

A taboo food gets high-end treatment

From Page 1.

A handful of epicures in town have tried to match their seasonal favorite with European wines, he said, but not as openly as he has.

"Why can't dog meat be enjoyed in an elegant manner?" he said in an interview before the dinner. "Why do dog meat eaters have to go to dingy restaurants in back streets and be embarrassed about it when they enjoy it so much? Even if the event at my bar might cause controversies, I'm prepared to take the risk."

Does he eat dog meat himself? "No, it's not that I cannot eat dog meat, but I do not eat dog meat. I won't be eating the meat even though I'm organizing the event at my bar," he said.

He said he is a dog lover and chooses not to eat the animal, but he doesn't think Koreans should be ashamed of a long-standing tradition.

The dinner would mark the first time in Korea that dog meat was served at a mainstream, upper-class establishment, but he expected and hoped that the event would "not be so serious and not so sensational ... because the event is about simply matching a Korean traditional food with a Western traditional beverage."

Mr. Eun announced his bold plan to more than 30,000 subscribers to his Web site (www.bestwine.co.kr) a few weeks ago, telling them that his 32nd Wine Academy event on Aug. 14 would match dog meat with internationally reputable wines.

He chose a Korean-German TV personality who runs a consulting company and imports German wine. Lee Charm, better known as Lee Han-woo, has given numerous lectures on wine and food for local wine clubs.

About 50 participants, including wine enthusiasts and the press, turned up for the event at 3 p.m. on Saturday. Mr. Lee talked about the Taoist interpretation of matching tastes, closing his lecture by saying the reason why Koreans are so harshly criticized for eating dog meat is because "their cultural image is weak." A few listeners broke into a loud applause.

Afterward, attendees were served a light course meal and eight of the world's different kinds of wine: the Chateau Cissac, the Chateau Petit-Figeac, a 2000 Joseph Drouhin Gevrey-Chambertin, a 2001 E. Guigal Hermitage, a 2001 Castello di Fonterutoli Chianti, a 2001 Wolf Blass Shiraz, 2000 Catena Malbec and a 2001 Zimmermann-Graeff Muller Niersteiner Gutes Domtal Auslese.

Participants were then asked to fill in a grading sheet at the end, picking the wines that best suited the meat.

For the dog meat, Mr. Eun contacted a

wholesale supplier he had found online. The precooked meat was again cured and cooked by the Casa del Vino chef, who regularly eats dog meat in the summer.

Instead of the soup version, which is heavily seasoned with strong spices, such as garlic, onion, ginger, red chile pepper paste and sesame leaves, the chef prepared simpler dishes such as cold cuts, in porridge and braised. All three dishes were elegantly garnished with beets, chopped chives and roasted sesame seeds and served on beautiful modern plates.

Mr. Lee, whose name was Bernard Quandt before he permanently adopted a Korean name, came to Korea 27 years ago and earned his Korean citizenship in 1986. A native of Bad-Kreuznach, near the famous wine region of Nahe in Germany, he said he grew up drinking and appreciating some of the finest wines in Europe and picked up cooking as a hobby during his teen years.

He found the practice of dog-eating in Korea to be quite natural. While living in Korea, he has eaten dog meat on many occasions.

"In East Germany, they too have a tradition of eating dog meat," he said. "Also, the Korean-style dog meat is very similar to a traditional German dish called hasenpfeffer, which is made with a hare. The texture and taste of the meat and the preparation, except for some spices, are very similar."

The restaurant that serves "probably the best dog meat in Korea," he said, is on the road between Gyeongju and Mokpo in the south of Korea. After trying the braised dog meat at Casa del Vino's dinner, Mr. Lee said, "Nothing compares to the meat there."

Many dog meat lovers say the best meat comes from 1-year-old dog of a local mixed breed called *nureong-i*. It's not a cheap meal — some dishes can cost 30,000 won (\$25) and up to 100,000 won per person.

"[The cost] is because it takes relatively more time to feed and care for a meaty adult dog," Mr. Lee said.

When the reported cases of torture involving dogs were mentioned, Mr. Lee shook his head.

"In the old days people used to believe that if you beat the dog before it dies, the meat became tastier," he said. "But they don't do that anymore, because it's scientifically proven that the fear hormone released upon the death of the animal actually ruins the taste of the meat."

Among the audience, there were men and women of varying ages and degrees of dog meat-eating experiences.

Upon tasting the dog meat porridge, Lee



Dog meat was elegantly prepared, above, in cold cuts, a porridge and a braised dish, with dipping sauces and vegetables. After a lecture by Lee Charm, a Korean-German, participants voted on which wine paired best with the dog meat. *By Ines Cho*



Lee Charm, the speaker of the day, encouraged his audience to enjoy dog meat, a traditional Korean dish, just like Europeans savor their traditional foods, such as foie gras and hasenpfeffer.

