

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



July 2013 – Best of Summer

Judging wine competitions is one of the best parts of my job. This year, I had the pleasure of judging the North of the Gate Wine Competition at the Sonoma-Petaluma County Fair run by Valery Uhl. The wines for this competition are limited to California wines made from grapes that are grown north of the Golden Gate Bridge. After personally tasting over 150 wines, this competition confirmed that Northern California has some of the highest quality wines in the world.

Here is an evening that features the “Best Of” wines from this year’s competition. The 2012 Handley Cellars Riesling from Anderson Valley was a shoe-in for the top white. The Anderson Valley has textbook growing conditions for Riesling. Low night and morning temperatures keep the acid levels high and lots of daytime sunshine ripens the grapes to their peak intensity. Riesling is my favorite cheese wine. Its ripe apricot flavor offers a lovely counterpoint to the pronounced flavor of monastery cheeses that have been washed in brine, wine, beer, or brandy. Additionally, it goes well with cooked, pressed cheeses like Swiss and Gouda. Arrange the cheese on a cutting board with bright green and red grapes. Slice up some crunchy baguette and you have a beautiful, delicious starter.

The Red Sweepstakes winner was the 2010 Trentadue, La Storia, Cuvée Evelyn, also from Alexander Valley. The wine is made from classic Bordeaux grapes and it is a crowd pleaser. It would be terrific with Dean Carr’s 6-Hour Tri-tip because its bright acidity will stand-up to the lemon in the marinade. Additionally, standard BBQ sides like potato or macaroni salad, baked beans and coleslaw will all match seamlessly with the herbal and dark berry

flavors.

The grand finale to your evening and at the fair is the Best of Show wine, the 2012 Navarro Vineyards, Anderson Valley, Cluster Select, Late Harvest Gewürztraminer. It is rich and honeyed, with a caramelized, floral-pear flavor that makes it perfect with the Upside Down Pear Polenta Cake found on my website.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Dean Carr’s 6-Hour Tri-tip

INGREDIENTS

½ cup lemon juice
½ cup soybean oil
¼ cup white sugar
¼ cup soy sauce
¼ cup black pepper
2 tbsp. seasoned salt
¼ cup chopped garlic
¼ cup chopped dried onions
4 lbs. tri-tip

DIRECTIONS

Place all the marinade ingredients in a one-gallon zip lock bag. Shake until ingredients are well mixed. Add meat. Let stand in the refrigerator for 6-24 hours.

Yield: serves 4-6

(on website)

Upside Down Pear Polenta Cake

INGREDIENTS

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3 bosc pears, ripe but still firm, about 1 1/2-1 3/4 pounds
1/2 lemon, juiced
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons corn syrup
3/4 cup light brown sugar
1 cup unsalted butter, softened
1 1/2 cup sugar
3 eggs
2 1/2 cups flour
3/4 cup fine yellow cornmeal/polenta
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1 cup milk

Optional garnish:

1 cup heavy cream
1/2 teaspoon sugar
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and flour the sides of a nonstick 9 x 13-inch pan.

Peel pears, cut in half lengthwise and remove the core and tough stem. Acidulate pear halves (to minimize browning) by dipping them in mixture of one cup of water and the lemon juice; drain, cover with plastic wrap and set aside.

In a small saucepan, heat six tablespoons butter, corn syrup and brown sugar and whisk until sugar melts and mixture is combined. Pour butter-brown sugar mixture into the prepared pan, spreading evenly across the bottom.

Cream one cup of softened butter and sugar together until they are lightened and light

yellow in color, scraping the bowl often. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition and scraping often.

Combine flour, cornmeal, salt and baking powder in a medium bowl; in a measuring cup, add the vanilla and almond extracts to the milk.

Add the flour mixture to the egg mixture alternately with the milk; end with the dry ingredients. Mix just until well combined, frequently scraping bottom and sides of the bowl.

Cut reserved pears lengthwise into 1/4-inch thick slices. As each piece is cut, shingle the slices in rows on top of the brown sugar mixture.

Spoon batter on top of the pears and spread evenly. Bake until golden brown, about 50-60 minutes. Cake should spring back when touched, but center should still be slightly moist when tested with a toothpick.

Rest for 15-20 minutes; run a knife around the edge of the pan before turning out onto a platter for serving.

Meanwhile, mix cream, sugar and vanilla; whisk to soft peaks.

Serve cake with a dollop of whipped cream.

Note: If cake cools too much and is difficult to turn out, warm the bottom of the pan slightly before flipping it over.

Yield: 12-14 servings