

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



August 2018 – French Riviera in Summer

The Côte d’Azur or French Riviera is one of the most beautiful and relaxing places on earth. This menu is anchored by the classic salad of Nice — Salad Niçoise. And, while the menu may seem daunting, do give it a try. There is a lot of chopping for the salad but no complicated cooking techniques and the rest of the meal is ‘purchase and plate.’

Start off this French inspired meal with a classic Italian sparkler, lambrusco. Light red in color, lambrusco is low in alcohol and lightly sweet. It is delicious with salty, fatty salumi. Salumi are Italian cured meat products predominantly made from pork, like prosciutto. The word salumi is not a misspelling or variant of salami (sing: salame). Salame is a specific type of salume.

Rosé is a quintessential summertime wine. Some like it dry, others like it a little sweet. One of my favorite dry rosés is from a little town in Provence named Bandol. Bandol is light salmon in color and has the aroma of fresh picked strawberries. It also has a lovely herbal quality that is the perfect complement to the green flavors of the Niçoise salad.

Sauternes is a French winemaking region that specializes in very sweet, dessert wine. The wines are made from a blend of sauvignon blanc and sémillon grapes that have been affected by the fungus Botrytis Cinerea. Blue cheese is one of sauternes best pairings. Stay in the French theme and pick Roquefort or choose another of your favorites.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Salad Niçoise

INGREDIENTS

Vinaigrette

- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium shallot, minced
- 1 Tbsp minced fresh thyme leaves
- 2 Tbsp minced fresh basil leaves
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh oregano leaves
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Salad

- 2 grilled or otherwise cooked tuna steaks (8 oz each) or 2-3 cans of tuna
- 6 hard boiled eggs, peeled and either halved or quartered
- 10 small new red potatoes (each about 2 inches in diameter, about 1 1/4 pounds total), each potato scrubbed and quartered
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 medium heads Boston lettuce or butter lettuce, leaves washed, dried, and torn into bite-sized pieces
- 3 small ripe tomatoes, cored and cut into eighths
- 1 small red onion, sliced very thin
- 8 ounces green beans, stem ends trimmed and each bean halved crosswise
- 1/4 cup niçoise olives
- 2 Tbsp capers, rinsed and/or several anchovies (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Marinate tuna steaks in a little olive oil for an hour. Heat a large skillet on medium high heat, or place on a hot grill. Cook the steaks

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2 to 3 minutes on each side until cooked through.

Yield: 4 servings

Whisk lemon juice, oil, shallot, thyme, basil, oregano, and mustard in medium bowl; season to taste with salt and pepper and set aside.

Bring potatoes and 4 quarts cold water to boil in a large pot. Add 1 tablespoon salt and cook until potatoes are tender, 5 to 8 minutes. Transfer potatoes to a medium bowl with a slotted spoon (do not discard boiling water). Toss warm potatoes with 1/4 cup vinaigrette; set aside.

While potatoes are cooking, toss lettuce with 1/4 cup vinaigrette in large bowl until coated. Arrange bed of lettuce on a serving platter. Cut tuna into 1/2-inch thick slices, coat with vinaigrette. Mound tuna in center of lettuce. Toss tomatoes, red onion, 3 tablespoons vinaigrette, and salt and pepper to taste in bowl; arrange tomato-onion mixture on the lettuce bed. Arrange reserved potatoes in a mound at edge of lettuce bed.

Return water to boil; add 1 tablespoon salt and green beans. Cook until tender but crisp, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain beans, transfer to reserved ice water, and let stand until just cool, about 30 seconds; dry beans well. Toss beans, 3 tablespoons vinaigrette, and salt and pepper to taste; arrange in a mound at edge of lettuce bed.

5 Arrange hard boiled eggs, olives, and anchovies (if using) in mounds on the lettuce bed. Drizzle eggs with remaining 2 tablespoons dressing, sprinkle entire salad with capers (if using), and serve immediately.