

The Chronicle-Journal

CHEF HOUSE
By: Richard Mooorey

VINEGAR EXPERTS WARMING UP TO MINUS 8

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2004

A couple of months ago I heard some whispers about this relatively new vinegar that would challenge the best balsamic and sherry vinegars for balance of flavor and body, and even cleanse the palate after a meal. I was probably thinking the same thing you are now; "It's vinegar, how good can it be?" Now I've had balsamic vinegar aged so long that it was black like licorice, thick like molasses and very complex in flavor - in short, amazing. But this new wine vinegar I had been hearing about, could it really compare? Mike Lavoie says he knows it does. Lavoie was confident enough in his product that he brought me a sample to experiment with. The first thing I noticed upon opening the package was the detail in the bottling. The neck of the bottle had been wax dipped to ensure a proper seal and the top was corked. Seeing the care with which they had sealed the bottle started to tip me off that the liquid inside was well worth the extra effort. After opening the bottle I caught a breath of a very rich aroma that reminded me of grape concentrate or ice wine with a bit of underlying acidity. Off to find some spoons I went. I tasted the Minus 8 and was welcomed to a myriad of taste sensations. Sweet, sour, rich, crisp, and savory all flash across the taste buds. I was blown away. Thinking I had just suffered from some kind of breakdown because I had been impressed by a vinegar, I took the bottle around the hotel and had everyone from chefs to administrators try my new discovery with the same results all around - astonishment. Minus 8 is currently being used at all kinds of world class establishments from the Ritz Carlton to the Four Seasons. It has been featured on MSNBC, in the New York Times and the Wine Spectator. Locally, Doug Morrill of Gargoyles has discovered Minus 8 and incorporates it into his menu. I haven't been able to bring myself to share any more of my Minus 8 even though it is Christmas, but I will share some information that will help you get your own bottle. You can visit the Minus 8 website at www.minus8vinegar.ca for purchase information. Happy New Year everyone! You can reach Chef House at cookhouse_25@hotmail.com