

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



December 2010 – Austrian Christmas

It seems like I have been inspired by my mom a lot this year. I guess that is appropriate since she was my first culinary instructor. This menu comes from Austria which is just over the border from my mother's homeland, Hungary.

The appetizer for this menu came from a pairing I had at a German restaurant in Alameda called Speisekammer. It was truly one of those, "Wow," moments. Smoked fish is perfect with the great grape of Austria, grüener veltliner. Grüener has searing acidity with citrus and white pepper notes. It is very similar to Sauvignon Blanc. The delicate smoke on the fish absolutely transforms the wine and tempers the acid. Serve smoked trout or salmon on top of little rye toasts and top with a dollop of horseradish cream. Garnish with pickled onion or capers. The salty fish and tangy cream will melt in your mouth and the wine will refresh your palate after each bite.

Wiener schnitzel, cracked potatoes and my mom's fresh cucumber salad will serve as a classic trio for your entree. Open a Zweigelt from the region and enjoy the bright berry flavors that make this wine so easy to drink. If you can't find Zweigelt, Sonoma County Zinfandel will work beautifully.

Enjoy your party and choose not to slave over dessert. Purchase a classic Linzer Torte from a local bakery and pair it with a trockenbeerenauslese (TBA) welschriesling from Neusiedler See or a TBA from Germany will work, too. The almonds, lemon and buttery crust will be just the right sweetness with the rich wine. Also, do choose the apricot filling. Raspberry or plum are both fantastic but the stone fruit notes will be beautifully harmonious with the wine.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Horseradish Cream

INGREDIENTS

½ cup cream cheese
½ cup sour cream
¼ cup grated fresh horseradish
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon white wine vinegar
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Process ingredients in food processor until well combined.

Yield: one cup

Pickled Onion

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup white vinegar
3 tablespoons sugar
pinch of salt
1 bay leaf
5 allspice berries
5 whole cloves
a small, dried chile pepper or ¼ tsp. of red chili flakes
1 large red onion, peeled, and thinly sliced into rings

DIRECTIONS

Bring vinegar, sugar, salt, seasonings and chile to a boil. Add the onion slices and simmer gently for 30 seconds. Remove from heat, cool and serve.

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Yield: 2 cups

Wiener Schnitzel

INGREDIENTS

4 (5 oz.) veal, chicken, turkey or pork cutlets
(traditional) pounded to 1/4 inch thickness
1/2 cup flour
1/4 tsp. each salt and pepper
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup bread crumbs
1/2 tsp. paprika
Oil for frying
Lemon wedges

DIRECTIONS

Heat oil in a large frying pan. Dredge cutlets in seasoned flour, then egg, then paprika breadcrumbs. Fry the cutlets in hot oil making sure the breaded meat “swims” in fat. Contrary to instinct, the breading will take on less oil than if the meat is sticking to the pan. Fry to golden brown and fully cooked through. Drain on paper towels. Serve with wedges of lemon.

Yield: 4 servings

Cracked Potatoes

INGREDIENTS

12 small-medium Yukon potatoes
1/2 cup olive oil
2 sprigs fresh thyme, plus 1/2 tablespoon
chopped fresh thyme leaves
Coarse salt and freshly cracked black pepper
1 clove garlic, sliced

DIRECTIONS

Choose potatoes that are similar in size; you can cut some in half if they are too large. Rinse and split the skin with a paring knife.

Over low heat, add the olive oil to a medium-sized, heavy-bottomed saucepan, then add the potatoes, thyme sprigs and season generously with salt and pepper.

Place the lid on the pan and allow to cook, undisturbed, shaking the pan every 5 minutes or so, until the potatoes are tender and browned, about 20 minutes. (Check occasionally to make sure the potatoes aren't browning too quickly and adjust heat accordingly.)

Remove the lid and cook a further 2 to 3 minutes, for the condensation to evaporate. Remove the thyme sprigs and add the sliced garlic and chopped fresh thyme and cook until the garlic is caramelized and chewy, about 2 minutes.

You can fish the potatoes and garlic out with a slotted spoon, but it is most efficient method is to use a metal colander fitted over a catch basin for the hot oil.

These are essentially roasted potatoes cooked on the stove top; a great alternative to boiled potatoes.

Yield: 6 servings

Mom's Cucumber Salad

INGREDIENTS

2 large cucumbers, sliced thin
1/2 red onion, sliced into rings
1 tbsp. salt
3/4 cup water

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2 tbsp. white, cider, or rice vinegar
¼ cup sugar
2 garlic cloves
paprika to garnish

DIRECTIONS

Place cucumbers and onion in a water tight bowl. Sprinkle with 1 tbsp. salt and cover with water. Stand for a minimum of ½ hour, preferably overnight.

Place cucumbers and onions in colander and gently squeeze all liquid with a paper towel. Return to water tight bowl. Sprinkle with sugar, add garlic and toss. The onions should separate into individual rings. Add ¾ cup water and vinegar. Stand for a minimum of 1 hour.

Serve chilled in small bowls, garnish with paprika.

Yield: 6 servings