

Wine Dinners at Home

By Chef Judi Gallagher

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I find that repeating a wine dinner is often not only helpful for planning and preparation on my end, but also enjoyable to friends alike. It is the same experience of revisiting a favorite old restaurant, where you always seem to order the same dishes, year after year after year. As I look over my volumes of tested recipes and wine pairings, this one has become a favorite. Slanted towards the healthier side, the dinner chosen for **Attitudes Magazine, October Celebration of Food and Wine**, reflects the how to's of preparing a wonderful culinary experience.

Wine enthusiast, Jeff Rubin (Vincella), has uncorked a few suggestions to make your autumn dinner party a wine lovers paradise! Follow our tips as we set the table, turn up the poaching liquid and light the candles...

Tonight's Menu: Dinner for Six

Bourbon-Grilled Romaine Salad with Goat Cheese and Roasted Red Peppers

2002 Gainey Limited Selection Sauvignon Blanc from Santa Ynez Valley, CA

Barrel Fermented for a Richer Style.

About \$15.

Steamed Rainbow Trout, Asian Chili, Ginger-Sesame Broth with Peking Dumplings

2003 Spice Route Chenin Blanc from South Africa.

Melon, apple and pear nuances for the ginger-sesame. Hint of sweetness to offset the chili.

About \$13.

Sautéed Bartlett Pears and Dried Cranberries with Crumbled Gingersnaps

2002 Costa Diva Alicante from Gutierrez de la Vega, Spain.

Moderately sweet. Honey flavors with a ginger finish.

About \$20.

Getting Started:

First, design your menu around a theme. Since ginger has an influence on this particular dinner party, hand write your menus on rice paper and roll with chop sticks in the center. Tie them with sprigs of fennel ferns and place on a square charger. When your guests are seated, serve each guest a menu along with their first selection of wine.

Having a tasting notebook for each guest will encourage dialogue and innovative note taking, while also serving the purpose of a perfect gift for each guest to take home. Make sure the notebooks are compact, so guests will feel comfortable bringing them to other wine dinners; you may want to include a small printed copy of the menu.

At the end of the evening, soak off the wine labels and give each guest a wine label to attach to his/her tasting book.

Proper stemware is very important when you are serious about wine tastings. The Chef's Table on Cooper Creek Boulevard offers a wonderful selection of Riedle wine glasses.

Make sure the flavors of the food compliment the wines. Overpowering with heavy, spicy sauces can ruin the experience of the wines. When in doubt, ask the professionals for some suggestions. Let them know your ideas of menu items and they can help guide you to the wines, fully complimenting your style of cuisine.

Ask the experts. Local wine experts Kristine Nickel, Jeff Rubin, and, the owners of The Wine Warehouse are most gracious in selecting wines, both inexpensive boutique wines and reserve specialties, that will ensure a spectacular dinner party.

If you have never prepared your own wine dinner, start as a wise-novice.

Begin by inviting a small group of six over for cheeses (Southgate Gourmet has excellent selections), French Bread, Pate`, and, Sliced Apples and Pears.

Serve a different glass of wine about every 20 minutes.

Discuss the identity and characteristics of each wine and the foods that it may inspire.

Notice, you have now created your first wine dinner menu with everyone's input.

Delicate preparations such as Sea Bass in Parchment Paper or Steamed Rainbow Trout, served as a light seafood course paired with delicate white wines, are frequently met with approval..

Be careful, however, of cooking with citrus. Its strength can affect the sense of taste for the main star of your dinner, the wines.

Pan Seared Duck Breast with Port Wine and Wild Berry Reduction is almost always a perfect match for a bolder Pinot Noir, while a classic Steak Diane holds hands with a nice Syrah or Cabernet.

Steaming Seafood is a healthy and simple cooking process without adding extra fat and calories to your diet. It also creates a beautiful table presentation, with simple garnishes of sliced lemons and fresh dill sprigs.

Using a standard seafood steamer, place such liquids as seafood broth, clam juice, enhanced by white wine or fish stock, with 1-cup orange juice and ¼ cup Pernod or sliced fresh fennel. Remember the art of steaming or poaching fish, however, is in preserving the delicate flavor, so always use mild broths and liquids. They enhance, not overpower.

Steamed Rainbow Trout with Asian Chili and Ginger Broth

Fresh Rainbow Trout*, 4-6 lbs, cleaned

Steaming liquid:

2 bottles Clam broth
3 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon sliced fresh ginger, skin on
¼ cup Maggi Sweet Chili Sauce
6 steamed Peking Dumplings from your favorite Take- out Chinese Restaurant.
(Again, throw out the container, spend an extra 20 minutes at the gym and make sure you serve the dumpling sauce with your steamed fish.)
1 lb. fresh snow peas
1 teaspoon pure sesame oil
½ cup chopped scallions

Rinse the fish under cold water and place atop of the steamer.
Never immerse the fish into the liquid. (This technique is reserved as poaching).
Add the liquids to the steamer pan.
Season the fish with kosher salt and fresh ground Asian pepper.
Cover the pan and gently cook approximately 6-12 minutes per inch thickness.
Remember, the key to cooking fresh fish and seafood is to not overcook so check often
(If you make sure that it is just opaque throughout, your entrée will be a tasteful success.)

Arrange the snow peas, washed but uncooked, in the center of a large colorful platter.
Remove the steamed fish and place on the snow pea bed.

Remove 1 cup of steaming broth, stir in dumpling sauce, 2 teaspoons soy sauce and 1
teaspoon pure sesame oil.
Add ¼ cup Maggi Sweet Chili Sauce.
Pour over fish and serve with dumplings.
Garnish with chopped scallions

*(Note, you can also use trout fillets)

Desserts can be simple and elegant. Presentation is always best in beautiful stemware for
this 'grand finale' dish.

12 Bartlett pears, semi ripe peeled and sliced
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon brown sugar
½ cup dried cranberries
1-tablespoon port wine (optional)

Topping:

1 cup low fat sour cream
Small package crumbled low fat gingersnaps (You may want to grind in a coffee grinder
or food processor.)
1 teaspoon ground ginger

Heat butter in a medium sauté pan.
Add Brown Sugar and stir.
Add sliced pears and dried cranberries.
Sauté until warm and tender.
Remove from heat and add port wine.
Stir gently.
Place warm pear mixture into large martini glasses.
In a separate bowl, mix low fat sour cream with ginger.
Top pears with sour cream mixture and sprinkle with crumbled gingersnaps.
Serve immediately.

Bon Appetit! Chef Judi Gallagher