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Coppola Winery:
A Playground
for Wine Lovers

Champagne: Not Just for the Holidays

What to Eat When the Drink Is Tawny Port How to Get the Most Out of a WINE FESTIVAL

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#### **Martin Stewart**

Chief Operating Officer (aka "The Buck Stops Here"):

Lawrence D. Dutra

Editor:

#### **Robert Johnson**

Wine Steward: **Katie Montgomery** 

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### It's Okay to Be Experienced

By Robert Johnson

In the world of journalism, there are numerous topics that accommodate critiques by presumed experts on the given subject.



Examples: movies, plays, books, TV programs and restaurants. And, of course, there's plenty of "wine reviewing" going on.

It's pretty difficult to get a wine review "wrong" because virtually every palate is different, and wine is perceived differently by different people. Ultimately, a wine review typically is just one person's opinion.

But when it comes to writing about other wine topics, a certain degree of expertise is mandatory. That thought came to mind recently while reading a story in a major American newspaper about how to order wine in a restaurant:

"Here's the first and most important thing to remember: The person waiting on you does not care that you are clueless about wine... In fact, the server would rather help you through the process than wait on a wine geek who just wants to drop names and esoteric terms."

I realize the, ahem, expert was trying to ease the mind of the inexperienced wine drinker, and that's fine. But in doing so, to claim that wine servers *prefer* inexperienced drinkers to experienced ones just

didn't seem logical.

So I decided to ask three people — one sommelier, one restaurant wine buyer, and one server at a restaurant that does not have a sommelier — whether they agreed with this writer's observation.

Let's start with the server, who works at a well known, moderately upscale restaurant chain that has a modest sized wine list.

"I never thought about it," she said.
"My job is to make every customer feel comfortable; it doesn't matter to me whether they know much about wine or not."

Next, the wine buyer at an East Coast restaurant that's known for its extensive wine list.

"That makes no sense at all," he said. "If I have a customer who wants to talk about malolactic fermentation or to compare vintages, why not?"

Finally, the observation of the sommelier at one of California wine country's top dining destinations.

"From a purely selfish perspective, I'd have to say that guy is nuts," he told me. "I'm going to guide an inexperienced wine drinker to an inexpensive bottle of wine that will pair well with his food. A more experienced wine drinker is much more likely to order a very expensive bottle — and that almost always means a much bigger tip."



### **How to Order Wine** in a Restaurant

When dining out, there are several rituals associated with ordering a bottle of wine.

All of them are just that: rituals. They are not rules. A few could even be perceived as pretty silly.

Let's take a look at these rituals, and whether you'd be well advised to follow them...

• Examining the wine list. There is no "template" that every restaurant uses when putting together its list. Marketing 101 would suggest placing the highest-priced bottles at the top of each category, since many people will not bother to read the entire list. That sells more premiumpriced bottles.

Advice: Unless you really know your stuff — how one wine compares to another, and whether the price points make sense in that context — you're better off simply figuring out what kind of wine you'd like to have, and then picking a price that's comfortable.

• Examining the bottle label. Once you've ordered your

bottle, the server will fetch it from the cellar and bring it back to your table. At that point, you'll be shown the bottle's label.

Advice: Absolutely take a look. Restaurants are notorious for showing one vintage of a wine on their list, but having another vintage in stock. There's usually nothing nefarious involved; wine lists, particularly long ones, can be a challenge to keep up to date. Examining the label simply assures that you're getting the bottle you ordered.

• **Sniffing the cork.** Once the bottle is opened, the server will present the cork to you. This ritual involves the diner sniffing the cork in order to determine whether the wine is

Advice: Total waste of time. A cork smells like... cork.

You should feel free to examine it for breakage or cracking, which could be an indication that air got into the bottle and hastened the wine's aging process. But smelling the cork will tell you nothing useful.

#### • Tasting the wine.

Once you've examined the cork, the server will pour a splash into one person's glass. This ritual calls for the person to swirl



the wine, sniff it and then taste it — again, to assess the quality of the bottle.

Advice: Do swirl and do sniff. But there's no need to taste. If the wine smells okay, it will taste okay. If the wine doesn't smell okay, then go ahead and taste the wine. A wine that smells good will taste good. A wine that doesn't smell good may taste "off," but probably will be just fine.



