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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

The Salad Days of Summer: What to Drink

How to Get the Most Out
of the 'Wine Experience'

Exploring Antinori's New
Chianti Classico Estate

There's More to Wine
Country Than 'Just' Wine

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Death of the Wine Bottle?

By Robert Johnson

W*ith the emergence of the screw cap, we've already learned to live without the "pop" sound made by a cork being pulled out of a wine bottle. Will we soon be learning to live without the bottle as well?*

Wine bottles were first made during the 1600s, when hot-burning coal furnaces made it possible to manufacture thicker, more durable glass. Shapes and sizes of wine bottles varied, but over time they became the wine "holder" of choice.

During the 20th century, "wine in a box" became popular, although it generally was limited to low-end wines — the type one might otherwise buy in large jugs at the liquor store or supermarket.

More recently, other types of containers have been introduced, including aluminum cans. Sofia Blanc de Blancs from Francis Ford Coppola is packaged in four-can cardboard cubes, and each 6.3-ounce can comes with its own straw.

Then there's the Wine Cube, which reminds me of a kid's juice box, only larger. Each cube contains the equivalent of about three glasses of wine.

Stack Wines have been on the market for a while, and each "tube" contains four filled glasses made out of hard plastic. Simply unzip the outer packaging, unstack the bottles and pull back their foil tops — a nice idea for a picnic.

Even the much maligned "wine in a

box" has been given a stylish update by Volere Wines, which packs its 1.5-liter bags of wine in a purse-shaped box with a piece of rope attached for carrying. It definitely makes a style statement.



Will the "wine purse," wine stacks, the Wine Cube or aluminum cans one day replace the wine bottle — singularly or collectively? Personally, I doubt it.

But in the sometimes-wacky world of wine, where that iconic pop of a cork has been joined by a "cracking" sound once reserved for cans of soda pop, I've learned to never to say never.



How to Fully Experience Wine

“See me / Feel me / Touch me / Heal me.” Those lyrics from The Who’s iconic “Tommy” rock opera could make one think about wine appreciation.

For many people, the only sense used when drinking wine is taste. Which makes perfect sense, since flavor tends to be what we enjoy most about eating or drinking.

But to fully appreciate wine — particularly wines of exceptional quality — one must also embrace three of the four other senses.

First, we see the wine. Next, we smell it. Thirdly, we “feel” it. And, finally, we taste it. Follow these tips and, over time, you’ll embrace wine not merely as a beverage, but as a sensual experience.

- **See the wine.** Its color provides clues about its complexity, its age and even its future. Deeply hued wines tend to be bolder in flavor than lightly colored wines. Those with some brown coloring around the “edges” in a glass may be near their peak of maturity, meaning it’s probably time to drink up.

- **Smell the wine.** Pour the wine into a glass — no more than half-full. Swirl the wine, helping release its full

spectrum of aromas. Think about what you’re smelling. Is it fruit? What kind? Is it flowers? What type? Is it spice? Baking or cooking? The smell of the wine is directly linked to the wine’s flavor.



- **“Feel” the wine.** Hold the wine in your mouth for a few seconds before swallowing it. Does it feel “heavy” or “light”... or perhaps somewhere in-between? Does it seem a bit flat and dull, or is it assertive and bright?

- **Taste the wine.** By using your other senses, when the time finally comes to taste the wine, you’ll be much more aware of the flavors. Instead of referring to a specific wine as “sweet” or “sour,”

you’ll be able to describe its color and level of richness, as well as specific aromas and flavors.

And when you can do that, you’ll no longer be merely tasting wine; you’ll be *experiencing* it. Kind of like the difference between listening to your favorite music group through ear buds, and seeing the group perform live.

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Antinori Unveils New Chianti Classico Cellar

For more than 600 years, Marchesi Antinori has played a major role in shaping not only the wine industry in Italy, but also that country's culture.

But unlike the most influential estates of the Napa Valley in California, the Bordeaux appellation of France and other key winegrowing regions around the world, Antinori has made its mark in relative privacy. Only those with connections — wine buyers, primarily — ever had the opportunity to visit the family-owned operation and take a behind-the-scenes glimpse at what made it tick. That was true in 1385, when Giovanni di Piero Antinori became a member of the Winemakers' Guild in Florence, and it was true in early 2013, as 25th- and 26th-generation family members — Marchesi Piero Antinori and his daughters Albiera, Allegra and Alessia — carried on the tradition in various facilities.

