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# The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



## Champagne: The Bubble Capital of the Wine World

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Solvang's Centennial

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**Lawrence D. Dutra**

Editor:

**Robert Johnson**

Wine Steward:

**Katie Montgomery**

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## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

# What Are Friends For? How to Create a Wine Lover

By Robert Johnson

*It's a topic that never gets old, even if the writer addressing it does: how to transform someone who doesn't drink much wine into a wine lover.*

Hey, it's all part of being a good friend. You know how much more enjoyable a meal can be when there's a food-friendly bottle of wine on the table. You also know that culinary memories can be created when the wine truly complements the food... and vice versa. So why wouldn't you want your BFF to enjoy the experience with you?

But wine can be an acquired taste for some. And if their first wine experience was with a big, bold, tannic Cabernet Sauvignon, getting them to give the glorious gift of the grape another try could be an uphill battle.

That's why you need to (almost literally) lead them by the hand, introducing them to certain types of wine in a very specific order.

If they're already drinking White Zinfandel on occasion — and there's nothing wrong with that — they probably have a sweet tooth... as most of us do. In weaning them off White Zin and getting them to experience

something a bit more complex, a good "starter wine" would be an off-dry (or semi-sweet) Riesling.

Once they can identify some of the flavors of the Riesling variety, move on to a completely dry rendition. This will help them understand that a wine can *taste* sweet (via its fruit flavors) without actually *being* sweet.

From there, an ever-so-slightly sweet Chardonnay — the type that Kendall Jackson makes — would be a logical next step. Follow that up with a rich, buttery, completely dry Chardonnay.

After they've been drinking Chardonnay for a few months, it'll be time to take the big step: introducing them to *red* wine. Start with a lighter red, such as an Italian Chianti or a California Merlot. Next, have them try a fruit-forward Zinfandel or a silky-smooth Pinot Noir.

Once they've gained an appreciation for those varieties — and only then — open up a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon. Pour it alongside a thick, juicy steak, and then look for a light bulb to appear above their head.

Just as we don't jump from simple addition to quantum physics, a newcomer to wine should not be expected to be a Cabernet Sauvignon lover right off the bat.

It *can* happen, but it's rare.





## Caring for Your Wine Glasses

***Some of us invest a lot of money in our wine glasses. Different sizes. Different shapes. Real crystal, as opposed to plastic.***

Nothing is more disheartening than the sound of a favorite wine glass hitting a hard kitchen floor and shattering into a hundred pieces... unless it's several glasses breaking at the same time.

But accidents happen, and there's not much you can do about them. That said, accidents also can be prevented, particularly when washing your glassware.

We asked members of our tasting panel to share some of their glass-washing savvy, both in terms of protecting the glasses from breakage and getting them squeaky clean. Here are six of their tips...

**1. Carry one glass per hand at a time.** Even if you have big hands, you're just asking for trouble when you try to transport multiple glasses. And don't use a tray. Filled wine glasses are top-heavy, and the typical laws of gravity just don't seem to apply. That old saying *does* apply, however: Haste makes waste.

**2. Store the glasses upright, not upside down.** The rim of the glass is much more prone to chipping than the base, so use the base as it was intended.

**3. When washing the glass, do not hold it by the stem.** Instead, hold it by the bowl in one hand, and place it under warm or hot running water.

**4. Avoid using harsh detergents.** As long as you don't allow the glass to sit unwashed overnight, water is all you need to get the glass clean.

**5. When drying the glass, again hold it by the bowl, not the stem.** Cradle the glass in one hand with a clean towel, and then use a second towel for the inside. Dry the outside and the inside simultaneously with a simple circular motion.

**6. Store the glasses in a cabinet away from the kitchen.** Glassware can pick up the odors of food, and the only thing you want to smell in that wine glass is wine.



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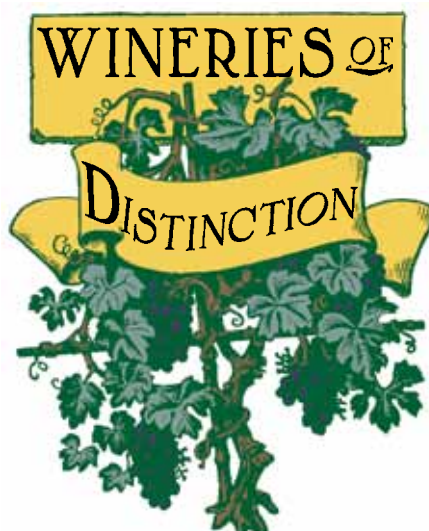
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## Goose Ridge Is Flying High With a 'Top 100' Ranking

**W**hen a wine makes the annual "Top 100" list selected and published by *Wine Spectator* magazine, two things typically happen.

