

WINES WE COOK WITH

A food and wine tasting.

Several of our members are preparing dishes with the wines we more often cook with than drink. We will be tasting a food then sampling the wine then taking a second bite to see if we really feel the wine translates in the food.

Becky Wilson

PORT

Port was first exported from Portugal to Great Britain in the 17th century. At that time it was called Red Portugal Wine. In the 18th century it was discovered that the addition of Brandy stabilized the wine so it could better survive the sea journey. The colorless grape spirit **aguardente** is added to stop fermentation at a rate of 100 liters per 450 liters of wine.

In times past up to 48 grape varieties could be used in the production of port, but now there are seven: **Touriga; Nacional; Tinto; Cao; Tinta Roriz; Tinta Barroca; Touriga Francesa; Tinta Amarela;** and **Mourisco**. The port is matured in wooden casks called pipas. In lower quality rubies and tawnys the port can be exported in these pipas. However, all but the lowest quality is bottled in Portugal as indicated by the paper label over the cork and seal.

Blue cheese, Port and Walnut Spread

Recipe Prepared by William Brown IV

1 pound blue cheese (such as Stilton or Gorgonzola), crumbled

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened

⅓ to ½ cup Tawny Port

1½ cups chopped walnuts

In a food processor, blend the cheese, butter, and Port until the mixture is smooth. In a bowl, combine the cheese mixture and the walnuts. Transfer the spread to crocks or ramekins. The spread keeps, covered and chilled, for up to 3 weeks. Serve the spread with crackers

MADEIRA

It is said that before Madeira was made known to Man it was the setting for lively celebrations held in honor of the nectar of the Gods. The Island of Madeira, 375 miles west of Casablanca in the Atlantic Ocean, gives its name to the only wine in the world baked in an oven. Madeira was a good watering port on the sea trade routes. They would pick up the island's wine to sell in other ports. Unknown to the wine makers, the long weeks in the hot ships holds was greatly improving the quality of the wine. This was discovered when a shipment was returned unsold. That started the practice of heating the casks in special ovens or running hot pipes through the wine.

After the new wine, called "**vinho claro**" - clear wine, is fortified with wine alcohol to control fermentation and to retain the natural sweetness of the grapes it is ready for its boiling in large coated vats, generally holding **30 or 40 thousand litres of wine**. These vats are fitted with serpentines of stainless steel to evenly radiate the heat throughout the wine. Then the wine is poured into the huge unheated chambers. The heat is **applied very slowly** - at a rate of about **5 degrees Celsius (9°F) per day**. This is continued throughout the rest of the month to eventually achieve a temperature of about **40 to 50 degrees Celsius (104 - 122°F)**. If the wine is heated too quickly it develops prematurely and acquires a burnt taste or flavor. The heating process continues at this bubbling pace for another 3 months and careful observation and control is maintained, including governmental verification. One practice is the official waxing and sealing of the heating gauges to 55 degrees Celsius - the maximum temperature permissible to bake the wine. At the end of the process, the heat is gradually reduced until the wine reaches room temperature before **it is fined and placed in oak casks** for quiet and restful maturing.

There has been an extreme shortage of the four noble grapes used to make Madeira since the Phylloxera epidemic in the 1870. Those are **Sercial, Verdelho, Bual (a.k.a. Boal), and Malmsey**. Most cooking Madeira (80% of exports) is made from a different and considered inferior grape, **Red Tinta Negra Mole**.

Soleras are started with a row of casks of old matured Madeira, one next to the other. The **criadeiras** are the "**nurseries**", in which selected casks of old matured Madeira (a separate solera for malmsey, bual, and so on) are at floor level. The next tier has the same type of wine, but of later vintage. Then there are third and fourth tiers up on the hierarchy making "criadeiras".

Wine is taken from the bottom casks and is refreshed from a tier above, and so on. The newer wines are blended with the older ones and the original character is preserved. But between the refresher and the refreshed there may be a period of time up to twenty years of gradual blending. Each tier is in the process of maturing at roughly the same rate, so that the final solera remains consistent in character.

