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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

L.A.'S UNIQUE URBAN WINERY

**How to Host a
Wine Tasting**

**Pairing Wine
With... Bacon?**

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

Editor:
Robert Johnson

Wine Steward:
Katie Montgomery

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Which Comes First: The Food or the Wine?

By Robert Johnson

"Discussing the way a dish is prepared, arguing over courses and sampling pairings only leads to a chef's nose in the glass and a sommelier's hand on the knife."

So said Lindsey Whipple, sommelier at Cut restaurant inside the Palazzo resort in Las Vegas. His comment underscores the importance of the relationship between a chef and a sommelier, and also brings up a question: When it comes to food and wine pairing, which comes first — the food or the wine?

After talking to a number of chefs and sommeliers, I found that there are two distinct schools of thought on this topic. Not surprisingly, most of the chefs believe that wine should be matched to dishes, while many sommeliers feel that a chef should try to tailor specific dishes to specific wines.

Not to appear wishy-washy a la Charlie Brown — although I've read every "Peanuts" strip ever composed by the late Charles M. Schulz — but I can see both sides.

Marcel Boulestin, a restaurateur and French cookbook author during the first half of the 20th century, once observed: "Cookery is not chemistry. It is an art. It requires instinct and taste rather than exact measurements."

When Boulestin was in the

kitchen, he wasn't cooking a meal; he was creating a feast for the senses. Whether it was a spice or a sauce, he was looking for flavors that complemented and elevated one another. He was seeking to create a perfect balance of aroma, flavor and texture — a task challenging enough without adding wine affinity to the equation.

But there's a solid case to be made on the other side of this debate: Once a wine has been fermented, aged and bottled, there is nothing more that can be done for it. There are things we can do to it — such as exposing it to too much light and/or heat — but there is no way we can improve the product, or alter its flavors.

On the other hand, a chef has the ability to alter ingredients in order to change the flavor of any given dish. With that flexibility, he or she also has the ability to tailor a specific dish to a specific wine.

Of course, it takes a special chef — one with little or no ego — to follow that path. And that's why it's likely that chefs and sommeliers will be engaging in passionate debates for untold vintages to come.



How to Host a Wine Tasting

It can take a while for many of us to get back in the celebratory spirit following the holidays. But May has arrived, and we've been hibernating long enough. It's time to party!

Spring is the perfect season for hosting a wine tasting in your backyard or other outdoor space. Before the heat of the summer kicks in, which can present challenges in managing the temperature of wine, plan to invite your friends over for an evening of wine fun and discovery.

There are many ways to host a successful wine tasting, but we've found there are certain guidelines that, if followed, help ensure a successful event.

The first consideration, of course, is the wine. Plan on opening one bottle for each person in attendance, and try to have a nice mix of reds, whites, rosés and sparklers. Why so many bottles? We'll explain in a moment.

Next, you're going to need wine glasses. Lots of them. Specifically, one glass for each wine to be opened... per person. So, if you have six guests and six bottles, you're going to need 36 glasses.

If you don't own that many, "plasticware" will work just fine; remember, this is a wine *tasting*, not a wine *judging*.

To enhance the enjoyment of guests, have a few wine aroma wheels scattered among the wine bottles, and also provide notepads and pencils for those who wish to jot down the names of their favorites. And be sure to have one or two "dump buckets" available so guests don't feel compelled to finish every ounce of every wine sampled. Use of the dump buckets should be encouraged to promote safe driving after the party.



The idea is for each guest to try a little bit of each wine, and hopefully discover one or two new "favorites." Then at the end of the evening, have guests draw numbers from a hat to determine the order in which open bottles are selected to take home — nice "parting gifts" for the first party of Spring.



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The Last Vestige of Winemaking in L.A.



California’s wine tradition began with the Franciscan fathers of the early Spanish missions. In 1833, French winemaker Jean-Louis Vignes brought the first European vines from his native Bordeaux, and planted them in downtown Los Angeles.

