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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

ALL SUMMER WINES NEED NOT BE WHITE

Brunch and Wine in
the 'New' Las Vegas

For a Vintner, It's Okay
to Be a 'Control Freak'

Food/Wine Pairing:
Fondues and Don'ts

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Not All Summertime Wines Must Be White

By Robert Johnson

Our wine consumption evolves with the weather. Here at Vinesse, we even have wine clubs and Cyber Circle offerings that are geared specifically to the changing seasons.

For instance, right now, you're seeing a lot of wineries releasing white wines in anticipation of the hot summer months ahead. It makes perfect sense to seek refreshment first when the air temperature begins to rise.

But that doesn't mean that all of our red wines must be relegated to the cellar, basement, closet or wine rack until summer begins to morph into autumn again. There are plenty of reasons to think red and drink red during the warm-weather weeks and months ahead.

Perhaps the best example of a summertime food and red wine pairing is barbecued fare with Zinfandel. That's *red* Zinfandel, not the sweet blush wine known as White Zinfandel. The lush, sometimes jammy impression of Zin's berry-like fruit flavors meshes perfectly with the char



that the grill leaves on meats.

Grill some chicken or ribs, add a touch of sweet barbecue sauce if you want, pour a glass of Zinfandel, find some shade and get ready for a real treat.

If you're grilling a big, juicy steak, a big red wine is called for. And red wines don't get any bigger than Cabernet Sauvignon. In this case, the fattiness of the meat and the tannins of the wine work to create a harmonious melding.

Pizza has become a year-round treat in most households. A simple cheese pizza pairs

nicely with just about any red wine. A pepperoni pizza goes really well with Zinfandel. If you top your pizza with mushrooms, a meaty wine like Syrah can be a marvelous match.

We may not drink as much red wine during the warmer months, but there's no reason to stop drinking it altogether.



The Best Vintners Are ‘Control Freaks’

If we were talking about any other profession, you might think of them as “control freaks.” But winemakers have valid reasons for wanting to make as many decisions as they can.

In point of fact, the more control the vintner has in every step of the process — beginning in the vineyard — the better the wine he or she is going to make. (“Better,” of course, is in the eye of the beholder; a more accurate way of putting it might be to say that greater control equates with being able to make wine in the vintner’s preferred style.)

Few winemakers begin their careers with such control.

Typically, they’ll earn a degree in viticulture, then land a job as an assistant winemaker. Depending on the winery and the circumstances, it could take years — even a decade — to move up in the ranks. Sometimes it’s as much about luck as skill: being in the right place at the right time when a veteran vintner decides to retire.

But even head winemakers are at the mercy of others,



at least to some degree. They may work for a winery that has purchase agreements with any number of vineyards, but they’re not likely to have much say in how those vineyards are farmed.

And even if they do have a say, they’ll still be dealing with clones of varieties that were selected when the vines were planted. Farming methods may influence how flavorful that fruit is in a given vintage, but the aroma

and flavor spectrum will always be limited by the clonal selection.

Ultimately, the only way a winemaker can truly have full control is to be involved in the site selection, clonal selection and planting of a vineyard... to oversee how it is farmed... and to make the decision regarding when to harvest the grapes.



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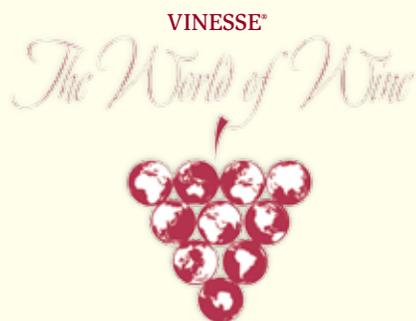
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Wine Tool Museum Opens at Historic Buena Vista Winery



Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma, Calif., has unveiled a first-of-its-kind museum in California, dedicated to the history of winemaking and its tools.