After all the hard work and the years of waiting the wine is ready to bottle. As a final preparation the wine is filtered in a specially designed cylinder containing about **200 rings of coarsely woven cotton** (several other models of filters are used). At this point, the wine is squeezed under pressure through tightly packed rings and into ½ centimetre holes in a tube to the bottling machine.

Corking and labeling are done manually, and one final piece of handwork is the **seal of guarantee** of quality from the wine institute.

Mushroom and Gruyere Bread Pudding

Prepared by Barbara Brown

Nonstick vegetable oil spray
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 pound assorted fresh mushrooms (such as crimini, button, and stemmed shiitake), thinly sliced
1 cup chopped onion
1/2 cup dried porcini mushrooms,* broken into pieces
2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 cup **Madeira**
2 cups whole milk
4 large eggs
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
12 slices white bread, crusts trimmed
3/4 cup grated Gruyère cheese
3/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Spray 13x9x2-inch glass baking dish with nonstick spray. Heat oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add fresh mushrooms and onion; sauté 3 minutes. Add dried porcini; sauté until mushrooms are brown, about 8 minutes. Mix in tarragon and garlic; season with salt and pepper. Transfer to medium bowl. Add Madeira to same skillet; boil until reduced by half, stirring, about 1 minute. Whisk milk and eggs in large bowl to blend. Whisk in Madeira, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Arrange 6 bread slices over bottom of prepared dish. Top with mushroom mixture, half of Gruyère, and half of Parmesan cheese. Cover with remaining 6 bread slices. Drizzle egg mixture over; press gently to submerge bread. Cover; chill at least 1 hour and up to 3 hours. Preheat oven to 350°F. Sprinkle remaining Gruyère and Parmesan cheese over bread pudding. Bake uncovered until bread pudding puffs and top is golden brown, about 40 minutes.

Bon Appetit, Nov. 2002 .

VERMOUTH

Vermouth is the name given to any of several wine varieties that contain aromatic herbs, other flavors, sweetenings, and grape spirits with an alcohol content of about 16 %. It is produced mainly by a few small companies in Piedmont, Italy.

Vermouth is liquor made from wine, with a number of different herbs added for flavor. It is known as an *aromatized liquor*, and some people refer to it as a *fortified wine* – although strictly speaking, a fortified wine usually has alcohol added to it to increase its potency, while vermouth uses the alcohol for the flavor it imparts.

Vermouth was created in the late 18th century by an Italian and was originally used as a tonic drink because of the healing herbs that went into its creation. These herbs included wormwood, nutmeg, coriander, juniper, orange peel, cloves, marjoram, and cinnamon.

Artichoke and Blue Cheese Bisque

Prepared by John Pardoe

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/3 cup vermouth
- 2 8-ounce packages frozen artichoke hearts
- 3 cups low-salt chicken broth
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 cup whipping cream
- 1/4 cup crumbled blue cheese (about 2 ounces)
- Chopped fresh chives

Melt butter in heavy large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until translucent, about 10 minutes. Add vermouth and simmer until all liquid evaporates, about 4 minutes. Add artichokes, broth, and thyme. Simmer until artichoke hearts begin to fall apart, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Cool slightly. Working in batches, puree soup in blender until smooth. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate.) Pour soup into saucepan. Stir in cream and blue cheese. Simmer over medium heat until cheese melts and soup is smooth, whisking constantly, about 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Ladle into bowls. Sprinkle with chives and serve.

Noggins Restaurant, Raw Bar & Pub, Shaker Heights, OH

MARSALA

Marsala is the western section of Sicily. In 1798 they managed to substitute their own wines in place of the standard rum in an English naval shipment. In those seafaring days, something had to be done to wine to allow it to last the long ocean journeys. Brandy was added to allow the wine to last longer, and to be more resistant to temperature changes. These were called "fortified wines"

Once the British had a taste of Marsala, demand grew quickly. In the United States during Prohibition, things became even more interesting. The typical Marsala bottles made the wine seem like medicine. People found that getting Marsala was less risky than other types of wine. While not as popular now, it is still used quite frequently as a cooking wine in Italian dishes. Marsala uses the following grapes:

- white skin/berry grapes: **Grillo, Catarratto, Inzolia** and **Damaschino** for golden and amber Marsala
- dark red skin/berry grapes: **Pignatello, Calabrese, Nerello Mascalese** and **Nero d'Avola** for ruby red Marsala

Marsala is made in the "solera" tradition - a melding of years. First, a keg is put down. Subsequent years with similar tastes are placed in kegs above the first. When liquid is drawn out of the bottom (oldest) keg, it is refreshed with liquid from the next keg up, and so on. In this manner, the taste remains the same throughout the cycle, and every bottle you get has (potentially) some liquid from the very first vintage.