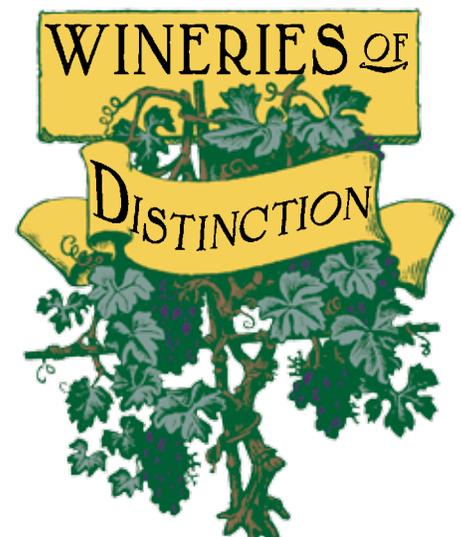
There, he also built a winery. By the end of the 1880s, Los Angeles had become the premier appellation for grape growing and winemaking in all of California, as the area’s temperate climate made it ideal for growing fruity, lush, richly-colored grapes. Vignes, considered by many to be the founder of California’s wine industry, eventually had a street in downtown L.A. named after him.

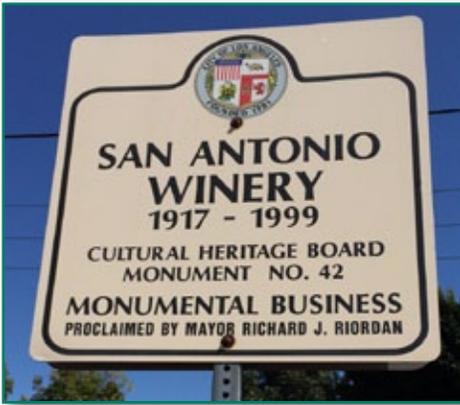
In 1910, Santo Cambianica left his home of Berzo San Fermo, in the northern Italian province of Lombardia. After registering at Ellis Island, he arrived in New York and then traveled across the country to Los Angeles. It took only a few years of saving money, building relationships, and planting his feet in the downtown Italian-American community to start his own company and begin living the American dream. Santo founded San Antonio Winery in 1917 on Lamar Street, dedicating it to his Patron Saint, Anthony.

In 1936, a young Stefano Riboli returned to the United States from Italy. With World War II on the horizon, Stefano’s parents knew it

was the appropriate time to return their son to the U.S., where he was born 15 years earlier. Stefano began apprenticing under his Uncle Santo, learning the skills necessary to operate a winery.

When Stefano married Maddalena Satragni in 1946, San Antonio Winery already was an established institution in California’s wine community. During this time, Northern California was making fast strides in vineyard plantings, but Santo, Stefano and Maddalena decided to remain with their





family in Los Angeles, where they'd been blessed by good fortune.

Santo Cambianica passed away in 1956, and wished that Stefano continue the business for the next generation. Stefano was granted full ownership of San Antonio Winery, and he and Maddalena had a powerful vision for the winery's future.

In the 1950s and '60s, Stefano and Maddalena began to look north for land and grape contracting, realizing that the quality of grapes produced in Northern California was surpassing that of Southern California. With the help of their children, they purchased vineyard properties in Monterey County in the 1970s, and in the Rutherford appellation of Napa Valley in the 1980s. They also forged relationships and business partnerships with grape growers throughout the

state, many of which remain in place to this day.

Most recently, the family has focused on the Paso Robles region in California's Central Coast. Two estate vineyards have been planted within the El Pomar AVA, and a modern winery and tasting room have been built.

But the original San Antonio Winery remains a fixture in downtown Los Angeles — the last producing winery in the city, with more than 97 years of winemaking under its belt. It is an essential component of the city's cultural and historical landscape.

In fact, in the early 1960s, Los Angeles' Cultural Heritage Board designated the winery "Cultural Monument Number 42." Still sitting on its original location on Lamar Street, San Antonio Winery is the last vestige of the rich winemaking tradition of the City of Angels.



San Antonio Winery visitor Michelle Garcia had an opportunity to meet the winery's patriarch, Stefano Riboli, during a visit to the downtown Los Angeles landmark.

