

Hello Spanish Table wine friends!

I keep you on your toes, no? As you probably know by now, *tomorrow* is Valentine's Day. Sorry, Cupid! I hope that you have some bubbles chilling & a little sweet something to linger over, be it dessert or dessert in a glass...

If you're looking to get out of cooking tomorrow, there's still seats available at the Palace Ballroom for Tom Douglas's [Latin Love Feast](#). Three flights of tapas will be served while you are treated to a cabaret show with some sizzle! But if you do want to impress your someone special with a home-cooked meal, our staff is here to help coach you on how to make the perfect paella, throw together an instant tapas menu, or just pick out a cheese plate that will make you weak in the knees.

Here's my suggestion for a dreamy trio of cheeses that will start your evening off right:

Cypress Grove Truffle Tremor- I had one customer write me after we recommended this for a party, "I'm still thinking about that cheese the next day!" Ooey goeey goodness that melts on your tongue with just the right balance of truffle & creamy goat's milk--like the truffled version of Humboldt Fog! The original reason why I bought this for us was the wine pairing recommendation--**Albarino**. Now it's become such a favorite we can't live without it!

Mahon 12 month aged Reserva- Mahon is named after the capitol city of the island of Menorca & has been produced since the 15th century. After one month of aging, the rind is rubbed with cow butter or olive oil & mixed with paprika. The result is a bright yellow-orange skin that's traditionally shaped in a square loaf. Mahon has a wonderful tangy dry saltiness which apparently comes from the sea salt that coats the grasses these Mediterranean cows love to graze on! Earthy sun-dried flavors & semi-hard texture. The traditional way to serve it is to sprinkle slices with olive oil, black pepper & tarragon. Yum! Pair with a big sun-drenched red such as **Son Bordils Negre 2001** from Mallorca, or accentuate the nutty character with an aged Madeira such as **Broadbent's Ten Year Old Malmsey**.

Les Bleu de Basque- One of the world's most tasty blue cheeses, this Pyrenees treasure is rich from alpine grasses & wildflowers. Sheep's milk transfers flavors of sweet almonds with an unmistakable creaminess & less bite than most blues... A match made in heaven with Marcona almonds & **Blandy's Alvada Madeira**!

Salud! **Catherine**

MORCILLA BLANCA (BLOODLESS BLOOD SAUSAGE) from **Cooking from the Heart of Spain** by Janet Mendel

While I have had some delicious blood sausage both in Spain & here in the states, I'd have a really hard time concocting my own. This Christmas I got a meat grinder attachment for my Cuisinart & have been itching to make some fresh sausage... Thanks to Janet Mendel for this savory recipe that's a little more tame for the home cook, like me.

Makes 6 sausage links, weighing about 2 pounds

2 bay leaves
2 tsp salt
1/3 cup Spanish round-grain rice
1 cup chopped onion
1 1/2 lbs ground fresh pork belly (uncured pancetta)
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp sweet pimenton

1/2 tsp bittersweet smoked pimenton
1 tsp dried oregano
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp ground cloves
Grating of fresh nutmeg
1/8 tsp crushed aniseeds
1 Tbs dry white wine
1 egg, beaten

Bring 1 1/3 cups water to a boil with one of the bay leaves & 1 tsp of the salt. Add the rice, cover, & simmer until the water is absorbed, 15 minutes. Remove from the heat & allow to cool. Discard the bay leaf.

Cook the onion in boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain, saving the liquid.

Combine the onion, rice, & ground pork belly in a bowl. Add the crushed garlic. In a small bowl, mix the pepper, both kinds of pimenton, oregano, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, aniseeds, & remaining teaspoon of salt. Sprinkle half of the spice mixture over the pork. Turn the pork mixture over & sprinkle on the rest of the spices.

Add the wine & egg & knead the sausage mixture until thoroughly mixed. Make a 2-inch patty. Fry it on both side in a small skillet. Cool slightly & taste the patty. Add salt or spice, if necessary.

Cut a double thickness of cheesecloth into 3 rectangles measuring 12 x 8 inches. Divide the sausage mixture into 3 parts. Spread a sheet of wax paper on the work surface. Roll & pat one part of the sausage into a log, about 10 inches long & 1 inch thick. Place it on one edge of a cheesecloth rectangle & roll the sausage log in the cheesecloth. Tie the ends with kitchen twine. Tie the middle of the roll, dividing it into 2 links of sausage. Continue with the remaining 2 pieces of sausage mix.

