

THE PRIDE OF ALSACE

On 2nd February at a special wine dinner at Cut Catch Cucina, Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua Beach Resort's signature restaurant, we had the pleasure of meeting Etienne Hugel, a 12th-generation torchbearer of the family-owned Hugel & Fils, a pioneering winemaker in the small French region of Alsace.

Established in 1639, Hugel rose to fame during the 18th and 19th centuries for their winegrowing skills and for the uncompromising way in which they cultivated their vineyards. Bringing with him the cherished, distinctive yellow bottles of 1639 Gewürztraminer and Riesling, the jovial

Etienne shared his family's winegrowing passion over a tasting session on the Cut Catch Cucina terrace.

At a delectable dinner prepared by Chef de Cuisine Maxie Millian following the wine tasting, two of the dishes on our degustation menu were paired with Hugel's fine wines. The 2009 Gewürztraminer is strong, spicy and fruity, a perfect accompaniment to the decadent entrée: pan-seared foie gras sprinkled with spiced brioche and raisin crumble, foie gras dust and caramel walnuts, finished with dollops of apple purée and star anise orange jus.



The next dish, a succulent butter-poached lobster tail with squid ink tagliolini, red pepper marmalade and bisque emulsion topped with a seaweed crisp, was balanced with the elegant Hugel 2012 Riesling, a dry wine with great finesse, often paired with Alsace's seafood specialties.

The golden rule of the Hugel family is that "the wine is already in the grape." Alsace, being the driest wine region in France, has a climate that allows grapes to ripen slowly to full maturity, resulting in aromatic wines with an unparalleled intensity. In Hugel's unique production process, all grapes are handpicked and, instead of pumping, the presses are filled by gravity. After slow crushing, only the first part of the juice is preserved to merit the famous yellow label.

At Hugel, the art of winemaking has been passed down through generations of wine growers and wine merchants, from father to son, since 1639. The Hugel family is on a mission to resurrect Alsatian wines and regain the reputation and prestige they enjoyed when the family business was founded.

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