It was Legado del Conde Albarino. This crisp and floral white is a perfect summer wine. It has enough flavor to handle a picnic in style. It was great with our salad.

Now it was time for our main course – stuffed quail. The quail breasts were boned first and then stuffed with cornbread, red pepper and Pochés' Andouille sausage. A Creole almond meuniere was spooned over the topped of the roasted birds.

The base for the quail was a mixture of zucchini and patty pan squash that was finely chopped before sautéing with fresh tarragon. A slice of grilled Gala melon was served along side.

This was a great dish utilizing fresh local produce and Georgia quail.

The wine was Fabre Montmayou Grand Vin from Argentina. This was a 1999 vintage and relished in its maturity. This blend was in the Bordeaux style that was spiced with Malbec. It was very good with the quail.

We finished with a dessert of fresh biscuits topped with a pastry cream flavored with the juices of the fruits on top – blackberries, strawberries and peaches. A sprig of fresh mint topped off this great delight.

Our wine was a surprise – Tamayo Syrah. Such a bold wine worked very well with the fruits. It had its own fruitiness that balanced out things just right. There's no need to be timid when pairing a wine with dessert. Fruit and fruit went very well together.

The farmer's market feast was great fun. And thanks to folks like Al Hooks, Sherry Aplin, and the Burdettes, we had plenty of fresh produce to build our meal. My herb garden got a workout, too.

Try to make time to go to your local farmer's markets. There's one on Tuesday in downtown Opelika and then on Thursday in Auburn in an area near the stadium. Be careful in Auburn. The produce police are out in force. They'll nab you if you break a rule.

There are still some farmers that gather under the Sam Morgan Bridge in Opelika on Saturday. This is not an official function.

The famous chef Alice Waters said in her book, The Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook, "It is a fundamental fact that no cook, however creative or capable, can produce a dish of a quality any higher than that of the raw ingredients." For several more weeks now you can avail yourself of some of the freshest and best you will find this year. Don't miss your chance.

In July we celebrate Bastille Day with a French dinner on the 20<sup>th</sup>. We will have some fresh goodies that night too. Those farmers will still be picking and we'll be buying. You do the same and make sure to let them know you appreciate them being there.

Maybe more of them will stay longer this year. Al Hooks is still around in September. If he could grow orange trees in Notasulga, he'd be there at Christmas.