

# PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



## March 2011 – Luck of the Irish

Here is a menu for this year's Irish holiday that is packed with flavor. It starts with a classic Irish beverage – beer – and continues with a California petite sirah, one of the biggest wines on the planet. Finally, end the evening with a nutty Irish whiskey.

Crack open an ice cold wheat beer to pair with your starter salad of arugula and spinach. Tossed with a tart sherry vinaigrette blended with pungent shallots, this is no wimpy salad. Counter the strong flavors of the dressing with cubes of red pears and aged cheddar cheese. The floral and citrus notes in the beer will echo the fruitiness of the pears and the nutty cheese will complement a similar character found in the beer.

Your entree beverage is made from the 'black' petite sirah grape that is now grown almost exclusively in California. However, the petite sirah pedigree is French in origin. An offspring of the Rhone varietal syrah, petite sirah usually makes a wine that has substantial alcohol and tannin levels. Both of these components make it a challenging wine to pair with food. Ground beef seasoned with plenty of salt will serve to tame the tannins. A little pepper and some fragrant allspice will complement the spicy flavors in the wine. The creamy potatoes and melted brie will further balance the full body of the petite sirah.

Finish the meal with a pot-distilled Irish whiskey. Clean nutty notes and flavors of honey, ginger and light molasses are the hallmarks of this beverage. The ginger and spice notes of the whiskey will soar with the caramelized fruit flavors in Pears Charlotte with Chamomile Crème Anglaise. Find the full recipe on [www.LaSommeliere.com](http://www.LaSommeliere.com).

So, go on. Pair Up!

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## Sherry Shallot Vinaigrette

### INGREDIENTS

1 large shallot, thinly sliced  
1 1/2 tablespoons sherry vinegar  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

### DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, toss the shallot with the vinegar and season with salt and pepper. Let stand for 15 minutes, then whisk in the oil.

Yield: 1/3 cup

## Elegant Shepherd's Pie

### INGREDIENTS

2 pounds russet potatoes, peeled and cubed  
2 tablespoons softened cream cheese  
1 large egg yolk  
1/2 cup cream  
Salt & pepper  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 3/4 pounds ground beef  
1 tsp. allspice  
1 onion, chopped  
8 crimini mushrooms, sliced  
2 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons flour  
1 cup beef stock  
2 teaspoons Worcestershire  
3 oz. brie cheese, sliced thin  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves

### DIRECTIONS

Boil potatoes in salted water until tender, about 12 minutes. Drain potatoes and pour

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them into a bowl. Combine sour cream, egg yolk and cream. Add the cream mixture into potatoes and mash until potatoes are almost smooth.

While potatoes boil, preheat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add oil to hot pan with beef. Season meat with salt, pepper and allspice. Brown and crumble meat for 3 or 4 minutes. Add the mushrooms and onion to the meat. Cook veggies with meat 5 minutes, stirring frequently. In a second small skillet over medium heat cook butter and flour together 2 minutes. Whisk in broth and Worcestershire sauce. Thicken gravy 1 minute. Add gravy to meat and vegetables.

Preheat broiler to high. Fill a small rectangular casserole with meat and vegetable mixture. Spoon potatoes over meat evenly. Top potatoes with slices brie cheese, broil 6 to 8 inches from the heat until potatoes brown and cheese is melted. Top casserole dish with chopped parsley and serve.

Yield: 4 servings

(on website)

## **Pears Charlotte with Chamomile Crème Anglaise**

### INGREDIENTS

#### Raisins and pears

1/2 cup water  
1/4 cup sugar  
3/4 cup golden raisins  
1/4 cup dark rum  
3 tablespoons honey

1 3/4 pounds firm but ripe Bartlett pears  
(about 4 medium), peeled, cored, cut into  
1/2-inch cubes

#### Custards

2 16-ounce brioche or egg bread loaves,  
crusts trimmed, bread cut into 1/3-inch-  
thick slices  
1 1/3 cups heavy whipping cream  
6 tablespoons sugar  
3 large eggs  
2 tablespoons dark rum  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

#### Anglaise

2 1/2 cups half and half  
8 chamomile tea bags  
8 large egg yolks  
1/3 cup sugar

### DIRECTIONS

#### For raisins and pears:

Bring 1/2 cup water and sugar to boil in heavy small saucepan, stirring until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat. Mix in raisins and rum. Let soak 1 hour. Drain raisins. Meanwhile, heat honey in large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add pears; sauté just until tender, about 2 minutes. Cool. Mix in raisins.

#### For custards:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter eight 1 1/4-cup custard cups, then sprinkle with sugar. Place cups on baking sheet. Place 8 bread slices on work surface. Cut out 1 round from each slice to fit cup bottoms. Line cup bottoms with bread rounds. Cut enough of remaining bread slices into strips wide enough to line cup sides; line cup sides completely with strips, cutting to fit. Cut

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enough of remaining bread into 1/2-inch cubes to measure 4 cups.

Whisk cream, sugar, eggs, rum, and vanilla in large bowl to blend well. Add 4 cups bread cubes and fruit mixture; stir to blend.

Divide among prepared cups.

Bake charlottes until center is puffed and set, about 55 minutes. (Can be made 2 hours ahead. Let stand at room temperature. Warm in 350°F oven for 7 minutes.) Run knife around sides of charlottes. Invert onto plates. Spoon crème anglaise over warm charlottes.

## For anglaise

Bring half and half to simmer in heavy medium saucepan. Add tea bags; remove from heat. Cover; let steep 30 minutes.

Strain mixture through strainer into bowl; discard tea bags. Return half and half to same saucepan; bring to simmer.

Whisk egg yolks and sugar in medium bowl to blend. Gradually whisk in hot half and half. Return mixture to same saucepan. Stir over medium-low heat until sauce thickens very slightly, about 15 minutes (do not boil; sauce will be thin but will thicken slightly when cold). Cover and chill overnight. (Can be made 2 days ahead. Keep refrigerated.) Serve cold.

Yield: 12 cakes