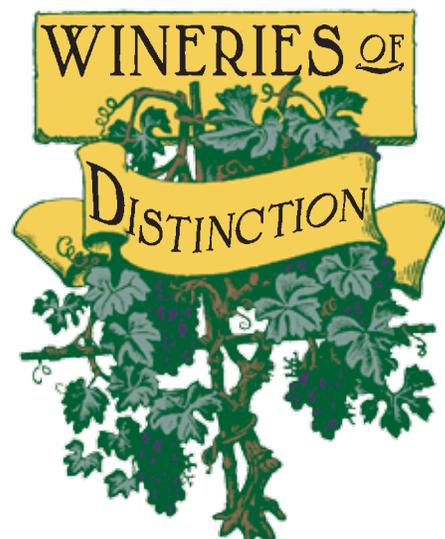
The museum features a collection of rare and authentic 19th and 20th century European viticulture tools that are theatrically arranged and displayed against the winery's historic cellar walls, which date back to 1864. Visitors will be guided through a 20-minute show that presents the story of winemaking through the use of these tools from vineyard to bottle, while also learning about the life of the vivacious and eccentric founder, the self-proclaimed "Count of Buena Vista," Agoston Haraszthy.

"The exhibit is a performance — a dramatic dance of the tools, with lighting, special effects and movement," says Buena Vista proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset. "It is designed for guests to discover and experience the world of wine and the rich history of California winemaking. It celebrates and communicates the historical significance of wine as part of our civilization and part of our cultural fabric, while paying homage to Buena Vista Winery's central role in California's long and storied place in the wine world."

Boisset purchased Buena Vista Winery in 2011 and immediately began a significant restoration project to preserve and protect the winery's

cellars and caves. In 2012, a seismic retrofit was completed that allowed the cellars to re-open to the public after closing due to the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989. That same year, the building was also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2013, Buena Vista Winery was awarded the California Preservation Design Award for using innovative center-core drilling technology, which made it possible to restore and preserve the original character of the building from 1864. It is thanks to this restoration that the building is standing in perfect condition today





following the Napa earthquake last August. While other historic buildings toppled, the Champagne Cellars at Buena Vista Winery suffered no structural damage.

The creation and opening of the Historic Wine Tool Museum is another milestone, and for Boisset, a crowning achievement in the revitalization of the property.

The tools on display include picks, secateurs, grafting knives, presses, a dramatic presentation of pomace cutters, as well as the tools used in barrel making, such as batissoires, adzes, doloires, and more.

From the pioneering zeal of Count Haraszthy through the devastation of phylloxera, the collection guides guests through the evolution of the wine world via its tools.

“We are ambassadors and stewards of these historical objects, and we have the opportunity to share them with America in the ideal location: the first premium winery in California,” Boissert adds. “We are thrilled and honored to share this moment of history that enhances the culture of wine and history in America.

“Our mission at Buena Vista is to bring a renewed sense of energy and life back into the winery so that it can return to its glorious past. As we like to say, Buena Vista’s past is its future. The Historic Wine Tool Museum is the true embodiment of this spirit.”

The museum is an extension of the Boisset family’s collection in Burgundy, France, which is housed at the Imaginarium at Louis Bouillot in Nuits-St-Georges.

Guests may reserve in advance at www.buenavistawinery.com, by calling 800-926-1266, or at the Buena Vista Winery Tasting Room. Museum tours are available daily, by appointment, at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Walk-up visitors will be accommodated as availability allows; groups of eight or more require advance reservations.

In addition to the \$25 tour and tasting option, families will also be offered a choice of a museum-only experience for \$10 per person, and children with paying adults are free.

The winery offers additional guest options that include “Be the Count” wine blending experiences, private tastings, barrel tastings, winery tours, tastings of a wide selection of award-winning, small-production wines, and beautiful picnic areas.

Winery 4-1-1

Buena Vista Winery

18000 Old Winery Road

Sonoma, CA 95476

800-926-1266

www.buenavistawinery.com

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Brunch and Wine in the 'New' Las Vegas

By Robert Johnson

When I was a kid, most of our family vacations were to Las Vegas. My folks loved the downtown area, and it was perfectly safe and acceptable for one teen (my brother) and one pre-teen (me) to stand by the casino entrances while their parents fed nickels, dimes and quarters into slot machines a few feet away inside.

Like so many visiting Californians, we'd arrive on Friday night (following dinner at the Bun Boy in the desert outpost of Baker), and leave on Sunday morning — but not before partaking of one of the casino's buffet brunches. The typical price: \$1.99, all you could eat.