Place the reserved onion water, remaining bay leaf, & enough additional water in a pot deep enough to hold the sausages in one layer. Bring to a boil; add the sausages, & cook, covered, for 30 minutes.

Drain the sausages. Hang them in a cool place to dry for 34 hours. Refrigerate the sausages in a covered container & use them within 3 days.

Before serving, remove & discard the cheesecloth. The sausages can be sliced & eaten cold, added to stews & cocidos, or fried.

NEW & NOTABLE

Quinta Couselo Turonia Albarino 2005, *Rias Baixas* \$11.99 (reg. \$22.99) 8 bottles left!

I love a bargain! Now's your chance to grab some top notch Albarino for a song...Couselo massages the palate with ripened fruit from the O Rosal valley where the Vicente family has made wine since 1898. Lovely floral underpinnings of cherry blossoms & nectarines with crushed sea shell minerals, this is tailored for a bowl full of steaming mussels to four star Thai takeout!

Kir Yianni "Akakies" Rosé 2006, *Macedonia, Greece* \$11.99

"This consistently excellent rosé is made from northern Greece's great Xynomavro, and it is as delicious in 2006 as in any vintage I've ever tasted it. Bone dry and even slightly mineral in the finish, it is nevertheless generous and expressive in midpalate fruit, with nice notes of red cherry and plum. Balanced and very fresh, this is an exemplary rosé."

-89 points, Michael Franz

Osborne Dominio de Malpica 2001, *Castilla* \$15.99

"I just got back from an Osborne Rioja tasting, and wow! Some fantastic wines were on display, from 20+ year old Montecillo's to some wonderful modern values. Osborne's Dominio de Malpica Cabernet Sauvignon stood out as a favorite, in both taste and price. Very deep and dusty on the

nose, with black pepper and an attractive musk rising out of the glass. A similar and delicious spectrum of flavors graced the tongue, with a beautiful, insistent bouquet of ripe red fruits blossoming just before the finish. The wine ends a little abruptly, but for everything else it offers--and at \$15.99 a bottle--it's a worthy trade-off." -Trevor

Rioja Vega Reserva 2001, Rioja \$17.99

Owning a winery in Spain can be a bit of a soap opera. Don Felipe Ugalde began his bodega in Haro back in 1882, families married & wineries merged, but the dream continues unto this day under the name Rioja Vega. But tradition is steeped in this glass full of cherry & oak with silky baking spices, dark plums, meaty flavors & resinous balsam. Serve with *Marinated Pork Loin* & oven-roasted potatoes for a homey Sunday supper that goes straight to the heart.

Arzuaga Crianza 2004, Ribera del Duero \$15.99 375ml; \$29.99 750ml

One of the greatest things about Tempranillo is how good it can taste on day two, sometimes even *better*. That would definitely be the case with the 2004 Arzuaga--a huge vintage that fell perfectly into place after it had been allowed to open up for a day. Espresso & musk come to life with robust berries & candied cherries in a deliciously earthy delight. Vanilla & savory acid join classic pencil lead notes for a tangy then sweet send off... Throw this in your decanter at breakfast or enjoy a glass tonight & one tomorrow--an impressive vintage!

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Bodegas LAN Culmen Reserva 1994, Rioja \$75.00

1994 available again??? The best thing about this release is that it is \$100 less than when it first came out! Build a vertical Rioja lover's dream--1994, 1995 & 2001 are all the same price for each exceptional vintage.

"Muscular and amazingly youthful, this vibrant red is bursting with blackberry and chocolate flavors, still fresh and firm. An impressive example of the modern style." **-91 points, Wine Spectator**

Bodegas Montecillo Gran Reserva Seleccion Especial 1981, Rioja \$85.00

Today we were treated to a vertical tasting of Montecillo, from their 2003 Crianza & way back into the depths of their cellar. This 1981 sparkled like a dusty diamond among these treasures: youthful still, deliciously classic, & romantically old-fashioned, this is for true lovers of the Rioja. A time machine...

"Medium red. Complex aromas of plum, red berries, cinnamon, tree bark, pepper and bacon; autumnal in the style of a mature syrah yet still fresh. Then less sweet in the middle than the 1982 but more penetrating, with lovely clarity of flavor. Finishes with firm, slightly drying tannins. For tasters unfamiliar with fully mature classic Riojas, this would be an excellent starting point." **-91 points, Stephen Tanzer**

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