

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



June 2014 – Graduation Celebration

My family will be celebrating a high school graduation this June. For me, a celebration isn't complete without some kind of bubbles. The bubbles don't have to be alcoholic or made from grapes, but they do have to be served in tall, elegant glasses to feel special.

Sparkling wines are made all over the world, however, the only sparkling wine that can truly be called Champagne must be made according to very stringent French laws and come from grapes grown in the Champagne region of France. In turn, other sparkling wine regions call their wines by special names as well. Cap Classique is a sparkling wine from South Africa made in the traditional *methode champenoise*, with the secondary fermentation occurring in the bottle. Often, Cap Classique is made from Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc grapes. It has bright, fresh citrus flavors and aromas. To start the meal below, choose a Brut style wine that will have little or no perceptible sugar. Simple Grilled Shrimp will be delicate and perfect with the clean flavors of the wine. For underage grads or those who prefer to consume their beverage sans alcohol, offer sparkling water with a squeeze of lemon.

Kick it up a notch at dinner with a slightly more complex wine, Vintage Brut Champagne. These wines are literally the cream of the crop. Only the best grapes are chosen each year to make vintage wines from the Champagne region. They are made from primarily Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes and usually spend time in oak. The resulting wine is creamy, toasty and a little earthy. For these reasons, Duck Breast with sautéed Chanterelles, Spaetzle (March 2010), and Creamed Spinach is the main course of choice. The slightly gamey and

rich flavors of the duck in conjunction with the earthy flavors of the mushrooms will echo the earthy richness of the wine. If the cost of vintage Champagne is prohibitive, try a Blanc de Noirs or a non-alcoholic, sparkling apple-cranberry cider.

Sparkling Moscato d'Asti is one of the few sparkling wines I recommend with dessert. And, it is a really good one. It has the right level of sweetness for dessert and is also a good value (usually \$10 – 20). Moscato d'Asti comes from the Piedmont region of Italy; however, Sparkling Moscatos are made in many locations, including Australia and Chile. Moscato has pretty lemon curd flavors and will pair deliciously with Ina Garten's Lemon Yogurt Cake. Finally, to end on a non-alcoholic note, try a sparkling apple-pear cider.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Simple Grilled Shrimp

INGREDIENTS

16 jumbo shrimp, deveined in shell, raw
Extra-virgin olive oil, about 1/2 cup for brushing
Coarse salt and black pepper
2 lemons, halved

DIRECTIONS

Preheat griddle, grill pan or BBQ to high heat. Butterfly shrimp by slicing almost through lengthwise, but leave shell on shrimp to keep the shrimp tender while grilling over such high heat.

Brush shrimps with oil, season with salt and pepper and grill 2 minutes on each side,

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until shells are hot pink and shrimp is opaque. Place lemons on grill the last minute. The heat will release juice from lemons. To serve, squeeze grilled lemon wedges over shrimp.

Yield: 4 servings

Pan Roasted Duck Breast

INGREDIENTS

3 Muscovy duck breasts (about 1 1/2 pounds)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

With a sharp knife score the fat of the duck breasts in a crisscross pattern. Season the duck with salt and pepper. Warm a heavy bottomed, ovenproof skillet over medium heat.

Place the duck breasts, fat side down, in the skillet to render off the fat, about 6 minutes. Pour off and reserve rendered duck fat. Turn the duck breasts over and sear for 1 minute. Turn the fat side down again and place the skillet into the oven to roast for 7 to 9 minutes, until breasts are medium rare. Let the duck breasts rest for 5 minutes then thinly slice.

Yield: 2-3 servings

(If you need to increase the servings, you will want to create an assembly line for searing the breast three at a time. Place the seared breasts on a larger tray and finish all in the oven at once.)

Sautéed Chanterelles or Portabellas

INGREDIENTS

1 1/4 pounds fresh chanterelles or Portobellos
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 tablespoon olive oil
1/4 cup dry white wine
3 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaved parsley leaves
Fresh lemon juice to taste

DIRECTIONS

Halve chanterelles lengthwise or cut Portobellos into 1/2-inch-thick slices. In a large, non-stick skillet, melt butter with oil over moderately high heat until foam subsides and sauté mushrooms, stirring, with salt and pepper to taste until barely tender, about 2 minutes. Add wine and cook, stirring, until liquid is evaporated and mushrooms are tender, about 5 minutes. In a bowl toss mushrooms with parsley and lemon juice.

Yield: 6 servings

Creamed Spinach

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. baby spinach leaves, washed
1/2 cup heavy cream
2 oz. butter
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot (such as an enameled Dutch oven), heat the spinach leaves over medium-high heat. You can add a small amount of water to the pot before adding the spinach, but as the liquid in the leaves cooks out, the leaves will steam in their own liquid. Stir with a wooden spoon

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to keep everything moving.

As you cook it, the spinach will soften and turn a bright green color while reducing in volume quite dramatically. This might take 5 to 6 minutes or a bit longer.

Plunge the cooked spinach leaves into a large bowl of ice water. This will stop the spinach from cooking and lock in that bright green color.

Drain the ice water and squeeze the excess water from the spinach. Squeezing by hand, a handful at a time, is the best way to do this. You can transfer each squeezed handful directly into the bowl of your food processor, since the next step will be puréeing it.

Meanwhile, heat the cream over medium heat. Let the cream reduce slightly while you're squeezing the spinach.

Purée the spinach in a food processor until it's completely smooth.

Return the puréed spinach to the pot and add the butter, cream and cheese. Cook over medium heat, stirring continuously, until it's hot.

Season to taste with kosher salt and a generous amount of freshly ground black pepper. Serve right away.

Yield: 6 servings

Lemon Yogurt Cake

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
1 1/3 cups sugar, divided
3 extra-large eggs
2 teaspoons grated lemon zest (2 lemons)
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

For the glaze:

1 cup confectioners' sugar
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease an 8½ X 4¼ X 2½ -inch loaf pan. Line the bottom with parchment paper. Grease and flour the pan.

Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt into 1 bowl. In another bowl, whisk together the yogurt, 1 cup sugar, the eggs, lemon zest, and vanilla. Slowly whisk the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients. With a rubber spatula, fold the vegetable oil into the batter, making sure it's all incorporated. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for about 50 minutes, or until a cake tester placed in the center of the loaf comes out clean.

Meanwhile, cook the 1/3 cup lemon juice and remaining 1/3 cup sugar in a small pan until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is clear. Set aside.

When the cake is done, allow it to cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Carefully place on a baking rack over a sheet pan. While the cake is still warm, pour the lemon-sugar mixture over the cake and allow it to soak in. Cool.

For the glaze, combine the confectioners'

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sugar and lemon juice and pour over the cake.

Yield: 1 loaf