



Parksville UNCORKED WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL



TASTES AND TEMPTATIONS

by David Morrison

On the evenings of February 21 and 22 I will be fortunate, not to mention delighted, to join hundreds of other people in the serious appreciation of some of the finer simple things in life. At Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort (1155 Resort Drive, Parksville) on 21st I will attend an event that has seen me checking the days off my calendar since being wowed by it for the first time last February. It is Parksville Untapped, the beer lovers' component of the Parksville Uncorked Wine & Food Festival, and one of the highlights of my 2012.

Last year, at what was just the second occurrence of Untapped, my wife and I had a wonderful time sampling (in respectable volume, note) many fine craft beers produced by noted microbreweries and brew pubs from around the Island and

province. (Contrary to what that legendary curmudgeon Alfred Hitchcock thought, we also conversed with plenty of folk.) That evening, amongst many fabulous ales we discovered the best IPA ever to flow over our taste buds. It is the kind of hop-heavy, full-bodied beer that makes one (or at least us) go cross-eyed in joy at the first sip, but in the name of journalistic integrity I must refrain from favouritism by naming it here!

Also included in the excellent value ticket price was (and again will be) an amazing spread of delicious comestibles from an impressive cast of local food purveyors, some offerings prepared using showcased beers as ingredients. Untapped truly was a gastronome's bliss-fest, hence my eagerness to return this year!

"Conversation is the enemy of good wine and food."

— Alfred Hitchcock

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Photos courtesy "Parksville Uncorked Wine & Food Festival"

The 2012 Untapped was hosted by The Beach Club Resort (181 Beachside Drive, Parksville), which has partnered with Tigh-Na-Mara in co-presenting the umbrella Uncorked festival each year since the inaugural event in 2009. The resorts alternate as venues for what are now the two central components: Untapped, and the wine and gourmet cuisine event, Swirl. The latter is a gala-style evening with a cocktail attire dress code, so the perfect excuse for digging out one's best bib and tucker to dazzle fellow guests and representatives of the 25-plus wineries in attendance. Swirl will be held at The Beach Club Resort on Friday February 22, and I look forward to this exciting experience for the first time.

Despite the obvious temptations on offer at this festival, it is crucial to note that this is no indulgent, gluttonous booze-up and chow-down, or an event held merely for the sake of it. It is a well-organized and classy affair. Neither is it intended as a self-serving exercise for the two resorts. Indeed, the catalyst for and wider aims of the Parksville Uncorked Wine & Food Festival originate from a desire to place a spotlight on tourism for the entire region, at a time of year when it is most needed.

"It started with a conversation at the Beach Club," explains Shawna Broekhuizen, General Manager of The Beach Club Resort. "We were trying to think of some kind of event that would stimulate the slow season and were looking at stuff for October-

November, then January-February-March. I approached (General Manager) Paul Drummond at Tigh-Na-Mara, and then we approached the (Quality Resort) Bayside and Pacific Shores (Resort & Spa) at that point. The first event we hosted was Swirl at The Beach Club Resort in 2009, then we did the Winemaker's Dinners the following evening, and Tigh-Na-Mara did their brunch on the Sunday. The other resorts did take part the

first year, but both fell off the second year; there is so much time and marketing expense involved, and they could not commit at that time. After this Paul and I agreed we would work in partnership together and moving forward we agreed that Swirl would alternate between the two resorts, going back and forth each year. The following year Tigh-Na-Mara suggested we do a beer event the night before Swirl, and so they were the first to do Untapped."

From little acorns mighty oaks do grow, as the saying goes, and from that conversation between Broekhuizen and her colleagues Parksville can now boast one of the most important annual events of its kind, yet boosting the profiles of businesses way beyond Parksville's city limits by showcasing the best the entire province has to offer. And with ticket sales increasing for each component increasing year-on-year, this young festival is on an upward trajectory. From 2009 to 2012, tickets for Swirl have increased by over 30 percent, while Untapped tickets were up over 20 percent from 2011 to last year. Like the winemaker's dinners featured at Uncorked do every year, both events could feasibly sell out in 2013.

While no specific celebrations are planned for Uncorked's fifth anniversary, the festival does continue to expand and diversify. "This year we have added a third component, which is three events on the Sunday," reveals Broekhuizen. "We've added golf, so you can go golfing at Morningstar, and also do a tour at Qualicum Cheeseworks, because they're side-by-side." (Full details of this and other plans for the festival were still to be confirmed as we went to press, so please check the event website (URL below) for details.)

The events I can confirm as I write are the aforementioned and (personally highly recommended) Untapped (Thu Feb 21, at Tigh-Na-Mara, 6:30-9:00pm); the Swirl Signature Event (Fri Feb 22,

at The Beach Club Resort, 6:00-9:00pm); Winemaker's Dinner: Burrowing Owl, and Winemaker's Dinner: Road 13 (both Sat Feb 23, 6:30-9:00pm, at The Beach Club Resort and Tigh-Na-Mara respectively). To wrap up this spectacular festival, Tigh-Na-Mara will host Bubbles & Brunch on Sunday February 24, from 9:00am until 2:00pm, where the emphasis shifts to BC's sparkling wines.

All in all, it's a superb, four-day line-up of events for oenophiles, foodies and, if you

can forgive the pun, beer nuts! Although, again, the exhibitors are to be finalized, it is reasonable to expect such as Hester Creek, Cedar Creek, Averill Creek, MooBerry, Blue Mountain, Mark Anthony and Summerhill wineries alongside the featured Burrowing Owl and Road 13. Breweries likely to be promoting their wares include Phillips, Vancouver Island Brewery, Lighthouse, Driftwood and the Craig Street Brew Pub. In terms of nosh, as well as the Executive Chefs and their crews from The Beach Club Resort and Tigh-Na-Mara, it seems odds-on that the mouth-watering ilk of Island Scallops, Effingham Inlet Oysters, Rocky Mountain Chocolates, the Rod & Gun pub, Bernard Callebaut and...okay, I'll stop there, as I do not wish to give everything away... will be there to tempt us. There's more than enough listed here to send you scampering for tickets, I would imagine! So, I'll see you there, then, yes?! ~

Tickets for all events at Parksville Uncorked Wine & Food Festival 2013 are now available from Tigh-Na-Mara (250-248-2072) or The Beach Club Resort (1-888-760-2008). For further information please visit www.parksvilleuncorked.com

"Wine is one of the agreeable and essential ingredients of life." – Julia Child

"Beer, it's the best damn drink in the world." – Jack Nicholson