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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

Austria Turns Up the Charm

**Does the Shape of a
Wine Glass Really Matter?**

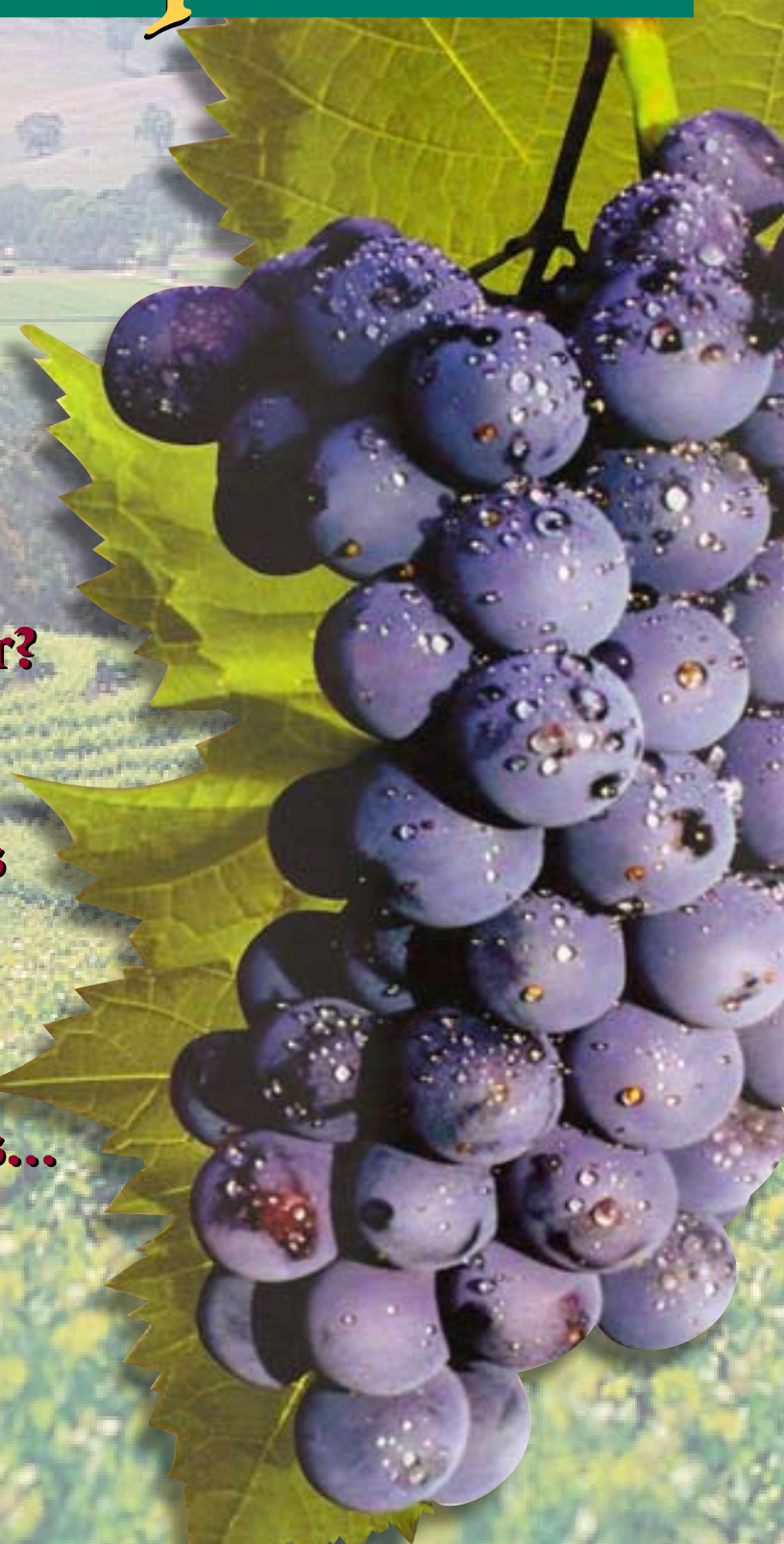
**Modern Wine Wonders
From Ancient Peaks**

Plus These Tasty Recipes...

