

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



October 2015 –Sherry Delicioso

Northern California is truly one of the best wine regions in the world, however, there is a long list of other places I would love to visit. At the top of my bucket list is Jerez, Spain, where they make a special wine called sherry. I love the idea of strolling the rustic streets, going from bar to bar, sipping sherry and eating small plates of tapas along the way.

Sherry is made primarily from the Palomino grape, although sometimes the Pedro Ximénez grape is part of the blend. Sherry is a non-vintage wine because it is made in a barrel “system” called a solera. Wine from each harvest is added to the solera, blending over time with years past. Sherries range along a spectrum from dry to sweet, from pale-yellow to almost black. There are four Fino-type sherries: Manzanilla, Fino, Amontillado and Palo Cortado. Fino-type sherry is protected by “flor,” a special film of yeast that covers the wine for all or part of its time in the solera. The flor prevents oxidation, keeping the wine light in color and fresh in flavor. The other type of sherry is called Oloroso-type. There are three: Oloroso, Cream and Pedro Ximénez. Oloroso-type sherry is generally darker and more oxidized; it is unprotected by flor and often fortified like a Port wine. The sweetness of any sherry depends on how much sweet Pedro Ximénez juice is added.

Dryer and lighter, Fino-type sherry is an excellent aperitif. Start your meal with a simple pairing of Fino sherry and Marcona almonds with serrano ham. Finos have a fresh minerality with a hint of almond that will cleanse the palate of the soft, buttery Marcona almonds and salty-sweet ham. Fino sherries are not aged; they should be treated like a regular white wine. Serve them chilled

and at their peak of freshness. They will keep in the refrigerator for two to three days.

The second course increases in complexity when you choose a dry or off-dry Amontillado sherry and pair it with a roast pork loin topped with a decadent cream sauce made from almonds, garlic, and shallots. An Amontillado sherry is a slightly fortified, aged Fino sherry. The aging results in a light amber color and a roasted, nutty flavor. The oxidation, sugar and fortification allow Amontillado to keep in the refrigerator for several months. I like this recipe served with sautéed spinach and creamy mashed potatoes that can soak up a little extra sauce.

A small amount of Pedro Ximénez grapes goes into making a 100% Pedro Ximénez sherry. For this sherry, the grapes are picked and then laid out in the sun for two to three weeks. Most PX sherry is nearly black in color and as dense as molasses. It has fig newton and deep licorice flavors. Because it is so sweet and thick, you can serve it for dessert on its own or drizzle it over vanilla ice cream.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Roast Pork Tenderloins with Almonds, Garlic & Sherry-Shallot Cream

INGREDIENTS

¼ cup + 2 tbs. olive oil
(2) Boneless pork loins, approx. 4 to 5 pounds
Garlic powder
2 cups sliced skin-on almonds
1 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley

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3 tablespoons finely minced garlic
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
3/4 cup minced shallots
1 cup Amontillado sherry
2½ cups heavy cream
Salt and pepper

Yield: 6-8 servings

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°. Toast the sliced almonds on a baking sheet for about 7 to 10 minutes. When they are cool enough to handle, roughly break them up with your fingers and combine with parsley and garlic. Toss with ¼ cup olive oil. Put the mixture in a baking pan and bake for about 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally with a metal spatula until golden brown. Set aside.

Raise the oven temperature to 450°. Coat the tenderloins liberally with garlic powder, salt, and pepper. In an oven-proof skillet, sear tenderloins on all sides in 2 tbsp. olive oil. Then, put the pork in the oven and roast for 15-20 minutes. Cover it with foil to keep it warm.

While the pork roasts, make the sherry shallot cream: Melt the butter in a medium saucepan. Add the minced shallots and cook over low heat until they are softened and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the sherry and simmer briskly over medium heat for a few minutes. Add the cream and simmer again for about 5 minutes to reduce the sauce by about half. The sauce should thicken enough to coat a spoon. Add the almond-parsley mixture, to the sherry-shallot cream and heat through. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Slice the pork into 1" medallions and spoon the sauce over the meat.