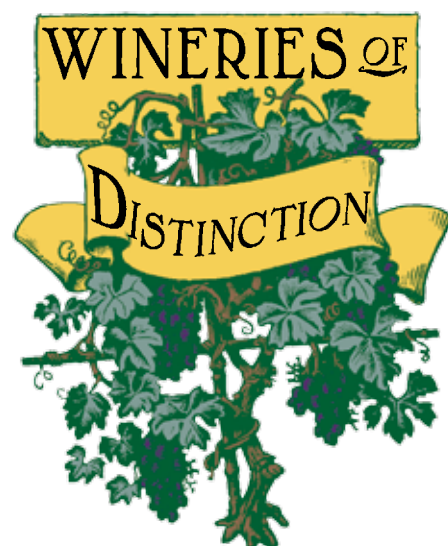
Then in March, everything changed. The cloak of secrecy was retired, and the Antinori family began welcoming guests to its new, state-of-the-art winery in Bargino, about 20 minutes outside Florence. It's called the Marchesi Antinori Chianti Classico Cellar, but it is more than just a winemaking facility.

Yes, visitors can taste Antinori's coveted wines — the full line, in fact. And, yes, they can view all of the

latest winemaking equipment used at the facility, and learn how the process has gradually evolved through the centuries and the generations. That, alone, would be worth the \$27 admission fee, given the quality of the Antinori wines.

But there's so much more to see and do — even if the exterior of the facility appears somewhat small.

As one approaches the Chianti Classico Cellar, the deck of the facility's on-site restaurant comes into view... and nothing else. The deck is impressive, highlighted by a stunning spiral staircase and even some newly





planted grapevines. But given the scope of the project and the buzz it has created, one expects more.

And one gets more... a *lot* more... inside the facility, a vast majority of which is underground, built into a hillside. From conception to the grand opening, eight years passed, and visitors agree that the wait was worth it.

In addition to the cellar and wine-tasting area, the facility offers:

- **The aforementioned restaurant**, overseen by Chef Matteo Gambi of the acclaimed Osteria di Passignano, featuring dishes that use products from the Chianti region. Surprisingly, there is a hamburger on the menu, although it is unlike any burger you've ever tasted. Gambi even elevates chicken salad to a new level.

- **An extensive tour**, highlighting not only the winemaking process, but the amazing architecture that made it all possible. Beyond the neatly arranged rows of oak barrels, one will notice the curved walls lined by terra cotta bricks, fulfilling the family's desire to focus on local materials whenever possible. Architecturally, the facility has been called inspiring.

- **A museum**, highlighted by a Renaissance-era wine press that was designed by Leonardo Da Vinci. There

also are original scores of compositions inspired by Antinori wine, classical paintings, models of the Antinori family's other estates, and an array of historical artifacts.

- **An auditorium**, where documentaries chronicle the family's winemaking history, as well as the construction of the Chianti Classico Cellar.

- **A wine store**, where one can purchase bottles after sampling the winery's current releases.

If you're planning a trip to Italy and have time to visit only one winemaking estate, the Marchesi Antinori Chianti Classico Cellar should top your "to see" list. The facility paints a compelling portrait of Italy's most influential wine family, and provides countless treats for the eyes and the palate.