- **Scallop Stir-Fry**
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... and Much More!

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Chief Operating Officer (aka "The Buck Stops Here"):
Lawrence D. Dutra

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Wine Steward:
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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

The 'T' Word

How Technology Impacts the Perception of Wine

By Robert Johnson

One of the great advances of the new millennium has been the proliferation of screw caps as closures for wine bottles, replacing the traditional cork.

While cork certainly is traditional, and the popping sound it makes when being removed from a bottle has long been music to a wine lover's ears, it has some inherent problems. Some corks become tainted quite early, while others dry out and develop cracks that allow air to seep into the bottle. Neither scenario is good for the wine, and so-called "corked" wines can ruin a good meal or an entire evening.

While screw-caps aren't 100 percent fool-proof, they do a much better job of protecting the wine. Yet because the first wines to receive such closures were on the low end of the quality spectrum, the screw-cap closure became associated with "cheap wine." It's an example of technology influencing the perception of wine, and in some cases tarnishing the reputations of vintners. It has

taken a great deal of education to turn consumer perceptions around, and some folks still stick up their noses at screw-caps.

Another technological advancement that continues to be met with some skepticism is the rotary fermenter. I first saw the machine at Geyser Peak Winery in Sonoma County. Winemaker Mick Schroeter explained that it was a way to manage the "cap" of the fermenting juice — the gathering of grape skins that have floated to the top of the fermentation vessel and formed a thick "crust" — without the need for stirring or "pump-overs" through hoses. In essence, it was a form of automation, removing the

human (i.e., labor) element from the equation.

Some opined that the technology also was removing the craftsmanship from winemaking. But as Schroeter pointed out, the vintner still needs to decide when to turn the rotary fermenter on... and off.

My opinion? The best wines today are being made by vintners who not only understand the available technology, but also when to use it... or not.





Does the Shape of a Wine Glass Really Matter?

Riedel, Waterford Crystal, Schott-Zwiesel and other glass makers would have you believe that virtually every type of wine requires its own style and size of wine glass.

Of course, those companies make money by selling glasses, so that shared opinion should come as no great shock. The question for us wine drinkers is whether it's really worth it to spend \$100 or more per stem for various types of glasses... or if we could get by with just a few.

After years of tasting literally tens of thousands of wines in various types of glasses, the Vinesse tasting panel has come to the following conclusions:

1. The shape of the glass — specifically, the shape of the bowl in which the wine sits — has much greater influence on the aroma of the wine than on its flavor. That said, aroma

is important because it provides the first impression of a wine. Vintners interested in impressing serious wine drinkers (i.e., buyers) are wise to match the glass to the variety.

2. The shape of the glass can help a wine “open up” more quickly. The Burgundy glass has a wide bottom for that very purpose, since Pinot Noir is a variety that can take literally hours after uncorking to reveal its full personality.

3. The larger the bowl, the easier it is to slosh the wine

and let it breathe. If you're going to have just one type of wine glass in the house, choose one with a wide opening, such as a Bordeaux glass.

4. When it comes to the rim of the glass, thinner is better. A thin rim helps prevent dribbling and, after all, you want that wine in your mouth, not on your chin.



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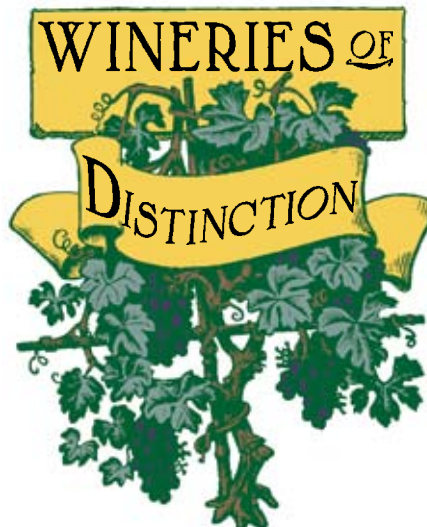
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Modern Wine Wonders From Ancient Peaks

Truly unique vineyards are few and far between, simply because there are ranges of geological and climatic conditions within which all vineyards fall. But along California's Central Coast, about 14 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean, the Margarita Vineyard — owned and farmed by Ancient Peaks Winery — can truly be termed unique.

