

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



February 2016 – Tropical Winter

After months of cold weather and lots of big red wines, it may be time for a change. And, although the warm weather is still months away, there are some terrific white wines with a little extra body and flavor which make them excellent companions to a crisp winter day. As a bonus, they often have tropical flavors, making them perfect for dishes starring tropical fruits. Together, they will have you dreaming of summer.

Viognier (pronounced: vee-ohn-yay) is an increasingly popular grape, which has traveled from its home in France to many corners of the winemaking world. It makes distinctive wines that have all the weight of a Chardonnay. The aromas are dominated by tropical and stone fruits, blended with lovely floral components. Pair your dry Viognier with Major Grey's Mango Chutney (Safeway) and Brie atop crunchy crostini bread. The spicy sweet combination of the chutney is offset by the umami (read: savory, earthy) flavors of the cheese. Umami often brings out fruit flavors in wine.

Semillon (pronounced: se-mee-ohn) also originated in France but now has a stronghold in Australia. Most of Australia's Semillon is picked a little extra ripe, aged in oak, and undergoes malolactic fermentation to produce a rich white wine similar to Chardonnay. Semillon's honey, orange and lime flavors are delicious with most Asian cuisines, including this Asian Salmon. A bright Pineapple Salsa offers an acidic punch to the dish, and with simple steamed white rice and sautéed Sesame Spinach, you have a complete plate.

One of my favorite tropical fruit desserts is Pineapple Upside Down Cake. For me, the best part is the sticky sweet syrup that is created as the pineapple juice and brown

sugar cook together. Late harvest white wines have sweet honeysuckle and ripe fruit flavors, as well as a toasty, caramel flavor that comes from oak aging. Both Viognier and Semillon grapes make fantastic, late harvest dessert wines, or you can choose just about any other white dessert wine and create a successful pairing to top off your tropical meal.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Asian Salmon

INGREDIENTS

Glaze:

- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons Asian chili-garlic sauce
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

Salmon:

- 1-1/2 teaspoon brown sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
- 4 salmon fillets (about 1-1/2 to 2 pounds total)
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil

DIRECTIONS

Combine glaze ingredients in small saucepan; whisk until combined. Over medium-high heat, bring the sauce up to boil, then reduce heat to maintain a simmer

PAIR UP

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for 3 minutes. Remove pan from burner and cover to keep the sauce warm until you are ready to put the salmon in the oven.

Preheat your oven to 300-degrees, and set an oven rack in middle position. In a small bowl, stir together brown sugar, kosher salt and cornstarch. Use paper towels to dry the salmon's surface. Grind some fresh black pepper on the meat-side, then evenly sprinkle the sugar/salt mixture. Rub into fish so that it evenly covers the meat.

Add 1 teaspoon vegetable oil to 12", oven-safe, non-stick skillet. Place over a medium-high burner and pre-heat until it just begins to smoke. Sear salmon, skin-side up, for 2 minutes until forms a browned crust. Turn and cook with the skin-side down for 1 to 2 minutes.

Remove skillet from burner and evenly coat the glaze over the exposed meat. Put skillet in pre-heated oven and bake from 10 minutes. When done, the thickest part of the fish should read 150-degrees on an instant-read thermometer.

Yield: 4 servings

Pineapple Salsa

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 c. chopped pineapple
1/4 c. chopped red onion
2 tbsp. sugar
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1/2 - 1 tsp. chopped jalapeno pepper
1 tsp. finely minced ginger
1 tbsp. fresh chopped mint

DIRECTIONS

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Mix ingredients in glass bowl. Adjust seasonings to taste. Refrigerate at least 4 hours.

Yield: 1 3/4 cups

Sesame Spinach

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp. dark sesame oil
1 tbsp. minced garlic
1 lb. fresh spinach, cleaned and washed, large leaves roughly chopped
1 tbsp. sugar
1 tbsp. soy sauce
Salt to taste
1 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds

DIRECTIONS

Heat 2 tablespoons of the sesame oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook briefly. Add the spinach and cook, stirring occasionally, until the spinach is completely wilted. Turn the heat to low.

Stir in the sugar and soy sauce. Remove from the heat. Add salt to taste. Sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Yield: 4 servings

Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup butter or margarine
1 cup packed brown sugar
1 can (20 oz) pineapple slices in juice, drained, juice reserved
1 jar (6 oz) maraschino cherries without stems, drained
1 box yellow cake mix

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



Vegetable oil and eggs called for on cake mix box

DIRECTIONS

Heat oven to 350°F (325°F for dark or nonstick pan). In 13x9-inch pan, melt butter in oven. Sprinkle brown sugar evenly over butter. Arrange pineapple slices on brown sugar. Place cherry in center of each pineapple slice, and arrange remaining cherries around slices; press gently into brown sugar.

Add enough water to reserved pineapple juice to measure 1 cup. Make cake batter as directed on box, substituting pineapple juice mixture for the water. Pour batter over pineapple and cherries.

Bake 42 to 48 minutes (44 to 53 minutes for dark or nonstick pan) or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

Immediately run knife around side of pan to loosen cake. Place heatproof serving plate upside down onto pan; turn plate and pan over. Leave pan over cake 5 minutes so brown sugar topping can drizzle over cake; remove pan. Cool 30 minutes. Serve warm or cool. Store covered in refrigerator.

Yield: 12 servings