

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

Why not give your Valentine a Ferrari

Your first thought when we say Ferrari should not be a car. It's Italy's best sparkling wine. Because Ferrari never advertises and relies only on word-of-mouth to let the world know about its wine, you may not know it. But for Valentine's Day this year, give your lover a Ferrari!

Ferrari sparklers carry the phrase Metodo Classico on the label. It has the same meaning as Methode Champenoise on a bottle of champagne from France. That is, the second fermentation that creates the bubbles was done in the bottle. It's not sweet or overly fizzy.

Ferrari sparklers are dry and elegant in a true Brut style. They are made exclusively from chardonnay and pinot noir (called pinot nero in Italy). These are the same grapes used in the best champagne production in France. And the price? Significantly less than a bottle of top champagne.

Ferrari is not trading on the car name! This legendary sparkler "popped" onto the scene in 1902 when perfectionist Giulio Ferrari founded what is now Italy's oldest sparkling wine company, in the mountainous region of northeast Italy, known as Trentino. Because Giulio had no heirs, in 1952 wine merchant and connoisseur Bruno Lunelli purchased the Ferrari winery. Since 1969, a Lunelli family member has been at the winery's helm, carrying on the art of producing Italy's best sparkler.

Ferrari is so popular in its homeland that 90 percent of the production is sold in Italy. About two percent makes its way to the U.S. and is sold in 10 states; Michigan is one of them.

Taste-testing a Ferrari

Non-vintage Ferrari Brut \$17 is 95-percent chardonnay and 5-percent pinot noir. It spent two years on the yeast before being disgorged. Showcasing pure chardonnay fruit, it finishes with citrusy crispness and a creamy mouth feel.

The 1996 Ferrari Perle Brut \$21 is a true Blanc de Blancs, made from 100-percent estate-grown chardonnay. It spent four years on the yeast and was recently disgorged. In handsome, upscale packaging, the wine has rich, chardonnay character and depthful, toasty flavors. It illustrates what additional time on yeast brings to a sparkling wine made from top-flight grapes.

Ferrari Brut Rose \$21 displays a copper-like blush from 65-percent pinot noir in the blend, with the balance as chardonnay. Unlike many rose sparklers, the blend was made before the alcoholic first fermentation. Fermenting both grape varieties together created harmonious integration of flavors and delicious creaminess.

The top of the Ferrari line is 1992 Giulio Ferrari Riserva del Fondatore \$40. In 2000, it won the sparkling wine of the year award and has been awarded the prestigious tre bicchieri

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WINE PICKS

Outstanding, mellow and delicious reds, perfect for Valentine's Day.

Merlot: 1999 Geyser Peak \$17; 1999 Pine Ridge Crimson Creek \$30; 1998 Sebastiani Appellation Selection \$22; 1999 Luna \$32; and 1999 Chateau Sovereign \$17.

Best buys: 2000 Fetzer Eagle Peak \$9 and 1999 Gallo of Sonoma \$11.

Syrah/Shiraz: 1999 Geyser Peak Shiraz \$17 and 1999 Chateau Sovereign Syrah \$20.

French: 1999 Barton & Guestier Chateaufort-du-Pape \$19.

Food for your honey



Local chefs' recipes make Valentine's Day sizzle

BY LANA MINI
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For centuries, men and women have used food and aroma as aphrodisiacs to seduce potential lovers. Cleopatra added cinnamon, lavender and rose oils to the meals of her desired men. Witches in the Dark Ages used sage and vanilla.

For Valentine's Day, we asked prominent local chefs to create recipes that arouse the senses. Taste, texture, aroma and appearance were considerations.

We spoke with Chef Dan Rowland, a culinary arts instructor and chef at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills; Chris Angelosante, chef and proprietor of Appetizer in West Bloomfield, and Nina Scott, executive chef at Big Rock Chop & Brew House in Birmingham. Each chef offered different advice.

"Never try to follow four different recipes," chef Chris Angelosante said. "Don't try to make an intricate salad, appetizer, entree and dessert all at once. Keep it simple."

Simplicity doesn't mean bland either.

Angelosante is owner of Appetizer in West Bloomfield and Milford, Flat's Bar & Grill in Brighton, and Lu & Carl's in Milford. At Appetizer, he said men like beef tenderloin, but finding a choice cut can be tough.

"Couples want meals at home that they get at restaurants," he said. "Friends call me for advice on cooking snails and oysters ... I recommend a bit of adventure while cooking. Cook together."

Easy and fabulous

Make it easy with one great recipe, he said. Season shrimp on a skewer and cook on a pancake griddle.

"It's easy and it tastes so good," Angelosante said.

For a main course, Nina Scott of Big Rock suggests Chateaubriand and Oysters Rockefeller.

"It's a classic meal and the recipe isn't as daunting as it seems," Scott said. "People are going back to tradition and Chateaubriand is classic 1950s chophouse that's perfect for a guy who wants to impress his girl."

Scott offered easy presentation tips such as add an egg to the mashed potatoes before roasting to give some color. Stuff the potatoes into a pastry bag and squeeze into fluffy swirls on the plate. Or, press

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PHOTO BY TOMMY HOFFMEYER

Classic: Executive Chef Nina Scott, of Big Rock chophouse in Birmingham, creates a traditional Chateaubriand with roasted mashed potatoes, stuffed tomatoes and peppers. The dish is very European, she said. Scott also offered readers a recipe for Oysters Rockefeller. Add a red raspberry drink and champagne for a classic Valentine's dinner. Top, red raspberry Stoli or champagne can top off a Chateaubriand or a chocolate dessert. Chef Nina Scott said the drinks are also appropriate with oysters.

Try desserts made with sugar substitutes

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

The tradition of giving sweets to your sweetheart on Valentine's Day is somewhat of a mystery. Sweets have always been a token of affection for they are richly satisfying. To many of us, a meal is not complete unless we conclude it with something sweet like a rich dessert.

Desserts can be a challenge to people who are watching their sugar or fat intake. Remember this basic dessert drill — "portion them out, count them in." That means you can have almost any sweet or dessert on the table. Fruit is the best dessert of all because it is loaded with nutrients and fiber. It is also very high in the simple sugar fructose, so watch the serving size.

"My husband really enjoys blueberries for dessert,"

said Demitra Wilson of Southfield. "As long as I keep the serving small, he has them whenever he wants."

Regular sugar is not forbidden because it too is a simple sugar. People with diabetes or those who are watching their calories, can substitute a sugary dessert for another part of the meal. It is acceptable to substitute a cookie or a piece of cake, for pasta or a slice of bread. The key word is substitute, not add.

Good replacement

Artificial sweeteners provide a good replacement for the sweetening of sugar. Although there has been a lot of controversy around sugar substitutes, all are safe if used in moderation. Children and pregnant women should use artificial sweeteners with caution, and one very important thing to note is that people who have phenylketonuria should completely avoid

aspartame.

There are numerous artificial sweeteners on the market and there are good reasons to use them.

Since sugar has more calories than artificial sweeteners, it may be easier to stick to your calorie budget if you use a sugar substitute instead of sugar. Sugar causes tooth decay but sugar substitutes do not. However, sugar must be "counted" in a meal plan. If you choose sugar-containing foods, they may crowd out healthful foods such as fruits.

Sugar substitutes are essentially free. There are numerous dessert recipes that replace sugar with artificial sweetener. The trick with recipes like these is to add the artificial sweetener when the dish is almost finished cooking or shortly after it is done. Additionally, many of these recipes contain 100 cal.

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