That was Old Vegas, and it has been gone for a long time.

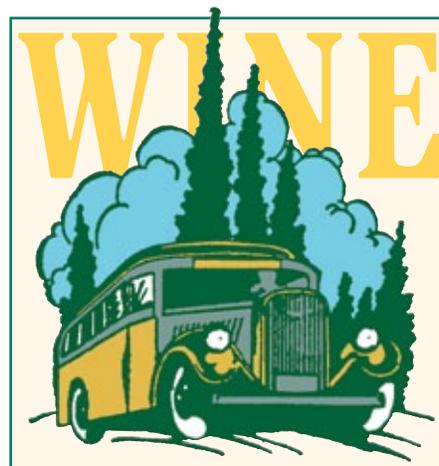
While the downtown area still exists and has been undergoing extensive urban renewal, most of the brunch action has shifted to the Strip and the suburbs. In the New Vegas, brunch isn't about cheap eats; it's about gourmet fare, a wide selection and, in several cases, some pretty good wine.

Here are five Las Vegas brunch destinations for oenophiles...

■ **Bardot Brasserie** — Some are saying that this is the best new restaurant in Las Vegas, so it's no surprise that its brunch is stellar. Picture eggs Benedict made with

Swiss chard or smoked salmon, atop a croissant... or a king crab buckwheat crepe bathed in beurre blanc. And for an extra \$20, you can drink all the French rosé your heart desires. At the Aria resort.

■ **Fountains Brunch at Jasmine** — Most Vegas visitors hit this brunch for the view of the Bellagio fountains.



TOURING TIPS

While that view is awesome, so is the food, including fresh seafood flown in fresh, dim sum options and a chocolate fountain. It's made all the more sublime with a glass of bubbly.

■ **Jazz Brunch at the Country Club** — At this Wynn resort restaurant, the views are of the golf course, and the palate-pleasing options include ultra-fresh smoked salmon, an amazing seafood ceviche, and sausages so good they're served at a carving station. Add in boundless bubbles, and it's impossible to leave this brunch without a smile on your face.

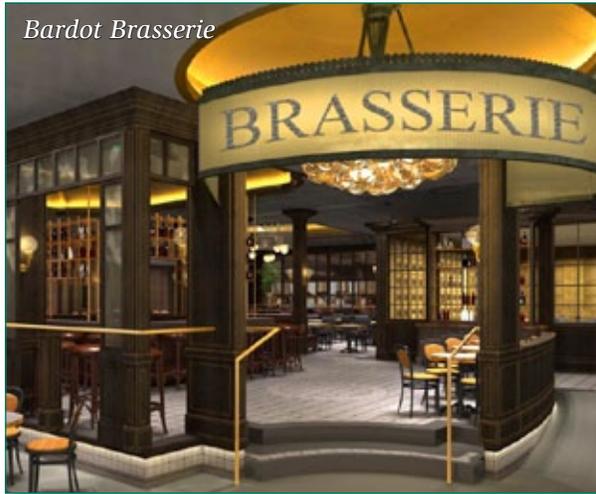
■ **Marche Bacchus** — While tourists jam the Strip hotels to get their brunch fixes, locals head here, part of the lakeside Desert Shores development. Crab and asparagus Benedict is an inspired dish, as is the lobster salad croissant. What locals also know is that when you "do brunch at Bacchus" on Saturdays, free wine tastings are part of the deal. Marche Bacchus, you

see, also is a high-end wine shop.

■ **Sterling Brunch at BLT Steak** — Back on the Strip, this is a true Las Vegas classic.

Bally's Steak House closed last year, then was remodeled and given a new identity: BLT Steak. The old Sterling Brunch was so good that Vegas residents were willing to fight the tourist crowds in order to partake of the lobster, cognac and Boursin omelet, accompanied by "bottomless" (a term that means something else at some other Vegas places of business) Perrier-Jouet Champagne. Well, those old mainstays are back, making the Sterling Brunch a true "destination meal."

As mentioned, crowds can be frustrating at some Las Vegas brunches, but here's a tasty and fun



Bardot Brasserie

alternative to that scene: It's back downtown, in the new Container Park complex, which is home to a wine-focused spot called Bin 702.