Winery 4-1-1

Marchesi Antinori Chianti Classico Cellar

Bargino, Italy

Open Daily, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

www.antinorichianticlassico.it/en



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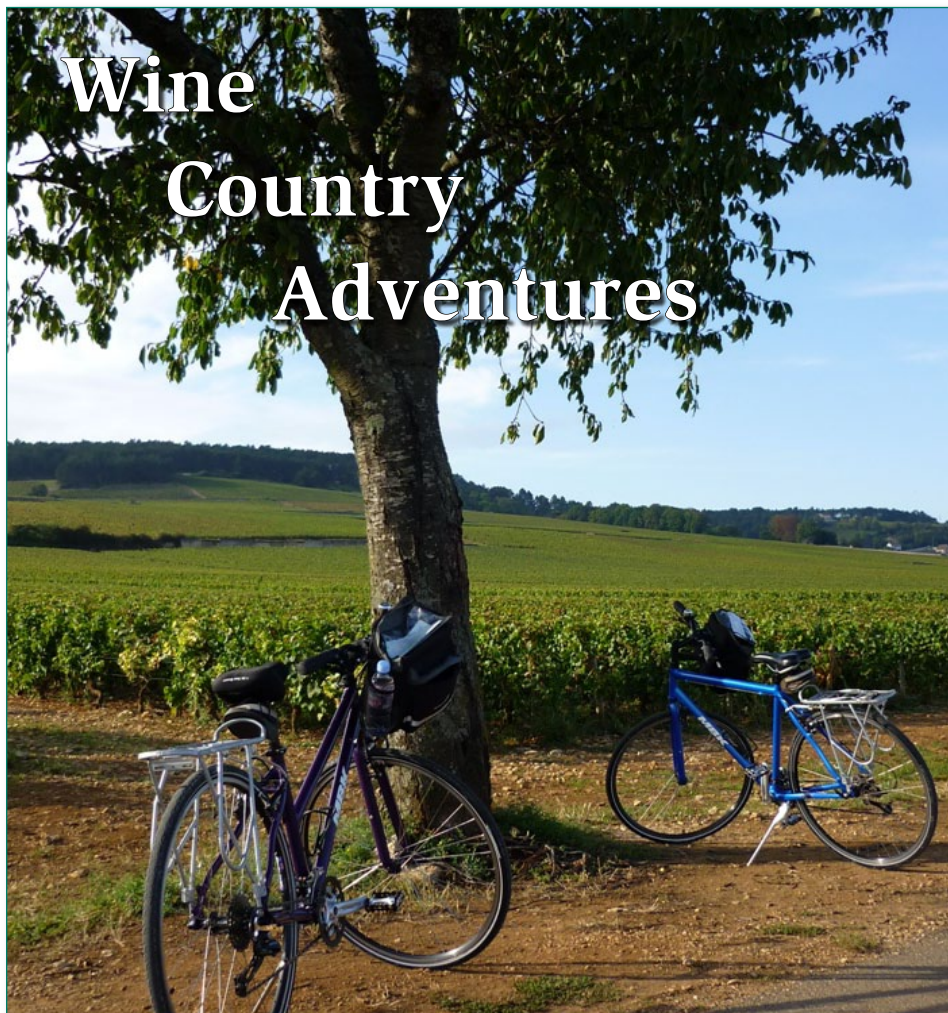
FREQUENCY:

Approximately Monthly

PRICE:

\$85.99 average per shipment including shipping

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Wine Country Adventures

We go to “wine country” primarily to taste wine. The opportunity to meander from tasting room to tasting room, sampling the latest vintages and perhaps some older ones, is the adult equivalent of a kid in a candy store. One could easily build an entire vacation around that single activity.

But if you prefer to have a mix of activities when on vacation, there’s no reason to cross “wine country” off your list of potential destinations. From California’s Central Coast to the vine-covered hills of Tuscany, there are countless opportunities for adventures within steps of the tasting rooms.

Here are just six of the possibilities...

1. Bicycling in Sonoma County.

One can really get away from the hustle and bustle of city life by riding a bike on Old Redwood Highway out of Santa Rosa.

A somewhat ambitious route will take you to Pleasant Avenue in the town of Windsor, then on Chalk Hill

Road to join Highway 128.

A left turn will take you into the Alexander Valley, where you’ll be surrounded by grapevines. It also will take you to the Jimtown Store, where you can stop for coffee and stock up for a picnic later on.

At that point, you’ll need to make a choice: keep going straight and head into Healdsburg (with its charming town square surrounded by satellite tasting rooms, restaurants and shops), or make a right turn toward Geyserville, where you can continue to enjoy the country quiet or perhaps visit a winery.

Whichever way you decide to go, keep in mind that you’re sharing the



TOURING TIPS

road with cars, some of which are being driven by people who may not have done as much spitting as they should have at the tasting rooms. Always have a “bail-out area”... just in case.

2. Bicycling in Tuscany. If you’re a bicycle rider who prefers the safety and camaraderie of a group cycling tour, Butterfield and Robinson offers a six-day trip through the legendary landscape of Tuscany.

The route takes cyclists up the clay hills toward Siena, with stays at 5-star hotels and picnics at private estates. The guided tours are priced at \$5,295, plus \$400 for a quad-comforting electric bike.

3. A shrine to wine. Calling the new Marchesi Antinori Chianti Classico Cellar a “tasting room” just seems... wrong.

It is so much more, from its subterranean cellar to its spiral staircase that leads to a rooftop planting of grapevines. The architecture is magnificent, and so is the on-site restaurant.

