

KAUAI/OAHU Wine SLEUTHING



1 Dame Victoria Cowan, Master Sommelier Roberto Viernes and Cyd Asakura.

2 Bailli Hon. Bruce Liebert and Chargée de Presse Provinciale Judith Kellogg.

3 Chevalier Minoru Arakawa, Vice Conseiller Gastronomique Mirella Monoscalco, Dame Yoko Arakawa and Bailli Mark Monoscalco.

4 Chevalier Allan Gifford and Chevalier Beau Champion.

By Judith Kellogg, *Hawaii/Pacific Islands Chargée de Presse Provinciale*

FORTUNATELY, THE DISCOVERY OF FINE WINES DIVERTED Master Sommelier Roberto Viernes from his originally intended career path of optometry. This silver medal-winning Jeune Sommelier is one of only two master sommeliers in Hawaii. On November 14, Kauai/Oahu Mondiale members gathered at the Matters of Taste restaurant for a seminar during which this charismatic speaker invited us to adopt the mindset of a master sommelier.

After a tour of classifications and characteristics of the wines of France, Italy, and Spain, Master Sommelier Viernes conducted a blind tasting of one white and one red selection, posing questions that would be intuitive to the professional eye, nose, and palate. We observed clarity, brightness, color concentration, and viscosity. We sniffed for intensity, age, aromas, and minerals. We assessed whether characteristics were Old World or New World, especially noting the earthiness and wood. Before tasting, we had been given clues that suggested the Old World.

Next, we delved into a study of the palate. We considered sweetness versus dryness as well as body, fruit, spices, herbs, flowers, and earth. We tried to determine exactly what kind of wood

hints we were picking up. We questioned details such as alcohol content, acidity, finish, complexity, and—for the red wine—tannins.

Most of us were surprised to find that, with guidance and commentary, we could detect many subtle characteristics. We gained a deeper appreciation for what consummate wine professionals experience with each sip, and we got a better sense of the fine-tuned skills necessary to become a master sommelier.

Master Sommelier Viernes taught us how to discern whether our test wines were of the Old or New World, the climate in which they were grown, the grape varietals, and the general age range. The solution? Our mystery wines were revealed to be *Domaine Roland Lavantureux Chablis 2005* and *Castello Banfi Chianti Classico Riserva 2003*.

Of course, we had to test our new oenological skills with food pairings, so we partook of an elegant dinner featuring grilled opah with vine-ripened tomato, Hamakua mushroom stew over gnocchi, and roast pork au Pauillac.

Even the self-confessed wine snobs among us admitted to learning a great deal during the evening. We look forward to future lessons from Master Sommelier Roberto Viernes! ☒