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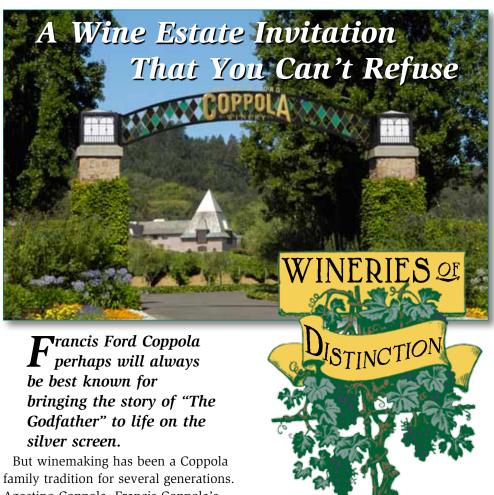
#### **FREQUENCY:**

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But winemaking has been a Coppola family tradition for several generations. Agostino Coppola, Francis Coppola's grandfather, used to make wine in the basement of his New York apartment building, using concrete vats that he constructed himself.

The wines that Coppola makes today aren't the same as those Agostino made, but they are produced in the same spirit — for sharing with friends and family.

More than 35 years ago, when Francis and Eleanor Coppola and their kids were living in San Francisco, the family began looking for a small cottage in Napa Valley that they could use as a weekend retreat — and a place where they could make homemade wine.

The "family cottage" they found turned out to be the great Niebaum Mansion in Rutherford, on the famed Inglenook Estate. Suddenly, the prospect of restoring that legendary property sounded far more exciting than making a little bit of wine in the basement.

Once they had completed the estate's restoration, which turned out to be

a 30-year endeavor, the Coppolas decided to build a new winery in Sonoma County so that, at long last, they could create a home for their everpopular Diamond Collection and Rosso & Bianco wine brands.

They also wanted to create a place for families to enjoy all the best things in life together, and when designing the winery in Sonoma County's Alexander Valley, Francis remembered a scene he had watched many times at his Napa Valley winery. For years, children have played around the fountain at Rubicon Estate, pleading with their parents to allow them to jump in. Francis always sympathized with the children, so he thought, "Gee, the kids will want to go swimming, so let's have swimming pools."

Situated in the center of the park area at the winery, two pools totaling 3,600 square feet are connected by a "swim-through" where small jets create a water bridge to swim under.

Surrounded by chaise lounge chairs, the pools are a welcome addition for children and adults on warm days.

Just steps from the pool and sunbathing terrace, 28 European-style personal changing rooms called *cabines* are available to rent for the day. The *cabines* (pronounced kabeens) offer a comfortable and secure space for families to change clothes and store personal items.

Cabines are equipped with a private shower, and rental includes pool use and towels. During the swimming season, cabines are available for daily rental, and there is a choice of assorted "family" flags to hoist above the cabine, to identify it as reserved. Upon departure, families may purchase the flag as a souvenir and use it during return visits to the winery.

Another unique attraction is the Movie Gallery, displaying a vast collection of authentic movie memorabilia. Coppola's filmmaking career spans five decades, which means there are some pretty amazing items to explore, including Don Corleone's desk from "The Godfather," and the original automobile from "Tucker: The Man and His Dream," rotating impressively on a showroom turntable. Much of the memorabilia is integrated throughout the property so guests can enjoy it all while they taste wine, peruse the retail merchandise or make their way to another on-site attraction: RUSTIC restaurant.

Adorning the walls of RUSTIC is a unique assortment of vintage olive oil cans from The Tiziana Riva Guatelli Collection. Tiziana is a dear friend of the Coppolas, who were delighted to showcase the unique collection of Italian design that includes more than 4,000 original lithographed oilcans.

Drawing on a life that has taken him around the world, Coppola shares his personal pantheon of recipes at RUSTIC. Set in a Sonoma County-casual atmosphere, the restaurant's menu embraces international as well as traditional Italian dishes, with an emphasis on family-style cooking that features fresh, seasonal ingredients

sourced from the property's organic herb and produce garden. Authentic, Neapolitan-style pizzas also are a specialty.

A focal point of the dining room at RUSTIC is the *parrilla* (pronounced pah-REE-jah), an authentic Argentine grill. Manned by the restaurant's dedicated *asador*, or grill-master, it provides a true South American experience of delicious, wood-grilled meats.

In addition to dining room seating, RUSTIC offers service on an outdoor terrace overlooking the picturesque Alexander Valley. A bar adjacent to the restaurant also serves a full complement of cocktails and an extensive wine and beer list.

