

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



January 2012 – Winter Fresh

After the indulgence of the holidays, it is nice to have a meal that is both appetizing and good for you. Take advantage of the abundance of tempting produce available in Northern California to create a meal that will shake off those mid-winter blues.

Start with a salad of fennel, arugula and aged jack cheese. This lightly dressed salad is unique and pairs nicely with sparkling water jazzed up with fresh cut cucumber slices. While citrus, berries, and mint are all also delicious, I find the green flavor of cucumber particularly refreshing. Water is essential to good health and changes dramatically with these additions. Whether you prefer sparking or still, lightly flavored water is the perfect partner for your salad.

For the main course, open up a winter white wine like Chenin Blanc. It is a welcome reprieve from the red wines often served in cooler winter months. Chenin Blanc's herbal notes will pick up on the ranch spices found in the Original Ranch Roasted Potatoes listed here. Add some grilled boneless breasts of chicken that have been marinating in your favorite citrus juices, olive oil, rosemary and salt. Cook it over an indoor grill pan and you can stay inside where it is nice and warm. Complete the meal by coating some asparagus with olive oil and salt and throwing it into the oven with the potatoes. Let them roast together for the last 7-10 minutes.

Chocolate Walnut Meringues are a heavenly way to end this meal. Plan to make them well in advance because, while they start in a pre-heated oven, they need to cook with the oven off for at least two hours to obtain their crisp crunch. Since these cookies are too sweet for wine, pair them with some slightly nutty chai tea to complement the chocolate and echo the

toasty flavor of the walnuts.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Fennel Salad

INGREDIENTS

1½ tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. sugar
½ tsp. olive oil
Salt and pepper
2 cups thinly sliced fennel, about 1 bulb
½ cup thinly sliced sweet onion
4 cups trimmed arugula
1 oz. shaved aged jack or parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS

Whisk together dressing. Toss fennel and onion with dressing. Place arugula on plate and a mound of fennel onion on top. Finish with cheese shavings.

Yield: four servings

Original Ranch Roasted Potatoes

INGREDIENTS

1 pound small YukonGold potatoes, quartered
2 tbsp. olive oil
¼ -½ packet (1 ounce) Hidden Valley® Original Ranch® Salad Dressing & Seasoning Mix

DIRECTIONS

Place potatoes in a gallon-size ziplock bag and add oil; seal bag. Toss to coat. Add

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salad dressing mix and toss again until coated. Bake in parchment lined baking pan at 450°F for 30 to 35 minutes or until potatoes are brown and crisp.

Yield: four servings

(on website)

Chocolate Walnut Meringues

INGREDIENTS

2 large egg whites, at room temperature
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
2/3 cup superfine granulated sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips or finely chopped semisweet chocolate
1 cup finely chopped walnuts

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F and line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat egg whites until foamy. Add the cream of tartar and beat until fluffy but not at all dry. (Be careful not to over beat.) Add the sugar gradually, about 3 tablespoons at a time. When 1/2 of the sugar has been added, add the vanilla extract. Continue beating and adding remaining sugar in batches, until all of the sugar is dissolved and the meringue is very shiny and tight. Gently fold in the chocolate chips and chopped nuts.

Working one teaspoon at a time, push a teaspoonful of meringue from the tip of 1 teaspoon with the back of another teaspoon onto the lined baking sheets, leaving 1-inch of space between cookies. Place baking

sheets in the preheated oven and turn the oven off. Leave the cookies (undisturbed) in the oven for at least 2 hours and up to overnight, or until cookies are crisp and dry.

Yield: 48 cookies