THE WINE MANIFESTO
A NEW KIND OF REVOLUTION
DAVID ROSENGARTEN
Brothers and sisters...there is a problem with wine in America!!! To the casual observer, it may be a little tricky to see. But a lot of what’s typically available to American consumers at reasonable prices is difficult-to-love, middle-of-the-road wine that “seems” acceptable...but only seems that way because of the wine culture we’ve developed. Simply put: Americans are being deprived of the mirthful, unpretentious wines that Europeans drink every day with their meals! Imagine going into restaurants across France and Italy, finding main courses for 15 dollars...along with beautiful bottles of wine that cost the same...or less!

I want wine to be as simple and delicious and natural at table as bread, butter, salad, fish, meat, vegetables and cheese. No fuss! No stress! Just great refreshment and taste!

I propose that we start the transition (or “the revolution!”) right now. I propose that instead of flooding our shops, and our glasses, with Chardonnay, Chardonnay, Chardonnay...and Cabernet, Cabernet, Cabernet...we start paying more attention to the little, food-loving gems, at good prices, that are available at wine shops and restaurants in other parts of the world.

And how would you find these wines? That’s my mission...bringing exquisite, reasonably priced food-loving wines from across the world...to you!

I have reckoned that dividing the world of wine into ten key categories will help make a difference for all of us. I have done so...and I am actively combing the world for good-value bottles that I can bring here for my readers and followers.

Here they are, in all their shimmering, food-friendly lightness. If you’re a big-a-holic, and you test my wines from all ten categories with your dinners...I’m thinking you’re gonna say: “I see it! I see the light!”
David Rosengarten's 10 Wine Categories:
The REAL Categories Every Wine-Lover Needs in His or Her Life!

#1: Complex toasty-yeasty
Champagne

#2: Crisp, clean, non-fruity
sparkling wine

#3: Dry, sleek, racy whites
(for oysters, etc.)

#4: Dry Riesling, Chenin
Blanc, and a few other light,
food-loving, highly versatile
white-wine grape varieties,
young and old

#5: Complex aged whites with
tolerable wood (excellent
cream sauce wines)

#6: Meaningful rosés, light on
their feet but...bursting with
fruit, or smoldering with al-
most-red-wine interest

#7: Young, bouncy, juicy
reds (other wines of
the world in the sappy
Beaujolais mode)

#8: Round, gentle, complex,
affordable
aged reds

#9: Elegant mainstream
reds... that's mainstream
but ELEGANT!

#10: Complex, luscious,
affordable dessert wines and
fortified wines
Where else would you want to begin your portfolio...or your party? It must be this kind of Champagne. Most Champagnes in the market don't do it for me; very often, they are blends of young Champagnes, and young means f-r-u-i-t. A glass of bubbles, for me, with rich, almost-sweet fruit is not an exciting party-starter! I always prefer the magic of a Champagne that has been given time to age! It dries out, gets crisper, takes on amazing layers of flavor (toast, vanilla, licorice, old Cognac). The magic of Champagne is in this kind of Champagne, not in the fruity upstarts. And the food-matching possibilities! Fruit hurts Champagne's ability to pair well. But the complex older ones I tout really make sense out of classic matches like Champagne and caviar, Champagne and smoked salmon, Champagne and sushi.

Additionally, these kinds of Champagnes will serve you well (if you serve them well) deep into your menus and dinner parties. Egg dishes (like quiche!) Fish dishes (especially creamy ones). Chicken and veal dishes (blanquette de veau is KILLER with a Champagne like this!) Even the cheese course is served, if you stick to dry-ish cheeses (like goat cheese). I do have one admonition, however: do not serve these beauties with dessert, or anything very sweet. The sugar will deflate them!

(Note: My current Champagnes from Michel Gonet fall in this category...there will be more!)

Sample Recipe: Smoked Salmon Bundles With Hamachi Crudo, and Runny Ginger-Lemongrass Mayonnaise (see page 10)

#2: Crisp, clean, non-fruity sparkling wine

There's another style of sparkling wine I adore...though it usually does not come from Champagne, France. "Lesser" sparkling wine producers around the world (as in much "less" expensive!) sometimes come up with fizzy wines that are very simple, and, most importantly, devoid of aggressive mediocre bubble-gummy fruit flavors. Clean and thrillingly refreshing. Vinho Verde is an exemplar of this style--I wish I had a euro for every gallon of madly fizzy, crisp-as-lemon, low-alcohol wine I've thrown back in Portugal with amazing platters of fish and shellfish (shrimps, scallops, octopus, lobsters, sardines). I keep this tradition in my own kitchen... whenever I gather merry diners around a big platter of steamed American crabs, this kind of wine is my go-to! No oak, no sugar, no whopping alcohol, no pain!