First, the wine almost immediately sells out. Second, the price goes up for the next vintage.

It's too early to know whether that will happen with the three-variety blend known as "Vireo," crafted by Goose Ridge Vineyards and Estate Winery in Richland, Wash. Its 2006 bottling of "Vireo" — consisting of 38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Syrah and 29% Merlot — claimed the No. 41

spot on the *Spectator's* list for 2010.

What is known is that Goose Ridge has been producing high-quality wines ever since its founding in 1998 by the Monson family, with the assistance of legendary Washington wine figure Walter Clore.

The late Dr. Clore — known as the father of the Washington wine industry — assisted Arvid Monson in establishing the estate. Today, it



includes a 1,400-acre vineyard that's planted on a south-facing slope in the Columbia Valley appellation, adjacent to Red Mountain.

From the very beginning, the vineyard has yielded grapes of exceptional character and complexity, a key to developing a line of highly regarded wines.

"We are committed to producing consistent, high quality, memorable wines through sound viticulture practices, site selection with low yield vineyards, and artisan winemaking," a Goose Ridge spokesman tells us. "Our winemaker, Kendall Mix, works closely with our vineyard manager to indentify the best blocks in our estate vineyard."

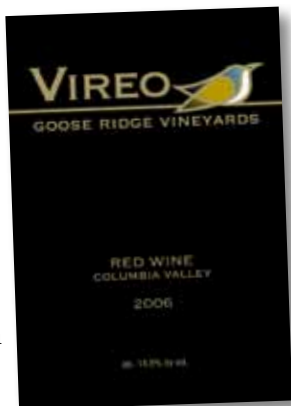
Those blocks provide the fruit for the winery's signature blends, including "Vireo," as well as "g3" and "Sol Duc."

The "g3" wine features the same varietal mix as the "Vireo," but with more Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, and a little less Syrah. "Sol Duc" is named for the sparkling waters that nourish the Columbia Valley, and is positioned by the winery as "a classic concentrated red wine."

Sheltered from Seattle's maritime climate by the towering Cascade Mountain Range, the Goose Ridge vineyard receives less than 8 inches of rainfall annually. Long, warm summer days and cool nights contribute to the growing of grapes that are noted for their ripe, rich character.

"We are committed to sound viticultural practices," the spokesman adds. "All vines are planted on original rootstocks. We have south to north row orientation for maximum solar exposure. We use drip irrigation, we manage the crop loads, and we make canopy adjustments."

All that work pays off, as one can taste in the award-winning blends as well as the various single-variety bottlings made at the winery. Those single-variety wines include Cabernet



Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and Riesling — all of which have developed strong track records in the Columbia Valley climate.

Goose Ridge provides two tasting rooms for traveling wine lovers. The "home base" is situated in the heart of the vineyard, and includes an event

center which enables it to host large groups. Private tours also are available by appointment.

The second tasting room is in Woodinville, in the heart of the Columbia Valley "wine country," not far from Seattle. It's located adjacent to the historic Hollywood Schoolhouse, and can host intimate private events.

The wines of Washington state have been growing in popularity as touring in the Columbia Valley has increased. Visitors to the dozens of tasting rooms have known about the high quality of the offerings for years.

Now, with the kind of added attention provided by a "Top 100" ranking from *Wine Spectator*, even more people will be in on the region's "vinous secret." When planning a trip to the great Northwest, a stop at one of Goose Ridge's tasting rooms should be on your "To Do" list — before all of its now-famous bottlings are gone.

### Winery 4-1-1

#### Goose Ridge Vineyards and Estate Winery

16304 N. Dallas Road  
Richland, WA 99352  
509-628-3880

Open Daily, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

### Second Location:

14450 Woodinville Redmond Rd.  
NE

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## Four Seasons



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***In the summer of 1995, the owners of the first three wineries in Southern Illinois — Alto Vineyards, Pomona Winery and Owl Creek Vineyard — recognized that their estates had untapped tourism potential.***

With that in mind, they worked with Debbie Moore, Executive Director of the Carbondale Convention & Tourism Bureau, and Cindy Benefield of the Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau, and the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail was born.