Grapes were first planted on the Santa Margarita Ranch by Franciscan missionaries in 1774. The structure of Santa Margarita de Cortono (a sub-mission of Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa) remains a centerpiece of the ranch.

Today, Santa Margarita Ranch and Margarita Vineyard are owned by three long-time winegrowing families, the Filipponis, Rossis and Wittstroms, who also jointly own Ancient Peaks Winery.

Margarita Vineyard is situated along the top of the Cuesta Grade, approximately 22 miles south of the city of Paso Robles and eight miles



northeast of San Luis Obispo. The peaks act as a gateway between the ocean-cooled environs below the grade and the warmer climes above the grade, allowing measured yet substantial temperature transitions on a daily basis.

When the days heat up in the areas north and east of the Margarita Vineyard, the air rises to create a vacuum that pulls marine breezes and fogs inland and over the peaks, and right through the vineyard.

The coolest area of Margarita Vineyard is the Trout Creek drainage, which runs westward along the middle of the vineyard in the form of a notch, or saddle, in the bordering mountain range. As cool air billows over the Santa Lucia mountain range, it first announces itself in the hollows of Trout Creek. The microclimates diversify as the terrain unfolds along the vineyard's other two main sections, Moore Ridge and Oyster Ridge. The most spectacular soil is found along Oyster Ridge, where the ground is riddled with white ocean fossils that testify to the land's origins as an uplifted sea bed.

As the only vineyard in its vicinity, Margarita Vineyard is alone in benefiting from the climatic attributes of the location. These attributes combine to create a viticultural "sweet spot," a place where Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Zinfandel, Syrah and other varietals can achieve full ripeness — but only after a long, marine-moderated growing season that creates uncommon balance, flavor and structure in the grapes and resulting wines.

Tasked with handling this very special fruit is Mike Sinor, a man who knows how to get high scores from influential wine critics, including *Wine Spectator*, *Wine Advocate* and *Wine Enthusiast*. His winemaking career on the Central Coast spans 15 years.

"We employ progressive and sustainable winegrowing practices that nurture the natural qualities of our grapes while fostering harmony between the vineyard and its environment," Sinor says. "We take great care to preserve and accentuate the vineyard's pure fruit character throughout the winemaking process. Hands-on, small lot methods are used to ensure gentle retention of varietal authenticity and nuance."

What role do oak barrels play in Sinor's strategy?

"Our French and American oak program seeks to enhance and complement the authentic fruit character of our vineyards," he explains. "The resulting wines are distinguished by their natural dimension, balance and complexity — as well as the striking flavors of Margarita Vineyard." Fining and other cellar manipulations are kept to a minimum.

That kind of attention to detail — from the sustainable practices in the uniquely-situated vineyard to the hands-on approach of an experienced and dedicated vintner in the cellar — is difficult to achieve in a corporate climate. But with three families and a legendary winemaker all on the same very non-corporate page, the bottlings of Ancient Peaks Winery are destined for greatness.

Four Seasons



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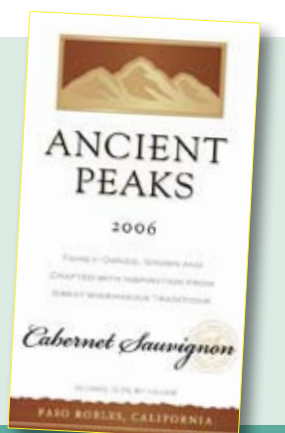
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Karl Wisstrom, Doug Filipponi
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Director of Winemaking:

Mike Sinor





AUSTRIA Turns Up the Charm

From Vienna to the Vinelands, Visitors Never Run Out of Things to Do

Austria offers the visitor great history, breathtaking scenery and outstanding cultural and culinary experiences. But what keeps people coming back is the charming atmosphere provided by the Austrian people.

Shaped by a turbulent past and influenced by many other European cultures, Austrians have worked hard to maintain their own identity. They are hospitable people who are proud of their country and cherish its traditions, while also embracing innovation. In a word, the Austrian people have charm.

