

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



September 2011 – Beginnings and Endings

September represents the start of a new school year and is almost the end of the calendar year. Both are something to celebrate.

Madeira is the delicious wine from the Portuguese island of Madeira. Like most European wines, it is a regional style that is made from different local grapes, individually or as a blend. And, it is the composition of the blend that influences exactly how the final wine will look and taste. From lighter to darker, drier to sweeter, the four grapes are sercial, verdelho, bual and malmsey. All Madeiras have a bright acidity and flavors of fig, citrus, and nuts. It is these unusual flavors, slight sweetness and higher acidity that make it perfect for the beginning or end of a meal.

Start this fall menu with one of my favorite late summer/fall fruits - figs. Serve a lovely starter plate composed of sweet, earthy figs and salty serrano ham topped with fresh basil and drizzled with Leslie Styles' balsamic glaze (*Pair Up*, Feb 2010 www.LaSommeliere.com). The figs and balsamic reduction go well with fig flavors in the wine, and the salty ham is a perfect counterpoint to the wines sweetness.

Next, take a break from the sweet quality of the Madeira and pick up one of its mainland cousins, a dry red from either the Douro or the Dão. Both regions make wonderful, earthy red wines that will pair well with the Osso Bucco and Mascarpone Polenta recipes listed here. If you can't find anything from Portugal, a classic California syrah will give the depth and body needed for this big, bold dish.

Return to Madeira at the end of the meal and try pistachio ice cream with Anna's Orange Flavored Thins (a sweet citrus

biscuit that can often be found locally at Safeway). Pistachio nuts bring out the richness of the wine, and the subtle spark of citrus in the cookie brings out its brightness. And don't worry if you don't finish the bottle tonight; Madeira will keep for months in your fridge.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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

Mascarpone Polenta

INGREDIENTS

2 cups milk
1/8 cup olive oil
1/2 cup polenta (coarsely ground yellow cornmeal)
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 cup Mascarpone cheese

DIRECTIONS

In a large saucepan, bring the milk to a boil. Add olive oil, salt, and pepper. Very gradually, add the polenta in a steady stream, whisking constantly. Add the salt and whisk to combine. Reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring frequently with a heavy wooden until thick and creamy, 20 to 30 minutes. Add the mascarpone to the polenta and adjust the seasoning to taste.

Yield: four servings

Osso Bucco

INGREDIENTS

3 oz. pancetta/ bacon, chopped
4 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted

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4 large veal shanks, cut in half crosswise,
patted dry
1 cup all purpose flour
1 tbsp. seasoned salt
2 cups dry red wine
1½ cups chopped yellow onion
¾ cup chopped carrots
¾ cup chopped celery
1 cup peeled, seeded and chopped tomatoes
2 bay leaves
1 tbsp. chopped garlic
2 tbsp. chopped parsley
4 sprigs fresh thyme
1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest
3 to 4 cups beef stock

Gremolata

2 tbsp. chopped parsley
1 tsp. chopped garlic
3 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

DIRECTIONS

Brown pancetta in butter in a large Dutch oven. Remove pancetta. Dredge meat in combined flour and seasoned salt and brown in pancetta drippings, adding more butter if needed. Remove meat. Add wine and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring to deglaze the pan. Cook until reduced by half. Add onion, carrot and celery, cook, 4 minutes. Add garlic, cook 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes and bay leaves, cook 1 minute. Add meat, bacon, parsley, thyme, lemon zest and cover with beef stock. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover tightly and simmer, turning the meat occasionally until the meat is tender and falling from the bone, about 2 hours. Transfer the shanks to a plate and keep warm. Bring the liquid to a boil and cook until slightly reduced. Serve meat on top of

polenta, top with gremolata and drizzle with sauce.

Yield: four servings