

Napa Valley and San Francisco

May 9-18, 2012

Wednesday, May 9 - Our United flight (connection at ORD) was uneventful and we arrived on time at SFO. We got our rental car from Hertz and headed to [Napa](#). It was getting late by the time we arrived at Embassy Suites but we were hungry and decided to have dinner at a tapas restaurant named [Zuzu](#) which we knew from our time in California. We shared house-cured California Anchovies on Grilled Bread with piquillo and piparas peppers, Pacific sardines grilled with fresh herbs, Meyer lemon, and pickled fennel aioli, and bacalao (salt cod) drizzled with white truffle oil, and garlic crostini. We were so tired by this time that we could not eat anymore so we went back to the hotel and slept.

Thursday, May 10 - We had been anticipating having lunch at the [Hog Island Oyster Company](#) in Napa, since we had some great oysters at the one in San Francisco the last time we visited. We started with a beet salad with baby arugula, goat cheese and Dijon vinaigrette then had shared two dozen raw oysters (6 each Sweetwater, Kumamamoto, Shinnecock, and Hog Island Virginia). Heaven! After lunch, we walked around the [Oxbow Market](#) where Hog Island Oyster Company is located. Then we took a drive on the [Silverado Trail](#), which runs parallel to State Highway 29 but is not as crowded. It's a beautiful drive and passes many wineries along the way.

Soon it was time to go to [Bistro Jeanty](#), which we had also been anticipating. Cindy had pieds de cochon persillés with haricots verts and shallot mustard vinaigrette and I had fried smelts with spicy aioli to start. For our entrées, Cindy had their fabulous Coq au Vin and I had my favorite...vol-au-vent with sweetbreads, wild mushrooms, sweet garlic cream and truffle oil. However, the vol-au-vent was disappointing. It was OK but seemed to have been frozen previously and was not as good as I remembered.

Friday, May 11 - We checked out of the hotel and drove to [Bistro don Giovanni](#) for lunch before leaving for San Francisco. It was a beautiful day and we sat at the bar where we ordered antipasti misti (Mortadella, salami, provolone, roasted peppers, olives, and garlic toast) followed by grilled calamari with pea-mint purée, then fritto misto (calamari, rock shrimp, fennel, onions, asparagus, and spicy aioli). It was a fitting ending to our Napa Valley visit.

We proceeded to drive to San Francisco. When we arrived at our Union Street apartment, we were met by Barbara who showed us around and took me to the garage where we could park the car. After getting settled into the apartment and having a couple of drinks, we went to Rose Pistola (now closed) to meet Cindy's friends Pat, Clare, and Lissa. They were roommates at Wellesley and Clare and Lissa were visiting Pat, who lives in Mill Valley. Cindy and I shared fried chickpeas with capers, orange zest and mint. Then Cindy had chicken al Mattone with roasted heirloom cauliflower and salsa verde and I had risotto with smoked duck, caramelized Cippolini onions, bell peppers and sheep-milk ricotta. We had a great time.

Saturday, May 12 - We prepared to meet Pat, Clare, and Lissa again at our favorite dim sum restaurant, Ton Kiang (now closed). Lissa had spent a long time in China and spoke Chinese so we let her order. We had Bol Choy Gao, Dai Dze Gao, Ha Gao, Wah Tip, Siu Mai, Dao Miu Gao, Hai Kim, Chun Gūn, Yeung Qi Dze, Fun Got, and Ha Yeung plus some others which I can't remember. After our dim sum brunch, Cindy, Pat, Clare, and Lissa went shopping together and I went back to the apartment to watch The Players golf tournament.

Our plan was to meet at Zarzuela (now closed), a tapas restaurant just up the hill where Union meets Hyde. We shared berenjena con queso de Cabra (eggplant with cheese), boquerones en vinegar (pickled anchovies), jamon Serrano con pan y tomate (Serrano ham with bread and tomato), tortilla Española (potato and onion omelette), eperlanos fritos (fried smelt), calamares a la plancha con aioli (fried squid), fabada Asturiana, pato con ciruelas (leg of duck with prunes and pine nuts), and tostadas de caracoles (snail stew). It was a fantastic time and a great way to say goodbye to Clare, who was heading home tomorrow.

Sunday, May 13 - For lunch we had leftovers of coq au vin (from Bistro Jeanty) and a rocket, tomato, and avocado salad made from ingredients we picked up at the local market down the street.