Modern winemaking in the area started in 1984, when Guy Renzaglia established Alto Vineyards by planting five acres of then-unheard-of grape varieties: Chancellor, Chambourcin, Vidal and Villard Blanc. Gradually, word got out, curiosity grew, and by the time the winery was built and the first wine was released in 1987, people were standing in line waiting to buy this new Illinois wine as fast as the crew could label it.

Renzaglia's success was noted by a pair of would-be winery owners, George Majka and Jane Payne, who had been making wines from apples and other local fruits for more than a decade. In 1989, they broke ground for the Pomona Winery at a location as far away from people as you can get and still be in the state of Illinois. It became a licensed winery in 1991, and released its first two apple wines in 1993.

Another piece fell into place in 1994 when Ted Wichmann built Owl Creek Vineyard and released his first wine the following year. Wichmann had established his vineyard in 1980 and had worked as Alto Vineyards' first winemaker. Now owned and operated by the Genung family, Owl Creek produces dry wines, lighter sweet wines and delicious dessert wines.

In 1997, Dr. Paul, a local optometrist, and Rhoda Jacobs opened Von Jakob Vineyards and became the Wine Trail's fourth member. The Jacobs' original location in Pomona is surrounded by vineyards and offers a warm, cozy atmosphere. Their second site in Alto Pass provides breathtaking views of their orchard.

In 2003, Inheritance Valley Vineyards, owned and operated by Tim and Kendall Waller, joined the Wine Trail, upping the number of wineries to five. The Wallers believe that by keeping things as simple as possible, they are best able to produce quality grapes and wines to be enjoyed by a diverse group of wine drinkers.

Hedman Vineyards opened as the sixth winery on the Shawnee Hills

## A Dozen Delicious Reasons to Explore Southern Illinois

Wine Trail in June of 2005. Originally from Sweden, Gerd and Anders Hedman took over a peach orchard in Alto Pass, planted a vineyard, and began selling their peaches and grapes to local wineries.

Now producing and selling their own European-styled wines, they also own and operate the Peach Barn Café, specializing in Swedish cuisine. In addition, Hedman Vineyards has a Scandinavian gift shop and a Bed & Breakfast, both located in their historic three-story peach barn.

After having been a dream for years, Blue Sky Vineyard opened its doors on the 4th of July in 2005. Barrett Rochman and Jim Ewers brought a taste of Tuscany to the eastern end of the Wine Trail with their winery,



## TOURING TIPS



*Blue Sky Vineyard at dusk*

a Tuscan-style villa surrounded by 12 acres of grapevines, nestled in the rolling hills of the Shawnee National Forest. Blue Sky Vineyard also has two suites available for rent year-round.

Also joining in 2005, StarView Vineyards became the eighth member of the Wine Trail when Scott Sensmeier brought his wife and two small children back to his hometown of Cobden. The Sensmeiers purchased a mature vineyard and their first harvest yielded six award-winning wines, medaling in national and international competitions. The family has since expanded the vineyard and hosts many events throughout the year.

A more recent addition to the Wine Trail is Kite Hill Vineyards. In 2006, Jim and Barbara Bush purchased this little bit of heaven off Highway 127, which includes a boutique winery and Bed & Breakfast. Kite Hill offers guests who stay at their B&B a three-course breakfast, wine tastings, and a relaxing stay after a full day of Southern Illinois touring.

In 2008, Orlandini Vineyard became the 10th winery to join the Trail. Gary and Noella Orlandini planted their vineyard 10 years earlier on one of

Southern Illinois' highest ridge tops, deep in the heart of the Shawnee Hills American Viticultural Area. Orlandini began releasing wines to the public in 2001, and a tasting room was opened in 2008.

Hickory Ridge Vineyard & Winery, owned and operated by Ron and Sylvia Presswood, and Rustle Hill Winery, owned by John Patrick and Debbie Russell, round out the list of Trail members.

As the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail continues to expand, it has become virtually impossible — not to mention unsafe — to travel the whole Trail in one day. The good news is that several B&Bs have opened near the wineries, enabling visitors to extend their stays in comfort.