Types of Marsala

- Fine: 17% alcohol, aged >1 yr
- Superiore: 18% alcohol, aged >2 years
- Superiore Riserva: 18% alcohol, aged 4 years
- Vergine Soleras: 18% alcohol, aged 5 years

Marsala was traditionally served between the first and second courses. It is now also served chilled, with Parmesan (stravecchio), Gorgonzola, Roquefort and other, spicy cheeses.

Salmon with Lemon Capers and Rosemary

Prepared by Barbara Brown

- 4 (6 oz.) Salmon Fillets
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary leaves
- 8 lemon slices (about 2 lemons)
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup Marsala wine
- 4 teaspoons capers
- 4 pieces aluminum foil

Brush top and bottom of salmon fillets with olive oil and season with salt, pepper and rosemary. Place each piece of seasoned salmon on a piece of foil large enough to fold over and seal. Top each piece of salmon with 2 lemon slices, 1 teaspoon of lemon juice, 2 tablespoons of wine, and 1 teaspoon of capers. Wrap up salmon tightly in foil packets

Place a grill pan over medium-high heat or preheat a gas or charcoal grill. Place the foil packets on the hot grill and cook for 10 minutes for a 1-inch thick piece of salmon. Serve in the foil packets.

Giada De Laurentiis

SAUTERNE

Sauterne [*soh-TERN*], an elegant sweet wine from the Sauternes and Bordeaux regions of western France, it is made from **sauvignon blanc** or **semillon** grapes that have been infected by a beneficial mold, or “noble rot”, called *botrytis cinerea*, which causes the grapes to shrivel, leaving a sugary fruit with concentrated flavors.

The best Sauternes come from vines that have been hand-picked (as many as 12 separate times) to ensure that the grapes are not removed from the vines before reaching the perfect degree of ripeness required for these wines. French winemakers only produce sweet Sauternes in years when the grapes are perfectly ripened and botrytis infected-otherwise they turn their grapes into dry wines.

The eminent **Château d'Yquem**, the most famous of the châteaux in Sauternes, undisputedly makes the best wines in the area. Sauternes are most notable as dessert wines but, because of their high acidity, they also make excellent partners for rich dishes like pâté, caviar and foie gras.

Sauterne is also a generic name used in the United States for some inexpensive, dry to semisweet white wines made from various mediocre grapes.

CHICKEN BREAST WITH HONEY SAUTERNES SAUCE

Prepared by Pat Valas

SAUCE:

- ¼ c. plus 2 tbsp. honey
- 1½ c. Sauternes (Sweet wine)
- 1 c. canned low salt broth
- 2 Tbsp. soy sauce

CARAMELIZED ONIONS

- 1 (10 oz.) basket pearl onions
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- ¼ c. water
- 1 Tbsp. honey

CHICKEN:

- 1 to 2 lbs. boneless chicken breast (depending on the size of portions desired)
- ½ c. dry white wine
- Butter
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ c. unsalted butter
- 1 pkg. frozen chopped spinach

Sauce: Heat honey in heavy small skillet over medium high heat until honey darkens and becomes fragrant, swirling pan occasionally, about 3 minutes. Carefully add Sauternes and stock. Boil mixture until reduced to 1 cup, about 20 minutes. Add soy sauce and boil 3 minutes longer. Onions: Blanch onions 2 minutes in boiling water. Drain. Rinse under cold water to cool. Drain. Using small sharp knife, trim off root end of onions; peel off skin. Melt butter in heavy medium skillet over medium heat. Add onions and sauté until golden brown and almost tender, about 10 minutes. Add ¼ cup water and honey. Cover and simmer until onions are tender, about 5 minutes. Uncover and continue cooking until onions are caramelized, stirring occasionally, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

Chicken: Place chicken in baking dish in one layer. Dot with butter and season with salt and pepper. Pour wine around chicken. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes until done. Cook spinach and season with salt and pepper. Reheat onions over medium heat, stirring constantly. Bring sauce to a boil; remove from heat and gradually whisk in 1/4 cup unsalted butter. Divide spinach among plates. Place chicken breast atop spinach. Spoon sauce over chicken. Garnish with onions and serve. I add my favorite stuffing with this dish.