Winery 4-1-1

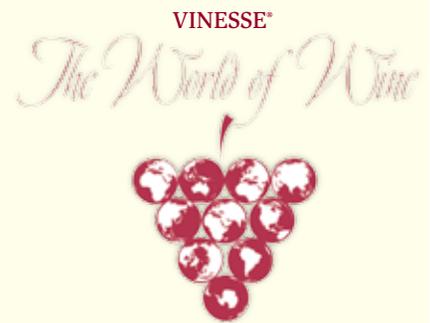
San Antonio Winery

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323-223-1401

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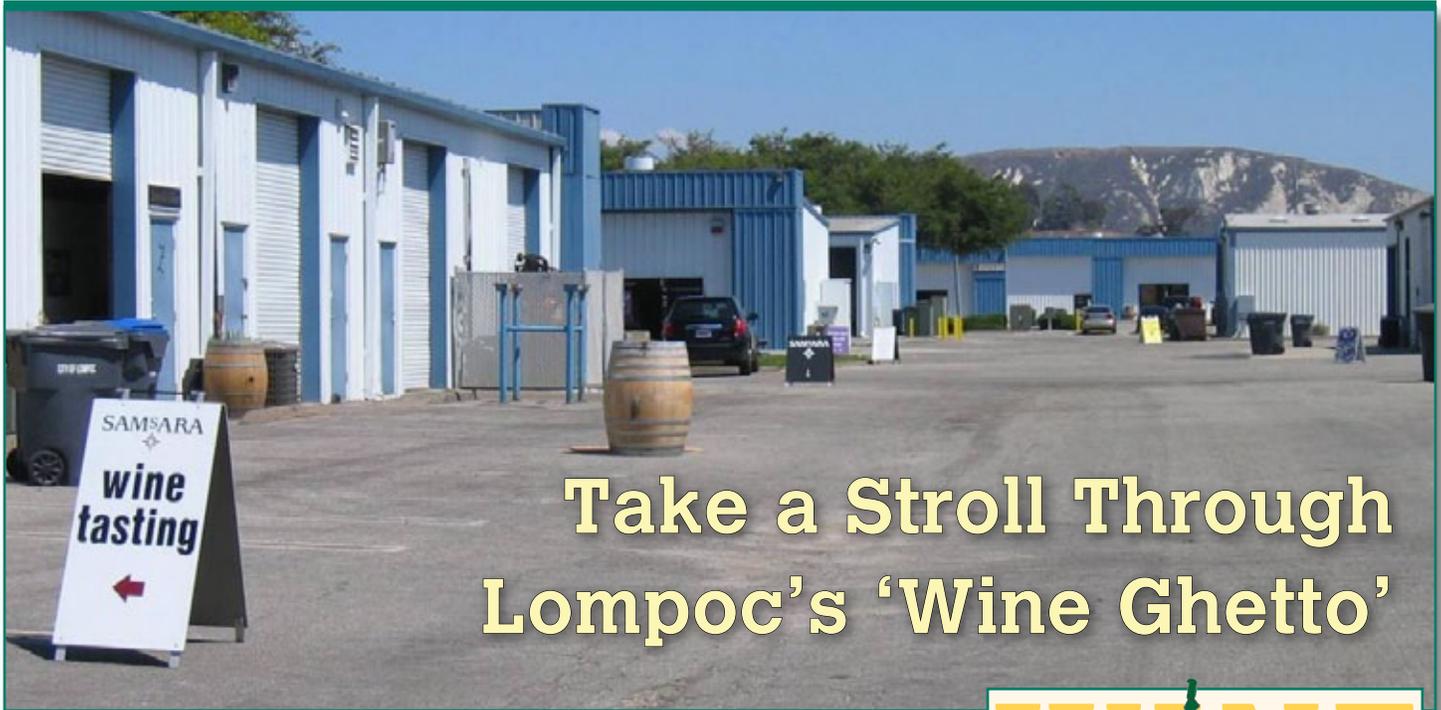
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Take a Stroll Through Lompoc's 'Wine Ghetto'

If you're looking for grapevine-lined hillsides for as far as the eye can see, you'll need to go elsewhere. If you expect to encounter tasting rooms with giant picture windows and soaring ceilings, you've come to the wrong place.

But if you'd like to taste a lot of different wines in a short period of time, with no need to drive from venue to venue, you've come to exactly the right place. That place? The California coastal community of Lompoc, and a few-square-block area that has been dubbed the "Wine Ghetto."

There, you'll find tasting room after tasting room, most devoted to low-production wineries that either can't afford or simply don't desire the fancy tasting rooms often associated with more famous wineries. It's basically an industrial park devoted to wine.

The Ghetto was founded by Rick Longoria of Longoria Wines in 1998. Longoria has long been a champion of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from the area, which since 2001 has been officially recognized as Sta. Rita Hills.

