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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



Cellarmaster: Get to Know the Wines of Romance

Vinesse Style: How to Wrap That Bottle to Impress

Food & Wine Pairings: Romantic Culinary Delights

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

China's Knock-off Problem

By Robert Johnson

It has happened in many industries in many countries, and now it is happening in China.

"It" is counterfeiting, and there are two primary methods that thieves use to dupe an unsuspecting and, at this point, unsophisticated wine-drinking public.

One involves taking an empty bottle of a premium brand, filling it with inferior (and much less expensive) wine, recorking it and selling it as if it were the original — often at a steeply "discounted" price, but still very profitable for the thieves.

Warning to potential wine purchasers in China: If that \$8,000 bottle of well-aged Lafite Rothschild is being sold for \$175, chances are it's not really Lafite.

The other method used by counterfeiters is to print a label that is nearly identical to that of a well-known (and well-priced) brand, and simply let the buyer assume it's the real thing. This plays on the consumer's reluctance to question the authenticity of a product, since such a comment could cause the seller to lose face.

Tribune Newspapers recently reported that Christie's auction house has taken a highly unusual step following any tasting event it conducts in China or Hong Kong: It breaks the bottles with a hammer.

"We have to protect provenance," Simon Tam of Christie's told Tribune's David Pierson. "Even if you scrape off the label, there are still channels for the bottles to be misused."

Counterfeiting is unusual in the United States, but it does happen.

How can you be sure that the wine you're buying is the real deal? Here are three tips:

1. Beware of steeply discounted bottles. If you know that a wine normally sells for \$50,

and it's being offered for \$10, there could be something more involved than a really good sale.

2. Check the label to make sure that the winery's name is spelled correctly. Counterfeiters sometimes make a subtle change to a single letter so they can later, if caught, claim they were not selling the "real thing."

3. Always buy your wine from a reputable seller.

"Even if you scrape off the label, there are still channels for the bottles to be misused."





The Wines of Romance

Just because it's a leap year doesn't mean you have extra time to plan for Valentine's Day.

The most romantic day of the year is still on February 14. This year, that's a Tuesday — good news for restaurateurs, since Monday and Tuesday tend to be the slowest days of the week for dining out. For a restaurant owner, it's almost like getting an extra Friday or Saturday.

Assuming you are the CEOR (Chief Executor of Romance) in your relationship, it's important to know that wine is required for an evening to be truly romantic. It might even be a law, but we'll have to check into that.

What kind of wine? Romance experts from Cyrano de Bergerac to Charlie Sheen (probably) recommend three types:

1. Red. That is, after all, the color of the heart. But which red? We could cop out and say, "Whatever kind you prefer," but we'd highly recommend Pinot Noir. It's the only red that's regularly described as silky, smooth, supple and seductive. The really good ones also have great legs.

2. Sparkling. It's the wine served at weddings, and it's the go-to wine for all types of celebrations. It's also just

plain fun to drink, and shouldn't romance be fun?

3. Sweet. The Valentine's Day meal must be concluded with dessert (that might also be a law), but that doesn't mean dessert must be something that's chewed. Instead of strawberry cheesecake or flourless chocolate cake or crème brûlée, opt for a glass of dessert wine. On a restaurant wine list, look for vinous verbiage such as "Port" or "Late Harvest" or "Ice Wine." Drinking your dessert not only is a fun change of pace, but it also gives you one more opportunity to toast the one you love.



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Romantic Sunsets & Lots of Wine in a Land of 'Paradise'

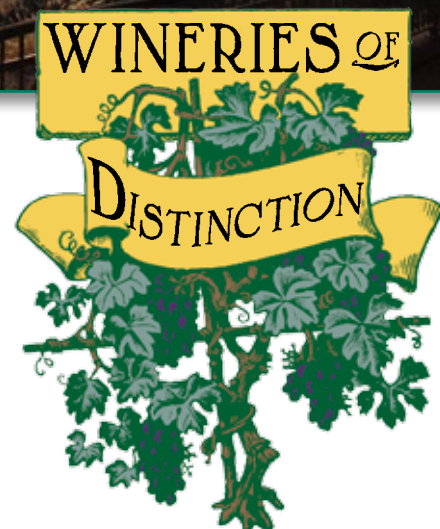


***N**ature's gift to romance is the sunset, and there's no better place to watch a Sonoma County wine country sunset than Paradise Ridge Winery in Santa Rosa.*

In fact, Paradise Ridge hosts a weekly event called "Wines & Sunsets in Paradise." Unfortunately, those events are limited to early May through mid-October, which means it's not a Valentine's Day option. Still, a planned trip to Paradise Ridge for that event would make a nice Valentine's gift.

