

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



December 2014 – Chocolate Decadence

Folks are always talking to me about chocolate and wine. They are two favorites, and people want them to go together. Unfortunately, most foods with chocolate ingredients are too sweet for wine. The wine ends up tasting bitter and sour. In honor of the holidays, and trying to find ways to get wine and chocolate together, I created an all chocolate dinner. This meal provides the deep flavors and smooth richness of chocolate, incorporated in wine friendly recipes. And, at the end of the meal, a final shot that tastes like a slice of German chocolate cake, yet has absolutely NO chocolate in it!

Start off with something very pretty for your holiday table, White Chocolate Baba Ganoush sprinkled with red pomegranate seeds. This Mediterranean dip is perfect with one of the fantastic white wines from Greece. While there are many to choose from, look for one made from the Malagousia grape. Malagousia originated in the region of Nafpaktos in western Greece. It is an especially aromatic grape that makes elegant full-bodied wines, with exciting aromas of exotic fruits, citrus, jasmine and mint. The bright acid and intense flavors are delicious with the Mediterranean spices. If you can't find a Greek white, a dry Semillon will give you the body and acid you need to work with the rich texture that the white chocolate adds.

Celebrate the dark side of chocolate with a hearty main dish of Cocoa-Rubbed Baby Back Ribs, and match it with a full-bodied California Zinfandel. The recipe includes a little brown sugar to balance the intense spices that gives these ribs tremendous complexity. Accordingly, choose a Zin with a tiny bit of sweetness in it. It will balance the slight kick of heat from the chili powder,

ginger and garlic, and is a welcome partner to the likely high alcohol and tannins that are commonly found in big California Zins.

I could recommend a number of delicious chocolate desserts, but none would taste good with these dry wines. So, for fun, I found a recipe for a “sipping-shot ending” to this chocolate dominant meal. The German Chocolate Cake Shot is a blend of hazelnut liqueur and vodka that you drink with a sweetened wedge of lemon. Surprisingly, the flavor combination really tastes like the coco-nutty-chocolaty flavor of German chocolate cake. Think about it: all the benefits of chocolate cake without the tedium of slicing and chewing. Don't believe it? Try it!

So, go on. Pair Up!

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White Chocolate Baba Ganoush

INGREDIENTS

8 cloves garlic, unpeeled
4 medium eggplants, sliced in half lengthwise
½ cup fresh lemon juice
⅔ cup tahini
4 oz. white chocolate, melted and cooled
2 tbsp. finely chopped parsley
1½ tsp. ground cumin
1½ tsp. paprika
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Pomegranate seeds, for garnish
Toasted pita bread, for serving

DIRECTIONS

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Heat oven broiler to 450°. Place garlic and eggplants, skin side up, on a foil-lined baking sheet; broil until tender and charred all over, about 20 minutes for garlic, and about 40 minutes for eggplant. Peel garlic and peel, seed eggplants, and scoop out flesh from eggplant; transfer to a food processor with juice, tahini, chocolate, half the parsley, the cumin, paprika, salt, and pepper; puree until smooth. Transfer to a serving dish and garnish with remaining parsley and pomegranate seeds; serve with pita on the side for dipping.

Yield: 2 ½ cups

Cocoa-Rubbed Baby Back Ribs

INGREDIENTS

⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
½ cup light brown sugar
3 tbsp. ancho chili powder
2 tbsp. kosher salt
2 tbsp. granulated onion
1 tbsp. granulated garlic
1 tbsp. dried oregano
1 tbsp. dried mustard
2 tsp. dried ginger
2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. ground allspice
2 racks (3 lb.) pork baby back ribs

DIRECTIONS

Mix cocoa, sugar, and spices together in a bowl. Rub ribs generously with spice mixture, and wrap in plastic wrap; refrigerate overnight.

About two hours before you plan to serve the ribs, remove them from the refrigerator and allow the ribs come to room

temperature. Heat oven to 375°. Place ribs in a shallow roasting pan; bake until tender, about 40 minutes. Increase oven to 450° and transfer ribs to a baking sheet with a wire rack; bake curved side up and flipping once, until browned, 15–20 minutes more. Cut ribs into individual bones to serve.

Yield: 4-6 servings

German Chocolate Cake Shot

INGREDIENTS

1 fluid ounce hazelnut liqueur
1/2 fluid ounce vodka
1 lemon, cut into wedges (seeds removed)
White sugar for lemon

DIRECTIONS

In a shot glass, combine 1 part hazelnut liqueur and 1 part vodka. Coat a wedge of lemon with sugar. Suck the lemon wedge, and with the juice still in your mouth, drink the shot.

Yield: 1 shot