

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



May 2011 – Greek Isles

Greece is one of the most beautiful places in the world. The sea is bright blue and the buildings are sparkling white. The wines are some of my favorites and the cuisine of the area is fresh and perfect for a spring meal.

Santorini is an island that was created about 3600 years ago by a volcanic eruption. The best Santorini white wine is made from the assyrtiko grape. The wine has intense citrus flavors similar to sauvignon blanc but has a wonderful smoky, mineral quality that is likely influenced by the volcanic ash soil. Greek wines, like Italian wines, are truly made to go with regional cuisine. Choose a veggie plate filled with dolmas, tabouli and falafel with a drizzle of tahini sauce to start. The fresh lemon and mint in the food is matched beautifully by the medium-high acid in the wine. The nutty sesame in the tahini will pick-up the smoky notes.

Xinomavro is one of my favorite Greek reds. Deep red flavors of pomegranate are accented by floral violets and a hint of smoky tar. It is similar to the elusive Italian Barolo but comes at a fraction of the cost. Grab a Greek gyro (pronounced “year-oh”) to eat with this earthy wine and you’ll see how well it harmonizes with the roasted lamb, while the Greek yogurt, that gives the sandwich a refreshing bite, balances the medium-high acid found in all Greek wines. If you can’t find a xinomavro and can’t afford a Barolo, pick up a pinot noir as a readily available substitute.

Tonight is a good night to splurge on dessert wine. Vin Santo is classically made in Italy, but Greece has a version made from sun-dried assyrtiko grapes. The grapes are dried for 8-10 days and then the wine is aged for about two years in oak. It has a rich amber color and enticing caramel and nut

aromas. On the palate, it is sweet with flavors of vanilla, caramel and spice. The Feta Cheesecake listed below will be less sweet than the wine (always what you look for when pairing for dessert) and the caramelized pine nuts will offer a nuttiness that will complement the wine nicely.

So, go on. Pair Up!

Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. www.LaSommeliere.com

Feta Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS

1 9” crumb crust of your choice, graham cracker, Nilla Wafers, etc.

4 oz. Greek feta cheese, strained well

8 oz. cream cheese, softened

2/3 c. sugar

2 eggs (at room temp.)

1 c. sour cream

2 tsp. vanilla

Pine nut topping

2 tbsp. brown sugar

4 tbsp. golden syrup

2 tbsp. cream

2 tbsp. butter

1/2 cup pine nuts

Port Poached Figs

1 cup port wine

1 tsp. lemon juice

½ tsp. vanilla

2 tsp. sugar

½ cup sliced fresh or dried figs

DIRECTIONS

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Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Prepare and bake crumb crust; set aside.

In a large bowl, stir together cream cheese and sugar until soft and creamy, then beat in eggs, one at a time. Stir in sour cream and vanilla, blend well. Pour into baked crust.

Mix pine nut topping ingredients and carefully pour atop cake.

Bake for 20-25 minutes or until center jiggles slightly when pan is gently shaken (center will set upon standing). Let cool completely. Cover with wax paper and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight.

Reduce port slowly with vanilla bean, lemon juice and a small amount of sugar. Add sliced dried figs (or fresh when in season) and poach until soft.

Yield: 8-10 servings