Cooks.com

BEAUMES-DE-VENISE CAKE WITH GRAPES*(GATEAU DE BEAUMES-DE-VENISE AUX RAISINS)*

Prepared by Pat Valas

Named after a town in the Vaucluse and the sweet, fortified wine produced there.

Olive oil

1½ cups all purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon baking soda

¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar

8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 large eggs

1 teaspoon grated lemon peel

1 teaspoon grated orange peel

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup Beaumes-de-Venise or other Muscat wine

1½ cups red seedless grapes

Preheat oven to 400°F. Brush 10-inch-diameter spring form pan with olive oil. Line bottom of pan with parchment; brush parchment with olive oil. Sift flour and next 3 ingredients into bowl. Whisk ¾ cup sugar, 6 tablespoons butter and 3 tablespoons oil in large bowl until smooth. Whisk in eggs, both peels and vanilla. Add flour mixture alternately with wine in 3 additions each, whisking just until smooth after each addition. Transfer batter to prepared pan; smooth top. Sprinkle grapes over batter. Bake cake until top is set, about 20 minutes. Dot top of cake with 2 tablespoons butter; sprinkle 2 tablespoons sugar over. Bake until golden and tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 20 minutes longer. Cool in pan on rack 20 minutes. Release pan sides. Serve slightly warm or at room temperature.

Serves 10.

Bon Appétit. May 1999

SHERRY

Sherry is a fortified wine from a small region of Spain, made from the Muscat, Palomino, and Pedro Ximenez grapes. In the United States and some other countries, some producers market Sherry-style wines – though technically, like the use of the term *Champagne* for sparkling white wines, calling such wines *Sherry* is incorrect.

Sherry is made in the early stages like most other types of wine. Once it has fermented, however, it is fortified with **brandy**. At this point, some Sherry has more yeast added and some does not. Sherry is similar in some ways to other fortified wines, such as Port – in comparison to Port, however, Sherry is quite a bit less alcoholic.

Sherry may come in a variety of different styles, each with its own benefits and drawbacks. **Oloroso** [*O-lo-RO-so*] is a type of Sherry that is around 17.5% alcohol – too high in alcohol content to allow the growth of any yeast – which is extremely dark and full of flavor. **Amontillado** [*ah-MOAN-tee-YAH-doh*] is a type of Sherry that usually has around 15% alcohol, and has flor yeast added to the Sherry after initial fermentation. Amontillado is a lighter wine than Oloroso. **Fino** [*FEE-no*] is a type of Sherry that is quite dry in texture, and the lightest of all Sherry varieties. Sweet Sherry is one of these drier Sherry wines with a sweet wine such as Muscat added to it.

Sherry has a long and prestigious history – rivaling that of most wines still around today. The first record of grapes in what is now the **Jerez** [*HEY-deth*] region of Spain where Sherry comes from is by a 1st century B.C. Greek, who talks about the vines being brought there in 1100 B.C. There is ample archaeological evidence that the Romans enjoyed wine from this region of Spain.

The grapes of Jerez had a difficult time during the Moorish period of Spain, when Islamic precepts resulted in the uprooting of many of the vines. A great deal survived, however, and once the Moors left Spain in the 13th century, vines were replanted with an incredible passion. From then on, the wines of Jerez were popular throughout Europe, particularly in England, where they became known as Sherry.

Columbus is said to have brought ample supplies of Sherry on his journey to the New World and Magellan is famously known to have spent more money on Sherry for his long journey around the world than on weapons. The fortification of Sherry, like Port, allows it to survive rough sea journeys much better than more sensitive wines, helping to explain its popularity on long trips. In the 19th century, Sherry took its place as one of the world's truly great alcohols, being exported in great quantity to England and the United States, as well as to the rest of the world. It was this era that saw a refinement of Sherry-making procedure and began allowing for longer aging of the wines before release, resulting in richer, fuller wines.

