

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



November 2013 – Food & Wine Gift Giving II

Last year, I offered suggestions for the best wines to give as gifts based on their ability to pair with the most foods. This year I am providing three, homemade food items that are great for gift giving, AND I am adding suggestions for wines to pair with them.

The first food gift is a classic breadstick called Parmesan Grissini. In general, salted bread is delicious with any wine: sparkling, rosé, red or white. This recipe includes crushed fennel seeds, which add the subtle flavor of black licorice, crushed red pepper to give a kick of spice and, of course, Parmesan cheese. The perfect pairing partner is a buttery Chardonnay. Look for Chardonnays that have undergone malolactic fermentation and are aged in oak barrels. The oak will complement the low notes of the licorice and the Parmesan will echo the buttery/dairy flavor provided by the lactic acid from the secondary fermentation.

The next food item is Curried Cranberry Snack Mix. Bold curry flavors in this mix require wine that is very fruit forward. Additionally, the flavor of dried cranberries is often found in red wines; it is a smart mix-in. I also loved the addition of French-fried onions. Fried onions are terrific with wine because they have a sweet/savory quality that brings out the fruit flavor in the wine. Fruit forward varietals like Grenache and Pinot Noir are my first choice pairings but just about any red wine will be fantastic.

Sweet treats are always welcome and Fleur de Sel Toffee will fill the bill, especially since sweet and salty combinations are all the rage. I like the idea of pairing toffee flavors with a little known, fortified wine from the Languedoc-Roussillon region called Banyuls. It is made from Grenache grapes and has the flavors of

toasted nuts, fig newton, dark chocolate and hints of roasted coffee. It is rich and thick will echo the caramel flavor of the toffee. As a bonus, the salt in the toffee will make it more wine friendly as it balances the wine's high sugar content and tames any rough tannin.

So go on, Pair Up!

Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. www.LaSommeliere.com

Parmesan Grissini

INGREDIENTS

2/3 cup(s) bread flour
3 teaspoon(s) active dry yeast
1 teaspoon(s) sea salt
1 teaspoon(s) crushed fennel seeds
1/4 teaspoon(s) crushed red pepper
3 cup(s) olive oil
1 cup(s) warmed milk
1/4 cup(s) (about 1 ounce) finely grated Parmesan

DIRECTIONS

In a bowl, combine bread flour, dry yeast, sea salt, fennel seeds, and red pepper; make a well in the middle.

Pour olive oil and warmed milk in well. Stir until dough comes together. Add Parmesan and mix until incorporated.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth, about 5 minutes. Shape dough into a ball and return to bowl. Cover with plastic wrap; set in a warm, draft-free place; and let rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

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Lightly flour work surface again, then turn dough out and knead lightly for 1 minute. Using a rolling pin, roll dough into a 12- by 15-inch rectangle about 1/4 inch thick. Using a sharp knife, cut dough into strips just under 1/2 inch wide. Lightly flour hands, then quickly roll strips until they're slightly rounded.

Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet, leaving space between each strip. Set aside to rise again, 15 to 20 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Bake in batches on middle shelf until golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes, flipping breadsticks halfway through. Let cool completely.

Yield: 25 to 30 Grissini

Curried Cranberry Snack Mix

INGREDIENTS

6 cups Corn Chex
3 cups Rice Chex
1 can (6 ounces) French-fried onions
2 cups miniature pretzels
1-1/2 cups honey-roasted peanuts
1/3 cup butter, cubed
3 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons honey mustard
1-1/2 teaspoons curry powder
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1-1/2 cups dried cranberries, divided

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, combine the first five ingredients. Place the butter, honey, honey mustard, curry powder and garlic powder in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave, uncovered, on high for 1 to 1-1/2 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds or until mixture is

smooth. Pour over cereal mixture and toss to coat.

Place half of the mixture in a large microwave-safe bowl. Microwave, uncovered, on high for 2-3 minutes, stirring after each minute. Stir in 3/4 cup cranberries. Immediately spread onto waxed paper; cool completely. Repeat with remaining cereal and cranberries. Store in an airtight container.

Yield: 4 quarts

Fleur de Sel Toffee

INGREDIENTS

Vegetable oil, cooking spray
1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter
2 2/3 cups sugar
1/3 cup water
1/4 cup light corn syrup
Fleur de sel, for sprinkling

DIRECTIONS

Coat a rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Bring butter, sugar, water, and corn syrup to a boil in a large saucepan, whisking frequently until sugar dissolves and butter melts. Cook, undisturbed, until mixture registers 300 degrees on a candy thermometer, about 12 minutes.

Whisk toffee mixture, then immediately pour onto prepared sheet, tilting pan to spread over entire surface. Let stand for 30 seconds, then sprinkle with fleur de sel. Let cool. (Do not move the pan for first 30 minutes.) Break toffee into pieces. Toffee will keep, covered, for up to 1 week.

Yield: 2 pounds