

# CONFRÉRIE DE LA CHAÎNE DES RÔTISSEURS

## Bailliage National de Malte

### Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023 At Torri Ta Lanzun, Mensija, San Gwann

#### Board Members Present:

Bailli Délégué	Dr. Joseph Xuereb (Chair)
Chancelier/Argentier	Charles A. Gatt
Conseiller Gastronomique	Bernd Ritschel
Echanson	Dr. Ramiro Cali-Corleo
Charge de Presse	Dr. Mark Bailey

32 Bailliage members attending.

#### Apologies for absence:

Consellier Culinaire Maître Marc Besançon, Anne Besancon, Malcolm Ross, John Moore, Veronica Moore, Nadia Merten, Jost Merten, Ian Collins and Anne Collins.

**Minutes of the previous AGM held on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022** were taken as read and approved by a show of hands.

#### Bailli Délégué's Address

Good evening Consouers, Confrères,

Thank you for your presence here today. It is always a pleasure for us to meet and this AGM is the time for us to take stock of our raison d'être and our performance during the past year.

It also gives us the opportunity to discuss any ideas we have about our Bailliage and the Chaîne in general in both a formal setting and during the informal gathering over a drink and a nibble afterwards

We can now confidently say that the restaurant business and the culinary world in general have recovered and have now reached or even surpassed pre-pandemic levels in volume, if not in value

As we look back on 2022 we can say we are on the same road to recovery ourselves but the pandemic has not passed without leaving its effects

I refer, in particular, to the commitment to the ideals of the Chaîne, of some of the establishments we approach, both professional members I'm sorry to say and also establishments we identify as potential venues

These ideals include the provision of high standard events for members within the spirit of adventure, innovation and, even cost. With the notable exceptions, to whom we are truly grateful, we are finding difficulty in securing establishments who are willing to go beyond their set offerings, to give value as opposed to commercial menus and occasionally avoiding committing to Saturday evening slots more than a couple of months before the actual date. Again, with some exceptions we are also confined to hotel restaurants, which, while being professional and courteous do not always equate with venues that can be considered a destination in their own right. I am convinced we have several individual restaurants in Malta which can serve as innovative and unique venues, can accommodate our numbers and deliver high standard menus. It behoves us to strive to identify and rope these establishments in.

My personal impression last year was that attendance to events was below average. Is this a result of members travelling more once the possibility returned or is there an element of what I have just been referring to?

Which brings me to membership: Charles has already mentioned our membership stands at 58, of whom almost half are also OMGD members. This is a healthy number and I hope we can all participate consistently in all our events

I attended the Conseil Magistral meeting in Paris last June where one of the most important items on the agenda was the issue of membership and attendance declining. There were lengthy discussions on the reasons for this and what remedial action could be taken. The consensus reached was for a drive to recruit younger members, mainly by making our events more attractive in every possible way - variety, venue, cuisine, wine, camaraderie etc.

Let us embrace this - your ideas would be extremely welcome.

On the event front, we had several very enjoyable occasions but the highlight of our year must surely have been the Chapitre in October. These International events highlight the ethos of the Chaîne and our overseas visitors are a testament to this.

In the same way our participation at events abroad gives a broader meaning to our membership of this unique organisation. Those of us who have been on any of these came back with lovely memories, new friendships and wonderful ideas. I know some of you/us have already made plans to attend various Chapitres abroad this year and I encourage anyone who is still thinking about it to get up and go!

Staying on the international theme, this brings me to this year's World Chaîne Day. Last year we had a most enjoyable dedicated lunch at One 80 in Mellieha, organised by our Echanson. This year you may have wondered why we are holding this AGM on a Friday rather than the usual Wednesday. We thought it would be a good opportunity to celebrate World Chaîne Day, which falls this weekend, combined with this pleasant gathering. This is the 23rd anniversary of World Chaîne Day and 15 years since the inception of the ACCR, the Chaîne's Charity.

Our annual donations, to the Order of St Lazarus and, this year, to Dar tal-Providenza went ahead as usual. Please also keep in mind the ACCR which was set up in 2008 to launch food-related programs in the field of social development aimed at nourishing and improving the living conditions of those in need, especially children.

