

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

Clink glasses and toast the new year

The countdown has begun. Here's some fizz to help you pick a memorable bubbly.

Champagne should be served chilled from the refrigerator at 40°F or from a champagne bucket filled with half water and ice. Glasses should be either tall flutes or long tulip-shaped. A 750mL bottle serves five glasses.

Plan on two to three glasses per person at a sparkling cocktail party and 2/3 of bottle per person at an all-sparkling wine dinner.

Bubbly styles

Sparklers labeled Blanc de Blancs are almost always 100 percent chardonnay. They are delicate and dry. It is traditional to match them with oysters, smoked salmon, caviar or paté. They pair with soft cheeses, such as brie, goat cheese and gorgonzola.

Non-vintage (NV) bruts represent a producer's style. They are generally blends of chardonnay and pinot noir. Vintage-dated bruts represent the characteristics of a particular year, and are generally only made in top vintages. Both take to salty foods, such as nuts, thin slices of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, prescuzzolo or freshly-popped popcorn (no kidding).

A sparkler labeled Extra Dry is slightly sweeter than Brut.

A Blanc de Noirs is made from pinot noir and takes to any dish with mushrooms. It's also excellent with game birds or poached salmon. For dessert or ushering in the millennium in a special way, serve it with chocolate-dipped strawberries and amaze your guests.

A Brut Rosé and rack of lamb is sensational. Try it with steak or Mediterranean cuisine, including grilled tuna with a tomato, olive oil and garlic sauce, duck or venison.

A bubbly dubbed tete-de-cuvée is the top wine in that brand. Champagne or sparkling wine, in a 1.5L bottle, also called a magnum, has the best taste. No one really knows why, but it's true. Domaine Carneros Brut Vintage Millennium bottles (both 1994 and 1998 vintages) are available in magnum at \$63. The bottle has been dressed in festive wear with a gold 2000 screened onto the front. Good looks and great taste. Domaine Carneros is owned by Taittinger Champagne of France.

Marketing surveys indicate that more than half the people who have never drunk champagne before will this New Year's Eve, and nearly all people who have celebrated with champagne before will make a choice that is higher in price than their usual selection.

Here are our favorite bubbly baubles for your champagne glass:

- **Blanc de Blancs**
1993 Champagne Deutz Blanc de Blancs \$69
1993 Domaine Carneros Le Reve \$50
1991 Iron Horse Blanc de Blancs \$30
1996 Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs \$28.50
- **Non-vintage Brut**
Champagne Louis Roederer Brut Premier \$42
Champagne Deutz Brut Classic \$38
Champagne Piper-Heidsieck Brut \$32
Roederer Estate Anderson Valley Brut \$19
- **Vintage Brut**
1888 Piper-Heidsieck Rare \$70 (made only in years of exceptional quality such as 1979 and 1985, then 1988)
1992 Schramsberg J. Schram \$65 (tete-de-cuvée)
1991 Iron Horse Brut LD \$60

Please see WINE, B5

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- Living Better Sensibly



Festive slips: At the Zero-Proof Mix-Off contest in Southfield, contestants prepared their holiday alcohol-free drinks for the judges to taste. Pictured (left to right) are Dorothy Dandridge Delight, James Galway's Flute, Uncle Mitty's Miami Beach Maltly, Savory Sinatra Sizzler, and Kirk Chocolate Maltly.

'Stars of the Century' this year's theme of Zero-Proof Mix-Off

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER
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Thick and creamy, with just a hint of almond, Kirk Chocolate Maltly - named for the Detroit Red Wing hockey player, will help you achieve your goal of serving tasty, but alcohol-free, drinks on New Year's Eve.

Created by Margie Thomas of New Hudson, the drink was judged number one by me and two other judges in a Zero-Proof Mix-Off contest sponsored by the Automobile Club of Michigan on Oct. 7 at the Westin Hotel in Southfield's Town Center.



Cheers: The judges, Keely Wygonik (left to right), James Schultz, and Sgt. Michael Mellec, click glasses to toast the holidays and sample Savory Sinatra Sizzler, one of the drinks entered in the AAA Michigan sponsored Zero-Proof Mix-Off contest at the Westin Hotel in Southfield.

Joining me at the judge's table were James Schultz, administrator, Michigan Department of Transportation's Intelligent Transportation Systems Center, and Sgt. Michael Mellec of the Southfield Police Department.

The Southfield contest was one of three. The others were in Petooskey and Grand Rapids. Five finalists, selected from entries from all over the state, were chosen to mix their drinks in person at each of the three Zero-Proof Mix-Offs.