Need yet another excuse to explore the region? In March, "Vintage Arts Month" will feature exhibitions by local artists at all 12 wineries. Visitors will be able to view watercolors, acrylics, ceramics, photography and more while sampling the wide array of wines.

*Winery addresses and phone numbers, as well as links to the websites of area B&Bs, are available at:*  
[www.shawneewinetrail.com](http://www.shawneewinetrail.com)



# VINESSE

## Hot LIST

**1 Hot Culinary Celebration.** It's also a centennial celebration as the town of Solvang in California's Santa Ynez Valley turns 100 in 2011. The "colony," as it was called in 1911, was founded by Danish immigrants, and its architecture underscores that heritage to this day. Among numerous special events planned during the year is the annual Taste of Solvang in March — a great opportunity to sample traditional Danish fare following a day of wine touring in the valley.

[www.solvang100.com](http://www.solvang100.com)

**2 Hot Volcanic Vineyards.** In Sicily, rows of grapevines flank the still-active Mt. Etna volcano, and several wines made there are attracting worldwide attention. Example: the Contrada Ramparte, a cuvee that is more reminiscent of a fine Burgundian cru than a rustic Italian red. Andrea Franchetti is the winemaker.

39-0942-986315

**3 Hot Wine List Trend.** Ask to see the wine list at the Chicago Cut steakhouse, and you'll be handed an iPad. It's part of a growing trend among restaurants that seek to appeal to a younger and hipper clientele. Each listing includes not only the name of the wine and its price, but also detailed tasting notes. And for those who think this may be a really inexpensive way to obtain an iPad, be aware that the devices are equipped with tracking software.



**N**utty. Descriptor for a wine that exhibits the flavor of nuts — quite common in Sherry and older white wines.

**O**kanagan Valley. British Columbia's oldest and largest wine region. A wide array of grape varieties fare well there, from Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon to Riesling and Gewurztraminer.

**P**inot Noir. One of the most revered grape varieties, particularly in cooperative vintages. Its historic home is the Burgundy region of France.

**R**ipeness. Describes the final, and most important, aspect of a winegrape's development. Perfectly ripened grapes produce beautifully balanced wines. Overripe grapes produce wines that can be sweet in flavor and high in alcohol content.

**S**chist. Common in France's Loire Valley and Germany's Mosel, a type of soil created from rock that was exposed to extreme pressure or heat.

## VINESSE STYLE

### STAINLESS STEEL WINE GLASSES

*If you have little kids around the house, your wine glasses are in constant danger.*

Not even the tips provided by our staff of experts in this issue's "Cellarmaster" feature can protect your glassware from the little fingers of a curious 3-year-old.

What to do? Place your expensive crystal stems in a locked cabinet, and invest in some stylish stainless steel wine glasses.

That's right: stainless steel. It's an alternative that campers have embraced for years, and it makes perfect sense for any toddler-inhabited household.

The Glacier SS Nesting Wine Glass from GSI Outdoors has a stem that can be removed from the rim for storage. The stem has a non-slip base, and



it'll hold up to 10 ounces of wine — although you'd want to pour only about half that much so that it can be swirled and sniffed without spilling.

GSI Outdoors also offers the Glacier SS Stemless Wine Glass, which holds up to 11 ounces of vino.

Both are made with 18/8 stainless steel and are rust-proof.

And because you don't have to worry about breaking them, the glasses can be cleaned in your dishwasher — another plus for any home that includes small children.

The Nesting Glass sells for \$12.95, while the Stemless Glass goes for \$9.95. Additional information is available online at: [www.gsioutdoors.com](http://www.gsioutdoors.com)

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## APPELLATION SHOWCASE



### Champagne, France

**C**hampagne, east of Paris, is one of the great historic provinces of France. As far back as the times of Emperor Charlemagne, in the 9th century, it was one of the great regions of Europe, a rich agricultural area that was famous for its fairs.

Today, thanks to the sparkling wine to which the region has given its name, the word Champagne is known worldwide.

The region is essentially made up of areas of relatively flat agricultural land and other areas of gently undulating hills. The hills are higher and more pronounced in the north of the region — the area of the Ardennes — and in the south, known as the Plateau de Langres.

The central part of Champagne has vast expanses of cereal production, while north of Reims, vegetables and sugar beets dominate the landscape. In the north of the Ardennes department, you'll encounter wooded hills and valleys. The famous vineyards of Champagne lie on the chalky hills to the southwest of Reims, and around the town of Epernay.

