

## BAZAS BEEF

A short trip to Bordeaux at the end of September was enjoyable for the company, the wine, for some of the meals and for the discovery (under the guidance of Philip and Mary Hyman) of the *boeuf de Bazas*, an inexpressibly fine meat from the Bazadais breed that prospers around the town of Bazas, just south of Langon in the Sauternes and Barsac area. The animals were first used in the cultivation of vineyards but since the mechanization of agriculture in the years after the Second World War, the breed was improved (perhaps with an admixture of *blonde d'Aquitaine*) for its meat. The flesh was well marbled and succulent; the flavour very fine indeed. The animals are slaughtered at 36 months. There are a few breeders here in Britain, as well as in Australia.

## TIPS & TIPPING IN RESTAURANTS

In recent weeks, some newspapers in Britain have been exercised by what they perceive as the iniquity of restaurant proprietors in their administration of the service charge. On parallel lines, there has been a long-running debate over the low salaries of waiting staff in restaurants and whether there is a moral obligation on customers to tip their waiter or waitress in order to supplement their earnings. All this slots into a much larger national discussion on low pay, job security, tax credits, immigration, exploitation of workers and the rest – up to and including whether there is a God and whether JC is Corbyn or the Messiah, or both. Much of the newspapers' ire is directed at those restaurants who levy a percentage service charge on each bill (usually settled by credit card). In law, the levy belongs to the restaurant owner, who may thereafter distribute it according to whim. Often the staff themselves see a very small proportion of the charge, and the waiting staff a smaller proportion still, as the proprietor shares it between the front and back of house (as well as pocketing an administration fee and deductions for breakages and other involuntary losses). As if piling Pelion upon Ossa, some managements also 'tax' their waiting staff with a percentage of an evening's takings so as to distribute more widely the cash-in-hand gratuities that the waiter or waitress may have received. These various arrangements are usually vilified as exploitative. Often, indeed, they are; but they may also be seeking some sort of financial equity between the waiting staff and those slaving in the nether regions (the tips would be small were there no food to deliver). Imagine, however, our surprise when we read of the 'risky' developments in some New York restaurants today where they are trying to outlaw tipping and the service charge altogether and, instead, pay their staff a decent wage. It all took me back to 1974 when we opened our restaurant in Dartmouth. Because I had always been miserly and none too highly paid myself, I found tipping a tedious and expensive bore. So right from the start, we did not have a service charge and we discouraged tipping

with a note to that effect on the menu: something like, ‘Prices include VAT and service,’ or, occasionally, more strongly, ‘There is absolutely no need to add anything further.’ There were always some kind people who left a cash gratuity (over the years this worked out at approximately 2.5 per cent of turnover) and this was pooled and distributed equally between all members of staff according to how many shifts they had worked in a given period. Whether we paid more generously than our competitors I never knew. But the arrangement worked without engendering discontent. To my mind, it had the following advantages: the waiting staff were no longer personal servants dependent on gifts; and all the staff worked to the same end, the satisfaction of the customer, irrespective of their field of activity— there was no sense of independent trading on the part of the front-of-house staff as described in Gerald Mars and Michael Nicod’s book *The World of Waiters* (1984).

## CORNISH PASTIES

Peter Brears’s piece on the Cornishness of the pasty in *PPC* 102 excited much outrage in Cornwall itself. It even earned Peter an interview on the south-west’s news bulletin on the BBC. When his findings were reported in the *Cornishman* newspaper, they provoked a threatening storm of 8,000 Tweets. It is fortunate that Peter is so innocent of modern media that he was not oppressed by the cyber-bullying. He writes on haggis in this issue. Perhaps the Scots will be more troublesome, and closer to his northern home.

## ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

Reading ‘below the line’ in the on-line *Guardian* regarding the Conservative party conference, I came across a quotation from this poet’s not-very-highly regarded (and unfinished and unpublished in his lifetime) satirical work *Dipsychus*, dating from 1850. It is nicely turned and apposite to a number of situations. Below are some stanzas which I was able to locate.

As I sat at the café, I said to myself,  
They may talk as they please about what they call pelf  
They may sneer as they like about eating and drinking  
But help it I cannot, I cannot help thinking,

How pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!

How pleasant it is to have money.

I sit at my table en grand seigneur,  
And when I have done, throw a crust to the poor;  
Not only the pleasure, one’s self, of good living,  
But also the pleasure of now and then giving.

So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
So pleasant it is to have money.

It was but last winter I came up to town,  
But already I'm getting a little renown;  
I make new acquaintance where'er I appear;  
I am not too shy, and have nothing to fear.  
So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
So pleasant it is to have money.

I drive through the streets, and I care not a d--n;  
The people they stare, and they ask who I am;  
And if I should chance to run over a cad,  
I can pay for the damage if ever so bad.  
So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
So pleasant it is to have money.

We stroll to our box and look down on the pit,  
And if it weren't low should be tempted to spit;  
We loll and we talk until people look up,  
And when it's half over we go out to sup.  
So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
So pleasant it is to have money.

The best of the tables and the best of the fare -  
And as for the others, the devil may care;  
It isn't our fault if they dare not afford  
To sup like a prince and be drunk as a lord.  
So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
So pleasant it is to have money.

We sit at our tables and tipple champagne;  
Ere one bottle goes, comes another again;  
The waiters they skip and they scuttle about,  
And the landlord attends us so civilly out.  
So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
So pleasant it is to have money.

It was but last winter I came up to town,  
But already I'm getting a little renown;  
I get to good houses without much ado,  
Am beginning to see the nobility too.  
So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
So pleasant it is to have money.

O dear! what a pity they ever should lose it!  
For they are the gentry that know how to use it;  
So grand and so graceful, such manners, such dinners,  
But yet, after all, it is we are the winners.

So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!

So pleasant it is to have money.

Thus I sat at my table en grand seigneur,  
And when I had done threw a crust to the poor;  
Not only the pleasure, one's self, of good eating,  
But also the pleasure of now and then treating,

So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho

So pleasant it is to have money.

They may talk as they please about what they call pelf,  
And how one ought never to think of one's self,  
And how pleasures of thought surpass eating and drinking -  
My pleasure of thought is the pleasure of thinking

How pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!

How pleasant it is to have money.

## BACON

It's been pig-killing time and some belly was reserved for making bacon before the rest was sold on or otherwise consumed. (These are 6-month animals, not full-size baconers.) We relied on the very simple instructions in Michael Ruhlman and Brian Polcyn's *Charcuterie* (W.W. Norton, 2005) which worked excellently: nicely salty, little effort. Make up a basic dry cure of 1 lb sea salt, 8 oz sugar, 2 oz 'pink salt' or curing salt or Prague powder #1 (containing sodium nitrite). You can no longer obtain saltpetre from your butcher or chemist (fear of terrorists, they always say), but the curing salt will give your bacon a nice colour. Add to the mix some bay leaves and crushed black peppercorns. Store this dry cure in the larder. Take your trimmed belly and place it in a large Ziploc plastic bag. If it weighs around 4 lb, then add about 3 oz of the dry cure. Close the bag securely and rub the cure evenly over the belly. The salt will cause the meat to express its liquid content, which is kept in by the sealed bag. Leave this flat on a tray in the fridge for seven days, turning and rubbing it daily. Hey presto! Not long after this, we were exposed to the WHO report of the carcinogenic effects of processed meats. Miss out the nitrite if that makes you feel better. I have often made perfectly decent bacon without it.