

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



September 2009 - Festive Labor Day BBQ

Labor Day is the last chance to BBQ for many. Standard faire is chicken or hamburgers with potato salad and coleslaw. Here is a different kind of BBQ that is truly a fiesta.

Prosecco is the perfect way to start just about any party. It is light, effervescent, and slightly sweet. Prosecco goes with almost every appetizer. The sweetness of this sparkling wine creates a nice counterpoint to Spicy Scallop Ceviche. Throw in some good quality tortilla chips, guacamole and pico de gallo and you have a full spread. Be prepared to have extra bottles of bubbles on hand as sparkling wine goes down easy. Count on four full glasses from each bottle.

Creating a menu that pleases everyone is challenging for any occasion but even harder when it is a large gathering. In my family, we have vegetarians as well as 'fish or chicken only' eaters. My solution is a fajita extravaganza.

Grill shrimp, chicken and flank steak and serve with caramelized peppers and onions in flour tortillas. Toss in some Mexican rice and beans and the meal is complete. To complement this meal serve a fruit forward, slightly sweet California Zinfandel. The bold flavors stand up to the intensity of the food and the sugar balances the chili heat.

After a big Mexican fiesta, dessert should be light. Rosemary Shortbread cookies alongside good quality, store-bought lemon sorbet is sweet finish that won't take up any more room. If your guests are wined-out, serve some sparkling water with wedges of lime. If not, pop another bottle of the prosecco that started the party. It will be a delicious book-end to a festive evening.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Spicy Scallop Ceviche

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. scallops
Juice of 12 limes, enough to cover scallops
2 red bell pepper, chopped
1 large red onion, chopped
2 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced (less if milder is desired)
Large handful of fresh cilantro, chopped
2 tbsp. olive oil
1tsp. kosher salt
Ground black pepper, to taste
4 tbsp. tequila

DIRECTIONS

In a medium bowl, combine scallops and lime juice. Cover and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight.

When finished, drain off all but 2 tbsp. of the lime juice and stir in bell pepper, onion, jalapeño pepper and cilantro. In a small bowl, combine olive oil, sea salt, black pepper and tequila. Pour over scallop mixture, mix well, and refrigerate for at least another hour.

Yield: 4 cups

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Rosemary Shortbread

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups unsalted butter, room temperature
2/3 cup sugar
2 tbsp. fresh rosemary (minced), or 2 tsp.
dried (crushed in mortar and pestle)
2¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup white or brown rice flour (or just add
an extra ½ cup of regular flour)
¼ tsp. salt
2 tsp. sugar for topping

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375°. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

Cream the butter until pale yellow and light. Add the sugar, and continue mixing until fluffy.

Add the flours, salt and rosemary. Mix until thoroughly combined. The dough will be somewhat soft. Refrigerate for 1 hour to make firm for rolling.

Roll the dough out until ¼" thick about 10 X 14 inches in size. Cut into 1½" X 2" rectangles. Place about ½" apart on prepared sheets. Sprinkle them with sugar and bake until golden at the edges, 12 to 15 minutes.

Remove to racks to cool. Pack in airtight container to store. The flavor improves with age (best two days after) keeping about a week.

Yield: 3 dozen