Located near the swimming pool on the property's north side is the Coppola Pavilion. Inspired by the bandshell that appeared in "The Godfather: Part II," and featuring the original mural displayed in the 1974 film, the Pavilion is the platform for all kinds of entertainment at the winery, from daytime performances (which can be viewed poolside) to romantic evening shows highlighted by music and dancing. It also hosts such events as a stargazing evening with astronomers, Sonoma County historical symposiums, and grape growing seminars with Alexander Valley's dedicated agriculturists.

Of course, the property first and foremost is a winery, which means farming is a critical endeavor. Coppola's winegrowing practices include an integrated pest management program, which involves the best practices for maintaining soil and vine health and proactively farming to reduce and treat pest pressures. The winery also recycles its grape and water waste by fertilizing with composted grape pomace and irrigating only with reclaimed winery wastewater. (For more on the winery's "green" efforts, see the "Wine Buzz" department in this issue.)

Francis Ford Coppola Winery is a family-friendly adult playground that offers everyone a taste of the good life.



### WINES THAT MATCH THE SEASON

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n February, The Food Network's South Beach Food & Wine Festival attracted 53,000 people.

If that's any indication, culinary tourism could be back — and back big-time — in America. That's good news for foodies, many of whom had to cut back on their culinary adventures during the economic downturn.

This month, the Atlanta Food & Wine Festival (scheduled for May 19-22) will provide another indicator of the health of the festival scene. Next month (June 17-19), it'll be the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen.

Festivals of various sizes seem to be popping up everywhere. Some, such as the Charleston Wine + Food Festival (held in early March), started out as relatively small showcases for local restaurants, then expanded into multi-day events. Others started out big and just got bigger.

A typical wine festival could be held indoors or outdoors, and involves a number of stations staffed either by winery or distributor representatives who pour samples for guests. There usually are appetizers available, or some sort of cheese-heavy buffet to

help soak up the wine.

The more extensive food-and-wine festival typically is more foodoriented, highlighting the wares of local restaurateurs and caterers. There also will be a number of wine stations, but top-tier wineries may choose not to participate.

And then there's the massive food-and-wine festival, such as the aforementioned events in South Beach and Aspen, where food and wine sharing equal billing, and it would be impossible to sample everything available.

Whether small or large, and whether food-centric or wine-centric, attending a festival involves developing and sticking to a strategy in order to get the most out of it.

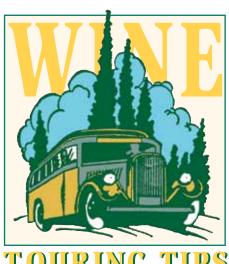
First, of course, you need to figure out which festival you'd like to attend. Here's a good online resource to help you choose: http:// culinarytravel.about.com/od/ foodwineevents/a/SummerEvents.htm

Once you've made that critical decision and taken care of your travel

arrangements, the following tips should come in handy...

1. Know where you're going after the festival. We want everyone to get home safely, and just by their nature, festivals sometimes see people over-imbibe. Festivals that are held at hotels are the best. Those that offer shuttles to and from nearby hotels are next-best. Even if it involves calling a taxi, make sure you'll be able to return to your hotel safely after the event. If there's any way you can avoid driving, do so.

**2. Do some research.** Find out which



TOURING TIPS

wineries will be pouring at the event, which should not be difficult; festival organizers often include a list in their advertising and/or on the websites. Beyond that, try to find out which wines the participating estates will be pouring. As an example, there's really no need for you to head to the Kendall-Jackson table if all they're going to be pouring is their ubiquitous Vintner's Reserve Chardonnay. On the other hand, if their rep is bringing

some bottles that normally could be purchased only at the winery, that table would be worth a stop.

3. Map out your tasting plan. Once you know who will be there and what they'll be pouring, make a list of the wines you'd really like to taste. Plan to visit those tables

first, because wineries sometimes bring only a few bottles of their best, and that supply often is exhausted quickly.

4. Spit. A lot. Most winery tasting rooms offer "dump buckets" in which guests may spit out the wine they've just tasted. (One need not swallow wine in order to experience its full range of flavors; swirling it in the mouth is sufficient.) But buckets can be few and far between at some festivals, which makes spitting problematic. Just in case, many festival-goers bring along their own "bucket" in the form of a large plastic cup or even a coffee tumbler. Remember, the more you spit, the more you'll be able to taste safely. **5. Eat.** Virtually all festivals offer some sort of snacks to nibble on between sips. Eating food helps mitigate the effect of the alcohol being ingested, keeping you sharper longer — which means you'll ultimately be able to enjoy more wine. At festivals where food shares the billing with wine, some of those food offerings

may have been prepared by celebrity chefs. So eat up!