On those select Wednesday evenings, visitors are invited to bring a picnic and enjoy award-winning Paradise Ridge wines while watching spectacular sunsets from the winery's expansive veranda and beautiful poetry terrace. "Wines & Sunsets" begins at 6 p.m. and ends once the sun has set.

Although the tasting room is closed, guests will find a wide selection of wines available to purchase by the glass or by the bottle. Be aware that only wines purchased at "Wines & Sunsets" are appropriate, but food may be brought in by guests. In fact, Paradise Ridge recommends three



nearby purveyors of excellent picnic fare (see box on next page).

While "Wines & Sunsets" is limited to the warmer months, there's another reason to visit Paradise Ridge anytime of the year: Marijke's Grove, a sculpture exhibit nestled in a four-acre grove of ancient gnarled oaks. Within the wooden glens are "galleries" connected by simple footpaths.

Sculptures are displayed among mossy rocks and small grassy clearings in this natural outdoor gallery. Rather than acquiring a permanent sculpture collection, Marijke's Grove supports the arts by creating an exhibit space where art, ideas and nature converge, and where the art changes annually.

Adjacent to the grove, in the environs of the Nagasawa winemaking building, an art garden

reveals additional sculptures displayed among the trees. Marijke's Grove is open daily during regular tasting room hours.

Speaking of the tasting room, it features Paradise Ridge's selection of wines from the Russian River Valley and the Rockpile viticultural area. A combination of romance, family values and rich European tradition inspired the dream of the winery, which graces a hillside overlooking the city of Santa Rosa.



When Walter Byck married Marijke Hoenselaars in Holland in 1961, little did they realize that together they would build a wine estate in the heart of one of the world's finest grape-growing regions — Sonoma County. Walter and Marijke moved to Santa Rosa in 1965 and realized they had found a haven to raise their growing family.

In 1978, after more than a year of searching for a ranch where their five children could camp, hike and fish, Walter came home one night, rain dripping from his coat, and said, "Marijke, children... I have seen paradise!" Thereafter, the 156 acres of land became known as Paradise Ranch.

Their love of wine, combined with a growing alliance with the incredible region they now called home, inspired Walter and Marijke to plant their own vineyards.

Within the first year of owning Paradise Ranch, Sauvignon Blanc had been planted. Chardonnay was added in 1985 and '86, making a total of 17 acres of grapevines.

Recognizing the outstanding quality of their estate vineyards, the Bycks were encouraged to start their own winery. After five years of planning, the dream of Paradise Ridge Winery became a reality. Opened in May of 1994, it has become a haven where guests can come to savor the wonderful wines, bring their friends

and soak in the magnificent views.

The winery welcomes visitors with a European-styled courtyard, leaf-shaped deck, expansive verandas and a terra cotta terrace. Guests also can enjoy breathtaking views of the vineyards and the Russian

River Valley from the distinctive indoor/outdoor tasting bar. The beautiful and serene atmosphere also provides a perfect setting for special events and for joyful brides and grooms to exchange their

wedding vows.

In 2001, after 10 years of making wine, Paradise Ridge completed a state-of-the-art winemaking facility. Situated in the heart of the estate, it was carefully designed to be as beautiful on the outside as on the inside.

Sadly, Paradise Ridge lost Marijke Byck-Hoenselaars in early 2006. But the Paradise Ridge family, including son Rene and daughter Sonia, along with General Manager Denise Stuart, carry on the rich tradition and dedication to quality.

Combine quality wines with spectacular views and breathtaking sunsets, and you have the perfect recipe for romance.