Far back in its history, the area was under the ocean. Layer upon layer of microscopic diatoms built up in vast quantities. As glaciers in the north and south grew, the ocean receded and land was uplifted, leaving vast sand dunes along what today is Highway 246, and huge deposits of diatomaceous earth throughout much of the Sta. Rita Hills and Lompoc.

A significant tectonic shift also took place, and the area was transformed from the traditional north/south orientation seen along the West Coast, to an east/west orientation — the only east/west winegrowing region between Chile and Alaska.

With the valley



TOURING TIPS

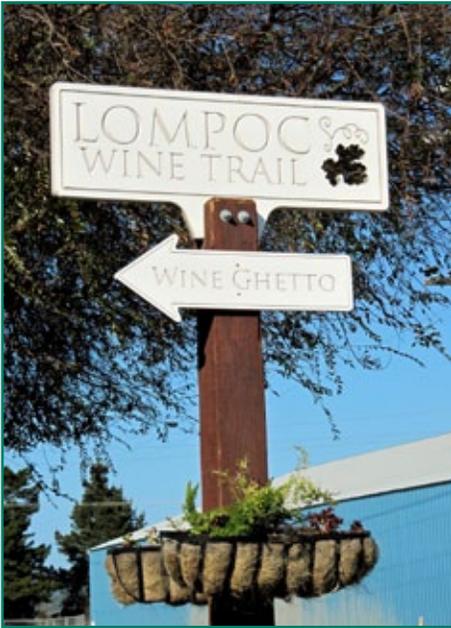
being open to the Pacific Ocean, cool, moist air is sucked miles inland as the Santa Ynez Valley heats up and those convection currents rise, essentially creating a vacuum. Summers in the Lompoc and Sta. Rita Hills areas are typically cool, foggy and breezy, with the longest, coolest growing season in the New World.

Because of these climatic conditions, the yields of fruit from Sta. Rita Hills is considerably less than in California's most famous winegrowing region, the Napa Valley. While Napa can typically produce three barrels of wine from one ton of grapes, one ton of Sta. Rita Hills fruit will make only about two barrels.

The different soils in the area are generally well drained, resulting in



Rick Longoria of Longoria Wines



more stress on the vines as they struggle to penetrate deep into the earth for moisture. This allows the farmers to apply just as much water as is necessary to produce flavorful, concentrated fruit.

The Pinot Noir grown there has incredibly long hang time before it is harvested, as does Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. This produces rich, deep flavors, with the calcium-rich soils adding distinct minerality not found elsewhere. All grapes in Sta. Rita Hills tend to develop thick skins, full of bright color and tannin. Resulting wines have great acidity,

and are ideal food wines.

But this is no mere two- or three-variety region. Many of the tasting rooms in the Wine Ghetto offer an array of bottlings, including Bordeaux-style wines and even luscious dessert wines.

And in this most non-traditional setting for sampling wine, don't be surprised if the person pouring the wine also is the person who made it.

For further information and to view a map of the Lompoc Wine Ghetto, go online to www.lompoctrail.com.



VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Orange County Wine Bar. Not many swallows return to Mission San Juan Capistrano anymore, but there's still a good reason to visit the south end of California's Orange County. Hamilton Oaks Winery has a tasting room in a 1920s farmhouse, where guests can sample wine, unpack a picnic lunch and, if they stop in at the right time, listen to music.
www.hamiltonoakssanjuan.com

2 Hot Wine Book. Ever attend a wine tasting where someone mentioned they smelled a certain aroma in a wine... but you didn't? There's a new book out that could help: *The Essential Scratch & Sniff Guide to Becoming a Wine Expert*. Even if the aromas contained therein occasionally suffer from the same affliction as those perfume sleeves included in magazines — i.e., they smell at least a little bit like paper — the humorous prose by author Richard Betts makes this a worthwhile addition to your wine library.
<http://myessentialwine.com>

3 Hot Wine Bar. There is no shortage of wine bars in Chicago, but the only one devoted primarily to Spanish wines is Vera. With around a hundred bottles from which to choose, including 15 Sherries, Vera provides an armchair journey to one of Europe's traditional wine countries.
<http://www.verachicago.com>

For Further Information

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La Montagne Winery 805-291-6643	Piedrasassi 805-736-6784	



Albariño. Native to the Galicia region in northwestern Spain, this variety also is popular in Portugal, where it's used in the crafting of Vinho Verde.

Backward. Describes a wine that is not as fully developed as others of the same variety from the same vintage.