And that charm manifests itself in many ways. Take the Viennese Waltz as an example. Its revolutionary three-quarter time and physical closeness of the partners initially triggered a full blown scandal. But it wasn't long before half of Europe was spinning with equal abandon. During the winter months, countless

balls are held at which Austrians and visitors waltz to the music of Johann Strauss and sip glasses of Champagne between dances.

Music has played a big part in Austria's history. Countless festivals each year revolve around the timeless music of Strauss, Mozart, Haydn and Schubert. Both the Vienna Mozart Orchestra and the Vienna Boys Choir are famous and beloved around the Western world. And perhaps the world's most cherished Christmas song, "Silent Night," traces its roots to Austria.

Charm also is exuded at the country's many coffee houses, particularly in Vienna. Long before Starbucks revolutionized the American coffee house experience, Austrians would congregate at their neighborhood roaster to feast on gourmet coffee and exquisite pastries while reading the newspaper or catching up with friends. Many Austrian authors, including Karl Kraus, would hang out at coffee houses for hours, working on their latest literary gems while surrounded by stimulating conversation and





much viticulture and wine culture in its capital city.

During the

abundant inspiration.

“Charming” also has been used to describe Austrian cuisine, which borrows from several neighboring countries to create unique and memorable dishes. The goal of most top chefs is to preserve the country’s cooking traditions while breathing new life into them. Locally grown or raised ingredients are coveted in this pursuit.

No matter what one’s passion may be, it can be satiated in Austria. For architecture aficionados, the styles to be seen range from Romanesque to Gothic, and from Baroque to Neoclassicism. And let’s not forget Austria’s take on Art Deco, which is known as Jugendstil.

For art lovers, Vienna, in particular, offers countless destinations. The Museum of Fine Arts boasts the largest collection of Bruegels in the world. The Albertina has an exceptional collection of graphic arts, with more than 60,000 drawings and a million prints. Gustav Klimt’s masterpiece, “The Kiss,” is housed in the Austrian Gallery at Belvedere Palace. The Liechtenstein Museum is home to important private collections of paintings, sculptures and decorative arts.

And let’s not forget about the wine. The miracle of Austria is that all of its winegrowing areas are incredibly easy to visit. In fact, once you step off the plane in Vienna, you’ve already arrived at a truly unique wine region. No other country can boast of so

Middle Ages, each district of Vienna worked its own vineyards. As the city grew and modernized, some vineyards were lost to concrete and asphalt. But recently there has been a trend of replanting vines in the city, and today there are 630 wineries in Vienna — that’s one for each 2,500 residents.

White grapes such as Gruner Veltliner, Riesling and Chardonnay dominate these urban vineyards, and the resulting wines are the perfect complements to such local specialties as wiener schnitzel, potato salad or any type of wurst. And if you enjoy tasting in style, plan to stay at the Hotel Rathaus Wein & Design, a hotel created specifically for wine lovers.

While Austria’s wine adventures begin in Vienna, they certainly don’t end there. The country is home to approximately 20,000 small winemaking estates, most of them too tiny to export their wares. Large wineries are rare in Austria, which is why so few of the bottlings find their way to the States.

There are so many reasons to visit Austria, and we haven’t even touched on Salzburg, Innsbruck, Linz (situated along the Danube and designated a “European Capital of Culture” in 2009), the magnificent Alps or the fabulous Christmas markets — all of which exude their own special kind of charm.

To learn more about Austria and its attractions and accommodations, visit www.austria.info.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Wine Country Hotel.

When money is no object (nightly rates range from \$525 to \$1,025), Les Mars Hotel in Healdsburg, Calif., provides spacious rooms (averaging 500 square feet) and friendly service. Among the amenities: white roses and chocolate truffles at turndown. And there’s no need to venture out for dinner. Les Mars is home to one of wine country’s most acclaimed restaurants: Cyrus. 877-431-1700.

2 Hot “Vinotherapy” Experience.

Skin treatments incorporating polyphenols — powerful antioxidants found in grapevines



and grape seeds — were introduced at Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte’s Les Sources de Caudalie near Bordeaux in 1999. Now,

an outpost has opened at New York City’s Plaza Hotel, which also features a wine lounge.

212-265-3182.