You can read more about the new Antinori Chianti Classico Cellar in this issue’s “Wineries of Distinction” feature.

4. Sip and zip. Ancient Peaks Winery, located in California’s Paso Robles winegrowing region, offers guests a balloon-free way to view vineyards by air: on ziplines.

One of the lines spans more than 1,200 feet, and if you’ve never been



on a zipline before, it can get the ol' heart pumping. But don't close your eyes, because that kind of defeats the whole purpose.

Also, if you're a zipline newbie, you may want to zip first and sip later. The \$99 zipline package includes wine at the Ancient Peaks tasting room.

5. Take a trolley. Sonoma's answer to the famous Napa Valley Wine Train is the Sonoma Valley Wine Trolley.

The trolley departs from the historic Sonoma Plaza, and the six-hour excursion includes a catered picnic lunch, plus visits to four boutique wineries. It's a great way to experience Sonoma wine country while leaving the driving to someone else.

6. Popcorn, Pinot Gris and a Movie. For the past several years, Moshin Vineyards in the Sonoma County town of Healdsburg has been welcoming summertime guests to its crush pad to watch classic films.

Already this summer, Moshin has shown "Back to the Future," and coming up on August 10, it will screen "Caddyshack." The admission fee is \$10, which includes unlimited popcorn, and wine is available for purchase by the glass or bottle.

Also, guests are encouraged to dress up as characters from the film. Seeing what fashion-focused film buffs come up with for "Caddyshack" may actually prove to be more entertaining than the film.

For Further Information

Santa Rosa Cycling Club

www.srcc.com

Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition

www.bikesonoma.org

Butterfield and Robinson Tuscany Bicycling

www.butterfield.com

Marchesi Antinori Chianti Classico Cellar

www.antinorichianticlassico.it

Ancient Peaks Winery Ziplining

www.margarita-adventures.com

Sonoma Valley Wine Trolley

www.sonomavalleywinetrolley.com

"Moshin Pictures" at Moshin Vineyards

www.moshinvineyards.com

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Wine Country Happy Hour. On one route to California's Sonoma Coast, the tiny town of Duncans Mills offers travelers a chance to stretch their legs and browse eclectic shops. And when the clock strikes 4 on Friday afternoons, it's "happy hour" time at Sophie's Cellars, featuring wine by the taste or glass, plus an array of cheeses, fresh-baked breads, and chocolates to enjoy.

www.sophiescellars.com

2 Hot Ever-Changing Wine List.

A diner can never become bored or complacent with the menu at Oxheart restaurant in Houston, Texas, because the menu is changed almost daily. That's a result of chef Justin Yu taking a micro-seasonal approach to his craft, sourcing ingredients both locally and seasonally. And the same goes for Oxheart's wine list, which features food-pairing partners that range from safe to daring, but always are spot-on.

www.oxhearthouston.com

3 Hot Long Island Wine Country

Inn. The North Fork of New York's Long Island is home to several excellent wineries, including Shinn Estate Vineyards and Farmhouse. It's the Farmhouse that really sets Shinn apart, providing a true country getaway with a fabulous breakfast included. After chowing down, one is mere steps from the Shinn tasting room.

www.shinnestatevineyards.com



Xtant. Name of a Bordeaux-style red wine blend, made in California's Napa Valley.

Yield. The amount of grapes grown in a vineyard, on an estate or within an appellation during a given vintage, generally measured in pounds or tons per acre.

Zymology. Name given to the chemistry of fermentation, the process through which crushed grapes are transformed into wine.

A.B.V. Abbreviation for "alcohol by volume," one of the pieces of information required to be included on a wine label.

Bota. A cask, generally housing between 159 and 172 gallons, used for storing Sherry.

Cru Classé. Term for a vineyard or winery that is officially classified under French winemaking laws.

VINESSE STYLE

MICHIGAN 'TASTING ROOM'

The "tasting experience" at most wineries involves running through a set list of wines, from white to red and dry to sweet, and then perhaps purchasing a bottle or two to take home.

But there's a winery in Michigan that has transformed the tasting room experience into nothing short of an event. It's called Gravity, and you'll notice the difference even before you enter when you're greeted at the door by one of the estate's friendly staff members.

