

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



February 2015 – Smart Money

The economy is on a roll, but it never hurts to have an economic meal in your back-pocket. This meal is elegant enough to serve to guests but simple enough for a weeknight family meal. As usual, I have included beverage pairings. As a bonus, these pairings won't result in a hangover for your head or your wallet.

I love having spinach in the refrigerator. A large container is inexpensive and will stay fresh for 10-14 days. It is delicious sautéed in olive oil with garlic or raw in a salad. Keep in mind, salad can be challenging with wine because the acidity of the dressing makes the wine taste flat. Spinach is even more difficult because its astringency actually increases the perception of the bitter tannins in wine. So in place of wine, serve your salad with sparkling water garnished with orange slices. The orange flavor will add interest to the water and echo the orange flavors in the Spinach-Orange Salad with Spiced Pecans.

South American red wines are one of the best wine values on the market. You can get fantastic Cabernets from Chile and Malbecs from Argentina for around \$7-8. Rich, fruit-forward, and full-bodied, these wines are perfect with the warm comfort foods our bodies crave in the cold winter months. Meatloaf with Sour Cream Gravy fits these requirements perfectly. Bacon and sausage add tons of flavors to the meat, and sour cream gravy will be a nice change from ketchup. You can serve the meatloaf with requisite mashed-potatoes and a simple, steamed green vegetable.

Easy Coffee Pudding has very few and inexpensive ingredients that are probably already in your kitchen. I like the idea of ending a meal with the flavor of coffee, but I don't like actual coffee with the texture of

pudding; I think hot coffee tastes better with crumbly-textured desserts like cake and cookies. With this dessert, sparkling water is a great way to cleanse your palate.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Spinach-Orange Salad with Spiced Pecans

INGREDIENTS

3 cups fresh baby spinach, washed and dried
2 green onions, chopped
1 orange, supremed and halved
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 teaspoon sugar
1/2 cup pecan halves
1 teaspoon dried rosemary
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Dressing:

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons orange or grapefruit juice (or a combination)
3 tablespoons canola oil
1 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Put the spinach and green onions in large salad bowl and sprinkle with the halved citrus supremes. In a small sauté pan over medium heat, add the butter and sugar and stir until the butter is melted. Add the pecans and toss until the pecans begin to brown. Stir in the rosemary and cayenne and stir just a few seconds to release the aroma. Remove from the heat and season with salt

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and pepper, to taste. Sprinkle the pecans on the salad while still warm. Drizzle the dressing over salad and serve.

Dressing:

In a small bowl, add all the ingredients and whisk until emulsified.

Yield: 4 servings

(on website)

Meatloaf with Sour Cream

Gravy

INGREDIENTS

3 strips bacon
2 eggs
1/4 cup ketchup
2 tablespoons sour cream
3/4 cup plain breadcrumbs
2 tablespoons minced yellow onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
Kosher and freshly ground black pepper
2 Italian sausages, casings removed (mild or spicy)
1 pound 80/20 ground beef

Gravy

2 tablespoons butter
1/2 onion, minced
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
1 cup beef stock
3 tablespoons sour cream
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Line the glass loaf pan with the bacon, centering the strips lengthwise in the pan, letting the ends hang over the short edge.

Lightly beat the eggs in a large bowl. Add the ketchup and sour cream and mix. Add the breadcrumbs, onions and garlic, stirring to incorporate, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Mix in the sausage, breaking it up to season the egg mixture evenly. Mix in the ground beef, using your hands to mix gently but thoroughly. Press the meatloaf mixture firmly into the loaf pan with the bacon, shaping the meat into a loaf shape. Unmold the meatloaf by turning the pan upside-down, and tapping the bottom to release the meatloaf. Tuck the bacon under the loaf, and place it bacon-side up on a foiled or parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake until the meat registers 160 degrees F, 50 minutes. Let rest 10 minutes before slicing. Serve with Sour Cream Gravy.

Gravy:

In a saucepan, heat the butter over medium heat, add the onions and sauté until the onions are soft, about six minutes. Sprinkle the flour on top of the onions and cook for one minute, stirring. Turn up the heat to medium-high and whisk in the stock and 1/2 cup water. Cook at a simmer, whisking frequently, until the gravy begins to thicken. Turn off the heat, whisk in the sour cream, and then the mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Taste before adding salt and pepper. Serve on the meatloaf.

Yield: 6 servings

Easy Coffee Pudding

INGREDIENTS

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2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Pinch salt
2 cups whole milk
1 tablespoon instant espresso powder
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Whisk the cornstarch, sugar, cinnamon and salt in a 2-quart heavy saucepan. Gradually whisk in the milk. Boil the mixture over medium-high heat, whisking constantly, about 2 minutes. The mixture will be thick when done. Remove the saucepan from the heat. Whisk in the espresso and vanilla until smooth.

Transfer the mixture to a bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Chill the bowl in the fridge until cold, at least 2 hours. Serve the pudding chilled.

Yield: 4 servings