3 Hot Airport Wine Bars.

If you’re going to get stuck at an airport, try to do so at either JFK in New York or Charlotte Douglas in North Carolina. JFK is home to the Vino Volo wine bar (in Terminal 8), while Charlotte features locally made wines at the Yadkin Valley Wine Bar (between Terminals D and E).



Flagon. A glass bottle that can hold 2 liters of table wine. Unfortunately, the wine typically is not anything to write home about.

Grand Cru. A French designation indicating that the wine was made from grapes grown in a highly respected (or “great growth”) vineyard. The country has very strict parameters regulating the use of the words on labels.

Hock. A term used in England for Rhine wines.

IGT. Short-hand for *Indicazione Geografica Tipica*, one of three categories of wine that is regulated by law in Italy.

Jug Wine. A term used to describe an inexpensive and generally inferior wine. Many such wines are bottled in flagons.

VINESSE STYLE

‘RESERVE’ CHOCOLATE

Chocolate is fun. Just ask Willy Wonka, or the folks who operate the rides at the theme park adjacent to the Hershey factory in Pennsylvania.

But there’s also a serious side to it. Today, artisan chocolate makers go by the fancy moniker of chocolatier, and they’re interested in such things as how stable the crystalline structures in chocolate are, not to mention the particulars of cacao genetics. They’re just as focused on the sources of their beans as are gourmet coffee roasters. As a result, their wares are just as coveted by chocolate lovers as “Reserve” bottlings are by wine aficionados. Interestingly, chocolate and wine share many of the same descriptors,

as you’re about to find out...

- **Amano Artisan Chocolate Ocumare.** Floral and fruitful, with notes of plum and almond. Well balanced, smooth and creamy, with an appropriately bitter finish. \$6.95 per 2-oz.

- **Rogue Chocolatier Sambirano.** Quite creamy and plummy, with notes of cedar and caramel. \$5.99 per 2.12-oz.

- **Patric Chocolate Madagascar.** This bar has both plum and citrus flavors, along with a hint of leather. \$5.75 per 1.75-oz.



- **DeVries Chocolate Costa Rican Trinitaro.** Big and bold, with intense berry and tropical fruit notes. \$7.35 per 2.3-oz.

For a decadent treat, leave the Willy Wonka and Hershey bars in the candy jar, and enjoy a few pieces of these chocolates with a glass of Cabernet or Zinfandel.



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



Burgundy is considered to be the heart of France... and not just geographically.

The region's peaceful landscape of farmland, vineyards, forests and canals is the embodiment of *la vie française*, and its passion and flair for food and wine is unsurpassed. Once ruled by the mighty Dukes of Burgundy, the region has a history that matches the richness and variety of its gastronomy.

Burgundy lies roughly between Dijon and Lyon in eastern France, with the district of Chablis to the northwest. It's a complex patchwork of small holdings as opposed to grand estates, yet the wines inspire the most passionate and loyal of followers.

Both red and white wines are made in Burgundy. Vineyards spread south from Dijon, along the slopes of the Cote d'Or ("golden slope"), which runs to the town of Santenay. The Cote d'Or is where many of the region's most well-known wines are made, and has traditionally

been divided into two distinct parts: the Cote de Nuits and the Cote de Beaune.

The Cote de Nuits, to the north, is home to villages such as Gevrey-Chambertin, Vosne-Romanee and Vougeot. This is red wine territory, and the Pinot Noir grape reaches its epitome here, making some of the world's most silky-textured, supple and astonishingly complex wines.

The Cote de Beaune, to the south, is more closely associated with white wines made from the Chardonnay grape. Village names like Pommard, Puligny-Montrachet and Meursault are synonymous with the fabled incarnations of that variety.

Chablis, another of the region's famed names, also is made from the Chardonnay grape but usually is lighter, fresher and crisper.

To the south of the "golden slope" lie the Cote Chalonnaise and the Maconnais. Red and white wines (of which Pouilly-Fuisse is probably the best known) are made in this area, and can offer quality and value to those willing to explore and experiment.

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“I’m one of the three best white winemakers in Burgundy. It’s just a pity the other two are so far behind.”