Cooper. One who makes wine barrels — a true art form both in terms of construction and “flavoring” the wood.

Demi-Sec. Term used to describe a slightly to moderately sweet sparkling wine.

Extra Dry. A misleading sparkling wine term; it actually denotes a very sweet wine.

Foppiano. Under-the-radar winemaking family in California's Sonoma County, most revered by in-the-know wine lovers for its Russian River Valley Pinot Noir.

VINESSE STYLE

THE WINERY RESTAURANT AND WINE BAR

“Expect to stumble into wine country in the heart of Orange County.”

That's the message you'll find on the website homepage of The Winery Restaurant & Wine Bar, which debuted in the city of Tustin (2647 Park Ave.; 714-258-7600) and recently added a second location in Newport Beach (3131 W. Pacific Coast Hwy.; 949-999-6622).

And The Winery delivers, as it pairs contemporary California regional cuisine with a hip, vibrant, sophisticated setting, creating a cutting-edge dining experience. In fact, The Winery's Tustin location was named “Restaurant of the Year” by the Orange County Concierge Association in its first year.

Each restaurant's wine list, which offers around 650 selections, changes weekly, providing diners with a wide range of varietals and blends from around the world. Guests can look into and even tour the climate-controlled cellars, which

can hold up to 7,500 bottles.

The dinner menu is packed with taste-tempting options. “Beginnings” include Shrimp Bisque, Colorado Beef Carpaccio, Crispy Almond Dusted Calamari, and Prosciutto Wrapped Wild White Shrimp.

Salad choices include Santa Barbara Heirloom Tomatoes (with fresh Burrata Mozzarella and garlic croutons), Organic Quinoa and Baby Beet Salad, and a Classic Caesar Salad.

Prime steaks seem to be extremely popular with diners, but guests should not ignore the other main course offerings, which include Jumbo Maine Scallops and Wild White Shrimp, Chili Lime Rubbed Hawaiian Mahi-Mahi, Rotisserie Sonoma Free Range Chicken, and Herbs de Provence Organic New Zealand Rack of Lamb.

The Winery Restaurant & Wine Bar offers a warm and passionate menu, complemented by well-selected wines — truly a touch of wine country in “The O.C.”

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



In Chile, one of the key factors in the growing of quality winegrapes and the crafting of fine wines cannot be seen.

The cool sea air in Chile is partially blocked by the Coastal Mountains, although it finds its way inland by following the course of the transversal river valleys. During the day, sea breezes carried by the cold Humboldt Current penetrate inland, and each night, cold air descends from the snow-covered peaks of the Andes.

There is not a visitor who hits Chile's shores who is not amazed by the country's broad and cool coastal areas. With a shoreline spanning more than 4,000 kilometers, a large part of Chile is caressed by the Pacific Ocean, making it a paradise for water sports as well as a dream-come-true for those who love seafood — and wine.

Chilean wines have long been said to flourish on fertile plains and the steep hillsides of the majestic Andes Mountains. That has long been true, but then Casablanca made its debut in the early 1980s. Chile's first cool-climate coastal region soon was turning out crisp, fresh wines that caught the world's attention — and

the search for new terroirs up and down the country was on.

That was just the beginning of a new chapter in Chilean wine. Today, not only has the number of varieties produced in the country increased, but so has the number of wine styles. With multiple microclimates from which to choose, winemakers and grape growers have invested considerable resources in matching the right varieties to the right growing areas — with magnificent results in the bottle.

The Chilean coastline is significant, but its role also is dependent upon the cooling effects of the Humboldt Current, which moves northward from southern Chile and makes the sea particularly cold. When it hits the coastline in northern Chile, it causes fog despite the total absence of clouds. This prevents the abundant rays of sun that shine over much of the country from reaching the vines, and therefore helps them ripen properly — the No. 1 factor in the ultimate quality of the wines.

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“Men are like wine — some turn to vinegar, but the best improve with age.”



— Pope John XXIII

Q I’ve always thought that when we cook with wine, it burns away all the alcohol in the wine. But a friend says that’s not true. Can you clear this up for me?

A Cooking definitely reduces the alcohol content of wine, but it does not eliminate it. We won’t bore you with the scientific details — which, frankly, we don’t entirely understand — but about 5 percent of a wine’s original alcohol content will remain no matter how long you cook it.



