

Wine styles vary, offering choices in flavors

"Fundamental to matching wine to food is an understanding of the differences in styles of wine because style can be more important than the variety," said Karen Kechn, coproprietor with her husband Richard of McDowell Valley Vineyards.

"Any wine grape varietal can be made in a range of styles, each one emphasizing a different combination of fruit, tannin, acidity, sweetness and oak complexity. Style is the sum of various components, and a range



focus on wine
Eleanor and Ray Heald

of styles offers the cook unlimited flavor choices."

The Kechns probably have the old-

est plantings of syrah in California on their ranch in Hopland. Their winemaker, John Buecheisen, is a leading force in a merry band of winemakers, the Rhone Rangers, who specialize in producing wines from varieties native to France's Rhone Valley.

"Syrah is often described as plummy with wild currant flavors," said Kechn. "We make a puree of ripe plums (canned plums also work), add a few dried currants and simmer this with Syrah as a base for a sauce, wine left or served, creating a delicious flavor complement for wild game, pork, liver or pate — especially when served with the same wine."

"AS A RULE of thumb, this preparation will work well with any smoked, roasted or grilled foods with stronger flavors. For syrah, the herb of choice is rosemary."

McDowell Valley Vineyards has designed a Rhone-style label for its California versions of these wines. The label carries the brand name Les Vieux Cepages. After tasting the 1989 Les Vieux Cepages Syrah (\$15), it's easy to understand how Kechn's concept of similar flavors can also guide the matching of traditional seasons to the fruit flavors perceived in a wine.

Many red wines have a decidedly berry flavor — such as raspberry, blackberry, cherry or plum. These fruits are traditionally seasoned with sweet spices such as cinnamon,

WINE SELECTION OF THE WEEK

1989 Les Vieux Cepages Grenache, McDowell Valley Vineyards (\$8). Produced from vines planted in 1919, this rose-style wine is impressively Rhone-like. Crisp and fresh, it will match with Mediterranean-style salads or a vegetable stir fry.

nutmeg, allspice, and clove. Basil, tarragon, mint and anise also have many of the same sweet, hot, spicy characteristics and will make superior complements to the food and wine selection.

The Kechns live in the middle of their winery vineyards and have the distinct California advantage of raising their own vegetables, herbs and meats. However, Michigan's growing season is not all that short, and a small herb garden, started about now, will provide fresh herbs all summer long.

"When I begin to create a dish or plan a menu, the wine is an integral part of the overall flavor concept, when it is used only as a complementary beverage or as an ingredient," Kechn said.

"WE WANT THE TASTE relationship between food and wine to be flavor-enhancing, a synergistic pleasure, not a competitive battle for dominance. We use wine as a significant seasoning ingredient primarily for its contributions of fruit and acid."

"A wine's acidity can provide a structural backbone for building sauces, fruit or vegetable butters, salad dressings and stocks. Wine acidity enhances food flavors." Kechn also observes that in addi-

tion to acids, alcohol in wine is a natural tenderizing agent. Therefore, she suggests using wine as a marinade to tenderize as well as to add flavor.

For foods that are lighter in color (such as veal and pork) and where discoloration would adversely affect visual appeal, Kechn recommends using white or rose wines with good fruit and acidity.

If you would like to try these suggestions with McDowell Valley Vineyards white wines, you might consider either the 1988 Fume Blanc (\$8) that contains 14 percent Semillon in the blend, or the 1988 California appellation Chardonnay (\$9).

The Fume Blanc has fruitly undertones and a broad palate feel. With this wine, Kechn also suggests foods with high texture levels such as swordfish, chicken, crab, veal and rabbit. The seasoning of choice is mustard and/or curry. "Asparagus, artichokes and spinach, which devastate some wines, work well with this Fume Blanc," she said. "The herb affinity is fresh marjoram, not oregano."

Food can be easily and elegantly tied to the wine through the seasoning. Make it fun, experiment, and re-

member that there is not a right or wrong way. With this attitude, eating can be elevated to a dining experience.