Winery 4-1-1

Paradise Ridge Winery

4545 Thomas Lake Harris Dr.

Santa Rosa, CA

707-528-9463

Open Daily, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Tasting Fee: \$10

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Cave B Inn & Spa: Making Memories in Washington



It is not yet a trend in the United States, but it's becoming more common to see wineries "married" with inns, providing wine-loving guests with a complete "escape" on a single piece of property.

In the state of Washington, there's a wine estate that's setting the standard for total guest "immersion" — combining wine, food, a place to stay and even music. It's the perfect romantic getaway for Valentine's Day, an anniversary or any special occasion, and this is its story...

In 1980, Seattle-based neurosurgeon Vincent Bryan II, along with his wife Carol, purchased a several-hundred acre parcel of land high on the cliffs above the Columbia River. The closest town was Quincy, and the nearest paved road was interstate 90, six miles away.

The Bryans had been on a year-long quest to find land in Washington that was similar in latitude to the great winegrowing regions of France, and which had tremendous variety in both soil and microclimates. They were looking for land that had nearly perfect conditions for growing grapes.

When they purchased the property, they immediately realized they'd received much more than they'd bargained for. To have such amazing conditions for growing premium

winegrapes — coupled with a location so stunning in its sweeping, panoramic gorge cliffs, valleys and views — was extraordinary.

But the goal was the vineyards, and the Bryans set to work planting. Then came the winery: Champs de Brionne. The ultimate goal: to ultimately have a premiere estate winery, and soils and microclimates provided the promise of potentially great wines.

But how to motivate Washington residents to visit the winery and taste the wines? This question was in the back of the Bryans' minds as they accompanied some friends on a hike into the gorge.

Near the top of the cliff leading down into the "little gorge," there was a strangely wonderful natural bowl in the cliff side. Carol and friends walked down the bowl to the bottom, and Vince remained at the top. Soon, Vince realized he could hear every word they were speaking — more than 1,000 feet below

This was the first indication of the amazing natural acoustics provided by the "bowl" on the cliff, and an idea



TOURING TIPS

was born: music!

There was nothing fancy about the setting for this natural venue's first concert: a small wooden stage, and a few hastily-laid sod terraces. The sole intent of the "amphitheater" was to provide a wonderful musical experience that would draw visitors to Champs de Brionne Winery.

As summer approached, pamphlets were written up and dittoed into damp, inky-smelling piles. The Bryan children handed out these "Champs de Brionne Summer Music Theater" pamphlets at the end of the dusty, unpaved road leading past the winery. To everyone's amazement, they passed out 1,000.

Guests came, tried Champs de Brionne wines, sat on the grassy



terraces and enjoyed themselves tremendously. Quickly, the amphitheater grew to include a much larger stage and an increasingly exciting lineup of performers.

The Champs de Brionne Summer Music Theater quickly gained momentum. The special land seemed to elevate everything and everyone around it, and with that understanding came the decision to close the winery and concentrate on making the estate vineyards larger, more mature and better matched to their surroundings. Then, and only then, would a new, smaller, boutique winery be built.

After only a few years, the Champs de Brionne Summer Music Theater had become The Gorge Amphitheater — better known to locals simply as “The Gorge.” It had grown to encompass a world-class stage, multiple grass-terraced levels, and as many as 20,000 concertgoers per show. Artists like Rod Stewart and Bob Dylan took the stage.

With every concert at the Amphitheater, one thing became increasingly clear: Something special happened to people who attended concerts there. There was a palpable sense of peace and community. There was something in human nature that responded to tremendous natural vistas. And when musicians picked up their instruments and began to play and sing, all of it had a profound effect.

Music pulsed and soared at The Gorge over the years while the vineyards grew and the vines

thickened and the grapes came into their own. It was time to build that second, smaller, premium winery. In 2000, the doors of Cave B Estate Winery were opened.

All around the winery other construction began, as more of the vision of Carol and Vince

Bryan became reality. Cave B Inn rose to the northwest of the winery. Tendrils Restaurant was built, and a chef’s garden was planted. And a boutique spa was created.