I must end with my customary, but no less extremely heartfelt thanks to the members of council who are tireless in their efforts and extremely generous with their time to make all of this happen and I thank you for supporting your Bailliage in the very enthusiastic way that you do. Thank you also to Charles and Maureen who host our Board meetings.

Having said all this, 2022 was a transition period. Committed members have remained true to the organisation and its ideals and the Chaîne is emerging stronger for this.

Members are eager and happy to meet and this can only bode well.

As we look forward to 2023 let us keep in mind the slogan for this year's World Chaîne day:

Come With Your Heart

Vive La Chaîne

**Dr. Joseph Xuereb**

### **Chancelier`s Report**

Good evening Confreres and Consoeurs and welcome to our Annual General Meeting.

The past year has been very busy for our bailliage since it included a Grand Chapitre in October combining our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which was postponed due to Covid.

During the year, seven members left the bailliage for various reasons. We have had a couple of changes to the Board.

We welcomed Officier Commandeur Bernd Ritschel as Conseiller Gastronomique and regrettably Commandeur John Attard relinquished his position as Charge de Mission due to personal workload.

Six new members have joined the bailliage, namely, Elsa Meyland-Smith, Anthony Busuttill, Joe Debono and Patrick Cole as non-professional members. Alexandra Pisani, Thomas Curmi and Eric Gauci are the new professional members.

Ta Frenc Restaurant, having four professional Chaîne members, is therefore Malta`s top Chaîne Recognised Establishment.

It is worth remembering that joining the Chaîne is not by request but by invitation. As you will be aware anyone wishing to join is obliged to attend some events as a guest following which, if mutually acceptable, an invitation to join may be extended.

At the end of 2022, the bailliage had a total membership of 58. This includes 12 professional and 26 OMGD members. The average age of our bailliage is slightly above that published in the Chaîne statistics and we must continue to encourage younger members to join. It is good to know that with the new members mentioned above we shall have two under the age of thirty and two under forty.

It is also important that we continue to make a special effort to attract more professional members, especially those employed within catering establishments.

In 2022, we had five official dinners. They were held at the Xara Lodge, Tmun Restaurant, Ta Frenc, Phoenicia Hotel, Corinthia Palace Hotel and Radisson St. Julians. The overall average attendance for these events was 40.

In addition, a casual OMGD themed dinner was held at Lovage Bistro in St. Paul's Bay and a casual lunch to mark the Chaîne World Day at One80 Restaurant in Mellieha.

In June, a group of our bailliage members attended the International Grand Chapitre in Paris. As often stated we appreciate comments and feedback from our members following events. Points raised are always considered and analysed at Board level and if appropriate, positive or negative, they are relayed to the venue. They serve to prevent similar shortcomings when planning future dinners.

It goes without saying that the premier event of the year was the Grand Chapitre held in October. The Welcome Gala Dinner was held in the Maryanski Lounge at the Phoenicia Hotel and the Induction Ceremony and Gala Dinner at the Corinthia Palace Hotel.

The officiating Officer nominated by Paris was Philip Evins, the Bailli Délégué of Great Britain and a Member of the Conseil Magistral

At the Ceremony, our own Bailli Délégué was presented with the coveted Red Ribbon following his elevation to a new Member of the Conseil Magistral. A great honour for our bailliage to be represented on that prestigious Council.

Local and foreign inductions, promotions and awards included two Officiers Commandeurs, a Commandeur (20 years), eight Commandeurs (10 years), a Charge de Presse, two Maîtres Rôtisseurs, two Maîtres Restaurateurs, three Officiers, four Dames de la Chaîne, three Chevaliers and 12 OMGD members. Congratulations to all of them.

In addition, Christopher Spiteri, was raised to Professionnel du Vin and we congratulate him for having received an Advanced Level Award with Distinction from the Wines and Spirits Education Trust of London.

Twenty five overseas members attended the Chapitre, including groups from the UK and Turkey. The visitors were treated to three special tours of the Island under Tour Director Mariella Bosé.

Overseas participation was lower than usual for this particular Chapitre. This was largely due to a number of chapitres held in other countries in the last quarter of the year. We discovered later that the flurry of chapitres imposed an overload on the head office admin team. As a result, although we managed to receive the ribbons and other regalia in time for the ceremony, some diplomas and certificates were delivered well after the event.

