

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



October 2014 – Spooky Wines

I like crazy wines. I like them because they are different and don't taste like every other wine on the shelf. It's not that "regular" wines are bad or inferior, but it can be an exciting experience to taste a wine with brand new flavors. Just in time for the spookiest holiday, here are three wines from the Mediterranean that are made with unusual grapes in unusual ways.

To start, what could be more perfect for Halloween than an orange wine? Made from a variety of white grapes, like Ribolla, Vitovska, and Carso, orange wines are produced in northeastern Italy and its neighbors Slovenia and Croatia. Often, these white wines are buried in clay pots and allowed to oxidize for weeks. Because of this aging, the yellow color we are accustomed to seeing in white wines darkens into a beautiful amber color. The oxidation process also creates unique flavors like dried apricot, camphor, cinnamon, and nuts. Like most Mediterranean wines, they have substantial acidity but little or no sugar. Because of this, they taste good with recipes that have a little sweetness to balance the high acid. I like the Bacon-Wrapped Stuffed Apricots below as their pairing partner. The apricots echo the stone fruit flavors of the wine and, along with the maple glaze, offers just the right amount of sweetness. These wines are not easy to find, but Solano Cellars in Berkeley has them on occasion. While they are truly unlike any other wine, if you can't find one, a late-harvest white dessert wine will work in a pinch.

Plavic Mali is a red grape from Croatia that is actually a cross of Zinfandel and Dobričić. Much like California Zinfandel, it is intensely flavored and high in alcohol and tannin. It has classic aromas of blackberries, black cherries, and black pepper, but is

slightly less ripe and fruity than its California cousin. I love the idea of pairing it with a rich Hungarian meat stew called Pörkölt. Pörkölt is always made from poultry, pork, beef, mutton, or venison, with beef being the preferred choice. A big red wine like Plavic Mali or Zinfandel stands up to the pungent fall flavors of paprika and caraway along with the hearty beef.

Passito di Moscato, one of the famous Italian dessert wines, is made using the passito method. The result is a moderately sweet, amber-colored wine with floral, spice and nut aromas. Passito di Moscato, like Recioto and Vin Santo, is "appassire," or wilted/dried, on cane mats. Pumpkin Spice Bread Pudding with Brown Sugar Caramel Sauce will play off the spice and nut flavors in the wine as well as maintain the Halloween theme at the end of the evening.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Bacon-Wrapped Stuffed Apricots

INGREDIENTS

½ lb. (8 strips) quality smoked bacon
3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
Pinch of ground cayenne (to taste)
8 large dried apricots stemmed
8 pecan halves, toasted
¼ lb. your favorite blue cheese

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place bacon on parchment paper-lined sided cookie sheet; bake 20 to 25 minutes until partially cooked.

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(so you can wrap the apricots later, while bacon is still soft and won't crack).

While bacon is cooking, combine maple syrup and cayenne and set aside for glaze. Open hole of each apricot; stuff each with a pecan half and some cheese to fill generously. Wrap one strip of bacon around each piece of fruit (enclosing the filling) and skewer with a toothpick. Place on a parchment lined sided cookie sheet; brush with some maple syrup glaze and bake 10 minutes. Turn each piece over; brush with more maple syrup glaze and cook another 10 minutes until bacon is crisp. Serve with any remaining maple glaze or make additional for dipping.

Yield: 4 servings, 2 per person

Pörkölt

INGREDIENTS

½ cup flour
½ tsp. paprika
¼ tsp. salt
1 lb. pork or beef, cut into 1" cubes
2 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 large onion, minced
1 large garlic clove, minced
½ medium green bell pepper, 1" dice
1 tbsp. paprika
1 tsp caraway seeds
1 large tomato, cored, 1" dice
1 cup red wine
4 cups or more water
Salt and black pepper to taste
1 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley for garnish (optional)

DIRECTIONS

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Mix flour, ½ tsp. paprika and ¼ tsp. salt together and place in 1 pound zip top bag. Add meat and shake until coated.

In a large, straight-sided sauté pan with a tight fitting lid, heat canola oil over medium. Add the seasoned, floured meat to the pan. Cook for 5-6 minutes, stirring twice, till meat is browned. Add minced onion and sauté for about 8 more minutes till softened. Add the garlic and green bell pepper. Continue to sauté for another 5 minutes until garlic is fragrant and bell pepper is tender-crisp. Sprinkle 1 tbsp. paprika and caraway seeds evenly over all. Add diced tomatoes, wine and 4 cups of hot water until the meat is almost covered. Stir and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to a simmer and cover the pan with the lid. Let the mixture simmer slowly for about 90-100 minutes, replenishing the water as needed to keep it from getting dry.

Serve over spaetzle, potatoes, rice or noodles

Yield: 4 servings

(on website)

Pumpkin Bread Pudding w/ Brown Sugar Caramel Sauce

INGREDIENTS

Bread pudding
2 cups half and half
1 15-ounce can pure pumpkin
1 cup (packed) plus 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

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10 cups 1/2-inch cubes egg bread (about 10-ounces)

1/2 cup golden raisins

Caramel sauce

1 1/4 cups (packed) dark brown sugar

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter

1/2 cup whipping cream

Powdered sugar

DIRECTIONS

For bread pudding:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Whisk half and half, pumpkin, dark brown sugar, eggs, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon and vanilla extract in large bowl to blend. Fold in bread cubes. Stir in golden raisins. Transfer mixture to 11x7-inch glass baking dish. Let stand 15 minutes. Bake pumpkin bread pudding until tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 40 minutes.

For the caramel sauce:

Whisk brown sugar and butter in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat until butter melts. Whisk in cream and stir until sugar dissolves and sauce is smooth, about 3 minutes.

Plate warm pudding just before serving. Dust with powdered sugar, top with sweetened whipped cream, and sprinkle with spiced walnuts.

Yield: 6 servings