The doors of Cave B Inn & Spa opened in 2005. This place, once considered to be in the middle of nowhere, had become, as the Bryans liked to say, “in the middle of everywhere.”

Cave B is an example of how nature and humans can enhance one another — like wine and music, or wine and food. The Bryans continue to extend their Cave B vision, taking their cues from the land. We can’t wait to see what they come up with next.

For Further Information

Cave B Inn & Spa

344 Silica Rd. NW
Quincy, WA 98848

Reservations: 888-785-CAVE
Inn Front Desk: 509-785-CAVE
Spa: 509-785-2036
Tendrils: 509-785-2283

Other Winery Inns

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www.ajbvineyards.com/bandb.html

Sannino Bella Vita Vineyard Bed & Breakfast

North Fork of Long Island, N.Y.
<http://sanninovineyard.com>

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Restaurant Ticket. The menu is different every day. Meals are expensive (\$165 for the Grand Menu, \$135 for the Vegetable Menu). And yet for 24 years, diners have flocked to Charlie Trotter’s in Chicago. The flocking will stop this summer, however, as Trotter has announced he will close his restaurant in August and take a sabbatical. So, get there while you still can.
773-248-6228

2 Hot Walking Wine Tour. It’s called “wiking” — a combination of wine tasting and hiking, and it first caught on in Oregon. Little wonder, as that state’s Willamette Valley is home to more than 400 wineries, and walking trails are seemingly everywhere. Grand Cru Wine Tours arranges itineraries and tours, with a six-mile excursion costing \$125. Why sleep it off when you can walk it off?
www.grandcruwinetours.com

3 Hot Food Trend. Each new year begins with a rash of predictions about what to expect in America’s restaurants, and in 2012, one of the trends is expected to be more regional American cooking. Along with that, we’d love to see more restaurants stock and serve more local wines. With wine being made in every state, and good wine being made in most, the time has come for regional cooking and wine pairing.



Zinfandel. One of the world’s most versatile winegrapes, grown mostly in California. It can be made into a dry red table wine, a semi-sweet blush wine, or a very sweet dessert wine.

A lion. A full-bodied Tempranillo wine from Spain’s Ribera del Duero growing region.

Body. A measure of a wine’s density in relation to its alcohol. “Full-bodied” wines tend to have a higher alcohol level than “light-bodied” wines.

Cooperage. The term used for the containers in which wine is stored prior to bottling and release. It’s basically a synonym for barrels.

Dessert wine. A sweet wine, possessing a fairly high level of residual sugar, and sometimes fortified. Such wines can either accompany certain types of desserts, or actually function as dessert.

VINESSE STYLE

GIFT WRAPPING

A bottle of wine makes a romantic Valentine’s Day present, and nothing says “I love you” better than a beautifully wrapped package.

Taking the time not only to buy a nice bottle but also to wrap it nicely conveys the message to your loved one that you gave the gift some thought — unlike a pre-packaged box of chocolates.

Fortunately, no artistic ability is required to transform that bottle into an amazing-looking gift.

The simplest option is to wrap the bottle in tissue paper (red would be a good color for Valentine’s Day), and then place it in a gift bag. Your local Hallmark shop offers a wide selection of wine gift bags, and you need to stop by there to pick up a card anyway.

Some wineries sell wooden crates for their special bottles, and include the winery’s logo on the crate. Add a red ribbon and a small gift card, and you have a classy, romantic presentation.

And if you really want to score points, include a bottle of wine as part of a gift basket that also holds a selection of chocolates or some other special treat. Wrap it up in red cellophane paper, and your sweetie will know where your heart is.



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



Burgundy

Pinot Noir is among the world's more romantic wines, and some of the world's finest Pinot Noir comes from the Burgundy region of France.

Burgundy is located in the eastern sector of the country, with the bulk of its vineyards sited between Dijon and Lyon. It is south of Champagne, north of the Rhone Valley and northeast of Bordeaux.

One must be cautious when purchasing Burgundy, because there is a wide spectrum of quality between the most esteemed bottlings and the rather lackluster renditions that simply take advantage of the Burgundy name, yet still command very high prices.

