

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



August 2020 – Harvest is Coming

Good news for grapes! It looks like our wine supply will not be affected by the Corona Virus. Leda Garside, a nurse from the organization Salud!, says, “(Vineyard workers) have an advantage from other agricultural crops in that they are able to maintain social distancing at worksites,” and that the number of positive tests for these workers has dropped since May. With this good news and in honor of the upcoming harvest, here are a variety of grape centric recipes and wines to pair with them.

Grapes are often a part of a beautiful cheese tray. This is because grapes offer much of the same benefit to cheese that wine does. Grapes, like most white wines, are juicy and acidic. They cleanse the palate by cutting through the fat. But, although they provide much of the same value to the cheese, grapes and wine do not go together. The sugar in grapes makes wine taste sour. Red wines suffer even more when paired with grapes because the acid in the grape can make a low acid red wine taste flat. One wine that has the acid and the sugar to stand up to grapes is Sauternes from France. It is made from a combination of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon grown in an environment that maximizes both sugar and acid. The resulting dessert wine has flavors of honey and stone fruits. I often recommend Sauternes for picnics because it goes so well with meats, cheeses, nuts, and fruits. It is a lovely partner for the Grape Cheese Balls, which combine cheese, grapes, and nuts into bite-sized morsel.

A wonderful fall meal is roasted duck and potatoes. This simple seared duck breast is quicker and easier to make than a whole duck. Paired with these pan-roasted potatoes, you can make both on the stove top rather than heating-up the oven. The

perfect wine for this dish is a rich Amarone from the Veneto region of Italy. It is a dry wine, with many of the flavors you find in dessert wines since the grapes are dried before making them into wine. The duck complements the gamey notes often found in Italian wines, and the cooked grapes echo the dried grapes flavors developed in production.

As a fun, easy ending, Wine-Frosted Grapes are cold and refreshing. A bright ending to a rich meal, they are too sweet for wine.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Grape Cheese Balls

INGREDIENTS

4 ounces sliced almonds (about 1 cup)
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
2 ounces crumbled blue cheese, room temperature
2 Tablespoons minced fresh parsley
2 Tablespoons heavy whipping cream, room temperature
1 to 1-1/4 pounds seedless red or green grapes, rinsed and patted dry
Appetizer skewers or toothpicks

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 275°. Pulse almonds in a food processor until finely chopped (do not over process). Spread in a 15x10x1-in. pan; bake until golden brown, 6-9 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer to a shallow bowl; cool slightly.

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In another bowl, mix cream cheese, blue cheese, parsley and cream until blended. Insert a skewer into each grape. Roll grapes in cheese mixture, then in almonds; place on waxed paper-lined baking sheets.

Refrigerate, covered, until serving.

Yield: 10-12 servings

Seared Duck Breast with Bacon and Grapes

INGREDIENTS

4 duck breasts
Kosher salt
Extra-virgin olive oil
2 cups seedless red grapes
2 strips bacon, cut crosswise into ½” pieces (lardons)
½ cup port wine
2 Tablespoons red wine vinegar
1½ cups chicken stock

DIRECTIONS

Using a sharp paring knife, score the fat in the duck breasts a couple times in two directions to create a crosshatch pattern. Cut through the fat but not into the meat of the breast. Salt the breasts and let sit outside the refrigerator for 10 to 15 minutes to allow them to come to room temperature.

Add about 1 tablespoon olive oil to a large sauté pan. Place the duck in the pan skin-side down. Bring the pan to a medium heat and cook the duck breasts low and slow to allow the fat to render and so the skin can get nice and crispy. As the fat renders out of the duck, pour or spoon it out of the pan and SAVE IT for another purpose.

Cook the duck for 8 to 9 minutes on the skin side. Turn the duck over and cook the duck for 2 to 3 minutes on the flesh side. Remove the duck from the pan, cover with foil and let rest for about 10 minutes.

Add the grapes to the pan with the bacon and bring the pan to a medium heat. Cook the grapes until they split and let out their juices and the bacon is crisp.

Spoon half the grapes out of the pan and reserve. Add the port and vinegar to the pan, season with salt and reduce the port by half. Add the chicken stock and reduce it by half. Add in the reserved grapes. Taste and re-season if needed.

Slice the duck at an angle and serve garnished with the sauce.

Yield: 4 servings

Pan-Roasted Potatoes

INGREDIENTS

12 small white rose or Yukon potatoes, cut into 2” cubes
½ cup olive oil
2 sprigs fresh thyme, plus ½ Tablespoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
Coarse salt and freshly cracked black pepper
1 clove garlic, sliced

DIRECTIONS

Over low heat, add the olive oil to a medium-sized heavy-bottomed saucepan, then add the potatoes, thyme sprigs and season generously with salt and pepper.

Place the lid on the pan and allow to cook, undisturbed, shaking the pan every 5

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minutes or so, until the bottoms of the potatoes are tender and browned, about 20 minutes. (Check occasionally to make sure the potatoes aren't browning too quickly and adjust heat accordingly.)

Remove the lid and cook a further 2 to 3 minutes, for the condensation to evaporate. Remove the thyme sprigs and add the sliced garlic and chopped fresh thyme and cook until the garlic is caramelized and chewy, about 2 minutes.

Drain the oil from the potatoes and serve.

Yield: 4 servings

Wine-Frosted Grapes

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. white seedless grapes
1 lb. red seedless grapes
(1) 750 ml. sweet Gewürztraminer or
Riesling
1 Tablespoon grated lemon zest
Granulated sugar or coarse sugar crystals

DIRECTIONS

Cut grapes into small clusters. Mix wine with lemon zest in a bowl large enough to hold all the grapes. Add grapes and cover. Refrigerate 24 hours. Line cookie sheet with waxed paper. Remove grapes from marinade and place on cookie sheet. Sprinkle with sugar. Place in freezer one hour before serving.

Yield: 6 servings