

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



October 2009 – Halloween for Everyone

Halloween is one of our family's favorite holidays. As the mother of two children, I love seeing my kids all dressed-up in their costumes but was always the one left at home to hand out candy. Now, I invite over the grandparents, neighbors and any friends who will come to keep me company. I make appetizers to snack on early and a warming soup for everyone to enjoy later. With a house full of people, I have a reason to open up a few bottles of wine. I have even found a wine that goes with Halloween candy.

Chenin Blanc is an excellent appetizer wine that was one of the base wines found in California Chablis of the 1970's. Contemporary Chenin Blanc is nothing like the old jug wine. Today's Chenin Blanc is crisp and citrusy with an aroma of fresh, line-dried sheets to add complexity. If you are feeling adventurous, look for Chenin Blanc from other countries like South Africa, Argentina or its birthplace, the Loire Valley of France. Historically made with a hint of residual sugar, many producers are bottling it bone dry. In either form, it will work nicely with a variety of quick appetizers: chips and dip, pigs in a blanket and a crunchy vegetable platter (minus the cauliflower and broccoli). Serve jicama, red bell peppers, snap peas and carrots to offer a variety of colors and be sure to include crimini mushrooms to dip in the ranch dressing. The combination of earth and herbs is delicious with Chenin Blanc.

A big pot of soup is an easy main course for this evening. Everything can be prepared early and served when it is needed. The traditional Halloween soup at our home is Pozole con Pollo, a Mexican, chicken vegetable soup. It is not too spicy and has a pleasant tang from the lime juice added at

the end. If you still have some Chenin Blanc left from earlier in the evening, it will work with the soup. If you are ready for something new, try an off-dry German Kabinett or Spätlese Riesling. Time after time, sommeliers turn to German Riesling as their 'go to' wine. Plenty of stone fruit like peach and apricot, a bit of sugar and zippy acidity make it one of the most versatile food wines.

It seems redundant to make another dessert on Halloween night with the plentiful selection of candies that show up at the end of the night. And, while I rarely recommend wine with desserts this sweet, Vin du Bugey-Cerdon is a great 'candy' wine. This French sparkler from the Savoie has sweet strawberry aromas and is hot pink in color. Now doesn't that sound like the quintessential wine to pair with a Three Musketeer's Bar?

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Pozole con Pollo (Yield: 1 big pot of soup)

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 medium red onion, ¼" dice
3 zucchinis, ¼" dice
1 red pepper, ¼" dice
1 green pepper, ¼" dice
5 garlic cloves, minced
2 lbs. cooked chicken, ½" dice
(2) 40 oz. cans of chicken broth
2 cans golden hominy
½ tbsp. cumin
2 tbsp. onion salt
1 bunch fresh cilantro, chopped
4 fresh limes, juiced

DIRECTIONS

Sauté onion, peppers, and zucchini in hot vegetable oil. Turn heat to medium and add garlic. Sauté about 3 more minutes. Pour in chicken stock, add chicken bring to a slow boil. Simmer 10 minutes. Add hominy, cumin and onion salt. Simmer for 10 more minutes. Add cilantro and lime juice just before serving.