**6. Watch the lines.** Particularly near the end of the festival, many people go back for "seconds" at their favorite food stations. Sometimes, waiting in a line will introduce you to "America's next great chef."

**7. Pace yourself.** If you were to sample every wine at every table you visit, you'd be "done" in an hour, and likely would have missed 95 percent

of the wines being served. A better strategy is to ask the person doing the pouring, "If you could drink only one of your wines, which one would it be?" Some will immediately pour their best bottling. However, some will answer your question with a question,

such as, "What kind of wine do you like?" Your reply to that query should always be: "Good wine."

8. Team up. Going to a festival with several people can provide tasting opportunities that simply aren't available to a couple or someone flying solo. Here's a great strategy that our tasting panel uses when attending festivals: Assign each person on your "team" one or two varietals or specific types of wine. If there are four people involved, that means you can cover eight different types of wine. Have each person visit as many tables as possible and taste only their assigned wine type(s) at each table. Make sure everyone takes notes. They need not be detailed, but they should provide a method of "ranking" the wines tasted. When there's one hour of tasting time left, have everyone meet at a designated location and report on their three favorite wines in each category. Just like that, you have a "best of show" list that you can use to track down some of the better wines being poured.

### VINESSE



### LIST

1 Hot Wine Chiller. You're having a party. You're serving white, rosé or sparkling wine. You forgot to buy ice. Guests will begin arriving at any minute. What to do? Plug in your Electric Quick Chill from Oster, which chills bottles in mere minutes while freeing up space in the refrigerator for Grandma's Famous Three-Bean Dip. \$40.

www.amazon.com

2 Hot Food Festival. If you've been wanting to take a trip to the welcoming border city of San Diego, this is the month to do it. On May 22, the Little Italy neighborhood will host Sicilian Festa, celebrating southern Italian music, dance, culture, food and wine. It's a great way to get your Sicily fix without having to cross an ocean.

www.sicilianfesta.com

**→** Hot Off-the-Beaten Path Dining **Scene.** Miami is trendy. But like all big cities, it has some neighborhoods that have seen better times. MiMo, part of Miami's Upper East Side, is one such enclave. But it has been making a comeback in recent years, fueled in large part by a handful of great restaurants. The next time you're in town, check out the casually elegant Michy's, the family-friendly American Noodle Bar, the Greek Anise Waterfront Taverna, or any of a number of sushi-focused restaurants.



**Fermentation.** The scientific process through which grape juice is transformed into wine.

**Gewurtztraminer.** A popular Alsatian variety that also is made by a comparatively small number of American vintners. A great pairing partner for slightly spicy Tex-Mex or Chinese cuisine.

Handley. One of the aforementioned American makers of exceptional Gewurztraminer. The winery is located in the Anderson Valley growing area of Mendocino, Calif.

**Import.** A wine that is brought into the United States from another country.

Jess Jackson. A iconic California vintner who died recently at age 81. For more on his life and contributions to the wine world, see the "Wine Buzz" department in this issue.

### **VINESSE STYLE**

### CHAMPAGNE WEDDING DREAMS

**M**ore than 40 percent of all Champagne is purchased during one month: December.

Which makes sense, since Champagne is the wine of celebrations, and the final month of the year offers plenty of reasons to party.

But a good deal of sparkling wine also is sold during the summer months for serving at weddings. Bubbly adds class to nuptials, and it's the perfect wine for toasting the happy couple in style.

In case you're called upon to open a bottle or two of Champagne this summer, here are a few helpful reminders...

- All sparkling wine should be served well chilled.
- Use a small knife or pair of scissors to cut and then remove the foil from the bottle top.
- The wire hood, sometimes referred to as the cage, should be removed by turning the wine knob similar to removing the tie from a bread bag.
- With one hand, hold the bottle at its base. Place the other

hand around the cork and hold it firmly.

- Point the bottle away from yourself and away from guests. Flying corks can put out eyes or worse.
- Slowly turn the bottle, and you'll feel the bottled-up pressure begin to push the cork out of the bottle's neck.

Performing this final task slowly is the key to preventing a stream of frothy wine from spilling out of the bottle. The goal is not to create a loud popping sound, but rather a quiet "poof."

Do that, and you'll have plenty of wine for everyone — so everyone can join in the toast.