"We refer to seasons as the ties that bind. These seasons may be an herb or spice combination or an herb or food that contributes flavor, such as tomato or garlic."

KECHN ALSO NOTES wines that are high in acidity seem to be enjoyed more when combined with foods high in fat content, such as butter, cream or cheese. In addition, high acid wines can be balanced by foods having some sweetness, such as a tart chardonnay served with scallops in a tarragon cream sauce. Also, acidity and alcohol in wine serve as a solvent to cleanse the palate.

Older wines, with fading acidity, are better enjoyed with foods having restrained flavors and less fat content, so as not to mask the more subtle wine flavors. With an older cabernet sauvignon, Kechn suggests a lean tenderloin roasted with fresh vegetables like potatoes and carrots, a simple sauce using the deglazed pan juices, a splash of wine and restrained seasonings — a little thyme and a pinch of salt and pepper.

2 cooks from area win cookie contest

Two area residents are among winners in the "Best Chocolate Chip Cookie in Michigan" contest co-sponsored by Zehnder's of Frankenmuth and Michigan Living magazine.

The Brandy Pecan chocolate chip cookie recipe created by Barbara Couillard of Westland won first prize, competing with more than 700 chocolate chip cookie recipes from around the state.

Third prize went to Karen Schanberger of Farmington Hills for her Spiced Viennese Coffee Treat.

Couillard earned a Michigan Living Five Diamond Rating, \$500 and a weekend in Frankenmuth for her first place recipe, which will be test produced in the Bakery at Zehnder's as a possible attraction on the cookie shelves.

Schanberger receives a Three Diamond Rating, \$100 and dinner for two at Zehnder's.

Second prize in the contest went to Donna McDermott of Belding for her Ultimate chocolate chip cookie.

Thirty recipes competed in the final round of chip competition recently at Zehnder's. Finalists included area residents Joycelyn Mander of Rochester Hills, Chocolate Chip Maple Almond Delights; Brenda Hayes of Farmington, Malted Chip Cookies; Ellen B. Exworthy of Southfield, Michigan Chippers; and Bernlyn Derry of Birmingham, Turtle Chocolate Chip Cookies.

Here are the first and third prize winning recipes.

BRANDY PECAN CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup vegetable shortening
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
1 cup chocolate chips
1 cup broken pecans
2 ounces brandy

Soak pecans in brandy for 1/2 hour. Mix together butter and shortening. Add sugars and beat until blended. Add eggs and continue beating until creamy. Add flour mixture a little at a time till well blended. Stir in pecans, brandy and chocolate chips.

Drop by large rounded tablespoon (golf ball size) onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 12 minutes. Makes 2 dozen 3 1/2-inch cookies.

Barbara Couillard
Westland

SPICED VIENNESE COFFEE TREATS

12 ounces (2 cups) mini chocolate chips
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon instant coffee crystals
2 teaspoons boiling water
1 1/2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup packed brown sugar

Thirty recipes competed in the final round of chip competition recently at Zehnder's.

"Please, my little girl needs blood."

Imagine if you had to ask for blood to save the life of someone you love. Next time the American Red Cross asks, give blood, please.

GIVE BLOOD, PLEASE

1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon orange extract
1 egg
1/2 cup blanched, slivered almonds

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Melt over hot (not boiling) water, 1/2 cup chocolate chips or microwave in glass measuring cup 1-1 1/2 minutes on high, stirring every 30 seconds. Stir until smooth; set aside to cool to room temperature. In small cup, dissolve coffee crystals in water; set aside. In small bowl combine flour, baking soda and salt; set aside. In large bowl, cream together butter, sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon and coffee mixture. Mix in orange extract, egg and melted chips. Gradually add flour mixture. Stir in remaining 1/4 cups chips and almonds. Drop by rounded tablespoons onto greased baking sheets. Bake 9-11 minutes. Allow to stand 2-3 minutes before removing from cookie sheets; cool completely. Makes 24 cookies, each 1 inch.

Karen Schanberger
Farmington Hills

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