

# Phuket Has Been Good To Us

**Peter Hamilton** – top man of the **Phuket Has Been Good To Us Foundation** initiates a gala feast in aid of the children of Phuket



After the tsunami hit Phuket in 2003 the late Tom MacNamara, owner of the Baan Rim Pa group of restaurants set up the Phuket Has been Good To Us Foundation with the aim of teaching Thai children good English from a very early age.

**T**he foundation hired nine teachers who have been giving English lessons to 600 children. The idea is that when they grow up, this will allow them to get good jobs in the tourist industry. When Tom passed away last year, entrepreneur and local businessman Peter Hamilton took over running the foundation. It was his idea to organize this charity gala dinner.

Jerome Nutile was conveniently in Phuket on his second visit cooking at the Yamu. “Jerome is an exciting young chef,” says Peter, “whose award winning food complements the Yamu’s visionary approach in its hotel project. We thought that it would be interesting to pair him with Aaron Hooper; Executive Chef of Joe’s Downstairs who was recently recognized by HAPA (Hospitality Asia Platinum Awards) as “King of the Kitchen, Thailand”.

It would make an interesting dinner and guests could see the different styles in cooking for French and American chefs - especially one such as Aaron who has spent a long time in Asia. The challenges for any chef are securing high quality produce - we are lucky in Phuket to have some excellent suppliers such as Choice Foods, Farang Foods but it’s very different from Provence or the Languedoc region.”



Jerome was on a very tight schedule while in Phuket and had only arrived back from Bangkok on the day of the dinner. The two chefs decided to keep the dishes as simple as possible while creating an interesting selection.

The wines were from Chateau Mas Neuf located in the Southern Rhone - the same region as Le Castellat. The wine maker and the chef have worked together for a long time and the wines complement Jerome's food. Luc is an innovative wine maker who is achieving great success with a non traditional approach to wine making and blending. He was responsible for the wine pairing.

Jerome's entrée was a Ratte potato foam with pan fried foie gras and butterfried king prawn. The foam was deliciously light, the foie gras cooked with a crisp envelope around a soft interior. It was paired with Chateau Mas Neuf Traditional white, 2007, a blend of 85% White Grenache and 15% Roussanne. In the glass the wine has a brilliant yellow color. On the nose it is uninhibitedly upfront revealing fresh fruit aromas of yellow peaches, combined with hints of white flowers. In the mouth it develops a full flavor with a fresh tonic finish.

Aaron's entrée was Braised lentils du Puy and a duck confit salad with Parmesan tuille and tender pea shoots. "I chose this for a few different reasons," explained Aaron. "Firstly the menu needed a "salad" and I also wanted to pay homage to Jerome's French cuisine with a small twist, adding pea shoots and apricots. I wanted to keep the portion small yet rich, thus the confit and lentils balanced with a splash of red wine vinegar."

This was paired with Chateau Mas Neuf traditional red, a blend of 60% Syrah, 20% Grenache, 10% Mourvèdre and 10% Carignan. In the glass the wine has an intense garnet colour. On the nose aromas of red fruits, raspberry and redcurrant, with a subtle hint of eucalyptus, bouquet garni and leather. In the mouth the taste is sensual, distinguished by a good balance of freshness. The full ripeness in the fruit used to make this wine was indicated by the same flavors in the mouth as the aromas experienced on the nose.

For his main course Aaron prepared pancetta wrapped Barramundi Filet with green pea risotto and carrot and ginger reduction. "With this course I wanted to showcase some of Phuket's fresh seafood using Barramundi and the Thai Blue Crab. Pancetta, peas and carrots all pair very well and were a base for me to show the freshly caught seafood." Aaron had done a great job with flavors in this dish. It was the one not paired with a Chateau Mas Neuf, instead Luc opted for a Domaine de Rochevin Bourgogne Aligote 2002. "This Barramundi displayed quite an earthy smoky flavor," Luc explained, "which was a call for a mineral driven white."

Jerome prepared for his main course - Tournedos of beef, finely sliced aubergines à la Provencale, Concasse of tomato with basil and copeaux of Parmesan. It was paired with Chateau Mas Neuf Avec Si 2005, made with 100% Syrah. In the glass the wine has a deep ruby color. Whilst on the nose the bouquet starts with elements of dark chocolate and grilled brioche, but as it starts to breathe this wine liberates dark fruit, blackberry and whortleberry notes. On the palate, the attack is fresh and ample with tannins present but controlled, it continues with fruit flavors, bay leaf and nutmeg.

The meal was concluded with Lemon Tartlet and raspberry Sorbet and Wild Berry Compote.

Let's hope that the money this dinner raised will give as much pleasure to the children it's educating as the meal gave to us attending the event.