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### **APPELLATION SHOWCASE**



# Monterey County is world famous for coastal beauty, golf and as home of the world's "Salad Bowl."

The county also is part of California's Central Coast winegrowing region. It encompasses the coastal areas of Monterey Bay and Big Sur, as well as the vast Salinas Valley and smaller Carmel Valley, bordered by the Santa Lucia and Gabilan mountain ranges.

The large size of the county, as well as the Pacific Ocean's climatic influence, makes Monterey wine country unique and diverse.

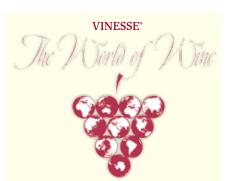
Eight American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) highlight some of Monterey County's unique winegrowing areas, and additional areas have been petitioned. One need only look to the diversity of agricultural crops grown in the county to understand what a special place this is.

Monterey County is an evolving wine region. The multitude of terroirs and climatic conditions have put the region at the forefront for producing world-class wines. Many of the state's most prominent vintners recognize the quality of the growing area and have planted vineyards alongside those of the "locals."

Here's a quick look at the

established AVAs in the county:

- Monterey One of the coolest appellations in the state, known for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.
- Carmel Valley Father Junipero Serra's padres first planted vineyards here in the 1800s.
- Santa Lucia Highlands The vineyards are planted on southeast-facing terraces of the Santa Lucia range, overlooking the Salinas Valley.
- **Chalone** Vines planted here in 1919 are the oldest producing in the county.
- Arroyo Seco This AVA is best known for its outstanding, fruit-driven renditions of Chardonnay.
- San Bernabe Nearly 5,000 acres are planted to 20 varietals, which explains why this AVA has been called "the world's largest, most diversified vineyard."
- San Lucas Typified by warm days and cool nights, daily temperatures here can swing by 60 degrees during the summer months.
- Hames Valley Here the weather is much warmer than in the northern sectors of the county, more closely resembling the climate of the Paso Robles AVA to the south.



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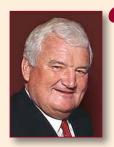


I've heard that some wineries pick their grapes at night. Why?

It's called the "fall" harvest season, but a good deal of winegrape picking takes place late in the summer, when it can still be very hot in wine country. Typically, the just-picked grapes are placed in large bins, some of which can hold up to 2 tons of grapes. All that weight, combined with the heat of the sun, sometimes can cause the grapes to start fermenting even before they reach the wineries' crush pads. Harvesting at night helps prevent such "spontaneous fermentations" by taking the heat factor out of the equation.



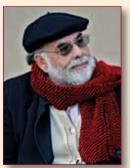
Do you know where the southernmost wine region in the world is? Hint: It's not in South America. Give up? It's Central Otago, which is located on the south island of New Zealand. Interestingly, even though it's on an island, Central Otago enjoys a continental climate. The region is shielded from the maritime influence of nearby large bodies of water by mountains. The specialty of Central Otago: Pinot Noir.



Wine is not meant to be enjoyed for its own sake; it is the key to love and laughter with friends. Its rewards are far beyond its cost.

– Legendary Australian winemaker Len Evans

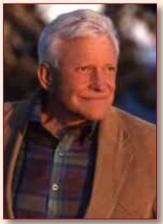
 $\mathbf{F}$  or more than 30 years, Francis Ford Coppola Winery has been committed to environmentally responsible business practices. All 24 planted acres are sustainably farmed and part of the California Sustainable Winegrowing Program, and the winery purchases fruit only from growers who farm



sustainably. As part of the CSWP, Coppola has become a learning-teaching vineyard. Every technique implemented is thoroughly documented so that the estate and neighboring Sonoma winegrowers can pinpoint the best ways to protect the land and craft the best wines from these vineyards. Coppola also is actively involved in the Fish Friendly Farming certification program. While this may seem like a matter totally unrelated to wine, watershed quality management is intrinsically connected to farming the

Coppola vineyard because the property includes two blue-line creeks. These creeks are a part of the Russian River watershed that supports steelhead trout and Coho salmon populations. In conjunction with its neighbors and local, state and federal agencies, Coppola works diligently to promote the overall health of the Russian River watershed so that the entire ecosystem remains in balance and is preserved for generations to come.