For dinner, we decided to go to a little tapas place down the street called Campanula (now closed), mainly because there weren't many other restaurants open on Sunday. It turned out to be a good choice. We shared fried sausage stuffed olives with aioli, burrata, prosciutto de Parma with fig jam, micro basil and Balsamico, steamed mussels with roasted tomatoes, fennel, chorizo, white wine and crostini, and, finally, lamb meatballs with tomato-olive sauce and Pecorino Romano.

Monday, May 14 - I took Cindy to Pat's apartment in [Mill Valley](#) and then drove to [Novato](#) for lunch with Steve, Bill, Ted, and Bob (my Fireman's Fund buddies). I was supposed to meet them at [Mi Pueblo](#) at noon but got lost and ended up being almost an hour late. Fortunately, they were still there when I arrived. I had my favorite combination of chorizo con huevos and a Negra Modelo which the guys bought for me. What pals! Afterwards, everyone except Steve had to leave so he and I found a pool hall down the street and shot a few games.

I drove back to Mill Valley to pick up Cindy. Then she, Pat, Lissa and I went to the bar at Murray Circle (now closed) at [Cavallo Point](#) for a drink. It is in one of the old buildings in [Fort Baker](#) and was a great place for a relaxing drink while sitting on the porch. Afterwards, we decided to have dinner at [Royal Thai](#) in [San Rafael](#). We shared tod man, spicy angel wings, kaeng daeng curry with chicken and bamboo shoots, chao praya salmon, royal trout, and ped sawan.

Tuesday, May 15 - Another highlight of the trip is our lunch at [Chez Panisse Café](#), and today is the day. So, we drove over to [Berkeley](#), parked the car on the street, and went in. It hasn't changed much and we were seated at a table in front. Cindy started with halibut and King salmon tartare and I had a salad with lettuce, anchovies, and egg. Our entrées were chicken kebab with fried onions for Cindy and confit duck leg with asparagus for me. The great thing about Chez Panisse is that they use incredibly delicious organic produce and meat products and it really comes through in the flavors.

We drove through [Marin](#) on our way back to the apartment so that we could go to the headlands again. What fantastic views!

For dinner, we decided to try a new place that we found in Zagat called The House (now closed) which serves Asian themed food. We had deep-fried chicken livers with baby greens, deep-fried salmon roll, grilled Ahi tuna, and grilled sea bass. The food was OK but not outstanding, and it was expensive. Service was also spotty. I don't think we'd go there again.

Wednesday, May 16 - Today is our twentieth wedding anniversary and we have some special plans. We're starting with lunch at Mijita (now closed) in the ferry terminal and we'll be joined by our good friends and Lazy Men Pete, Dave, Kay (Dave's wife and not really a Lazy Man), Howard (RIP), and David. I had my favorite tacos de pescado and Cindy had her favorite pozole, which was also a favorite of several others there. We sat at an outside because the weather was perfect and we had a great time. I only wish we could have spent more time together.

After lunch, Cindy and I walked toward [Fisherman's Wharf](#) but it started getting windy and cooler so we didn't walk all the way. We went back to the apartment and

prepared for the big event, our dinner at [Gary Danko](#). We decided on the three course menu with wine pairing. Cindy had glazed oysters with Osetra caviar with a glass of Sancerre and quail stuffed with foie gras, mushrooms, and quinoa with a glass of French pinot noir. I had soft shell crab with bacon, grits, fava beans and roasted chiles with a glass of Sancerre and herb crusted lamb loin with cannellini beans and braised lamb shoulder with a glass of Malbec. Then we shared assorted cheeses with some tawny port. Excellent!

Thursday, May 17 - We walked to Columbus Avenue and L'Osteria del Forno (now closed). It's a really small Italian restaurant but has the best sandwich ever. It's called focaccine arrosto (rosemary focaccia with roasted pork braised in milk). We had that with radicchio alla griglia and a glass of house Chianti. Simple but

delicious. After lunch we walked around the neighborhood and

[Washington Square Park](#).

For dinner, we went to [Tadich Grill](#), one of my favorite places. I had my favorite meal of deep-fried jumbo prawns and Cindy had grilled branzino. Afterward we went back to the apartment to prepare for our trip home.



Friday, May 18 - This has been a great trip. We've had some incredible meals and visited with old, dear friends. It doesn't get any better. We reluctantly board the plane for our flight back to Brunswick and bid adieu to one of the best cities in the world, San Francisco, and the Bay Area.