

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



March 2012 – Seasonal Eating

Even though winter is barely over, many of us are starting to plan for summer by planting gardens, scheduling the kids' activities and making reservations to visit exotic locations. While preparing for the summer, enjoy this light meal that uses the last of the winter foods and matches them with wines that bring out their best qualities.

Oysters are truly a delicious treat and must be cooked or eaten from a live state. Live oysters are tightly closed and will snap shut if tapped. If the shell is open, the oyster is dead and it cannot be eaten safely. Some say oysters are only safe to eat in months with the letter 'r' in their names. This rule is based on a variety of possibilities: oysters in the northern hemisphere oysters are much more likely to spoil in warmer months, warmer temperatures trigger spawning in some oysters (resulting in an unpleasant texture), and warmer temperatures increase the concentration of phytoplankton contaminated with arsenic that oysters could possibly ingest. Luckily, technology is on our side and commercially collected oysters are generally safe as long as they are alive.

Muscadet (moosk-a-day) is my favorite wine to pair with oysters. Made from the Melon de Bourgogne grape, it is crisp and dry with mineral and citrus zest flavors. Muscadet is made exclusively on the west coast of France in the Nantes region. Its proximity to the sea has made it a longtime companion to oysters. If you can't find Muscadet, a Sauvignon Blanc or Chablis will provide the necessary acidity. And, for an extra sharp bite, top your oysters with the Mignonette sauce listed here.

To end the meal, a delicate terrine of seasonal citrus can be paired with the Orange Muscat used to make it. The Muscat grape is very different from the Melon de

Bourgogne grape. Muscats are incredibly floral wines and often made quite sweet. There are multiple varieties of Muscat and they are grown all over the world. Wines like Moscato and Muscat de Rivesaltes are both made from Muscat grapes. Orange Muscat is used for dessert wines in California and Australia and has a very definite orange aroma.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Martha Stewart's Mignonette

INGREDIENTS

1 shallot, finely chopped
1½ teaspoons coarsely ground pepper
½ cup sherry vinegar
½ cup champagne vinegar or white wine vinegar

DIRECTIONS

Stir together shallot, pepper, and vinegars. Let stand 20 minutes before serving.

Yield: 1 cup

Citrus Terrine in Muscat Gelée

INGREDIENTS

2 large red grapefruits
1 large white grapefruit
2 navel oranges
2 tangerines
1 tablespoon candied grapefruit strips
4 teaspoons unflavored gelatin (less than 2 envelopes)
½ cup plus 3 tablespoons cold water
1¼ cups Orange Muscat such as Essensia

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½ cup sugar

DIRECTIONS

With a sharp knife cut peel from fruits, including all white pith. Cut sections free from membranes and remove any seeds. Chop candied grapefruit strips.

In a cup, sprinkle gelatin over 3 tablespoons cold water and let stand about one minute to soften. In a small saucepan, bring Muscat and sugar to a boil, stirring until sugar is dissolved, and boil 2 minutes. Remove pan from heat and stir in gelatin mixture until dissolved. Stir in remaining water and transfer mixture to a bowl set in a larger bowl of ice and cold water. Cool mixture slightly, stirring occasionally.

Pour a thin layer of gel on bottom of 1-quart nonreactive terrine or loaf pan and arrange fruit sections and candied grapefruit decoratively. Carefully pour remaining gel over all.

Chill covered until firm, at least 4 hours, and up to 2 days. Dip a thin knife in hot water and run knife around edge. Dip pan into a larger pan of hot water 3 to 5 seconds to loosen. Invert a serving plate over pan and invert onto plate.

Yield: 8-10 servings