The most famous wines of Burgundy come from the Cotes de Nuits and the Cotes de Beaune, but the region also embodies Chablis in its northern sector, as well as Beaujolais in its southern sector. The climate of Chablis is more similar to that of Champagne, while the climate of Beaujolais is more Rhone-like, which means varieties other than Pinot Noir can be grown quite successfully.

Chablis, for instance, is known for its crisp, minerally bottlings

of Chardonnay, while most of the fine wines of Beaujolais are crafted from the Gamay grape. The cooler temperatures in the north and the warmer temps in the south dictate the varieties that will be most successful.

Most of the famous Pinot Noir districts of Burgundy are bunched in the middle of the appellation, but as we've noted, simply seeing the "Burgundy" designation on a bottle is not a guarantee of quality.

So how can one sort out the classics from the merely average wines? One way is to look for "hyphenated" names on the labels because, long ago, a number of villages more or less hijacked the names of their most famous vineyards — a helpful sales tool in the local wine shops.

For instance, the village of Gevrey embraced the name of the famous Chambertin Vineyard and became Gevrey-Chambertin. When you see what *The New Sotheby's Wine Encyclopedia* calls such "double-barrelled" names, it's generally a dependable indicator of quality.

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\$139.99 per shipment
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“In water, one sees one’s own face.
But in wine, one beholds the heart
of another.”

— French proverb

Q We live just outside Los Angeles along the coast, and have started collecting wine. We built some shelves with enough room to hold four dozen bottles, and we try to buy a new bottle each time we drink one with dinner (which is about three times per week). With that many bottles, should we also invest in refrigeration?



A It can’t hurt, because the ideal temperature for storing wine is around 55 degrees. But considering where you live, it may not be necessary. When the temperature is around 72 degrees year-round, with few if any heat spikes, you should be fine. Your method and pace of swapping out bottles means no bottle will be on your wine rack more than four months. As long as you keep those wines out of direct sunlight, they should hold up well.

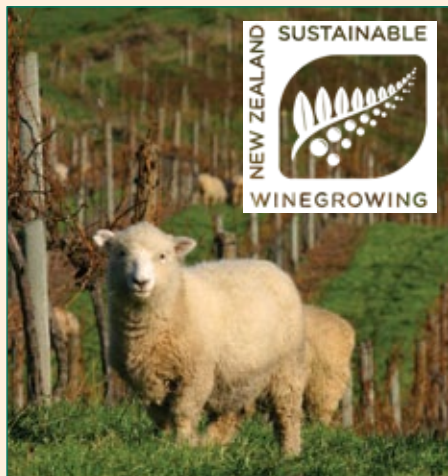
During the 1960s, Café de Paris was the place to see and be seen in Rome — one of the places that symbolized “la dolce vita.” But it turned out that Café de Paris also was a money-laundering front for the Mafia. Now, however, it stands as a symbol of the anti-Mafia effort in Italy, because its new management team has based the updated menu on items produced on land confiscated from the Mafia. That includes the pasta, made from wheat grown on a former Mafia-run farm near Naples, and red wine from the Centopassi cooperative near a town with a familiar name among movie buffs: Corleone.



If you haven’t already heard, you soon will: There’s a new kind of Girl Scouts cookie coming out this year: Savannah Smile. It’s named after the birthplace of Girl Scouts founder Juliette Gordon Low (Savannah, Georgia) and its half-moon shape resembles a lemon wedge — appropriate, since the cookie has a lemony flavor. Of course, no Girl Scouts cookie is complete (for an adult) without a glass of wine. To accompany a Savannah Smile, we’d suggest a neutral-flavored sparkling wine (such as a Blanc de Blancs) or, if you’re feeling adventurous, an Italian Pinot Grigio.

