

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



September 2015 – Very Vegetarian

The simplest definition of vegetarianism is a diet free of meat, fish, and fowl flesh. But eating habits of vegetarians cover a wide spectrum. At one end are lacto/ovo vegetarians, who add eggs and/or milk products. At the other end are vegans, who forgo eating all animal-based products. There are also pescatarians, who eat fish and seafood. My favorite is the “flexitarian.” They are vegetarians who occasionally eat meat and fish. For all of us, vegetables are a special case when finding wine pairings. The green or herbaceous flavors of raw vegetables can fight with wine and make it taste metallic. To reduce this, consider using cooking techniques that bring out the natural sugars in vegetables, like braising, roasting or grilling. Additionally, in my opinion, most foods need to have plenty of salt and fat to work with wine. Fat balances the weight of the wine’s alcohol content, and together they smooth out the bitter tannins found in red wine.

Potato, Tomato, Eggplant Gratin is delicious with a Southern Rhone wine made from a blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre grapes. The south of France has many herbs that grow wild, like thyme, rosemary and lavender. Their aromatics scent the grapes grown there. This aroma is known as garigue. Restrained alcohol, softer tannin and bright acidity make these wines ideal partners for tomato and herb based dishes.

A main course of Farro Risotto with Mushrooms and Hazelnuts provides whole grains to vegetarian, vegan, or otherwise healthy diets. Whole grains contain all the essential parts and naturally occurring nutrients of the entire grain seed. As for the wine, the mushrooms in this dish cry out for Pinot Noir. Both mushrooms and Pinot have

deep, earthy notes that produce a perfect harmony. Alongside the risotto, serve a simple arugula salad tossed with olive oil, lemon juice, toasted pine nuts, salt and pepper. It adds a welcome green color to the plate and is my favorite salad to pair with wine.

Russian Teacakes are filled with nuts, an important source of protein in a vegetarian or vegan diet. These cookies have an incredibly rich buttery flavor and a delicate crunch. They are quite sweet and require a super sweet wine. Consider an Eiswein from some of the coldest regions of the world like Germany or Canada. The early onset of freezing temperatures allow the grapes to freeze on the vine so that when they are picked and quickly pressed, the frozen water remains behind and only a tiny amount of super sweet, super saturated juice is released. The resulting wine is incredibly flavorful and very sweet.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Potato, Tomato, Eggplant Gratin

INGREDIENTS

2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil
Kosher salt and pepper to taste
1½ pounds all-purpose potatoes like Yukon Gold, 1/8” slice (possibly parboiled – 3 minutes)
1 large Asian eggplant, 1/8” slice
8 oz. Gruyere cheese, grated
½ cup hearty dry, lightly oaked red wine
1 to 2 tablespoons brewed espresso

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½ to 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional)
½ red or yellow onion, chopped fine
2 teaspoons chopped garlic
1½ to 2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano
½ to ¾ teaspoon fresh thyme
1 pound ripe tomatoes, chopped fine
Chopped parsley for garnish (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Brush 9X13 baking dish with olive oil.

Mix together wine, espresso, and mustard and blend well.

Mix together garlic, onion, oregano, and thyme.

Season tomato with salt and pepper.

Cut potato and eggplant and season each slice with salt and pepper lightly.

Layer all ingredients starting with potato, overlapping by 1/3 to create a structural lattice. Then, sprinkle with herb/garlic/onion mixture and the first layer of cheese. Next, the eggplant and another sprinkle of herb/garlic/onion mixture and another layer of cheese. Then, the chopped tomato and a final sprinkle of herb/garlic/onion mixture. End with one more layer of potato. Pour liquid over the top evenly and add one more layer of cheese.

Bake at 350° for 35-45 minutes or until brown. Allow to cool fully and cut into 2”X3” rectangles. Sprinkle with fresh parsley and serve at room temp.

Yield: 2 rectangles each, 8 servings

Farro Risotto with Mushrooms and Hazelnuts

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 lb. crimini mushrooms, trimmed and sliced
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup farro
4 cups water
2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter
¼ cup chopped shallots
2/3 cup dry red wine
3 cups vegetable broth, warm
2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese
½ cup hazelnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped
¼ chopped Italian parsley

DIRECTIONS

Heat a medium size frying pan over medium high heat. Add butter, and then add the sliced mushrooms and sauté until lightly browned but not dry.

Place medium saucepan over medium high heat and add olive oil. Add shallots and sauté until translucent. Add farro and wine. Simmer until almost all liquid evaporates, stirring frequently, about 5 minutes. Add warm chicken broth 1 cup at a time and simmer until liquid is absorbed and farro is just tender, stirring frequently, about 20 minutes total. Stir in mushrooms with last addition of liquid. Stir in cheese. Salt and pepper to taste, Garnish with hazelnuts and parsley.

Yield: 8 servings

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Russian Teacakes

INGREDIENTS

1 cup butter
1/3 cup brown sugar
¼ tsp. lemon zest
1 tsp. vanilla
½ tsp. salt
2 cups flour
2 cups finely chopped walnuts or pecans
Confectioners' sugar

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375°.

Cream butter, brown sugar, lemon zest, vanilla and salt. Add flour and incorporate well. Add nuts and thick soft dough will form. Refrigerate to cool.

Roll in palms to form small balls the size of walnuts.

Bake on ungreased cookie sheets for 12- 15 minutes. Cool slightly, but while still warm roll in powdered sugar.

Yield: 4 dozen cookies