Reims, a university city, has the feel of a bustling regional capital. The old city is dominated by its 13th century cathedral, one of the great

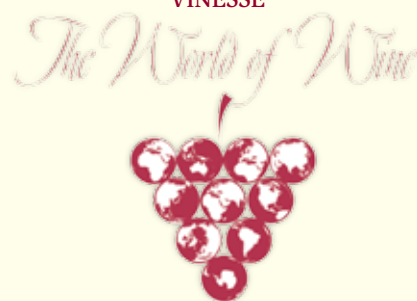
Gothic cathedrals of northern France and a UNESCO world heritage site. Badly damaged during World War I, it has been painstakingly restored to its past glory.

The city also is home to some of the major Champagne producers, including Taittinger, and cellar tours are available.

However, for perhaps the most enjoyable cellar visits and sparkling wine tasting, many visitors prefer to visit the smaller town of Epernay, 15 miles south of Reims. Located in the heart of "Champagne Country," Epernay is home to many of the most famous producers, including Moët & Chandon and Perrier-Jouët. Since the town is small, it's quite easy to visit a number of Champagne houses or cellars on foot.

One other Champagne-producing area, quite distinct from the Reims-Epernay vineyard corridor, lies to the south in the Aube department, between the towns of Bar sur Aube and Les Riceys.

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**Q** Like a lot of people, I'm dieting now that the holidays are over. So I'm eating a lot of salads. What's the best type of wine to drink with a salad?

**A** Obviously, the flavors of a salad can vary greatly based on the ingredients used. That said, a very basic salad, perhaps topped with blue cheese dressing, calls for a bright and refreshing Sauvignon Blanc. That's a variety that can have some "green" qualities, just like the lettuce, and a well-chilled Sauvignon Blanc with a well-chilled salad works very well.



**S**outh African David Frost won 10 titles while on the PGA Tour, and now splits his time between the European Tour and the Champions (senior) Tour. Since 1994, he also has been a vintner; he owns a 300-acre vineyard in his home country's Paarl growing district. How did the golfer catch the wine bug? His mother grew up on a vineyard, and when his parents got married, they planted their own vineyard.



“A glass of wine is great refreshment after a hard day's work.”

— *Composer Ludwig van Beethoven*

**T**here's a big royal wedding on the horizon that promises to overshadow last summer's nuptials of former First Daughter Chelsea Clinton. No word yet on which wines will be uncorked when Prince William ties the knot with Kate Middleton, but we can report on the wines served at the Clinton-Marc Mezvinsky wedding: Kluge Blanc de Blancs and Clinton Vineyards (no relation) Tribute, which is a Seyval Blanc.



**M**arcel Lapierre believed strongly in a "minimalist" approach to winemaking, and he practiced what he preached at his estate in the Morgon appellation of France's Burgundy region. Part of his philosophy involved embracing organic viticulture by eliminating the use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides in his vineyard. Today, that would make him a participant in France's so-called "natural wine" movement. But in the 1980s, when Lapierre began implementing his philosophy, it made him a pioneer. Jules Chauvet, who promoted organic farming even earlier, was Lapierre's mentor.

Sadly, Lapierre passed away late last year following a long illness. He was just 60. Happily, his son has taken over operation of the family vineyard and winery, and plans to continue Marcel Lapierre's groundbreaking work in organic viticulture.

**P**erhaps the most amazing thing about Michelin-starred Topolobampo, the Mexican restaurant in Chicago owned by Rick Bayless, is its wine list. Mexican food has never been easy to pair with wine, but Bayless has developed a list that works beautifully with his menu. *Chicago* magazine recently asked Bayless to name the most versatile ingredient in Mexican cooking. "There is always one ingredient that I have on my pantry shelf at home: canned chipotles," he revealed. "They can spice things up. Use them in a marinade. A salad dressing." And, yes, there are wines that stand up to and complement that spice. Just check the Topolobampo wine list.



54

Percentage of vineyard plantings in France's Bordeaux region devoted to Merlot — which may come as somewhat of a surprise considering so many Bordeaux blends are dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon.

## FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

### Flights of Fancy

**B**in 36 has become a downtown Chicago tradition, offering both resident and visiting wine lovers an opportunity to sample a wide array of bottlings at reasonable prices.



