

WINE

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varieties, corvina, rondinella and molinara contribute to the unique character of amaronne. With compact bunches, corvina is the lone grape in the amaronne blend that is susceptible to botrytis cinerea, which develops into noble rot, during the unique drying process known as appassimento. The beneficial mold reacts with grape skins, reducing both color and tannin, while simultaneously generating large amounts of glycerin, that creates the luxurious round mouthfeel.

Rondinella makes up for any color loss suffered by corvina and adds floral aromas and cherry flavors. Molinara contributes both cherry and raspberry notes, but more importantly, a backbone of acidity, without which amaronne would lack vitality and balance.

APPASSIMENTO

Harvested grapes are dried on large bamboo racks until the middle or end of January. Dehydration causes an increase in the sugar concentration, which is one factor that allows amaronne to reach 16 percent more alcohol. The other is the slow fermentation of the three grape varieties together which achieves a totally dry wine after approximately one year.

Masi amaronne ages in 20 percent new barrels which are a 50/50 blend of Slavonian and French Allier forest oak. They maintain distinctive aromas and balance between fruit and tannins, without contributing any characters, which would overshadow the elegance and personality of amaronne.

TASTING MASI WINES

The 1999 Masi Campoforin (S16) is a Masi specialty using a technique called ripasso where fresh grape juice is poured over half-dry grapes from the appassimento process, giving the finished wine a stunning fruit core.

The 1999 Masi Costasera Amaronne Classico (S44) is made from grapes sourced exclusively from west-facing vineyards. Bright cherry notes are hallmarks of a robust, velvety wine with an exuberant palate, ending with a touch of dark chocolate.

The 1997 Masi Vaso Armaron Seceto Alghieri Amaronne Classico (S55) represents Masi's most important vineyard and a personal interpretation of amaronne in a classic style.

An intense cherry character is magnified by the use of

WINE PICKS

Since the wine column focuses on a European wine, we're recommending other tasty stuff from foreign lands:

WHITE WINES

2001 Goats do Roam White Rhone Blend, South Africa (S10); 2001 Clovely Queensland Semillon-Chardonnay, Australia (S11)

RED WINES

Spain: 1994 Marques de Caceres Grand Reserva Rioja (S26) (outstanding vintage) France: 2000 Perrin Rasteau l'Angeol (80/20 Grenache/Mourvedre) (S16); 2000 Delas Freres Cotes du Rhone Saint Esprit Rouge (S17); and 2000 Delas Freres Cotes du Ventoux (S9)

Italy: 2000 Caparzo Rosso di Montalcino (S21); 1999 Villa Arceno Syrah Il Boscchetto, Tuscany (S35); 1999 Borgo Scopeto Chianti: Classico Misciano (S35); 1999 Borgo Scopeto Borognero, Tuscany (S35); and 1999 Caparzo Ca del Pazzo, Montalcino (S35)

Australia: 2000 Rosemount Estate GSM (S30)

All wines mentioned are available in the metro-Detroit area. If a retailer does not stock a specific wine, ask that it be ordered from the distributor.

600-Litre cherry wood casks.

The 1997 Masi Campolongo di Torbe Amaronne Classico (S69) showcases ripe plums and anise spice with slight bitter almond accents in an internationally-styled wine.

Our favorite of the three 1997s. The 1997 Masi Mazzano Amaronne Classico (S81) is least botrytis infected. Brimming with vanilla and chocolate, it is perhaps for us, too New World for a classic wine. Note: the 1997 wines will be available in spring 2003 in very limited quantity. Let your wine shop know now if you want some.

The Healds are Troy residents who write about wine, spirits, food, and restaurants for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave them a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047, mailbox 1864H.

Apricot, bananas sweeten this hearty oat bread

The easiest way to be sure you get the recommended three servings of whole grains each day is simple — eat breakfast.

Why? Because there are so many great-tasting, whole grain breakfast foods.

By starting the day with a large bowl of oatmeal and a slice of whole wheat toast, you've already met your daily quota of whole grains and gained a good start at meeting your dietary fiber needs.

Why choose whole grains? According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, eating plenty of whole grains, such as oatmeal and whole wheat bread, is part of a healthy diet, may help protect us against certain chronic diseases.

So, how do you know if you are eating a whole grain product? Always check the ingredient list on the package.

First, look for key words like "whole grain," "whole grain oats," "whole wheat," "whole grain corn," or "whole grain barley."

Then, choose foods that have a whole grain as the first ingredient listed.

If you're also looking for ways to eat less fat and sugar, you might consider baking your own whole grain muffins and quick bread loaves.

Oats, one of the most versatile whole grains, can be substituted for up to one-third of the flour called for in any recipe for cookies, muffins, biscuits, cof-

fecakes, yeast breads and quick bread loaves.

Apricot-Banana-Almond Bread, for example, offers not only the whole grain benefits that oats provide but natural sweetness from ripe bananas and dried apricots.

The bananas paired with lowfat buttermilk ensure a moist and tender loaf with less oil than is typical in a store-bought or bakery quick bread. Sliced almonds in the batter and sprinkled on top add texture and nutrition benefits of their own.