— Verget vintner Jean-Marie Guffens, as told to writer Jancis Robinson

Q When a recipe calls for wine, what variety of wine should be used?

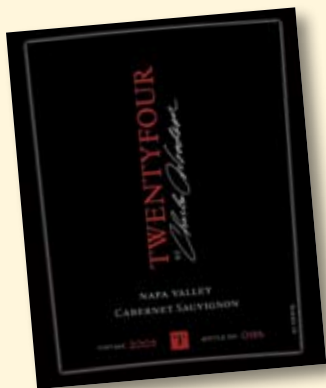
A Definitely not anything labeled “cooking wine,” which typically is packed with salt and barely resembles real wine. If the recipe designates a white wine, opt for Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling or some other lighter variety; stay away from oaky Chardonnay. If you need a red wine, Zinfandel and Merlot can work very well. When cooking, it’s always best to use the wine that you intend to drink with the meal, a technique that helps guarantee flavor compatibility.



When visiting wine country, it’s not unusual to be greeted at a tasting room door by a friendly canine. Sadly, one of our favorite winery dogs, a bulldog-lab mix named Moose, recently passed away. He was 11. Moose’s home was the B.R. Cohn winery in Sonoma County, and we pass along our condolences to owner Bruce Cohn.



Not every bottle of wine gets used up. (Oh, the humanity!) But that doesn’t mean the leftover wine must go to waste. Here are three ways to finish off that bottle (without drinking it): 1. Use one part wine and one part vinegar to make a tasty salad dressing. 2. Pour the wine over a roast or other dish during the last five minutes or so of cooking. 3. Add red wine to a vase of flowers in water. The nutrients in the wine will help keep the flowers fresh for a longer period of time.



Although he can’t talk about it because of arcane National Football League rules, Green Bay Packers cornerback Charles Woodson is now producing a wine. It’s dubbed TwentyFour — no, not in honor of Jack Bauer, but rather as a reflection of his jersey number — and is made from Stags Leap District (Napa Valley) Cabernet Sauvignon grapes.

14000 The number of bottles in the two-story “wall of wine” at Texas de Brazil restaurant in Chicago. “We wanted the Chicago location to be sort of a flagship for us,” says General Manager Vincent Feola. “The Chicago location offered us enough high ceilings to do something like this.” Wine stewards, known as aerial wine artists, use special rigging to retrieve the bottles.



Are you a gadget hound? Then check out the Vinturi Essential Wine Aerator, which does the work of a decanter — only in a lot less time and sans the pomp and circumstance. It costs about 40 bucks, and is available at vinturi.com.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

A DESSERT THAT'S FIT FOR A DESSERT WINE

Kinzie Chophouse hosts Chicago's best and most reasonably priced wine dinners. At this winter's "California Dreamin'" event, all four courses were fabulous, but the dessert stole the show. The Hot Buttered Rum Cheesecake was paired with the 2006 Rosenblum Black Muscat, but it would go nicely with almost any dessert-style wine. Here is the cheesecake recipe that Kinzie shared with dinner attendees.

HOT BUTTERED RUM CHEESECAKE WITH RUM CARAMEL SAUCE

Crust Ingredients

- 5-1/2 cups finely ground gingersnap cookies (about 1 3/4-lbs.)
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup packed golden brown sugar
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, melted

Filling Ingredients

- 1/2 cup dark rum
- 4 8-oz. packages cream cheese, room temperature
- 1-1/2 cups sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/3 cup whipping cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract



Topping Ingredients

- 2-1/2 cups sour cream
- 7 tablespoons sugar
- 1-3/4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Rum caramel sauce

Rum Caramel Sauce Ingredients

- 2 cups sugar
- 1/3 cup water
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1-1/4 cups whipping cream
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons dark rum
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

For crust: Blend ground cookies and both sugars in processor. Add butter and process to blend. Spread cookie mixture into one 10-inch-diameter Springform pan with 3-inch-high sides. Press crust onto bottoms and up sides of pans.

For filling: Position racks in top and bottom thirds of oven. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Boil rum in small saucepan until reduced to 1/4 cup (about 1 minute). Cool. Using electric mixer, beat cream cheese in large bowl on

low speed until smooth. Gradually beat in sugar. Add eggs one at a time, beating on low speed just to blend after each addition, occasionally scraping sides of bowl. Beat in spices, then cream, vanilla and cooled rum just to blend. Spread filling over crust.

