

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



April 2010 – Spring Thai

Thai food is a great winter-to-summer meal bridge. The flavors are fresh and bright but a little spicy heat keeps you warm. A trip to a local sake manufacturer was the inspiration to pair cool, sake rice-wine with spicy Thai food.

Nama sake is draft sake that has a peanut taste. Unlike many other types of sake, it must be consumed within three days of opening because it is unpasteurized. Chicken Satay immediately came to mind when I tasted Nama sake for the first time. Satay is a perfect hand held appetizer because it is grilled on a skewer. Look for some delicious pre-made sauces with which to baste the chicken during grilling and serve with additional sauce for dipping.

By contrast, Nigori sake is very different from Nama sake. It is unfiltered and the resulting wine is white and cloudy with a lovely weight on the palate. The nutty flavor and white color are reminiscent of fresh coconut. It has a fair amount of residual sugar so plan to pair it with a spicy dish like the coconut curry listed here. Green papaya salad is an excellent side dish as it offers crunchy freshness. The nut garnish continues to echo the nuttiness in the wine and if you can handle the heat, make it spicy to properly balance the sweetness in the wine.

Heavy desserts are not a large part of Thai culture. Some fragrant hot tea and perhaps some grilled pineapple will keep this meal authentic and light.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Green Papaya Salad

INGREDIENTS

1 large green papaya, peeled and shredded
1 large carrot, peeled and shredded
3 cloves of garlic, finely minced
1 scallion, finely minced
1/4 cup of high-quality fish sauce
1/4 cup of granulated sugar
1/3 cup of lime juice (or the juice from 2 to 3 limes)
1/4 tsp of lime zest
2 Thai bird chilies, sliced cross-wise (optional)
Garnishes: Roasted cashews or peanuts; basil or cilantro

DIRECTIONS

Combine the lime juice, lime zest, fish sauce, garlic, scallions, Thai bird chilies, and sugar. Toss with veggies and stir well to combine. Serve immediately, or marinate it in the fridge for an hour to allow the flavors to meld. The salad can keep in the refrigerator for up to a week. Strain away the excess dressing and garnish with cilantro or basil, and roasted cashews or peanuts just before serving.

Yield: 3-4 cups

Spicy Coconut Curry

INGREDIENTS

1 cup coconut milk
1 tablespoon red curry paste
1 chicken breast, bite size pieces
1/2 lb Japanese eggplant, cut in large chunks
3 cups water
2 tablespoons fish sauce
3-5 sprigs Thai basil

DIRECTIONS

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Pour half of the coconut milk into a large pot over low to medium low heat. Add the red curry paste. Break up the paste and mix it with coconut milk. Stir constantly. Add the chicken when you see red oil bubbling on top. Stir and coat the chicken with the sauce. Add the eggplant when the chicken starts to turn white. Add the rest of the coconut milk, water and the fish sauce. Let it boil until all the eggplant pieces turn dark and tender. Stir in the basil leaves just before you serve.

Yield: 2-4 servings