There, the specialties of the house, food-wise, are the montaditos — Spanish mini-sandwiches that could be considered tapas, only with no fork necessary. Choices range from a simple turkey and Brie with apricot

jam, to triple-crème Saint-Andre cheese and salty bresaola — each served on a 4-inch roll.

A nice selection of wines by the glass means patrons can try lots of flavor combinations. Even better, the montaditos cost just \$2.25 each, or six for \$12.

I have a feeling my folks would have loved this place — a short stroll from the slots at the El Cortez Casino.



Jazz Brunch at the Country Club

More Info

Bardot Brasserie
Aria
702-590-8638

Marche Bacchus
2620 Regatta Dr.
702-804-8008

Fountains Brunch at Jasmine
Bellagio
702-693-8865

Sterling Brunch at BLT Steak
Bally's
702-967-7999

Jazz Brunch at the Country Club
Wynn
877-321-9966

Bin 702
Container Park
702-826-2702

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Chicago wine bar. RM Champagne Salon is a 1,500-square-foot space in the city's West Loop/Fulton Market neighborhood, home to some of the city's best restaurants. The name comes from the French designation for "grower Champagne," and the wine list is expertly curated. The by-the-glass list also is inspired, far different than you'll find anywhere else in Chicagoland, and RM also offers dinner, late-night, and cheese-and-dessert menus.

www.rmchampagnesalon.com

2 Hot Sonoma wine tasting lounge. There's yet another way for Sonoma County visitors to savor the fine wines of Ledson, Mountain Terraces and Zina Hyde Cunningham: at the new Zina Lounge at the Ledson Hotel. Fifth-generation Sonoma County winemaker and farmer Steve Ledson has enlisted internationally renowned Chef Yoshiharu Sogi — a wine expert and chef extraordinaire — to create intricate pairings using locally grown farm-to-table products that are designed to excite the palate while elevating the nuances of each wine. 707-538-3823

3 Hot new book about Paris. Planning a trip to France's most famous city? Don't do it without first reading *A Passion for Paris: Romanticism and Romance in the City of Light*. Advance reviews say the book, written by David Downie, is a must for both veteran visitors to the city and first-timers.

www.amazon.com



Supple. A term that's used to describe a wine that is smooth and balanced.

Tempranillo. The star red variety of the Rioja and Ribera del Duero regions of Spain, and that country's most popular red winegrape.

Uctuous. Describes a wine that is lush and rich, with layers of concentrated and generally soft fruit flavors.

Vinho. Portuguese word for wine. Not to be confused with the Spanish or Italian word for wine, which is vino.

Winzergenossenschaft. German term for a co-op winery, where multiple growers contribute grapes to the cuvees made.

Xtant. A Napa Valley winery, not open to the public, that produces limited-production "cult wines" which it sells at high prices.

VINESSE STYLE

WINE-FOCUSED TOURS

In its May issue, National Geographic Traveler features a story called, "50 Tours of a Lifetime," written by Margaret Loftus. The story's subhead urges readers to "Venture farther. Dig deeper. Get personal."

It is the magazine's 10th annual list of the best guided trips, and three of them are clearly focused on wine:



Wachau Valley

■ "A Wine Lover's Journey Through Budapest, Vienna and Prague" is presented by Exeter International, and costs \$8,025. The 10-day trip includes time in Austria's Wachau Valley, where riverside rows of grapevines ascend the adjacent hillsides in steeply terraced rows. A visit to the Stahov Monastery, near Prague, also is included.

www.exeterinternational.com

■ "Georgia's Food, Wine and Culture" is presented by the Great Canadian Travel Company, and costs \$3,280. This is not an expedition to the southern U.S. state; this is the Republic of Georgia, where wine is produced at the ancient Alaverdi

Monastery using earthenware vessels that are buried in the ground. So how's the wine? You'll find out on this 10-day trip, which

focuses on food and wine.

www.greatcanadiantravel.com

■ "Argentina Vision and Vine" is presented by Ciclismo Classico, and costs \$5,300. This nine-day expedition to the Andean foothills in Argentina's northwest corner promises to provide plenty of memories for photographers and wine lovers alike. There will be ample opportunity to sample exceptional Malbec and Torrontes wines at the estates where they're made.

www.ciclismoclassico.com

To read about other "tours of a lifetime," pick up the May issue of *National Geographic Traveler*.