If you've not visited before, you'll be given the full 4-1-1 about what to expect. At Gravity, it's not just about tasting wine, but savoring it. That's accomplished not only via the ambience — there's both indoor and outdoor seating, the latter offering gorgeous vistas — but also with food. Specifically, with cheese and chocolate.

Guests are invited to create their own flight of four wines from a list that includes five whites, six reds and one blush. Each white and the blush are paired with an appropriate cheese, while each red is served with a piece of chocolate.

A few of the pairings that were available on the day of our visit:

- Pinot Gris with Mild Cheddar.
- Riesling with Colby-Monterey Jack.
- Merlot with a Dark Chocolate-Covered Cashew.
- Cabernet Franc with Dark Chocolate Almond Sea Salt Bark.

You can learn more about how Gravity elevates the tasting room experience online at facebook.com/gravitywinery.



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



Texas

T*exas is the site of the first vineyard established in North America by Franciscan priests. That vineyard was planted around 1662.*

As European settlers followed the development of mission outposts, they brought more grapevine cuttings, further enlarging the industry through the 1800s.

Today, the largest of the 48 continental United States has approximately 4,400 acres of producing vineyard farmland. Here's how it breaks down geographically:

- **Hill Country** — The Hill Country region north of Fredericksburg to San Saba, and west to Menard, is home to beautiful limestone hills and pristine creeks with approximately 600 acres of vineyards. A large tourist trade has made the Hill Country a popular wine region with more than 70 wineries.

- **Southeast Texas/Gulf Coast** — This region has a high population, providing excellent marketing potential for the more than 50 wineries located there. With close to 90 acres of winegrapes, most growers are concentrating on hybrid varieties such as Blanc du Bois and Black Spanish, although several

growers are having success with vinifera grapes.

- **Texas Panhandle/High Plains** — The Texas Panhandle/High Plains region has more than 1,100 acres of vineyard land. Located at 3,400 feet above sea level on flat terrain, the Texas High Plains experience long, hot, dry summers — but the cool evenings make it ideal for grape growing.

- **North Texas** — The North Texas region has more than 75 wineries and approximately 370 acres of grapes. The area has a wide variety of soils, some of which are deep, well-drained sandy loam — excellent for grapes.

- **West Texas** — The West Texas region has dry climate, fertile soil and mild winters, making it beneficial for more than 1,200 acres of vineyards. West Texas is home to seven Texas wineries, including the state's oldest bonded winery, Val Verde Winery, in operation since 1883.

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Q I've noticed that most wines from California are named after a grape, while most from France are named after a region. Why is this?

A In a word: tradition. French winemaking goes back centuries, and from the very beginning, it was common to blend a number of varieties into a single cuvee. This is known as a "field blend," and it remains a common practice today not only in France, but throughout much of Europe. The California wine industry, in contrast, is very young, and single-variety wines are common. Here's one way to think about it: In France, the emphasis is on "where." In California, it's on "what."

June 28 was a sad day in the world of wine, particularly in the land Down Under. Peter Lehmann, known as "The Baron of the Barossa," passed away



that day at age 82. Lehmann may not have put Barossa on the map literally, but he played a huge role in developing the region's reputation for high-quality wines. Lehmann's son, Doug, described his father as "one in a million," and added: "Like everything he ever did in his life, he fought incredibly hard in the end.

And always with a smile and a quip. He certainly lived more than nine lives in his 82 years." Lehmann always will be a hero to Aussie grape growers because of the courageous stand he took in 1979. That year, the big "corporate wineries" stopped buying fruit, threatening the futures of more than a hundred families. So Lehmann started a new, independent winery, providing a lifeline for the growers. Through the years, the wines he made gained international acclaim.

“They're both sophisticated, both have deep layers, but wine, like music, brings people together.”



— Contemporary jazz guitarist Paul Brown on the similarities between wine and music.



LEMELSON
VINEYARDS

Eric Lemelson entered the wine business with a set of core values from his environmental background and longstanding commitment to Oregon. Those values help guide his decision-making at all stages of viticulture and winemaking. Lemelson Vineyards has farmed its vineyards organically from the beginning, in part because of Lemelson's belief in organic farming. Knowing that great wines ultimately come from healthy vineyards, he sensed that grapes would develop their full flavor potential from vineyards managed without synthetic chemical inputs and with the use of techniques and practices that support living, healthy soils. In this view, synthetic chemicals are solutions that may make farming less expensive and labor intensive in the short term, while often damaging the complex biological relationships that support healthy vines over the long term. "Our intention," Lemelson says, "is to allow you to experience the pure, expressive flavors of our Pinot Noir and other wines, unclouded by homogenizing influences, while we work to protect the beautiful gift we've inherited that is a small bit of Oregon."

