

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



April 2016 – Flavor Knockout

The most memorable wines are intense. They are burned into memory by the sheer power of their aroma, flavor, mouthfeel, or finish. Powerful wines need powerful foods. In fact, the power or weight of a wine is probably the most essential part of pairing it. If either the food or the wine dominates the other, the pairing is less successful. The balance is thrown off and the lesser partner disappoints.

Many folks assume that because Riesling wines are white, they can't be powerful. This is absolutely untrue. In Germany, the climate, which can be very cold, allows the grapes to maintain their natural acids. Furthermore, the most extraordinary Riesling is grown on steep slopes where the grapes receive an abundance of daylight. The steep slopes and poor soils cause the vines to struggle and results in fewer, more concentrated berries. And, the constant sunshine allows the grapes to ripen to their peak of flavor. In fact, it is the ripeness of those berries that defines Riesling. If the berries are picked earlier, the wine is lighter and called Kabinett. As expected, late picking results in even more concentrated flavors. These wines are called Spätlese or Auslese-type. With flavors of apricot, peach, and honey and a precise balance of sugar and acid, they are the perfect pairing with Apricot and Habanero Ceviche. The spicy heat of the habanero is offset by the sweetness in the wine. The combination of habanero, floral apricots, briny fish and tart lime, make it light and powerful at the same time.

Rib eye is the ultimate steak-lover's steak. It's the most flavorful cut of the animal and comes with very rich marbling, which provides superior taste when cooked. Almost any red-wine would make a great

pairing with this steak. But, why not choose the red wine that has the best overall flavor, aroma, mouthfeel and finish? Cabernet Sauvignon is considered the king of grapes for good reason. It can be grown successfully in more places and has amazing longevity in the bottle. Cabernet Sauvignon has concentrated aromas of berries, mint and leather, fills your mouth with flavor, and ends in a long, lingering finish.

For dessert, intense flavor means lemon. Don't get me wrong, I love chocolate, vanilla and other fruits, but side-by-side, lemon desserts deliver more mouthwatering flavor than any other. Lemon Zest Bundt Cake has multiple layers of lemon flavor, which add to its intensity. Fresh zest in the cake, a long soak in a lemon bath and a rich glaze provide optimal lemon flavor and sweetness to balance. There are numerous beverages that would be lovely with this dessert: sparkling or dessert wines, water, tea or milk. But, the flavor knockout is hot coffee. Heat brings out aromas and liquefies the fat and sugar. And coffee's bitterness is an excellent foil to sweet cake. New Guinea Kimel coffee (which can be found on amazon.com) is full-bodied and exceptionally aromatic. It is medium bright in acid and has hints of currant and chocolate.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Apricot and Habanero Ceviche

INGREDIENTS

PAIR UP

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1 pound “sashimi-quality” skinless, meaty ocean fish fillet (halibut, mahi mahi, or bass), cut into ½ inch cubes
½ cup fresh lime juice
½ cup fresh orange juice
1 small red onion, sliced very thin
1 fresh habanero, stemmed and seeds removed, finely diced
2 cups (about 12 ounces) cubed mango
1 small avocado, pitted, flesh scooped from the skin, diced
About 1/3 cup chopped cilantro, plus more whole leaves for garnish

DIRECTIONS

Scoop the fish into a large nonreactive bowl (stainless steel or glass) and add the citrus juices and habanero chili. Fish should be completely submerged in juice—add more juice if the fish does not float freely. Allow the fish to “cook” in the citrus juices to your desired doneness—30 minutes to an hour for medium-rare, 3 to 4 hours for fully cooked. For a dryer ceviche, drain off and discard most of the juices from the fish. For a wetter ceviche (similar to a seafood cocktail), leave as much of the marinating juice as you like. Add the diced mango, avocado and red onion to the drained fish. Gently stir, taking care to not bruise or smash the avocado. Season with salt and sugar to taste. Garnish with chopped cilantro. Serve with tortilla chips as an appetizer or spooned into rocks or martini glasses as a plated first course.

Yield: 6-8 servings

Lemon Zest Bundt Cake

INGREDIENTS

For the cake

1/2 pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 3/4 cups granulated sugar
4 extra-large eggs, at room temperature
1/3 cup grated lemon zest (7 lemons)
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
3/4 cup buttermilk, at room temperature (or dried buttermilk powder + water)
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
3 cups all-purpose flour

For the soak

½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

For the glaze

1 cup confectioners’ sugar
1 3/4 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a standard 10-inch diameter Bundt pan and set aside.

Cream the butter and granulated sugar for about 5 minutes or until light and fluffy. With the mixer on medium speed, add the eggs, one at a time, and the lemon zest.

Add the baking powder, baking soda and salt and mix in. In another bowl, combine 1/4 cup lemon juice, the buttermilk, and vanilla.

Add the flour and buttermilk mixtures alternately to the batter, beginning and ending with the flour. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan, smooth the top and bake

PAIR UP

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for 60 minutes, until a cake tester comes out clean.

When the cake is done, remove pan from oven and let cool for 20 minutes, then invert cake onto a rack and immediately invert it back into the baking pan (this insures the cake is loosened from the pan). Pour soak over the cake while it is still in the pan, allowing some to run down the outer edge of the cake. Allow the cake to cool completely, and then turn it onto a cake stand or cake plate.

To make the soak: Combine 1/2 cup granulated sugar with 1/2 cup lemon juice and stir until the sugar dissolves.

To make the glaze: Combine the confectioners' sugar and lemon juice in a bowl, mixing with a wire whisk until smooth. Pour over the top of the cakes and allow the glaze to drizzle down the sides.

Yield: 12-16 servings