



**Dear Members,**

**Happy 2024! Hope the year brings you good times and you are looking forward to some of our club activities this winter and spring!**

**Our annual general meeting was held on January 16th. Over 50 members attended. Diane West was elected the new treasurer, serving a 3 year term. Many thanks to Dave Cuffe for his time as treasurer. It wasn't an easy year for him as he had shoulder surgery in the late spring and recovery has taken much longer than expected. The membership approved the revisions to the club bylaws by a large margin. The minutes to the AGM were sent to the membership and posted on the website (as are the revised Bylaws) in a new section on the menu, labeled, 'Documents.'**

**Looking back on 2023, we enjoyed new events and added two activity groups, Pétanque, organized by Guy Claude and Culinary Adventures which Christine Denis has agreed to organize going forward. Vicenç organized a great tour of the Perelada Winery and the Summer BBQ was the best attended event of the year.**

**Look for changes in the newsletter going forward, beginning in March as we have two new contributors willing to write new columns and articles. New activity groups and events are in the process; we will begin a " Menu del Dia" group. More on that soon 😊**

**We begin the new year with two new members, Terrence and Gladys Robinson; they live in the Dordogne area in France but spend part of the year here. Both are multilingual, golfers and enjoy cultural events and gastronomy. Welcome!**

**Our wine and tapas party was held at the Golf Club on January 23rd; 32 members attended. Members toasted the New Year and mingled in the early hours of the evening.**

**This month, two members are sharing some of their life experiences, one from the first half of the 20th century and the second, a gastronomy salute to a beloved city. Thank you Lorenzo and Christine! -Linda**

### **CLUB ACTIVITIES**

**January 29 - Book Group**

**January 30 - Cooking Group**

**February 5 - GPL**

**February 8 & 22 - Pitch'nputt**

**February 20 - Cultural Excursion to Maritime Museum in Barcelona**

**February 26 - Book Group**

**March 4 - GPL @ Calcotada Luncheon**

**March 7 & 21 Pitch'nputt**

**March 14 & 28 -Pétanque**

**March 17 - St. Patrick's Day Celebration**

**Remember: check our calendar on the website for activities through July: [cicb.eu](http://cicb.eu)**

**Reading and hearing stories looking back through the lens of time is enriching, especially when the person sharing them is 91. For those of you who haven't met Lorenzo Tommasi, we have a real treat for you. With a little prodding, Lorenzo has written a few anecdotes about his colorful life lived around the world. Here is the first.**

## **VENICE-1942**

I discovered early on that I had in me the ability to lead. At the age of ten, I attended elementary school in Venice run by the Facists. Like my schoolmates, I was supposed to own a "Balilla" uniform which my father refused to buy because he did not like the Facists.



Once a week we were taken to the gymnasium to do physical exercises. We had to learn to march in step and perform complicated choreographed marches. I was put in charge.

One afternoon, our teacher told us that in May, there would be a very important federal meeting in Venice followed by a parade and a military marches competition. Our school was to participate in the competition. I was excited as I was to lead our march.

Just before the competition, an incident happened that changed my attitude toward the competition. Part of our indoctrination was to learn all kinds of Facist hymns. Weekly, we would convene in the school's largest reception room; a music professor taught us new songs and tried to direct a chorus of sorts. It was very boring so a friend and I began exchanging jokes and were apparently laughing too loudly, the singing stopped. The professor's finger pointed at me. I saw my teacher making his way through the room to come to me. He grabbed me by the right ear and dragged me out of the room. The treatment was not only painful but also very humiliating. I managed to free myself and ran toward the exit. The teacher chased me, fearing, I think problems with parents if I told them of the incident. He offered me food to convince me to stay but I ran home. I never told my mother what had happened.



On the day of the parade, when we arrived there was a huge crowd and an elaborate stand from where the authorities could judge the parade and competition.

We observed the competition until it was our turn. I held my nerve as everyone watched and gave the correct orders perfectly. Our performance was frequently saluted with applause.

I ordered the last right turn to march our squad to the authorities stand and then I met the eyes of my teacher. I suddenly remembered the episode during the music lesson and the humiliation which "triggered" my next actions.