However, from the feedback received, it was clear that the Chapitre programme was well received and executed without any significant issues.

Since Covid, making firm venues reservations has become more difficult and our choice of venues more restricted. Prices have risen sharply and Terms and Conditions more onerous. Some venues are asking for or a large deposit on booking and a high corkage fee for supplying our own wines.

Occasionally they ask us to change the date initially agreed if a more lucrative event comes their way.

This means that there are occasions when we need to amend the dates in our calendar of events. We do hope our members appreciate the situation even if it clashes with their other commitments.

Your Board meets regularly to discuss every matter relating to the running of the bailliage and each member is involved in specific tasks.

All events, especially major ones, like a Grand Chapitre, require intensive activity well in advance. So a very big thank you must go to the Board members. I must also make a special reference to our Charge de Press who is also our webmaster as well as a voluntary photographer at most of our events. Mark regularly updates the website to include summaries of our events with a selection of photos. Please do him justice by accessing the website frequently.

It will be amiss of me not to mention the direction and guidance we receive from our Bailli Délégué. Joseph responds quickly to queries and issues, in spite of his busy schedule.

We must not forget the partners who support us and put up with our preoccupation with the Chaîne. At this point you will permit me to single out my wife Maureen for her patience and support.

To end my report, on your behalf, I wish to thank the Grand Commandery of the Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem for the loan of this Knights Hall to hold our AGM. As on previous occasions and as a thank you gesture, the bailliage made an appropriate donation to the philanthropic fund of the Order. A further donation was made to Hospice Malta. With your approval the bailliage continues the practice of making donations of up to €1000 per annum to worthy charities.

Vive La Chaîne

**Charles Gatt**

### **Echanson OMGD Report**

The OMGD is a specific section of the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs focusing on wines and beverages and pairing them with the appropriate dishes rather than the usual Chaîne practice of selecting a food menu and then seeking a suitable wine pairing. To become an OMGD member one needs to be an active Chaîne member. The current membership of the OMGD in Malta is 23 members.

In 2022 the most notable events were the induction of 8 new OMGD members during the Malta Grand Chapitre and the attendance at the OMGD meeting in Paris. Other activities were a Brandy focused dinner; selection of the wines for all Bailliage events and the creation of a Malta OMGD banner.

The OMGD meeting in Paris was attended by our Bailli and myself. Important points that came out were: Membership in the OMGD did not drop even during Covid with new members replacing those who drop out. This was attributed to the successful program of on-line seminars held during the will be now replaced by face-to-face meetings with on line events becoming the exception. A new OMGD ribbon and medal was launched. This is to be worn with the Chaîne ribbon of rank in addition to the tastevin pin for those who choose to acquire it. A discussion was held on the definition of crafted beverages and it was agreed that although strictly speaking where the OMGD is concerned these should be alcohol-based beverages we should also focus on 'crafted' beverages of all forms as many individuals have gone off alcoholic beverages.

Last Year's OMGD event was a Brandy focused event at Lovage where the chef presented a menu where brandy was an ingredient in every dish. Diners were welcomed with a brandy-based cocktail and sampled 5 different brandies from France, Spain, Germany and Italy. At the end of the dinner some of the attendees moved to the veranda to enjoy their preferred brandy accompanied by a cigar.

Plans for 2023 include 2 main OMGD events as well as the restart of the OMGD newsletter which will be included into the Bailliage website.

**Dr Ramiro Cali-Corleo**

### **Conseiller Culinaire Report** (read by Bernd Ritschel)

Good evening,

This year has been interesting for the cooking point of view. The chefs tried their best to show us their skills.

We had some tastes of different methods of cooking which give us the experience of different textures.

At the Tmun Restaurant, the starter was an impressive way of preparing different kinds of mushrooms, using different ways of cooking, seasoning and textures. The dish was topped up with a very light and tasty chestnut mushroom foam that made the dish look really interesting.

For the Chapitre Welcome dinner at the Phoenicia, Chef Daniel Debattista prepared a very interesting menu.. The main course,

cannon of lamb, looked very good, with a 'scotch broth' croquette and a very nice and colourful accompaniment and also a very tasty olive sauce. The cheese course was very well presented, the poached pear was perfect with the Roquefort.