Watching your calories? Who isn’t? So it’s good to know that moderate consumption of wine will not add inches to the waistline. Most of the calories in wine come from the alcohol, and in sweet wines, there’s also some residual sugar that contributes to the calorie count. In general, low-alcohol wines (those with 10% or lower alcohol) have between 70 and 100 calories per 5-oz. glass. Higher alcohol wines (around 14%) have around 125 calories.

Grapevines are growing over more and more of California as farmers add to their grape acreage, according to a report from the National Agricultural Statistics Service of the USDA. California’s 2013 grape acreage totaled 878,000 acres, up from 847,000 acres the year before. Of the total grape acreage last year, 820,000 were bearing while 58,000 were non-bearing. The wine-type grape acreage is estimated at 570,000 acres. Of the total, 525,000 acres were bearing and 45,000 were non-bearing. The leading wine-type varieties continued to be Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Table-type grape acreage totaled 105,000 acres, up 7.1 percent from the 98,000 acres in 2012. Acreage of raisin-type grapes totaled 203,000 acres, and Thompson Seedless continued to be the leading raisin-type variety, utilized for raisins, fresh market, concentrate and wine.



Thompson Seedless Grapes

5,000

Number of wine bottles housed in “The Barrel Room” at Charlie Palmer’s at Bloomingdale’s restaurant, located at the South Coast Plaza mall in Orange County, Calif. (Source: *O.C. Register Metro*)

The Stemmari Estates, situated along the south coast of Sicily, embrace some of the most sustainable wine production methods in the world in an effort to support the island, its flora and fauna, the future of its people, and the quality of its wines. A large amount of time and resources were invested in not only creating the winery and its vineyards from scratch, but doing so in a way that would have minimal environmental impact. A fundamental part of the estate’s plan is to limit the use of chemical treatments as much as possible, and alternative methods for combating problems in the field have been implemented. These include the correct use of copper and sulfur (permitted in organic cultivation), the introduction of positive insects in the vineyard and the use of “sexual confusion,” a biological system used to fight against hazardous bugs by limiting their reproduction through pheromone over-stimulation. In addition, all plant waste is recycled as fertilizer, reducing the amount of commercial fertilizer used in the field.

STEMMARI

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



We've been wrapping slices of bacon around filet mignon steaks for eons. The practice was started to lend flavor and prevent the steak from drying out during cooking, because this particular cut of beef has low levels of marbling or intramuscular fat.

More recently, however, bacon has found its way into less traditional dishes — including donuts. Many supermarkets now have maple bacon donuts in their bakery sections, having jumped on a craze started by Dawn Brown at her Swirls bakery in Omaha, Neb. Brown said she wanted to create an item that people would either love or hate, but definitely would talk about. She dubbed her maple bacon donut “The Elvis.”

A nod to “Fat Elvis,” a.k.a. “Las Vegas Elvis,” we would presume.

A good cup of dark roast coffee goes quite nicely with “The Elvis” and other versions of this sweet treat. But as bacon shows up in more and more main course dishes, there are opportunities for wine pairing. Because of bacon’s saltiness, selecting a complementary wine can be challenging — but it’s not impossible.

One popular choice is sparkling wine, because its high level of acidity produces a refreshing quality that provides a perfect counterpoint to saltiness. Sparkling wines made

with red winegrapes (i.e., Rosés) also provide complementary flavors.

Another sublime swine pairing partner is Riesling, especially when made in an “off-dry” style — which is winespeak for slightly sweet. In this case, it’s not the mouthfeel of the wine, but rather its flavors — sweet apple, peach and pear, often accented with a hint of citrus — that make the pairing not just work, but sing.

Finally, there’s the “go to” choice of all “go to” choices: Sangiovese. The most widely planted red winegrape of Italy also happens to be an extremely versatile food wine, and because it’s relatively low in tannin, it works well with fatty foods such as bacon. There’s no need to seek out an ultra-expensive bottle; a simple, well-made Chianti is just fine.

Is the widespread popularity of bacon today a trend or merely a craze? Either way, it’s showing up in more and more restaurant dishes, which means you need to have a pairing plan in place when the time comes to select the wine.

Four Seasons



WINES THAT MATCH THE SEASON

Summer — wines for barbecues, picnics or just for sipping. Fall — wines for hearty, harvest-time dishes. You get the idea. All wines are selected by our Tasting Panel to pair beautifully with the foods you love.