Sherry Butter Nut Drops

Prepared by Barbara Eisberg

1½ cups unsalted butter, at room temperature

1¾ cups sifted confectioners sugar

3⅓ cups sifted all purpose flour

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ cup dry sherry

1 cup ground pecans

2 egg whites beaten

Pecan halves, optional

Preheat oven to 350° F. Cream the butter and the sugar together with an electric mixer until fluffy. In a separate bowl, combine the flour and salt. Mix the flour into the butter mixture, alternating with the sherry, making sure to finish with the flour. Stir in the ground pecans. Drop by the teaspoonful onto a cookie sheet and roll each portion between your palms to make smooth, even balls. Press each one into the cookie sheet and brush with beaten egg white. Using a fork, knife or another tool, press a design into the top of each cookie or press a pecan half, right side up into each cookie. Bake in preheated oven for 25 minutes. Remove from oven, let cool on a wire rack. Cool and let cookies sit overnight to ripen. Serve or store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Food Network

SHAOXING

As we know rice wine has been made in China since 2500 B.C. Shaoxing [*shau-SHING*] rice wine is made from a **brown rice** from the Shaoxing area in east China, south of Shanghai, and is considered the best rice to make wine.

The first step in this process is called steeping. This is when the rice is put into a large vat of water for 18-20 days. Then the rice is cooked with steam, followed by a fermentation process where the steamed rice is added to water and wheat yeast, and then fermented for 90 days. In the next process, the solids are separated from the liquid, and the liquid is pasteurized at a temperature of 194°F. The liquid is then aged in 24-liter earthen barrels for 5 years.

Now various batches are blended to create a final product with consistent flavor and aroma. The blend is again pasteurized at 176°F for 30 minutes in this earthen bottle. This wine in its present earthen container only gets better with time, i.e., it ages and becomes more flavorful.

The health benefits of this wine are legendary in Chinese history and medicine. As we all know our western medicine is just catching up to Chinese medicine. Think about it folks, people live to a long age in China without all our Western amenities and health habits.

The Chinese don't believe in cutting the human body (surgical operations), but treating it with herbs, acupuncture and good health habits. So a little wine like this every day will do wonders for your body and spirit. We all know that the body needs essential amino acids that it cannot manufacture by itself. Well, they are here in this wine and more. They are not all found in wine made from grapes! Finally, there are no sulfites in this wine.

Chao Ji Song

(Minced Chicken in Lettuce Cups)

Prepared by Pennee Parker

This dish is based on a famous Cantonese recipe for squab. Makes 6

5 Chinese dried black mushrooms

½ lb. Boneless, skinless chicken breast

½ lb. Boneless, skinless chicken thighs

3 Tbsp. Peanut oil (minced garlic optional)

1 tsp. Minced peeled ginger

1 Tbsp. Shaoxing

Freshly ground white pepper

1 oz. Virginia ham, minced

2-3 Tbsp. Oyster sauce

2 scallions, white part only, trimmed and minced

½ cup drained whole canned water chestnuts, finely chopped

6 iceberg or bibb lettuce leaves

1 Tbsp. Soy sauce (optional)

1 tsp. Chili & garlic paste (optional)

1. Soak mushrooms in a medium bowl of hot water, covered, until soft, about 1 hour. Meanwhile, finely chop chicken breast and thighs with a sharp cleaver or knife and set aside. Remove mushrooms from soaking water and trim off stems. (Discard water and stems.) Finely chop caps and set aside.
2. Heat oil in a wok or non-stick skillet over high heat. Add ginger and stir-fry until fragrant, about 10 seconds. Add chopped chicken and stir-fry, breaking meat up with a metal spatula, until no longer raw, about 1 minute. Add Shaoxing, season to taste with white pepper, then add ham, mushrooms, and oyster sauce (and optional soy sauce & chili-garlic paste) and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and add scallions and water chestnuts. Spoon chicken mixture into lettuce leaves.