Seung-eun, an interior designer, declared, "This is a historic moment for me. I actually came here because one of my female friends loves dog meat."

She went on to share some trivia about dog meat. "Did you know that Koreans who are engaged in construction work never eat dog meat, because they are afraid of misfortune, like, their buildings might collapse?" she asked.

Ms. Lee said the porridge tasted very good and was fragrant with sesame oil, but she didn't finish it. She said a full-bodied red would definitely go well with such a heavy meat.

Jamie Kim, the publisher of *Winies*, a wine business magazine, said she had eaten

dog meat twice before, and she encouraged a reporter to set aside her own prejudices that were in her head and just try the meat. Ms. Kim said she preferred the porridge and marinated meat to the cold cuts.

Chi Sang-hun, who works as a sales director of a local electronics company, said he regularly eats dog meat. "Lilac-jip behind Palace Hotel in southern Seoul does it the best," he said.

As for the dinner, he said, "Frankly, the meaty texture is gone because it's been overcooked."

An elderly Korean participant, Lee Sok-ki, whose business card read "wine connoisseur and senior wine adviser," had been to Mr.

Eun's wine academy 30 times. He was obviously delighted with the unusual event. "Today's highlight is the *gaejuk* [dog meat porridge]," he said.

By 6 p.m., 29 participants voted for the best wine that matched with dog meat.

The Guigal Hermitage, based on the syrah grape, was rated the highest, and the Chateau Petit-Figeac, based on the merlot grape, was rated the lowest.

Throughout the event, the ethics of eating dog wasn't something to debate at all. As the wine enthusiasts lingered over dinner for a few more hours, all that mattered was the taste of the food and their favorite wine.

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Embark on a blues journey with 7 directors

By Chun Su-jin
Staff Writer

The American movie director Martin Scorsese once said, "If I could have played guitar, I never would have become a filmmaker."

His movies were his ticket to fame, but his passion for music lingered. And that passion eventually helped create "The Blues," a documentary series by seven directors that takes viewers on a journey to the source of the blues. The series will be shown in its entirety from today through Sunday at Seoul Art Cinema in northern Seoul. The schedule is at www.seoulselection.com/events.html.

Born of the spirituals and work songs in the late 19th



Richard Pearce's "The Road to Memphis" features many live blues performances as it retraces the life of B.B. King.

century United States, the music was an emotional release for African-Americans who continued to struggle for their dignity long after their emancipation. The songs displayed their spirit of agony and grief and formed the bedrock of American musical history, later giving birth to styles like jazz, country, rock and hip-hop.

The seven directors each cook up the music onscreen in their unique styles. Mr. Scorsese, also a producer of the series, features a number of live blues performances in "Feel Like Going Home." He also takes a journey to find the source of the music, from the Mississippi River over to West Africa, making this film into a road trip.

Charles Burnett, a director originally from Vicksburg, Mississippi, with a background as a professional trumpeter, based the film "Warming by the Devil's Fire" on a childhood story. With fictional and real-life stories melded together, "Warming" describes a 1950s family feud between a mother who can't live without the blues and a gospel-loving grandmother who considers the blues to be the music of devil.

"The Road to Memphis" by Richard Pearce is an homage to Memphis, the city of the blues. The director retraces the life of B.B. King, the celebrated blues musician and a Memphis native, featuring many of his live performances in the film.

Wim Wenders, a German-born movie director known for his love of music, as evident in "Buena Vista Social Club," presents "The Soul of a Man," about his three beloved blues musicians. Remaining true to his reputa-

tion as a music-savvy filmmaker, Mr. Wenders orchestrates music performances as well as rare documentary footage to create as fine a guide to the blues as any.

Marc Levin, another blues-loving director, is second to none in his admiration for the music. He says his life was transformed when he heard the Paul Butterfield Blues Band's music at age 15. His "Godfathers and Sons" carries viewers to the world of Chicago blues, rich in exclusive performance clips by celebrated performers.

If you remember the bewitching song "Angel Eyes" from "Leaving Las Vegas," then you'll appreciate the film director Mike Figgis's sense of music. In "Red, White and Blues," he presents his love for the blues through interviews and impromptu performance clips of musicians like Tom Jones and Van Morrison.

Clint Eastwood, who has by now freed himself from his cowboy persona, presents "Piano Blues." As the title indicates, this film focuses on the origin of piano blues. Mr. Eastwood, who calls the blues a part of his life, is also a fine pianist who wrote his own music for films such as "Mystic River."

This feast of music is available for 6,000 won (\$5) per screening, offering a nice getaway from the lingering summer heat.

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Seoul Art Cinema is best reached from Anguk station, subway line No. 3, exit 1. For more information, call (02) 720-9782 or visit www.cinematheque.seoul.kr (Korean only).



"The Soul of a Man," by Wim Wenders, is presented as part of a special screening on blues music documentaries. *Provided by Seoul Art Cinema*