***October 2019 – Something Sweet***

In the month of October, we start thinking about the sweet treats of Halloween. However, sweet things come in many forms. Here is a menu filled with food and wine that have a little to a lot of sugar. The trick to making it delicious is keeping the sugar balanced by other flavors like tart, spicy, and even bitter.

Start your meal with Sweet and Spicy Chicken Skewers paired with a Gewürztraminer Vendange Tardive from the Alsace region of France. Vendange tardive ("VT") means "late harvest" in French. The phrase refers to a style of dessert wine where the grapes are allowed to hang on the vine until they start to dehydrate. This process, called passerillage, concentrates the sugars in the juice and changes the flavors within it. Some vendange tardive wines are just a little sweet, most are quite sweet, and all are characterized by great richness and have an intense honey flavor. A wine with some sweetness is necessary when pairing with a spicy sauce like the one in this chicken. Additionally, acid in the wine, just like lemon, balances the heat perfectly.

Alsace is also home to world-class Pinot Gris. It is made in a VT style or a regular version. Non-VT Pinot Gris has high acid, no sugar, and intense flavors of stone and tree fruits. The recipe for Pulled-Pork Sliders served on Hawaiian rolls has warm spices like cumin and paprika to balance out the brown sugar. The acidity of the wine cuts through the fat and provides the acid balance for the dish. On the side, serve Jicama-Cilantro Cole Slaw. The big flavors in this recipe also need a wine with substantial acid and intense flavor. If you can’t find an Alsatian Pinot Gris, try a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc.

Most cookies are just straight-up sweet. This recipe for Mocha Chocolate Chip Cookies balances its sugar level with bitter coffee. But, don’t be fooled into thinking that a bitter wine works. You need a sweet, rich, red Port. This super sweet wine is full-bodied with red fruit flavors that complement the richness of the chocolate.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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**Sweet and Spicy Chicken Skewers**

**INGREDIENTS**

For the sauce:

4 garlic cloves, pressed

¼ cup honey

2 Tablespoons Sriracha

2 Tablespoons soy sauce

½ Tablespoon fresh grated ginger

1 teaspoon ground black pepper

½ teaspoon salt

1lb. chicken breast, skinless

1 Tablespoon olive oil

Lemon wedges, for serving

A handful of cilantro, chopped, for serving

**DIRECTIONS**

In a small bowl, whisk together garlic, honey, olive oil, Sriracha, soy sauce, ginger, black pepper, and salt.

Cut chicken into small cubes, about 1-inch. Place them in a Ziplock bag and pour in the marinade. Squeeze out as much air as possible and zip the bag. Marinate for at least an hour or overnight in the fridge.

Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Soak skewers in water for at least 30 minutes.

Thread marinated chicken cubes in the skewers, about 4-5 pieces on each. Line a baking sheet with foil, drizzle with olive oil, and arrange chicken skewers on it.

Put marinade into a small saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium and simmer until sauce is reduced by half, 3-5 minutes.

Brush reduced sauce on chicken and bake until fully cooked, 15-20 minutes, turning and brushing on the sauce halfway.

Yield: 9 skewers

**Pulled Pork**

**INGREDIENTS**

4 to 5-pound pork shoulder, bone-in

1 Tablespoon brown sugar

2 teaspoons cumin

1½ teaspoons paprika

½ Tablespoon salt

1 teaspoon pepper

1 Tablespoon olive oil

2 medium yellow onions, peeled and cut into wedges

3 medium carrots, peeled and cut into large chunks

4 cloves of garlic, peeled

1 14-ounce can diced tomatoes

1 12-ounce beer (a basic lager works well)

**DIRECTIONS**

Preheat the oven to 325℉.

Trim the pork shoulder of any thick layers of fat. Combine brown sugar, cumin, paprika, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Rub pork with spice mixture, getting into crevices and on the sides. Allow the pork to sit for about 30 minutes.

Heat olive oil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Brown pork on all sides, about 3 minutes per side. Remove from pot. Add onions, carrots, garlic, tomatoes, and beer. Bring to a simmer, scraping bottom of pot with a wooden spoon to bring up any browned bits.

Return the pork to the pot. Cover and put in oven for 3 1/2 to 4 hours, checking once or twice, until meat is extremely tender and pulls away from the bone easily. Shred pork in the pot, using tongs to separate the meat from the fat. Discard the bone or set aside for another use.

Yield: enough for about 20 sliders

**Jicama-Cilantro Cole Slaw**

**INGREDIENTS**

1 large jicama, peeled and finely shredded

1/2 Napa cabbage, finely shredded

2 carrots, shredded

1/2 cup freshly squeezed lime juice

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

2 tablespoons ancho chili powder

2 tablespoons honey

1/2 cup canola oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup finely chopped cilantro leaves

**DIRECTIONS**

Place jicama, cabbage, and carrots in a large bowl. Whisk together lime juice, vinegar, ancho powder, honey, and oil in a medium bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Pour dressing over jicama mixture and toss to coat well. Fold in the cilantro. Let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving.

Yield: about 6 cups

**Mocha Chocolate Chip Cookie**

**INGREDIENTS**

½ cup softened butter

1 cup light brown sugar

3 Tablespoons granulated sugar

1 large egg

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

1½ teaspoons ground coffee

1¾ cups all-purpose flour

1½ cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

½ cup chopped walnuts, opt.

**DIRECTIONS**

Preheat oven to 300℉. Cream butter and sugars with electric mixer on medium speed until fluffy (approximately 30 seconds).

Beat in egg and vanilla extract for another 30 seconds.

Beat dry ingredients into butter mixture (flour last) at low speed for about 15 seconds. Mix in chocolate chips.

Drop large, golf ball-sized scoops of cookie dough onto a cookie sheet about 3 inches apart.

Bake for about 15 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges.

Yield: 2 dozen cookies