

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



September 2013 – Golden Days

September in Northern California epitomizes the phrase “The golden days of summer.” The sunsets arrive earlier, but the days are still filled with sunshine. The promise of fall is in the air, and the nights offer a hint of crispness. This menu celebrates our golden state with golden fruits, golden vegetables and even golden candy!

California provides beautiful ripe fruits and vegetables for a Cornucopia Salad. Tart apples, sweet mango, crunchy celery and creamy avocado, this salad has it all. And, because it has it all, only sparkling wine can handle all these flavors and textures. Consider a rosé wine made from Pinot Noir grapes to provide full-body and intense flavor. And, if you like your bubbles with a hint of sweetness, the sweeter ingredients will welcome an off-dry wine.

With fall’s arrival, comfort foods become a staple in my house. Bright yellow, Butternut Squash Mac-n-“Cheese” will fool you into thinking you are about to partake in tangy cheddar pasta, but the lightly sweet flavor of butternut squash touched by earthy sage and piquant garlic will be an unexpected pleasure. Look for a slightly smoky chardonnay to partner the dish. Chardonnay develops a deep golden color when it spends time in oak, and that color will complement the golden pasta. Toasty oak will balance the sweetness of the squash, and the chardonnay’s full-bodied, creamy texture will harmonize with the cream in the sauce.

Golden Butterscotch Bars are too sweet for wine, but would be perfect with hot, black coffee. Coffee’s acidic bitterness is exactly right with the super-sweet decadence of this dessert. Try a coffee made from beans grown in Mexico, particularly from

the Oaxaca and Chiapas regions. Mexican coffee beans produce a cup that is soft and smooth, yet still bright with light to medium body.

So, go on. Pair Up!

Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. www.LaSommeliere.com

Cornucopia Salad

INGREDIENTS

½ cup sliced almonds
3 tbsp. sugar
½ head green leaf lettuce
½ head romaine lettuce
1 cup celery
4 green onions sliced
1 apple, peeled and diced
¼ cup raisins (dried cranberries)
½ cup blue cheese, crumbled
1 mango, peeled and diced
1 avocado, diced

DRESSING

½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. pepper
¼ cup oil
1 tbsp. chopped parsley
2 tbsp. sugar
2 tbsp. white wine vinegar

DIRECTIONS

In a small frying pan, heat 3 tbsp. sugar until just beginning to melt. Add almonds and toss to coat with melted sugar. While stirring at all times, cook until almonds begin to brown lightly. Transfer to a sheet of aluminum foil to cool.

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Blend dressing ingredients and pour dressing onto the bottom of a large bowl. Add lettuces, celery and green onion and toss with dressing. Add remaining ingredients, caramelized almonds and toss again gently.

Yield: 8 starter or 4 entrée servings

Butternut Squash Mac-n- “Cheese”

INGREDIENTS

1 medium butternut squash (about 1½ pounds), peeled, seeded and cut into 2” chunks
1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 teaspoon dried rubbed sage
Coarse salt and ground pepper
5 cloves garlic, peel on
1 cup half-and-half
1½ lbs. elbow macaroni
Toppings, such as grated Parmesan cheese, chopped toasted walnuts, finely chopped fresh sage

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Toss squash with oil and sage; season generously with salt and pepper. Scatter garlic around squash. Roast until squash is very tender, about 40 minutes, tossing once halfway through. Remove and discard skin from garlic.

Transfer squash and garlic to a food processor; puree. With motor running, add half-and-half through the feed tube; process until smooth. Add 1 to 2 cups water; continue to process until smooth, adding water to thin if necessary. Season generously to taste with salt.

Cook pasta according to package instructions. Reserve 1 cup pasta water; drain pasta and return to pot. Pour sauce over pasta; toss to coat. Add some pasta water to thin sauce if necessary. Serve with desired toppings.

Yield: 8 servings

Golden Butterscotch Bars

INGREDIENTS

1 package (17-1/2 ounces) sugar cookie mix
1 package (3.4 ounces) instant butterscotch pudding mix
1/2 cup butter, softened
1 egg
14 ounces caramels
1/2 cup evaporated milk
2 cups mixed nuts
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup butterscotch chips

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, combine the sugar cookie mix, pudding mix, butter and egg. Press into an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until set. In a large saucepan, combine caramels and milk. Cook and stir over medium-low heat until melted. Remove from the heat. Stir in nuts and vanilla. Pour over crust. Sprinkle with butterscotch chips. Cool completely. Cut into bars. Store in an airtight container.

Yield: 3 dozen