As the squad marched toward the stand, the boys waited for my signal to stop which I did not give. Confusion ensued, there was no order to lead an elegant ending to our march. The squad ended up at the authorities stand accompanied by cries of disappointment and horror from the galleries. For a moment, even at age 10, revenge was sweet.

-Lorenzo Tommasi

## BRUXELLES, MA BELLE \*

As some of you know, Xavier and I spent the last 10 years in Brussels after 2 decades of moving every 3 years in France and abroad. This very long stay probably explains the special bond we forged with this fascinating city.

Our Belgian friends used to tell us, "you know Brussels better than we do." I could talk about Brussels for hours, there is so much that comes to mind; there are the sights, restaurants and so much more, but I had to make a choice, this month the focus is on **Belgian Food and Drinks**.

Or shall I say **Fries and Beers**? But that would not include waffles nor chocolates. Considering the local weather, rain falling on more than 180 days a year on average, people need comfort food and drinks. That may be a reason why Belgians are known as friendly, convivial people, spending much time together in cafés and restaurants.

In this small city, 30700 km<sup>2</sup> and 11,7 million inhabitants, you will find over 100 breweries producing 700 different types of beers. Especially Trappist Beers which are brewed in only 14 monasteries around the world and 6 of them are in Belgium! Beer is such a cultural drink that it's not really considered as alcohol and teenagers can buy some from 16...



Well, that's a lot of numbers, maybe we should have one of those beers? White, Triple, Stout, Cherry Beer, Trappist... **ORVAL, LEFFE, CHIMAY, JUIPLER, CHOUFFE, GRIMBERGEN...** some can contain up to 15% of alcohol. So, when drinking beers (because you can't just have one) you'd better eat something. And that "something" can be the national dish: **FRIES**.

You noticed that I didn't say "french fries" or "belgian fries" because each country claims the paternity of these, "deep-fried in oil elongated pieces of potatoes."

Some say they originally come from Belgium and were mistakenly called "french fries" by the American soldiers during World War II because they discovered them in the French speaking part of Belgium (Wallonia) and others say they were invented in France around 1775 because they are mentioned in a cookbook of that time. Some even say they are a variant of Patatas Bravas...

Well, I think the most important is that the whole world now knows the fries.

In Belgium, they are usually fried twice, in beef tallow rather than in oil, and are considered as a main dish in themselves, served in a paper cone with an incredible choice of sauces. Don't ask for a simple mayonnaise, just go for Samourai (quite spicy), Piccalilli (with pickles), Dallas (pepper and whisky), Bicky (made from cabbage) and so many more as there are nearly 30 varieties, enough to dip a lot of fries and never get bored with them.

If you're still hungry after your fries, you should go for a waffle, but the choice won't be easy as there are 2 different types of waffles: **la gaufre de Bruxelles** and **la gaufre de Liège**, both delicious of course.



Epicurious  
Corner  
Christine  
Denis

The Brussels waffle is a crispy square, Tetris-looking piece offering straight edges, meant to be served with toppings such as whipped cream, fruit, melted chocolate... of course, you can combine. The Liège waffle is thicker and sweeter, more bread-like taste, with a chewy sweet caramelised texture and an irregular shape. It's a bit smaller but the number of calories is huge, so no need to add anything, unless you want to experience a diabetic coma.

Belgium, together with the Swiss, is one of the most important manufacturers of chocolate in Europe and is known as the country who invented the pralines, soft-centered confections with a chocolate casing.

In the 1800s, Jean NEUHAUS, a pharmacist, coated his medicines with chocolate to cover up their unpleasant taste and help them go down that little bit easier. A few years later, in 1912, his grandson evolved the idea to create the Belgian Praline by replacing the medication with cream.



After all these excesses, you'd better exercise! Fortunately, Brussels is one of the greenest capitals in Europe, more than 8,000 hectares of parks and forests. This compensates for the (too) heavy traffic inside the city, which is a real issue and will quickly drive you crazy if you must drive.

Well, I hope I didn't lose too many of you as it's not the short article I was asked to write! I hope that if you ever go or go back to Brussels you will have fries, beers, waffles and chocolates and enjoy the city!  
Christine Denis, January 2024.

Please enjoy this little video tribute to Brussels:  
\* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd5725HpKK0>



Happy New Year! 🌟  
Wine and Tapas event  
January 23  
Golf Costa Brava

