

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



October 2011 – Soup Time!

October in northern California is often warm during the day and chilly at night. This menu addresses that dichotomy by starting with a cool white wine and finishing with a warm soup. This year, I am featuring a soup from the Dominican Republic, a country that shares the same island with Haiti in the waters between Florida and South America.

Start with an easy to find, aromatic white wine like torrontes, a hybrid of muscat of Alexandria and the mission grape. Argentina produces torrontes at great prices. Lush aromas and flavors such as peach, apricot and lychee are typical, and the moderate alcohol levels which will allow it to work with the Aleppo pepper in the Sautéed Shrimp and Mozzarella appetizer.

Sancocho de Frijoles is a bold soup that incorporates savory pork and slightly sweet, sweet potatoes and requires a wine with plenty of big flavors. A hearty Livermore Valley merlot, like the estate wine from the Wood Family Vineyards, will have just the right complementary peppery notes as well as a zippy acidity to stand up to the lime, vinegar and fresh herbs.

As usual, I make the trek through the Caldecott Tunnel to Kermit Lynch in Berkeley or DuVin Wines in Alameda to buy Vin du Bugey-Cerdon. It's sweet, pink, bubbly nature makes it the only wine I pair with the super sweet chocolates of Halloween. This year try it with a Butterfinger. The salty, crunchy center creates a perfect harmony with the wine in both texture and flavor.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Sautéed Shrimp and Mozzarella

INGREDIENTS

½ tsp. Aleppo pepper or other dried, crushed pepper with medium heat
4 tsp. amontillado sherry
2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp. lemon zest
4 tsp. chopped fresh dill
1 lb. large shrimp, deveined, tail on (about 21-26 count per pound)
4 oz. small, fresh mozzarella balls (or a larger ball cut into small chunks)
Kosher salt and pepper to taste
Squeeze of lemon juice to taste
1 tsp. roasted red bell pepper, finely chopped

DIRECTIONS

Combine Aleppo pepper, sherry, olive oil, zest and dill in a medium-size bowl. Add shrimp and toss to coat. Marinate for about 30 minutes.

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Season shrimp to taste with salt and pepper. Add to skillet in batches if needed and cook until they brown and just losing their translucency, about 2 minutes per side. Move skillet off the heat and transfer shrimp to a warmed dish, then tent with foil to keep warm.

Meanwhile, drain cheese and add to the still-warm pan. Gently stir mozzarella balls to coat and slightly warm, then scrape the pan to incorporate the browned bits. Add mozzarella to the shrimp. Season with salt and pepper, and brighten with a squeeze of lemon, if desired. Stir in the red bell pepper. Serve immediately with crostini.

Yield: 3-4 appetizer servings

Sancocho de Frijoles

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. cooked pork, cut into 1" cubes
2 tbsp. olive oil
1 cup each onion and green bell pepper,
chopped
1 jalapeno, seeded and minced
8 garlic cloves, minced
1 can Italian tomatoes (with liquid), drain,
seed, and chop tomatoes, reserving liquid
1 can of small white beans, rinsed
12 oz. sweet potato, peeled and cut into ¼
inch thick slices
4 tbsp. white vinegar
Juice of one lime
2 qts. of good quality chicken stock
1 bay leaf
1 tsp. oregano leaves
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tbsp. each parsley and cilantro, chopped

DIRECTIONS

Heat olive oil in stockpot to medium heat. Add onion, bell pepper, jalapeno pepper, and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables are softened, 2-3 minutes. Add all remaining ingredients except fresh herbs.

Reduce heat to low, cover pan, and let simmer, stirring occasionally, for 20-25 minutes longer until sweet potato is tender. Just before serving, discard bay leaf, add parsley and cilantro.

Yield: a pot of soup