

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



June 2017 – Mediterranean Madness

There is a lot of conflict in the Mediterranean these days. So, instead of taking a trip, I think I'll make some of their delicious food and open a few bottles of my favorite Greek wine. I like Greek wine for the same reason I like Italian wine; it has assertive acidity and is great with food.

Malagousia is a delicious white wine from Macedonia and is now cultivated in vineyards in Attica and the Peloponnese. It is an especially aromatic grape that makes elegant, full-bodied wine and has exciting aromas of exotic fruits like citrus, jasmine, and mint. It reminds me of Viognier because of its floral qualities and Chardonnay because of its body and texture. This silky texture will work well with the Creamy Eggplant Dip. Serve it with crunchy pita chips or your favorite veggies for a healthy start to your meal.

Agiorgitiko reminds me of a GSM (Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvedre) blend. It can be made in a range of styles: fresh nouveau wine that is loaded with fruit aromas, medium bodied wine that is soft and charming, and blockbuster masculine wine that is tannic without compromising the fruit character. Agiorgitiko's true home is the area of Nemea, in the northeast of the Peloponnese, the largest red wine appellation in Greece. Its deep color, aromas of cherries mixed with sweet spices, and rich but finely layered palate make it delicious on its own. Echo the red fruit flavors with Pomegranate Chicken and serve it with jasmine rice. The slightly tannic walnuts, which are ground up and added to the sauce, give the dish depth and texture.

Baklava is a great way to end a classic Mediterranean meal. It is sticky, sweet, crunchy, and a little chewy. The recipe below can be made ahead and is not TOO

challenging, however, if you don't need much, you may be better off just buying a few pieces at your favorite deli or Greek restaurant. Pair it with unsweetened hot coffee or tea because its sweetness is complemented by a slightly bitter drink. Also, a hot beverage will help melt all that honey off your palate.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Creamy Eggplant Dip

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large eggplant, cut into 1/4 inch rounds (skin on)
- 2 cups onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Olive oil
- Sea salt + ground pepper
- 1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt or sour cream

DIRECTIONS

Sprinkle your eggplant with salt on both sides and place in a colander in the sink to drain excess water. After ten minutes, lightly rinse with water and then press dry between two towels.

Arrange eggplant rounds on a baking sheet, and drizzle with olive oil and salt. Roast in oven at broil setting for 5-7 minutes, turning once or twice, until eggplant is softened and golden brown. Remove from pan and let cool to the touch.

In a large skillet over medium heat, add 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil. Add onion and stir

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often until caramelized. Add minced garlic and cook 2-3 more minutes. Set aside.

Peel away the skin of the eggplant and add flesh to a mixing bowl. Mash with yogurt or sour cream and onion-garlic mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Yield: 2-3 cups

Pomegranate Chicken

INGREDIENTS

1.5 cups walnut halves
2 tbsp. olive oil
2 boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1.5-inch cubes, seasoned with salt
2 tbsp. olive oil
1 large yellow onion, diced
2 cups chicken stock
1/4 cup pomegranate molasses
2 tbsp. honey
1/2 teaspoon turmeric
1/4 tsp sea salt
Pinch each of cinnamon, nutmeg and black pepper
Optional: 1 cup pomegranate arils and fresh parsley for garnish

DIRECTIONS

Toast walnuts in a shallow pan over medium heat for 8-10 minutes, process to a fine meal, and set aside.

In a large pot over medium heat, fully cook the chicken in two tbsp. olive oil. Remove; add two more tbsp. olive oil and sauté onions until soft. Add back chicken, add chicken stock, and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and add pomegranate molasses, honey, turmeric, cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper

and walnuts. Simmer for 15-25 minutes or more, until sauce is desired thickness. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed.

Yield: 3-4 servings

Baklava

INGREDIENTS

1 pound pistachios and/or walnuts, coarsely ground, plus more for garnish
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon, or to taste
1 cup ground zwieback crackers or breadcrumbs
4 sticks unsalted butter, melted
16 sheets phyllo dough (thawed, if frozen), cut in half

Syrup:

3 cups sugar
1 6 -to-8-ounce jar honey
1 to 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven; preheat to 350 degrees F. Combine the nuts, cinnamon and ground crackers in a bowl.

Brush a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with some of the butter. Layer ten pieces of phyllo in the dish, brushing each piece with butter before adding the next (keep the remaining dough covered with a damp towel). Sprinkle a quarter of the nut mixture over the dough.

Layer four pieces of phyllo on top, brushing each with butter before adding the next; sprinkle with another quarter of the nut mixture. Add four more phyllo pieces on top, brushing each with butter, then add another quarter of the nut mixture, four more

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pieces of phyllo with butter, and the remaining nuts.

Layer the remaining ten pieces of phyllo on top of the nuts, brushing each with butter; brush the top piece with extra butter. Cut into the baklava to make strips, about 1 1/2 inches wide. Then make diagonal slices, about 1 1/2 inches apart, to create a diamond pattern. Bake until golden, about one hour.

Meanwhile, make the syrup: Bring the sugar, honey and 1 1/2 cups water to a boil in a saucepan over medium heat and cook, 10 to 15 minutes. Add the lemon juice and boil two more minutes, then let cool slightly.

Pour the syrup over the warm baklava; let soak, uncovered, at least six hours or overnight. Garnish with nuts.

Yield: 40 pieces