Located adjacent to the House of Blues and the Sax Hotel, the restaurant/wine bar/cheese bar/wine shop boasts a large oval bar where downtown workers congregate after a long day at the office and tourists meet before an evening at the theater or a concert at the "House."

Patrons can order wines by the bottle, glass or flight, and it's the flights that offer the greatest opportunity to discover something new and/or exciting.

During one recent visit, a member of our tasting panel ordered a flight that included four wines, each accompanied by a small sheet with tasting notes and food pairing suggestions.

Always on the lookout for pairing ideas to share with members, our panel member brought those sheets of paper back to our office.

Here's a look at what she drank that night, along with the food pairings suggested by the Bin 36 staff...

- **Bin 36th 10th Anniversary Cuvee** — A sparkling wine made from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes grown in Monterey, Calif., with impressions of juicy cherries, cranberry and orange-scented tea.

*Food pairings:* antipasti, cured meats, seafood salads, grilled meats, roast pork and

mildly spiced Asian food.

- **Monte de Luz 2008 Tannat** — This full-bodied wine from Uruguay is fully flavored with intensely brooding black minerals and inky black fruit.

*Food pairings:* hearty fare, including broiled and grilled meat, game and vegetables.

- **Zantho 2008 Zweigelt** — Bin 36 describes this wine from Burgenland, Austria, as "the liquid definition of balance." It's medium-bodied and richly flavored with dark fruit, berries and generous spice.

*Food pairings:* hearty grilled or roasted meat and game, burgers, and hard cheeses.

- **Cote Jardin 2008 Grenache Blanc/Marsanne/Roussanne** — This stylish wine from France's Rhone Valley offers classy melon and apricot notes, dancing in concert with a long, juicy and seriously elegant finish.

*Food pairings:* grilled fish, lightly-sauced poultry, veal, and grilled or roasted vegetables.

## Light & Sweet

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## PORTABELLA BURGERS WITH AVOCADO SPREAD

Whether you're a mushroom lover or an avocado aficionado — or both — you'll love this burger, which matches beautifully with California-style, creamy Chardonnay. This recipe makes 4 servings.

### Ingredients

- 4 medium-sized portabella mushrooms, stems removed
- 1 medium onion, cut in ½-in. slices
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- ¾ teaspoon salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper, divided
- 1 fully ripened avocado, halved, pitted and sliced
- 2 tablespoons low-fat plain yogurt
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic
- 4 whole hamburger buns, toasted
- 4 jarred roasted red peppers

### Preparation

1. Brush mushrooms and onion slices with oil. Sprinkle with ½ teaspoon of the salt and ¼ teaspoon of the pepper.
2. Heat large skillet or grill pan over medium heat until hot. Add mushrooms and cook until tender, about 8 to 10 minutes, turning once.
3. Transfer mushrooms to plate, cavity side up, and cover to keep warm. In same skillet, cook onion slices until golden, about 8 minutes, turning occasionally.
4. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine half of the avocado, yogurt, garlic and remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Mash until smooth.
5. Spoon onions and roasted peppers into mushroom cavities, divided equally. Spread smooth avocado mixture on bottom of each bun. Top each with stuffed mushrooms.
6. Top with remaining avocado. Cover with tops of buns and serve.

## CHICKEN & SPINACH ENCHILADAS

This delicious dish matches beautifully with Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc, and this recipe provides two enchiladas each for four diners.

### Ingredients

- 4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves, cut into thin strips
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- A 10-oz. package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and well drained
- A 10.75-oz. can condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted
- ¾ cup milk
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 8 (8-inch) flour tortillas
- Minced fresh parsley

### Preparation

1. Coat a large skillet with nonstick cooking spray. Cook and stir chicken and onion over medium heat for 6-8 minutes, or until chicken is no longer pink.
2. Remove from the heat. Add spinach and mix well.
3. In a bowl, combine soup, milk, sour cream and seasonings; mix well.
4. Stir ¾ cup into chicken and spinach mixture. Divide evenly among tortillas.
5. Roll up and place, seam side down, in a 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan that has been sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Pour the remaining soup mixture over enchiladas.
6. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.
7. Uncover and sprinkle with cheese. Return to the oven for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted and bubbly. Garnish with parsley.

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