

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



February 2014 – Sunday Dinner

Sunday dinners are about family and close friends. There is a special quality to Sunday dinner; often, the food and wine is prepared and consumed in a more relaxed fashion compared to the hustle and bustle of a workweek meal. Sunday meals also give us an opportunity to talk about what is coming up in the week ahead.

I always like to have a beverage and something to nibble on when folks gather in the kitchen before a meal. If I don't want to make anything elaborate, my go-to, wine-friendly starter is a salty bag of chips. They go with just about any wine and are easy to grab from the pantry. Two other staples are cream cheese and canned clams. My good friend John Horn gave me a recipe for clam dip that is super-quick to blend up and is loved by almost everyone. Pair it with Cava, Spain's sparkling wine. You will love the citrus-floral flavors of the wine with the delicate brine of the clams enrobed in the creamy dip.

Roast beef with mashed potatoes and gravy is a quintessential Sunday dinner. You will need to start it about two hours before you want to eat, but it requires almost no work. You could even slice the onions in the food processor before making the clam dip and just clean the bowl once. Roast Beef is a classic red wine dish. A great value-conscious choice is one of the rich, red wines from South America. Try a Chilean Cabernet or an Argentinian Malbec. It is easy to find terrific options for under \$10 at any local store that sells wine.

Since dessert is rare during the week at my house, serving dessert makes the meal feel more special. Poached Pears With Quick Chocolate Sauce fits perfectly with the simple, cook-ahead MO of the rest of this meal. Choose Sauternes, a sweet French

dessert wine, to complement the pears. You can find some great values on half-bottles at Costco and other wine shops for between \$10-20. They are super sweet and have classic aromas of honey, gardenia and pear. And, if you don't finish the bottle tonight, it will keep in the fridge for up to a month.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Clam Dip

INGREDIENTS

8oz. cream cheese
1 tbsp. minced dried onion
½ tsp. lemon juice (opt)
5 drops Tabasco sauce, or to taste
1 can minced clams
Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

Drain clams and reserve juice. Place cream cheese, onion, lemon juice and Tabasco in a food processor and blend until thoroughly combined. Add clams and pulse briefly. Add reserved juice and pulse a few times until combined and desired consistency is reached. Adjust seasoning to taste. Dip will thicken slightly upon refrigeration. Serve with Fritos Scoops corn chips or Kettle Cooked potato chips.

Yield: about 2 cups

Roast Beef with Pan Gravy

INGREDIENTS

1 (3 to 3 1/2-pound) bottom round rump roast, at room temperature

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1 teaspoon seasoned salt
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 large yellow onion, sliced
3 sprigs fresh thyme
3 cups canned low-sodium beef broth
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 cup water

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 275°F.

Season the meat on all sides with the seasoned salt, salt, and pepper. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven and brown on all sides, about 4 minutes per side. Remove the roast from the pan and add the onion slices and thyme sprigs. Place the roast on top of the onions, fat side up. Add beef broth to the pan and place in the oven, uncovered. Roast until the beef is tender and registers an internal temperature of 130° to 135°F.

Transfer the roast to a platter or cutting board and let rest for 15 minutes before carving.

Meanwhile, use a slotted spoon to discard the onions and thyme sprigs. Place the Dutch oven over medium-high heat to heat the beef drippings. Combine the cornstarch and water in a small bowl until dissolved. Add the cornstarch mixture to the beef drippings and bring to a boil. Cook, stirring constantly, until slightly thickened, 2 to 3 minutes.

Yield: 6-8 servings

Poached Pears With Quick Chocolate Sauce

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups sugar
1 cinnamon stick
Peel from 1/2 orange
Juice of 1/2 orange
4 Bosc pears

Quick Chocolate Sauce

1/3 cup heavy cream
2/3 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

DIRECTIONS

In a medium saucepan, bring 4 cups water, sugar, cinnamon stick, orange peel, and orange juice to a boil.

Peel the pears, leaving the stem intact. Core the pears from the bottom using a corer or vegetable peeler.

Add the pears to the simple syrup, and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook until the pears are tender, but not mushy, about 15 minutes. Chill the pears in the syrup.

For the sauce: Place the chocolate chips in a small bowl. Heat the heavy cream to hot, but not boiling in the microwave, about 15 to 20 seconds. Pour over the chocolate chips and let sit undisturbed for 5 minutes. Mix until smooth and serve.

Place the pear standing up on a dessert plate and drizzle with the chocolate sauce.

Yield: 4 servings