For the Gala Dinner at the Corinthia Palace, chef Stefan Hogan really gave us a memorable menu fit for a Chapitre. The starter of Stout Braised pig head terrine reminded me of what the French call "Fromage de tête", the texture was just as it should be and the date and mushroom ketchup, together with the burnt rosemary cracker and the surprising Marmite butter worked really well with it. To follow, we had a perfectly cooked and artistically presented

Jerusalem artichoke and "Trompette de la mort" Risotto served at a perfect temperature. The main course of roast meagre was again cooked to perfection and retained all the fish moisture, the small Leek tart and the Celeriac and caper puree worked very well with it, as did the delicate Vin jaune butter sauce.

The pastry chef brigade presented us with a work of art. Aerated prickly pear mousse, herb sorbet, cocoa soil. It was not only beautiful to look at, but very good in taste too, with different textures and very light.

For the first event of 2023 at the Exelsior Hotel in February 2023 'The second course of stuffed squid with sea bass and red prawn mousse was very tasty and light and very well presented.'

The dessert of Almond chocolate biscuit, mandarin chocolate cream, and exotic textures was not only beautiful to look at but very tasty and rich in different flavours and textures.

We had some really good desserts, petits fours and good cheese selections.

This is why I want to congratulate the pastry Chefs as well as the kitchen brigades. Well done to All and we hope to have the same standards in the future.

**Marc Besancon**

### **Argentier`s Report**

Prior to presenting the accounts, the Argentier highlighted aspects relating to payments of fees or charges as follows:

Handling personal cheques is time consuming and creates additional book-keeping and accounting work. Members are urged to make payments by bank transfer rather than by cheques;

A combining payment for different items (dinners, membership fees, ribbons etc.) should be avoided as this complicates accounting;

Hitherto, the bailliage paid for any additional regalia for promotions. In line with the new Paris fees structure, the bailliage will now charge for a promotion with ribbon but no charge will be levied for a promotion without ribbon. It will be the member`s choice which option to use;

Members can purchase additional Chaine ribbons or ladies` ribbon bows either directly through the Chaine Boutique online page or through our Conseiller Bernd Ritschel who can assist on this matter.

Members are reminded that venues always charge for dinners cancelled within two days of the event. Therefore, the bailliage will not make refunds for such cancellations.

Accounts:

Details of the Accounts for the year ending December 2022 were distributed to each member attending the meeting. The Argentier explained each item of Income and Expenditure and the

Balance Sheet. He stated that the Accounts as presented were audited by Registered Accountant Christopher Spiteri and the original documents and audited accounts were available at the meeting for inspection. He invited the floor to ask any questions or make comments.

### **Approval of Accounts**

The Chairman requested that the accounts be accepted. Approved by a show of hands.

### **Appointment of Auditor**

The Chairman proposed the re-appointment of Christopher Spiteri as auditor for the year ending December 2023. Approved by a show of hands.

### **Chargé de Presse Report**

As the Chargé de Presse, one of my jobs is to keep the website up to date with articles covering our events.

The first article covered was the Dejeuner Amical Ta Frenc Restaurant Gozo on 31st October 2021, which means that I will soon have been doing this for 2 years.

How about some interaction from the audience? Can we have a quick show of hands to see how many of you have taken a look at the site recently and how many of you know how to access the site?

You probably know that our site is a sub-section of the main Chaine website.

So if you search for Chaine de Rotisseurs on Google, and click the link for the main site you will find a list of countries that have a Bailliage at the bottom of the main page, and Malta is in the list.

By clicking on Malta you will reach our site.

Another way to get into the site is via links to the articles I send.

The menu button, that is the blue one on the left-hand side, is a bit tricky as you have to press on the angle bracket to enter the sub-menus, not the text.

In the articles, I summarize the speeches given by the various members of the committee and write down the menu and the wines together with the comments of the Echanson and Conseiller Culinaire.

Also, I usually upload a photo album of the members and the food.

On occasion I have forwarded the write-up of our event to Paris for inclusion in the 'News Online' section of the main site.

If anyone is not happy with having their photos uploaded please let me know.

If anyone still has difficulties email me and we will sort them out

Thanks for your attention

**Dr. Mark Bailey**

Comm. Charles A. Gatt  
Chancelier/Argentier