

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



February 2020 – Ah, Nuts!

Nuts are a wine-friendly food. This means that nuts taste good with wine and can make ingredients that clash with wine more palatable when nuts are part of the recipe. The reason nuts work with wine is first and foremost because of their fat content. Fat, as long as it is not cold, smooths out the tannic and acidic qualities of wine. Additionally, many wines have nutty flavors of their own due to time in a toasted barrel or from beneficial oxidation during an aging process.

In California, we have zucchini year-round and it is one of those wonderful vegetables that lasts quite some time in the refrigerator. This is why I am always looking for ways to prepare zucchini. I like the idea of a salad that is slightly warm for a cold winter night but is healthy and easy to throw together. I immediately wanted to pair this Zucchini with Pine Nut Salad with a Greek white wine. I think it was the fresh herbs and pine nuts. One Greek wine that would go really well is Roditis (“Ro dee’ tees”). It is a blush colored grape that is grown in Attica, Macedonia, Thessaly, and Peloponnese. The wine is elegant and light, with stone and citrus fruit flavors. Fortunately, just about any white wine will go with this salad because it is warm, has nuts, and is not too acidic. If you can’t find a Roditis, consider an Albariño, and if you only want to open one bottle, open your main course Chenin Blanc early.

Savennieres (“Sahv’ ven yares”) is made from the Chenin Blanc grape and comes from the Loire (“Low-are”) region of France. It is full-bodied and has high acidity, so it can age quite well. When white wines age, they oxidize and develop nutty flavors. Chenin Blanc has primary flavors of quince, lemon curd, and chamomile. It is a lovely,

complex wine. The nuts and lemon in this Steelhead Trout & Green Bean Amandine recipe will complement those same flavors in an aged Savennieres. The full body of the wine will match the fattiness of the fish, yet the flavors in the wine will not overpower the delicate flavor of mild trout, which I find less fishy than salmon. If you can’t find a Savennieres, look for a dry Vouvray or find a dry Chenin Blanc from either California or South Africa. Also, you can substitute salmon for the steelhead in a pinch.

Moscato is a sweet sparkling wine from Italy that has pretty floral aromas with pear and citrus notes. It is lightly sparkling and cleanses your palate from a Pear-Hazelnut Tart With Crumble Topping (go to www.lasommeliere.com for the recipe), especially if you serve it with vanilla ice cream. Moscato is fairly easy to find, but if you want to end your meal with a non-alcoholic beverage, try a hot jasmine tea. The white flower notes of the tea complement the floral quality of the pear. As a side note, ice cream and other cold foods are difficult to pair with wines because of their high fat content and their temperature. The cold fat coats the tongue, so when the alcohol hits the tongue, there is an unpleasant slipperiness. This is why you need bubbles or a hot beverage to clear the palate of the fat.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Zucchini with Pine Nut Salad

INGREDIENTS

6 zucchinis (thickly sliced lengthways)

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry

olive oil (to brush)
½ cup pine nuts
5 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon honey
3 cups mixed salad leaves
½ cup fresh mint, parsley, or basil leaves

DIRECTIONS

Roast or grill zucchini brushed with olive oil and sprinkled with salt.

Toast the pine nuts in a small pan over medium heat. Crush in mortar and pestle.

In a small bowl, combine crushed pine nuts, oil, lemon juice, and honey. Season with salt and pepper.

Cut the zucchini diagonally into thick strips. Place in a large serving bowl with salad greens and fresh herbs. Toss with dressing.

Yield: 6 servings

Steelhead Trout with Green Bean Amandine

INGREDIENTS

½ pound green beans
(4) 6-ounce steelhead trout fillets
Salt, to taste
Pepper, to taste
Canola oil
Flour, for dusting
1 stick of butter
1 medium shallot, minced
2 lemons, juiced
¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 200°F.

Trim the stem end from the haricot verts and cut in half. Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil. Cook the beans until just tender and refresh under cold water. Set aside in a colander to drain.

Make sure the trout fillets are cleaned well. Pat dry and season with salt and pepper. Place a large skillet over medium-high heat and preheat the canola oil. Lightly dust the trout with flour and pan fry, one at a time, until golden on both sides, about 2 minutes per side.

As the trout finish cooking, place them on a platter in the oven to stay warm. When the last fish is cooked, dump the excess fat from the pan. Reduce the heat to medium, add the butter, and sauté the shallots for 30 seconds. Add the haricots verts and warm through. Season with salt and pepper and add the lemon juice. Spoon the haricot verts and sauce over the platter of trout and garnish with toasted almonds.

Yield: 4 servings

Pear-Hazelnut Tart with Crumble Topping

INGREDIENTS

Crust

1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon salt
8 Tablespoons unsalted butter cold
¼ cup buttermilk

Frangipane Filling

8 Tablespoons unsalted butter softened
1/3 cup light brown sugar
2 eggs

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



1 egg yolk
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 Tablespoons hazelnut liquor optional
½ teaspoon salt
1½ cups hazelnut flour or almond flour
1/3 cup maple syrup
3-4 in pears, peeled and thinly sliced into ¼ inch slices

Crumble

¼ cup hazelnuts roughly chopped
2 Tablespoons pistachios roughly chopped
¼ cup old-fashioned oats
2 Tablespoons unsalted butter
2 Tablespoons brown sugar
½ teaspoon ground ginger
Pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

Crust

Place the all-purpose flour and salt in a large bowl. Add butter and use your fingers to break the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles small peas.

Add the buttermilk. Mix with a wooden spoon, drizzling in more buttermilk as needed (no more than 1 tablespoon at a time), until dough just comes together (a few dry spots are ok). Gently knead the dough on a lightly floured surface until no dry spots remain, about 1 minute. Divide the dough in half. Shape into a circular disk.

Grease a 9-inch tart pan with butter.

Roll out the dough onto a lightly floured surface to a 12-inch round. Carefully transfer the crust to the prepared tart pan. Lift up the edges and allow the dough to sink down into the dish. Trim edges to even out crust if needed, then prick the bottom of the dough with a fork a few times. Cover the

pan and place in the fridge for at least 30 minutes or up to two days.

Frangipane Filling

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Using an electric mixer, cream together the butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add the two eggs, one at a time, until fully combined. Add the egg yolk and beat until combined. Now add the vanilla and hazelnut liquor, beating until combined.

Stir in the hazelnut flour and salt until just combined. Set aside.

Add the maple syrup to a skillet with sides and bring to a boil. Boil 3-5 minutes or until the maple syrup just starts to thicken.

Remove from the heat and add the pear slices. Let the pears sit in the syrup for a few minutes but no longer. You don't want the pears to become too soft to work with.

Once your crust is chilled, remove from the fridge and spread the filling inside. Layer the pear slices over the filling, gently pushing them just slightly into the filling. Drizzle the remaining maple syrup over the pears.

Place the tart pan on a baking sheet and bake for 40-45 minutes or until the top is golden. Allow the tart to sit 10 minutes, then slice and top each slice with a few scoops of the crumble and a bit of vanilla ice cream if desired.

Crumble

Add the hazelnuts, pistachios, oats, butter, brown sugar, ginger and salt to a skillet set over medium heat. Cook for 5-10 minutes,

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



stirring often until the nuts + oats are toasted and golden. Remove from the heat and slide the mixture onto a plate. Allow to cool.

Yield: 6 servings