4.02

The 2012 crush of California winegrapes, in millions of tons.

(Source: Wine Institute)

A toast to Napa Valley's Domaine Chandon, which turns 40 this year. The estate, established by Moët Hennessy, represented the first French investment in the U.S. wine industry. Although not intentional, that decision sent an important message to the world: Napa Valley wines are worth considering. The rest, as they say, is history.



FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

Salad



Long gone are the days when a restaurant salad consisted of iceberg lettuce, perhaps a few carrot shavings (mainly for color) and a big glob of your favorite dressing.

As palates have evolved and Americans have become more adventurous diners — no doubt influenced by the arrival of new ethnic groups — the simple salad has evolved. Some barely even resemble a salad (taco salad, anyone?).

So, the wine pairing advice that follows must be taken with a grain of salt... not to mention pepper, assorted vegetables, various types of fruit and an array of “proteins.”

As is the case with most dishes, it’s best to select a wine that pairs well with the salad’s dominant flavor — be it the dressing, the protein or the veggies.

A dependable choice for pairing with many salads is Sauvignon Blanc. The variety often has a bit of a “green” edge to it, evoking impressions of grass, hay and/or herbs. It will complement, rather than compete with, the flavors of the lettuce.

Add a protein — such as chicken or turkey — to the mix, and you may opt for a more substantial wine, such

as a fruit-forward (as opposed to oaky and buttery) Chardonnay.

If you grill that chicken or turkey, rosé-style wines — either bone dry or off-dry — come into play. The fruit flavors and bright mouthfeel provide enjoyable counterbalance to the “char” of the grill.

If you like to throw everything but the kitchen sink into a salad, there’s a nice wine pairing partner even for you: sparkling wine. A salad may not be cause to open an expensive bottle of Dom Perignon, but it’s certainly worthy of a dry Spanish Cava or Italian Prosecco.

“Old school” salad fans need not despair. If it’s the dressing that provides most of the flavor to your salad, here are a few pairing suggestions:

- Blue Cheese dressing with a semi-sweet Riesling.
- Thousand Island dressing with “unoaked” Chardonnay.
- Italian dressing with Sauvignon Blanc or sparkling wine.
- Ranch dressing with Pinot Gris.

Light & Sweet

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ZINFULLY GOOD GRILLED LEG OF LAMB

This recipe makes 8 to 10 servings, and requires overnight marinating. So, plan ahead, and you'll be rewarded with a flavorful meal that pairs perfectly with Zinfandel.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 cup (red) Zinfandel wine
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup Asian sesame seed oil
- 1 leg of lamb, 4- to 5-lbs., boned and butterflied

Preparation

1. In a blender, combine the parsley, garlic, thyme, rosemary, mustard, wine, soy sauce, olive oil and sesame seed oil. Set aside 1/2 cup to serve with the lamb.
2. Place the lamb in a shallow dish, and pour the remaining marinade evenly over the meat. Cover and refrigerate overnight, turning occasionally.
3. Grill the lamb over medium-hot coals, approximately 6 to 10 minutes per side depending on desired doneness.
4. Slice lamb against the grain.
5. Heat the reserved Zinfandel sauce and serve alongside lamb.

AVOCADO CHICKEN SALAD AND CASHEW SANDWICH

This is an easy-to-make sandwich that's delightful to eat at any time of the year, but particularly during the summer. It pairs well with Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio or Pinot Gris. This recipe yields 6 sandwiches.

Ingredients

- 4 cooked, boneless chicken breast halves, shredded
- 1/4 cup ranch salad dressing
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 1 cup cashews
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted and diced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 12 slices bacon
- 6 slices Swiss cheese
- 12 slices whole grain bread, toasted

Preparation

1. In a large bowl, mix the cooked chicken, dressing, dill, cashews and avocado.
2. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
3. Cover, and chill in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.
4. Place bacon in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium high heat until evenly brown, then drain.
5. Spread even amounts of the chicken mixture on 6 slices of toasted bread. Top each with 2 slices bacon and 1 slice Swiss cheese. Top with remaining bread slices to make sandwiches.

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