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Moon Mountain District Sonoma County



Silver Cloud vineyard within the new Moon Mountain District.

For many years, the grape growers and winemakers on the western Mayacamas range wished they had a way to differentiate themselves from those in the lower elevations of Sonoma Valley.

In October of 2013, they got their wish when the Moon Mountain District Sonoma County (that is its full given name) was granted American Viticultural Area status.

Part of the larger North Coast AVA, the Moon Mountain District's distinct features bring into closer focus the vast diversity within the Sonoma Valley AVA.

Sharing the ridge of the Mayacamas, the Napa/Sonoma County line defines much of the eastern boundary of Moon Mountain District. The city of Sonoma is the demarcation to the south, Sugarloaf Ridge marks the northern line, and Valley of the Moon is the western boundary of this AVA.

The moderately steep slopes rise from 400 feet to 2,200 feet at the highest peak, distinguishing the

region from the flatter terrain of the valley below. The high elevations allow for cool mountain air to drain off into the valley, reducing frost in the mountains at critical times in the growing season, as well as placing a vast portion of the region above the cooling marine fog.

Despite being tempered by two coastal influences — the ocean and the San Pablo Bay — the region stays warmer due to the higher elevations.

Soils are dominated by Sonoma Volcanics — lava flows of rhyolite, andesitic and basaltic that over time formed the rocky soils important for good drainage. The thin, loamy soils of the area result in vines with less vigorous growth and lower yields, but fruit with greater concentration of flavors.



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PRICE:

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Winners of the first California Green Medal: Sustainable Winegrowing Leadership Awards were honored recently at a lunch reception and ceremony at the University of California Davis. The California Green Medal was developed as a way to showcase some of the leading wineries and vineyards committed to sustainability. The Leader Award, given to the vineyard or winery that excels in the “3 E’s” of sustainability — Environmentally sound, socially Equitable and Economically viable — went to Fetzer Vineyards. As a true pioneer in sustainability, Fetzer has been blazing a trail for earth-friendly practices since 1968. It was the first winery in California to operate on 100% renewable energy in 1999, and is the largest U.S. producer of organic winegrapes certified by CCOF and the first Zero Waste certified wine company in the world. The Environment Award, given to the vineyard or winery that best demonstrates environmental stewardship through maximized environmental benefits from implementing sustainable practices, went to Benziger Family Winery. With all of its estate properties Demeter Certified Biodynamic, this family winery created “Farming for Flavors,” which was third-party certified by Stellar in 2007 before other sustainability certifications were available. Benziger also had the first Biodynamic wine in Sonoma County. Next month: the Community Award and Business Award recipients.



“Sometimes I’m more fit. And then sometimes... I’d rather have wine!”



— Singer Kelly Clarkson, quoted in Time magazine

175

Number of calories in a 6-oz. glass of dry wine with 15% alcohol.

Q I have a bet with a friend. She says there are more calories in my occasional glass of Champagne than in her daily latte from Starbucks. I find that hard to believe, and we’ve bet a glass of Champagne against a latte. Is she right?

A Wow... there are a lot of variables to deal with here, including the size of the Champagne flute, what type of Champagne, the size of the latte, whether you use 2% or nonfat milk, and so on. Fortunately, around here, we drink almost as much Starbucks as we do wine, so we feel qualified to weigh in on this diet debate. Let’s begin with the Champagne, and let’s go with the driest designation of all: Brut Natural. A 6-oz. serving will have 120 calories. Now, let’s turn to our morning jolt of caffeine. At Starbucks, a tall (meaning small) latte made with nonfat milk and sugar-free vanilla syrup will have... 120 calories. So, it’s a tie! We suggest getting together tomorrow morning at Starbucks to discuss your diet goals, and then reconvening after work to toast your friendship with a glass of Brut Natural.



Eighteen people — 16 men and two women — have passed the advanced sommelier exam, conducted last month in Portland, Oregon. The exam was administered by the Court of Master Sommeliers, and attracted 66 candidates from 14 states and Canada.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



Fondues and Don'ts

Fondue is as much a social occasion as it is a dining experience. In fact, it may be even more so.