Three local community leaders tasted the drinks at each mix-off and picked their favorites. The winner in each contest received \$500 and the Golden Stirrer Award plaque. Runner-ups were awarded a ski or golf weekend for two at a Shanty Creek Resort, plus \$50. Honorable mentions each received \$50.

This year's theme was "Stars of the Century." In addition to Thomas, the finalists at the Southfield Zero-Proof Mix-Off included Victor Garsko of Birmingham, Darryl James of Southfield, Camille Barr of Harper Woods and Renee Reeves of Millard.

Garsko was named a runner-up for his James Galway's Flute, a flavorful blend of raspberry and lemon sorbet, lemonade and sparkling raspberry juice.

Honorable mentions were awarded to Barr for her Savory Sinatra Sizzler, James who created an exotic drink he named Dorothy Dandridge Delight after one of the first African-American women to achieve stardom in Hollywood, and Reeves for Uncle Mitty's Miami Beach Maltly named after comedian Milton Berle.

As the finalists prepared their drinks, they described the ingredi-



First-place winner: Margie Thomas garnishes her Golden Stirrer Award-winning drink, Kirk Chocolate Maltly, named after the Detroit Red Wing Hockey player.



Runner-up: Victor Garsko of Birmingham pours raspberry lemonade into "flutes" to make his special drink, James Galway's Flute, at the AAA Michigan sponsored Zero-Proof Mix-Off contest.



Honorable mention: Darryl James of Southfield measures Ribena, a black currant juice drink mix, as he prepares Dorothy Dandridge Delight, an exotic drink named after an actress.

ents and explained how they created it.

We were told to rate the recipes based on appearance, taste and creativity of the name (each recipe was to be named after a famous entertainer or sports celebrity).

Taste was the most important factor, but the drink also had to look nice and be easy to make.

As James created his drink, he explained that because he thought Dorothy Dandridge was beautiful and exotic, he chose really interesting ingredients including Ribena, a concentrated black currant juice

drink mix, and aqualibra, a sparkling fruit and herbal drink.

Garsko said his James Galway's Flute can be prepared in any kind of glass and describes it as being "cool and refreshing," just like the music James Galway plays on the flute.

As she created her Savory Sinatra Sizzler, Barr played some of Frank Sinatra's music. Because "Sinatra did everything with a passion," one of the ingredients in her drink is Old Orchard Apple Passion

Please see PRETENDERS, B2

Gala brings families together for food, fun

By SANDRA DALKA-PRYBYL
SPECIAL WRITER

Take eight couples, 21 kids, and two days, and what do you get? The ingredients for a memorable new year celebration.

Lisa Rahn and Tina Forsberg of Beverly Hills began organizing a New Year's Gala four years ago to provide themselves and their children a fun, wholesome and safe way to end one year and begin the next.

The group divides up between two houses for dinner, which is traditionally lasagna.

"When I say divide up, I really mean divide," said Rahn. "One spouse goes to one house, the other to the second. Children from one family are also divided between the two houses. This way the guests mingle with others instead of with their own families."

"But this is only a temporary separation, only for dinner. At 10 p.m. we all end up at one of the houses for dessert and our New Year's Eve party. All the families help provide the food for the dinner and the party afterward."

Their celebration follows a traditional mode with hats and noisemakers (packed away each year for the next year). For the midnight toast, adults are served cham-

pagne. The children are served grape juice

"Sometimes we have everyone write down and bring their best memory of the past year to share with the other guests. This year, in keeping with the new millennium theme, we're going to bring written thoughts and items for a time capsule. We just haven't decided where we're going to bury it," said Rahn.

The group's celebration doesn't end at midnight. Fathers rise early on New Year's Day to prepare breakfast at still another house. Spouses and children arrive later for an abundant first meal of the year. Then the wives go to a movie, while their husbands and kids watch football games on TV.

TRADITIONAL FAMILY LASAGNA

- Vegetable oil spray
- 1 pound ground round
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon basil
- 2 teaspoons salt, divided

- 1 (16-ounce) can chopped tomatoes
- 2 (6-ounce) cans tomato paste
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups cream-style cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons parsley flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

- 1 pound mozzarella cheese, thinly sliced
- 10 ounces lasagna noodles, cooked and drained

Spray a 13-by-9-inch baking pan with vegetable oil. Brown meat in skillet over medium heat; drain excess grease. Add next five ingredients. Simmer uncovered for 20-30 minutes (until thickened), stirring occasionally.

Beat eggs and add remaining ingredients, except mozzarella cheese and noodles.

Layer half the noodles on bottom of pan. Add a layer of half the egg mixture, half the meat mixture. Top with half the mozzarella cheese.

Repeat layers. Bake at 375°F for 40 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving. Serves 8-10.

Recipe compliments of Lisa Rahn