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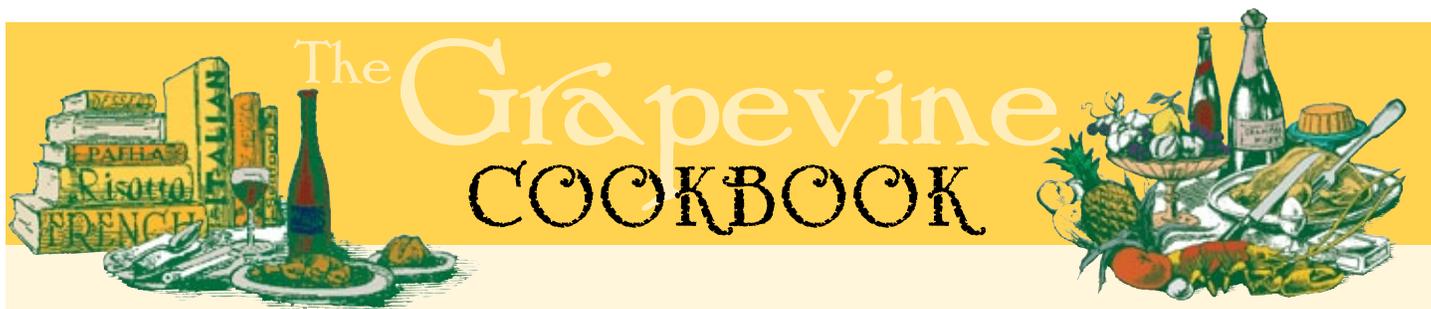
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BACON-WRAPPED MEATLOAF WITH BROWN SUGAR GLAZE

Try this dish with either a sparkling Rosé or a Sangiovese-based wine such as Chianti. This recipe yields 6 to 8 servings.

Glaze Ingredients

- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons cider

Meatloaf Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon hot red pepper sauce
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2-lbs. meatloaf mix (1/2 ground chuck, 1/4 ground veal, 1/4 ground pork)
- 2/3 cup crushed saltine crackers
- 1/3 cup minced fresh parsley
- 9 slices thin-sliced bacon

Glaze Preparation

Mix all ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.

Meatloaf Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Heat oil in a medium skillet. Add onion and garlic, and sauté until softened. Set aside to cool.
3. Mix eggs with thyme, salt, pepper, mustard, Worcestershire sauce, pepper sauce and milk.
4. In a large bowl, add egg mixture to meatloaf mix. Add crackers, parsley and cooked onions and garlic. Mix with a fork until evenly blended and meat mixture does not stick to bowl.
5. Place meat on a work surface. With wet hands, pat meat into a loaf, approximately 9 inches by 5 inches.

6. Cover a wire rack with foil and prick foil in several places with a fork. Place rack on shallow roasting pan lined with foil. Set formed loaf on rack.
7. Brush loaf with the glaze, then arrange bacon slices, cross-wise and slightly overlapping, on top. Tuck slices under loaf to prevent curling.
8. Bake loaf until bacon is crisp and loaf registers 160 degrees, about 1 hour.
9. Cool for at least 20 minutes prior to slicing and serving.

MUSCAT SABAYON CUSTARD WITH BERRIES

Enjoy this dish with any Muscat-based table wine, or sparkling Moscato. This recipe yields 6 servings.

Ingredients

- 2/3 cup semi-sweet Muscat wine
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- Strawberries
- Amaretti cookies, crumbled

Preparation

1. Set up a double boiler using a heat-proof bowl that will sit on top of a pot with water. (Note: Water level should be about 2 inches above the bottom of the bowl.)
2. Using a wire whisk, combine wine and egg yolks, then pass through a fine mesh strainer into the heat-proof bowl.
3. Whisk in sugar.
4. Bring pot of water to a hard simmer, then place bowl containing the egg-wine mixture on top. Whisk vigorously, causing the mixture to become foamy and light. (Note: Occasionally scrape along edges to minimize the eggs cooking.)
5. Continue whisking for several minutes until the custard sets.
6. Remove bowl from heat, and lightly scrape custard into a clean, non-plastic bowl set over an ice bath. Avoid dislodging any cooked-on egg. Let cool, then cover and refrigerate.
7. To finish, whip the cream into soft peaks, then fold into the sabayon.
8. Divide strawberries among bowls, spoon some sabayon on each berry, and garnish with crumbled amaretti cookies.

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