54

Number of liters of wine consumed annually in Italy, on a per capita basis. In the United States, annual wine consumption is estimated at 7 liters per person. (Source: Euromonitor)



Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand is an industry initiative directed through the New Zealand Winegrowers organization. With a growing trade and consumer demand for environmentally friendly products, it provides an important platform to promote the New Zealand wine industry as a world leader in clean, green wine production. Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand provides a framework for improving all aspects of performance — environmental, social and economic sustainability. In the vineyard, it addresses the use of agrichemicals, soil health, water availability and quality, and biodiversity. In the winery, it addresses resource management, waste management and process management issues. The program also promotes the well-being of staff, neighbors and the community. The Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand logo endorses wines produced from 100% accredited vineyard grapes, verifying each winery’s commitment to environmentally responsible production.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



ROMANTIC PAIRINGS

If you're looking for a list of aphrodisiacs to consume this Valentine's Day, you've come to the wrong place. There are plenty of, uh, resources online to help you with that.

If, however, you're simply seeking some suggestions for successful food-and-wine pairing, we can help — particularly if you're planning to open a bottle or two (or three) of those recommended in this issue's "Cellarmaster" feature.

- **With Pinot Noir:** The silky, smooth texture of Pinot provides a nice balance when dining on char-grilled food, so a steak (perhaps cooked over oak chips) is always a good choice. For the "red-wine-with-fish" crowd, salmon is a sublime option — particularly when both the wine and the fish are from the Pacific Northwest. If you happen to be heading to California's Central Coast for Valentine's Day, be aware that Pinot Noir also pairs beautifully with that region's culinary treat: tri-tip.

- **With Sparkling Wine:** Oysters. Scallops. Shrimp. Seafood, in general. All make great companions for bubbly, and because these dishes are lighter than red meat, you should have plenty of energy left over for, ahem, whatever you have planned for after dinner. Not a fish person?

Sparkling wine also matches nicely with slightly spicy fare, such as certain Spanish tapas or sizzling chicken fajitas.

- **With Sweet Wine:** The two basic types of sweet wine are "late harvest" dessert wines, which taste like sweet fruit, and Port, which can exude nut-like and chocolate flavors. With dessert wines, a peach or apricot tart would work well, as would a slice of pineapple upside-down cake. Or spoon lightly sugared peach or plum slices over pound cake.

With Port, dessert can be as simple as a bowl of mixed nuts (unsalted), or as lavish as a triple-layer chocolate cake topped with a caramel drizzle. Port also pairs nicely with crunchy treats such as oatmeal-raisin-walnut cookies and macadamia nut cookies.

Of course, if you don't have a curfew and aren't counting calories, you could make it a three-course meal. In that case, start with sparkling wine, move on to Pinot Noir, and finish with a sweet wine.

Light & Sweet

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PRICE:

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CHEESE & CHIVE SOUFFLES

Try these tasty soufflés with a California-style (i.e., rich and buttery) Chardonnay. This recipe yields 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk
- 3.5-oz. soft goat's cheese
- 3 eggs, separated
- 2 teaspoons fresh chives, chopped
- Salt
- Pepper

Preparation

1. Melt butter in a saucepan.
2. Add flour, and cook over low heat, stirring, for 30 seconds.
3. Remove pan from heat and gradually stir in milk until smooth.
4. Return saucepan to heat and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens. Cook for 1 minute more.
5. Allow to cool slightly, then beat in the goat's cheese, egg yolks and chives. Add salt and/or pepper to taste.
6. Whisk egg whites in a large bowl until soft peaks form. Fold egg whites into the cheese mixture.
7. Spoon the mixture into 4 greased individual soufflé ramekins, and set on a baking sheet.
8. Bake in preheated 400-degree oven for 15 to 18 minutes, until risen and golden. Serve immediately.

PASTA PIE

Try this easy-to-make dish with Zinfandel, Syrah or Merlot. This recipe serves 4.

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 14.5-oz. leeks, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 2/3 cup half-and-half
- 4-oz. Gruyere cheese, grated
- 1 cup cooked fusilli
- Salt
- Pepper

Preparation

1. Heat oil in a frying pan. Add leeks and garlic, and cook until soft.
2. Mix the leek mixture with all remaining ingredients.
3. Season with salt and/or pepper to taste, and transfer to a greased ovenproof dish or medium-sized cake pan.
4. Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 25 minutes, or until the eggs have set and the pie is golden brown.

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