When baking, either the quick cooking (1 minute) or the old fashioned (15 minutes) oats can be used interchangeably. Because they are thicker, the old fashioned oats add a heartier texture.

Quick breads like this loaf are easier to slice and even more flavorful a day after baking.

Tightly wrapped, they can be stored at room temperature for three to five days or frozen for longer storage.

Slice before freezing so you can take out just a slice at a time.

Good-For-You Granola, another healthy, whole grain breakfast choice, contains less saturated fat and sugar than many packaged granolas. Add your own dried or fresh fruit and lowfat yogurt or milk for a complete breakfast packed with



Apricot-banana-almond bread offers the whole grain benefits of rolled oats. Ripe bananas and dried apricots contribute sweetness and fabulous flavor.

fiber and calcium. More healthful oat recipes are available in a free brochure, "Oats: The Whole (Grain) Story." To order, send your name

and complete address to Oats: The Whole (Grain) Story, P.O. Box 3305, Chicago, IL 60654 or e-mail OatOffer@aol.com. Please allow two to three weeks for delivery.

RECIPES

APRICOT-BANANA-ALMOND BREAD

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup oats (quick or old fashioned, uncooked)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2/3 cup finely chopped dried apricots
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons unbleached sliced almonds
- 1 cup mashed ripe bananas
- 1/2 cup lowfat buttermilk
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon almond extract

Heat oven to 350° F. Spray bot-

tom only of a 9- by 5-inch loaf pan with cooking spray. Coat bottom of pan with flour; tap out excess. In large bowl, combine flour, oats, baking powder, baking soda and salt; mix well. Add apricots and 1/4 cup almonds, mix well. In a medium bowl, whisk together bananas, buttermilk, oil, brown sugar, eggs and extract until well blended. Add to dry ingredients all at once. Stir just until dry ingredients are evenly moistened. (Do not overmix.) Pour into pan. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons almonds.

Bake 55 to 65 minutes or until golden brown and wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes in pan on

wire rack. Remove bread from pan. Cool completely on rack.

Wrap cooled bread tightly in aluminum foil and store up to three days at room temperature. For longer storage, label and freeze.

GOOD-FOR-YOU GRANOLA

- 3 1/2 cups old fashioned oats, uncooked
 - 1/4 cup sliced unbleached almonds
 - 1/4 cup chopped walnuts
 - 1/3 cup honey
 - 1/4 cup vegetable oil
 - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
 - 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Heat oven to 350° F. In large

bowl, combine oats, almonds and walnuts. In small bowl, stir together honey, oil, cinnamon, vanilla and nutmeg.

Drizzle over oat mixture; mix well. Spread evenly in 13- by 9- by 2-inch baking pan.

Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown, stirring every 5 minutes. Remove from oven; cool completely in pan on wire rack. Store tightly covered up to 2 weeks.

Nutrition information: 1/10 of recipe (sant 1/2 cup). Calories 280, calories from fat 140, total fat 16g, saturated fat 2g, cholesterol 0mg, sodium 0mg, total carbohydrates 29g, dietary fiber 3g, protein 6g.

Congratulations to the winners of the Observer & Eccentric Contest for tickets to Disney On Ice Princess Classics

The following winners were among 700 entrants:

- Hope Pickens, Garden City, Grand Prize Winner**
- Jacob Tremonti, Westland
 - Theodora House, Troy
 - Edwin Stephens, Garden City
 - Ann Kelley, Clarkston
 - Henna Ata, Lake Orion
 - Devona Marshall, Southfield
 - Andy Teahan, Birmingham
 - Isabel Hooper, Rochester Hills
 - Cameron Gasser, Livonia
 - Bonnie Berry, Canton
 - Joseph & Bryan Griffin, Redford

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*The APR is based on the highest finance rate as published in the "Money Rates" section of The Wall Street Journal on the last publishing day of the calendar month immediately preceding the billing cycle. As of January 21, 2003, Finance rates are 4.25% and the Annual Percentage Rate (APR) on Standard Federal's Home Equity Line of Credit products varied between 5.50% and 7.25%, depending on your reported creditworthiness and product. Payments in arrears may be assessed. The APR on your account will change. The maximum APR is 21%. A balloon payment will result in the end of the loan term. Standard Federal's Home Equity Line of Credit is limited to interest-accrued 14-hour pre-qualified residential loans and are subject to no less than a second lien position on your property. You must carry insurance on the collateral. There is a \$200 processing fee. Any additional fees or conditions imposed by the city, state, or county may apply. Standard Federal Bank is licensed to originate, service, and record loans. Any additional fees or conditions imposed by the city, state, or county that the subject property is located in will be the borrower's responsibility. Contact your tax advisor concerning the deductibility of interest. There is a \$3,000 or more on your new Standard Federal Home Equity Line of Credit, or after closing on your new Standard Federal Home Equity Line of Credit of \$15,000 or more, you will qualify to receive a Gift Card worth \$50. Gift Cards will be mailed within 90 days of closing. Limit of one Gift Card per borrower of credit. Based on an amount of \$15,000. Must be accompanied by 80 days or longer. Additional restrictions may apply. The Gift Card may be considered income to you for tax purposes. MasterCard is a registered trademark of MasterCard International.