

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



February 2012 – Warming Syrah

Syrah is one of those dense red wines that make you feel warm just by looking at it. A robust wine, Syrah has black fruit flavors of berry and dried plum as well as notes of tobacco and dark soil. Also, Syrah is most often aged in toasted oak barrels, which impart the flavor of bacon. Here is a meal that pairs each course with a different version of Syrah wine.

New World Syrah from California, Oregon and Washington tends to be more fruit forward and lower in acid than French Syrah. Potato Leek Soup with Sausage Lardon is a great starter on a cold winter night. This soup is rich and creamy and accented with pork flavors; it is perfect for Syrah. The fat balances the high alcohol and pork flavors are echoed in the wine.

In the Old World (read: Europe), Syrah is celebrated in southern France. The most elegant Syrah wines come from the Northern Rhone and have fine-grained tannins. Slightly more rustic versions are found in the Southern Rhone and the vast Languedoc-Roussillon. I have chosen Alton Brown's Pot Roast recipe to pair with a French Syrah as the main course. I like Alton's recipe because it uses balsamic vinegar (to balance the higher acid found in French wines), cocktail olives (which have a briny, earthy characteristic) and raisins (to echo the dark fruit in the wine). Add your favorite starch to catch the juices and something green to make your mother happy and you have a complete plate.

To end the meal with a touch of sweetness, head back to the states where Syrah is often made into a delicious port-style wine. The deep flavors of the Syrah grape intensify as the grapes hang on the vine and the high alcohol is perfectly balanced by the extra sugar. The classic

pairing with port-style wines is Stilton, however, if you prefer less stinky cheese, try Gruyere. The tiny, crunchy crystals in Gruyere are a nice contrast to the silky texture of the wine. And, the fruit in the wine is intensified by the sharp, nutty flavors in Gruyere.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Potato Leek Soup with Sausage Lardon

INGREDIENTS

1 large or 2 small leeks, about 1 pound
2 bay leaves
2 tablespoons butter
2 strips bacon, chopped
1/2 cup dry white wine
5 cups chicken stock
1 to 1 1/4 pounds russet potatoes, diced
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
3/4 teaspoon white pepper
1/2 to 3/4 cup crème fraîche or heavy cream
2 tsp. fresh thyme or 1 tsp. dried thyme
2 tablespoons snipped chives, garnish
2oz. link sausage, cut into 3/4" x 1/2" pieces, fried crisp

DIRECTIONS

Trim the green portions of the leek. Using a sharp knife, halve the white part of the leek lengthwise and rinse well under cold running water to rid the leek of any sand. Slice thinly crosswise and set aside.

In a large soup pot over medium heat, melt the butter and add the bacon. Cook for 5 to 6 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the

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bacon is very soft and has rendered most of its fat. Add the chopped leeks and cook until wilted, about 5 minutes. Add the wine and bring to a boil. Add the bay leaves, chicken stock, potatoes, salt and white pepper, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes, or until the potatoes are falling apart and the soup is very flavorful.

Remove the bay leaves and puree the soup with an immersion blender. Stir in the crème fraîche, thyme and adjust the seasoning. Top with sausage lardon.

Yield: 8 cups

Alton Brown's Pot Roast

INGREDIENTS

1 (2-pound) blade cut chuck roast
2 teaspoons kosher salt
2 teaspoons cumin
Vegetable oil
1 medium onion, chopped
5 to 6 cloves garlic, smashed
1 cup tomato juice
1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
1 cup cocktail olives, drained and broken
1/2 cup dark raisins

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 200°. Place a wide, heavy skillet over high heat for 2 minutes.

Meanwhile, rub both sides of meat with the salt and cumin. Brown meat on both sides and remove from pan. Add just enough vegetable oil to cover the bottom of the pan then add the onion and garlic. Stir constantly until onion is softened.

Add the tomato juice, vinegar, olives, and raisins. Bring to a boil and reduce the liquid by half. Create a pouch with wide, heavy duty aluminum foil. Place half the reduced liquid/solid mixture on the foil, add the roast, and then top with the remaining mixture.

Close the pouch, and wrap tightly in another complete layer of foil. Cook for 3 to 3 1/2 hours until very tender. Puree the cooking liquids and solids into a sauce to serve alongside if desired.

Yield: 6-8 servings