

The Washington Post

By: Dave McIntyre

Drinking local at the White House dinner

It wasn't just local foods that were celebrated last night at [President Obama's first state dinner](#). The menu also featured a Virginia wine. The president, his guest of honor, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and invited members of D.C.'s elite washed down pumpkin pie tart and pear tatin with [Thibaut-Janisson](#) blanc de chardonnay, from the Monticello district near Charlottesville.



Thibaut-Janisson is an up-and-coming specialist in fine sparkling wine. Winemaker Claude Thibaut is convinced that Virginia has the climate and terroir to produce excellent bubbly – and evidently the White House agrees.

“Here's more evidence Virginia can produce top-notch fizz,” I wrote about this wine last year in my [Thanksgiving recommendations](#) in the Post. “Elegant and stylish, with palate-refreshing acidity and subtle fruit that emerges about an hour after opening.”

Other wines served at the dinner included the 2008 [Modus Operandi](#) Sauvignon Blanc from Napa Valley; the 2006 [Brooks Winery](#) Riesling “Ara” Vineyard, a biodynamic wine and a great example of what Oregon's Willamette Valley can accomplish with Riesling; and the 2007 [Beckmen Vineyards](#) Grenache from California's Santa Ynez Valley.

Diners had a choice of entree with the Beckmen grenache -- either roasted potato dumplings with tomato chutney, chickpeas and okra (the prime minister is vegetarian) or green curry prawns, caramelized salsify with smoked collard greens and coconut basmati rice. That last pairing, the curry prawns with a high-alcohol California red, is already [raising eyebrows among the vino blognoscenti](#). Indeed, I've rarely found a red wine that plays well with shellfish; something in the crustaceans seems to turn red wine harshly medicinal. Perhaps wine-savvy guests were able to read the menu and save some of their Brooks Riesling from the soup course, or just go with the flow and stay veg.

If you were there and have opinions about the match-ups, please weigh in.

-- Dave McIntyre

Sparkly from Thibaut-Janisson.