

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry

August 2010 – Vegetarian BBQ

I have many people in my life who choose not to eat meat. I believe that one can create delicious meals that focus on vegetables and no one even notices the meat is absent. Eggplant and mushrooms are frequently my protein replacements because of their dense texture and versatility.

Grilled Eggplant Crostini with Pine Nuts is an appetizer that can be made up ahead of time and does not require fork, knife or serving utensil for service. The texture of the eggplant becomes soft as it grills and the pine nuts provide a crunchy counterpoint. Pinot Grigio has soft citrus and floral scents and is highly quaffable. It will go with just about any light dish and this one is no exception.

The Caesar Cocktail is a spicy, juicy drink. It will stand up to all of the usual accompaniments one finds with a burger: ketchup, mustard and even raw onion. Great big portobello mushrooms grill up perfectly and seem to be made for a hamburger bun. Just season the caps with a bit of oil, vinegar, salt, pepper and grill for five minutes on each side.

Spiked Watermelon can be served as a side salad with the burgers or saved until the end of the meal. Include the alcohol when your guests are over 21 or leave it out altogether. The mint really is the kicker in this recipe.

So, go on. Pair Up!

Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. www.LaSommelierre.com

Grilled Eggplant Crostini

INGREDIENTS

1 medium eggplant with skin, stem removed and sliced lengthwise into 4 strips
2 tbsp lemon juice
1 small shallot, thinly sliced and sautéed
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp sea salt, or to taste
1/3 cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves

Crostini (see Pair Up December 2009)
2 tbsp pan-toasted pine nuts

DIRECTIONS

Heat the grill over medium-high heat. Grill the eggplant 4 to 5 minutes per side or until lightly charred and cooked through. Meanwhile, combine the lemon juice, shallots, oil, and salt in a medium bowl.

Cut each grilled eggplant slice into small bite-size pieces. Toss the eggplant with the dressing until just coated. Just before serving, stir in basil. Place one tablespoon of eggplant mixture on top of each crostini and top with pine nuts. Serve warm, cool or at room temperature.

Yield: 2 cups topping

Caesar Cocktail

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 oz vodka
fill with clamato juice
3 dashes Tabasco® sauce
3 dashes Worcestershire sauce

DIRECTIONS

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Line the rim of a glass with celery salt. Over ice, add vodka, fill with clamato juice, then add the remaining ingredients. Garnish with a celery stick. Add more tabasco sauce if desired.

Yield: 1 drink

Spiked Watermelon

INGREDIENTS

1 8-pound watermelon, peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces (about 16 cups)
1 cup fresh lemon juice
2/3 cup sugar
1/2 cup vodka
6 tablespoons crème de cassis
Salt (opt.)
1/4 cup chopped fresh mint

DIRECTIONS

Place watermelon in large bowl. Whisk fresh lemon juice and sugar in medium bowl until sugar dissolves. Whisk in vodka and crème de cassis. Add a pinch of salt if desired to bring out the flavors. Pour mixture over watermelon. Cover and chill at least 1 hour and up to 2 hours. Sprinkle with chopped fresh mint and serve.

Yield: 8 servings