A true legend in California winemaking, Jess Jackson, passed away on April 21 from cancer. He was 81. A few years after converting a small pear and walnut orchard into a vineyard during the middle-1970s, Jackson founded Kendall-Jackson Winery. Over the years, he grew the business into a multi-varietal, multi-appellation, multi-label behemoth, but always remained best known for one wine: Kendall-Jackson Vintner's Reserve Chardonnay. A mainstay on restaurant wine lists, that bottling gained a huge fan base because it offered just a hint of engaging sweetness in the mouth. Jackson



also was a prominent thoroughbred horse owner, and in many newspapers across the country, his obituary appeared in the Sports section.

93

Percentage of wine bottles now being sealed with screw caps (instead of traditional corks) in New Zealand.

### **FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS**

### **Tawny Port**

When Port is first made, it's red — much like any other red wine.

But over time, red wine will gradually turn to various shades of brown. It's simply part of the aging process. And that's how Tawny Port got its name: Typically aged for 10, 20 or 30 years prior to release, the typical Tawny Port is auburn brown in hue.

The aging process also impacts the flavor of the fortified wine. A

10-year-old Tawny Port will still have exuberant fruit flavors, often mirroring those of much younger wines.

A 30-year-old Tawny, on the other hand, will have lost nearly all of its fruit flavor. Its aroma and flavor spectrum will be more nut-like and raisiny.

Both styles are quite good, and your preference will be based on your own palate. That said, just about everyone enjoys a 20-year-old Tawny Port. It's a wine that definitely could be called "mellow," yet still typically exhibits some engaging fruit flavors. It's like having the best of both worlds.

Better still, Tawny Port is one of the few wines in the world that is dependably enjoyable with certain kinds of desserts. Whereas other types of Port — those with stronger flavors and a more syrup-like mouthfeel — are great with roasted



nuts and aged cheeses, Tawny Port better complements food with a touch of sweetness.

Among the desserts one can serve alongside Tawny Port are pecan pie, carrot cake, flan and crème brulee. The intermingling of the flavors is, in a word, amazing.

Here's another pairing suggestion you'll likely not see in any wine book or cookbook: Robert's

Birthday Cake.

In this case, the Robert is Robert Johnson, editor of *The Grapevine*. Every year since he was 10 — and that's a *lot* of years — he has dined on one kind of cake each birthday... even if it meant baking it himself.

It's really quite easy to make. First, buy a spice cake mix at the supermarket. The recipe calls for water, but in place of that ingredient, use about a cup-and-a-third of unsweetened apple sauce.

For the frosting, buy a can of already-prepared cream cheese icing. To that can, add about a third-of-a-cup of maple syrup — not some generic store-brand syrup, but the real stuff from Vermont — and stir it in.

A spice cake prepared that way, served with a glass of Tawny Port, makes middle-aged birthdays much less painful.



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#### CIDER-BARBECUE PULLED PORK

This dish can match equally well with Gewurztraminer (a white wine) or Zinfandel (a red). This recipe makes 6 servings.

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 lbs. boneless pork ribs
- 1 pint hard cider
- 18½-oz. bottle barbecue sauce
- 2½ lbs. russet potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 6 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup whole milk
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- Salt, to taste
- Ground black pepper, to taste

#### Preparation

- 1. Over medium-high heat, combine ribs, cider, and barbecue sauce in a large saucepan. Stir well, then bring to a boil. Reduce heat to maintain a steady simmer.
- 2. Cook for 1 hour to 75 minutes, or until pork is very tender and the liquid is reduced and thick.
- 3. After 45 minutes, place potatoes in a medium saucepan. Add cold water to cover, then bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
- 4. Cook until potatoes are tender. Drain potatoes and return to pot.
- 5. Add butter and milk, then mash.
- 6. Mix in parsley, then season with salt and pepper. Cover and set aside.
- 7. Use two forks to shred and pull apart the pork, mixing it with the sauce. Serve pork over mashed potatoes.

#### WEINSUPPE

Looking for a fun and unusual dessert? Karen MacNeil, author of the best-selling book, *The Wine Bible*, suggests Weinsuppe, which she describes as "a sweet soup made by adding sugar and aromatics to red or white wine." And she suggests serving it with cookies.

#### **Ingredients**

- Rind of an orange
- Rind of a lemon
- 2 cups Pinot Noir
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup dried cherries
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 whole clove
- Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- ½ cup heavy cream

#### Preparation

- 1. Grate the rinds of the orange and the lemon, then cut each fruit in half and juice it.
- 2. Place the juice and rinds in a medium-size saucepan and add Pinot Noir, water, sugar, dried cherries, cinnamon stick, clove and nutmeg.
- 3. Bring to a simmer, then add heavy cream.
- 4. Let return to a simmer, then serve immediately.



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