To bake: Place cheesecake on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake until top appears set, puffed and golden at edges, but still moves slightly in center when shaken, reversing sheets after 20 minutes (about 40 minutes total). Cool 5 minutes.

For topping: Whisk sour cream, sugar and vanilla in large bowl. Spread topping over cheesecake. Bake 10 minutes. Run knife around each cake to loosen crust from pan. Place hot cheesecakes directly in refrigerator. Chill uncovered overnight (can be made two days ahead; if doing so, cover and keep chilled). Serve with Run-Caramel Sauce.

For sauce: Combine first four ingredients in heavy medium saucepan. Stir over medium heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat; boil without stirring until syrup turns deep amber in color, occasionally swirling pan and brushing down sides with wet pastry brush (about 10 minutes). Remove from heat. Pour in cream (mixture will bubble vigorously), and stir to blend. Mix in butter, then rum, cinnamon and vanilla. Cool sauce completely, and divide among ten 4-oz. jars. Seal and refrigerate. (Can be made two weeks ahead.)

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& Sweet

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SCALLOP STIR FRY

Scallops, those velvety, succulent treats from the sea, may not be the first thing you think of when you get the urge to take a wok on the wild side. We predict that will change once you've tried this recipe. It makes 4 servings, and matches beautifully with Sauvignon Blanc or a crisp (not too sweet) Riesling.

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 16-oz. package frozen sea scallops, thawed and patted dry
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced
- 1 large jalapeno, thinly sliced
- 1 large bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 8-oz. can sliced water chestnuts, drained
- 1/2 cup uncooked instant or microwaveable rice, prepared according to package directions
- 1/4 cup chopped peanuts (optional)
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro (optional)

Preparation

1. Combine the wine, soy sauce and hoisin sauce in a small bowl, and set aside.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a wok (or large skillet) over medium-high heat.
3. Season scallops with salt and pepper to taste.

4. Add scallops to pan in a single layer. Cook, turning half-way through, until cooked through (about 5 minutes). Remove scallops from pan.
5. Add remaining oil to pan. Add onion and jalapeno, and stir-fry until onion softens (about 3 minutes). Add bell pepper, mushrooms and half of the soy and hoisin sauces, and stir-fry until pepper softens (about 3 minutes).
6. Stir in the reserved scallops, water chestnuts and remaining sauce. Stir-fry until ingredients have warmed through (about 1 minute).
7. Divide rice among four plates, and top with scallop mixture. Pass peanuts and cilantro for diners to add, if desired.

DUCK BREAST WITH RED WINE RISOTTO

This wine calls for a good quality red wine, and we suggest either Pinot Noir or Merlot. Whichever you choose, we also suggest serving that wine with the meal. This recipe makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 4 duck breasts, 7- to 8-oz. each
- 2 cups Pinot Noir or Merlot
- 1/4 cup onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup carrots, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup celery, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons garlic, minced
- 1 cup Arborio rice
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons whole unsalted butter

- 6 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 bunch parsley, chopped
- 4 pieces radicchio, cut in half length-wise, brushed with olive oil and grilled

Duck Preparation

1. Slowly sear duck breasts, skin-side down, over medium heat until skin is golden and crispy (about 10 minutes). Turn over and cook several more minutes, then remove from pan and rest.
2. Pour off fat and reserve. Add red wine to pan juices and reduce by half. Reserve for risotto.

Risotto Preparation

1. Place 2 tablespoons reserved duck fat over medium to high heat. Add onions, celery, carrots and garlic, and cook until vegetables are soft.
2. Add rice, coat with fat and vegetables, and toast for several minutes. (Do not let the rice brown.) Add reduced wine and cook until it's evaporated. Add 1 cup of stock and cook, stirring frequently, until all liquid is absorbed. Repeat process two more times to absorb all stock.
3. Evaluate rice for proper doneness. Season. Finish with butter, cheese and parsley.
4. Serve with duck breasts and grilled radicchio.

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