And what a concept for a restaurateur: simply chop up ingredients into bite-size pieces, place hot deep-frying vessels on the tables, and have the customers cook their own food — no need for Culinary Institute-trained chefs.

Typical “chunks” of food prepared for fondue frying include various types of cheese, assorted meats and, for a sweet meal-ending treat, chocolate. This “smorgasbord” of flavors calls for some creativity when it comes to wine pairing. We suggest tapping the restaurant’s wine-by-the-glass menu and perhaps sharing three or four different selections.

No fondue meal is complete without chunks of Gruyere cheese, a delicacy that’s made in the Gruyere district of Switzerland. It takes about a hundred gallons of cow’s milk to make a single wheel of Gruyere, which, over time, takes on earthy and nutty notes.

A wonderful wine companion is Riesling, which helps underscore and elevate that nutty quality. Another is Sauvignon Blanc, which has its own herbal quality that melds seamlessly with that of the cheese. If you prefer red wine, opt for Cinsault, another wine with nutty notes and mild tannins that won’t overwhelm the flavors of the cheese. Fuller-bodied reds do not work well with Gruyere or with fondue in general.

When it comes to meat and fish, the “secret” of fondue is that the hot oil sears the outside of the food while sealing in the juices. With beef and most other red meats, a mellow red such as Merlot or Sangiovese is suggested. With fish, Pinot Grigio or Chenin Blanc — white wines that generally do not have assertive flavors — make good pairing partners.

Any number of “side dishes” also can be prepared in that hot oil, including potatoes, mushrooms and sweet onions. For those, or for an all-purpose fondue wine, opt for sparkling wine — a Spanish Cava or an Italian Prosecco.

Chocolate fondue wasn’t introduced until the 1960s, but it has become wildly popular. Opt for dark chocolate, add some toasted hazelnuts, and serve it with Port for a decadent treat.

One final word of wisdom from fondue aficionados: avoid ice water. Combined with the cheese, it can cause indigestion.

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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FREQUENCY:

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PRICE:

\$98.99 average per shipment including shipping

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VEGETABLE SORBET SALAD

It's May, which means fresh vegetables are in greater abundance. Try this delicious flavor-packed salad with Sauvignon Blanc. This recipe yields 12 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 bunches of carrots
- 4 bunches of red and yellow beets
- 2 bunches of celery
- Pinch of thyme
- 1 tsp. orange zest
- 12 cups mesclun

Preparation

1. Peel and dice carrots and celery.
2. Boil beets until just tender, then peel and dice.
3. Puree each vegetable separately in a food processor until it becomes liquid. Strain the liquid and season with salt.
4. To the carrot juice, add thyme.
5. To the beet juice, add orange zest.
6. Process each batch of juice in an ice cream freezer according to manufacturer's instructions.
7. When freezing is complete, form each sorbet into quenelles. Store in freezer until ready to serve.

Vinaigrette Ingredients

- 2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbs. sherry vinegar
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 Tbs. fresh orange juice
- Salt and pepper

Final Preparation

1. Whisk all vinaigrette ingredients together and set aside.
2. Toss mesclun with vinaigrette dressing.
3. Arrange 1 cup per serving on individual plates.
4. Place one quenelle of each vegetable sorbet in center of greens.

SHIITAKE MUSHROOM TERRINE

Do you have a graduation, wedding, anniversary or other special event coming up this summer? This dish makes a great appetizer, and this recipe makes about 10 servings. Accompany it with an herb-infused mayonnaise, and uncork a Brut sparkling wine.

Ingredients

- 2 lbs. Shiitake mushrooms, coarsely chopped
- 8 Tbs. sweet butter, melted
- 4 eggs
- 1/3 cup celery, chopped
- 1/4 cup parsley, chopped
- 1/3 cup shallots, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup farmer's cheese
- 2 tsp. ginger
- 1 tsp. soy sauce
- 1/4 tsp. cayenne
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Lightly toss together all ingredients. Pack onto a buttered terrine mold. Cover.
3. Bake in a high water bath at 350 degrees until set (45-60 minutes).
4. Cool, and refrigerate for several hours. Unmold.
5. Slice and serve with herb-infused mayonnaise.

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