



Vintage meals

Cooking with wine adds flavour and fun to meals for special occasions and every day too.

BY ROSLYN RALPH, FOOD EDITOR

We owe some early ancestors a debt of gratitude when they first thought to add wine to the cooking pot. Wine has a wonderful way of transforming the flavours of food, both as an ingredient and as a beverage. As wine is used in most, if not all, of the world's best cuisines, you'll probably enjoy trying recipes at home that incorporate wine.

There are a couple of guidelines to follow when cooking with wine. First, and most important, if you wouldn't drink it, don't cook with it! Buy a good wine in a price range you can afford. Second, it's best to match the weight of the wine (full-bodied, or light and crisp) with the food. For example, if you are making a delicate sauce to go with a piece of sole, a Pinot Blanc or a Soave – both delicate whites – would be good choices.

Here are two recipes that use wine. Instead of presenting the more traditional fare such as Coq Au Vin, we offer up some more unlikely ideas for adding wine to a dish. Enjoy!

Red Wine Risotto

This makes an interesting side dish for grilled beef. Makes 4 – 6 servings.

3 Tbsp. olive oil
 1 onion, minced
 1 tsp. finely grated orange zest
 1 Tbsp. sugar
 3 garlic cloves, minced
 1 bay leaf
 2 cups arborio rice
 2 cups full-bodied red wine
 (Cabernet Sauvignon or Pinot Noir)
 4 cups beef stock, simmering
 salt and pepper to taste

■ Heat oil over moderate heat and add onion, garlic, sugar and zest. Soften onion and garlic, stirring often to prevent browning. Add rice and stir to coat with oil, onion and garlic mixture. Add wine and bay leaf and bring to boil, stirring continuously until wine has almost disappeared. Add stock, a half-cup at a time, stirring continuously until it is absorbed before adding next half-cup. Continue until all stock is used and rice is tender but firm. Remove bay leaf and add salt and pepper to taste.

Curried Mussel Soup with Riesling

This is an adaptation of a recipe from a terrific New Zealand food writer, Catherine Bell. Here we use the cultivated Malpeque mussels from Canada's east coast. Serves 4 – 6 as a starter.

2 Tbsp. oil
2 onions, chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 Tbsp. fresh thyme or 1 tsp. dried
2 Tbsp. fresh parsley
1 tsp. whole white peppercorns

40 mussels, scrubbed and with beards removed
1 cup dry Riesling
4 Tbsp. butter, chilled
2 tsp. curry powder
6 oz. light or half-and-half cream
1 tomato, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 Tbsp. finely chopped chives

■ In deep pan or soup kettle, heat oil. Add half the onions plus the garlic, celery, thyme, parsley and peppercorns. Stir to soften. Add mussels and wine and cover. Cook over high heat until mussels open. Drain mussels, reserving liquid, and discard any mussels that do not open. Keep mussels covered with a damp cloth. Add 2 Tbsp. butter to pan, melt and add remaining onion. Stir to soften, but not brown. Add curry powder and cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Add reserved mussel and wine liquid and bring to boil. Add in cream and reduce to simmer for five minutes. Remove mussels from shells and place in warm soup bowls. Process liquid in blender, adding remaining butter, until frothy. Pour the soup gently over the mussels, garnish with tomato and chives, and serve. 🌿

CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE ON WORLD'S WINES

Wine lovers, both novice and expert, will enjoy the readable and informative book, *Wine Lover's Companion*, Third Edition, by Tony Aspler of Toronto. It makes a great reference book and guide to buying, storing and tasting wines from around the world. The book is published by McGraw-Hill Ryerson and is available at many book stores throughout the GTA. Aspler (whose web site is www.tonyaspler.com) also is a co-founder of the charitable foundation Grapes for Humanity (www.grapesforhumanity.com).