(Note: I have terrific, crackling-dry, undiscovered Vinho Verde coming in)

Sample Recipe: Whole Cold Crabs, Northeastern-Style (see page 11)
There’s one type of shellfish that is my special obsession: oysters, raw. And, of course, I’m obsessed with oyster wine. When I’m in France, I make it as easy on myself as possible: I order the latest vintage of the tingly wine that comes from near the main oyster beds, Muscadet. And, sure enough, it is usually dry, sleek, racy, perfect for shellfish. But I have a problem in the U.S...when I buy the new vintage of Muscadet at wine shops, it sometimes takes me 15 or 20 bottles to find a tingly one! So, in this category, I will be importing racy whites—from all over the world—that will enable you in, say, October, to purchase your oyster wines for the winter oyster season. This is taste you can rely on, a purpose-driven wine you can trust! (How many million miles is that from “this white gets a 93”?!) These wines will also be magic for a wide range of other light foods at any time of year (salads, charcuterie, grilled fish, etc.)

(NOTE: It’s not always easy to find the perfectly lemony Muscadet. Mine will always, reliably be that...just in time for oyster season! And Gros Plant as well!!)

SAMPLE RECIPE: Raw Oysters with Jamaican Lime Chile Extraction (see page 11)

#3: Dry, sleek, racy whites (for oysters, etc.)

As you may know, the white-wine grape varieties that are mass-market standard in this country—Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio—do not turn me on. Oh, there can be great bottles of wine from those grapes—but not often enough. So I turn my all-purpose white-wine attention to other varietals of the world that much more reliably complement your food. The King of the Hill here, without doubt, is Riesling! I’ve been obsessed with Riesling for over 30 years, and it has finally become sizzling hot in America—but mostly with sommeliers! The task is to convince America’s wine drinkers that some of the greatest Rieslings are dry, dry, dry—perfect dinner wines, with a steely clarity that no other wine possesses. I have many Rieslings coming into the U.S., both young and old (old is my special favorite) that have never been in the U.S. before. Chenin Blanc from the Loire, another amazing food wine that ages beautifully, is also in this mix. And many others that really do work with food: dry Muscat, Grüner Veltliner, Vermentino, Torrontes, etc. This is my “expand your imagination” category! For food as well! Category #4 wines go brilliantly with a wide range of classic “white” dishes, with picnic foods, with cheese...and with the whole world of Asian food as well!

(NOTE: In addition to the two dozen German wineries coming in soon...fabulous Riesling that’s mostly dry and aged, going back to 1993...aged Savennières from the Loire is on my list, as well!)

SAMPLE RECIPE: Thai Yellow Shrimp Curry (see pages 12-13)
#5: Complex aged whites with tolerable wood (excellent cream sauce wines)

The white wines in the category above are generally devoid of oak. I am not the world’s greatest fan of oaky whites. However, occasionally someone makes a traditional-style wine, with oak, that really nails it. The added vanilla-like flavors are subtle, and the balance is not thrown off by the oak addition. The aging tames down the oak and, after a few years, everything comes together beautifully. Such a wine is going to be a bigger, richer wine—but I will select only those that match with food, usually bigger, richer foods, often including cream. Another great food match for these wines is corn! Such wines as traditional aged white Rioja, and Australian Semillon, and, yes, even impeccably made Chardonnay (wait until you see what I have coming from South Africa!) fall perfectly into this category.

(NOTE: My very favorite New World Chardonnay from South Africa is coming soon, from an elegant winery/restaurant in Franschoek)

SAMPLE RECIPE: Succotash (see page 13)

#6: Meaningful rosés, light on their feet, but...bursting with fruit, or smoldering with

Most rosé in the market is neutral tasting, often a little hot with alcohol, sometimes a little sweet. These wines recall not at all the light, graceful wines you remember drinking on the Riviera! My mission is to find those, and get ‘em into the country quickly while they still have their youth (you’ll be amazed by the Austrian Schilcher coming next year!) But there’s another rose path I’m pursuing. Roses are sometimes darker in color, richer in extract—sometimes reminiscent of light reds. I seek those as well, because they match beautifully with food; herbed and grilled chicken on the patio in August, a glass of serious rose...summer bliss!

(NOTE: Austrian Schilcher, not in the U.S., is on the horizon: a dry and vibrant rosé miracle!)

SAMPLE RECIPE: Chicken Tandoori (see page 14)
#7: Young, bouncy, juicy reds (other wines of the world in the sappy Beaujolais mode)

I am an out-and-out Beaujolais lover. So they're not tannic and alcoholic...so what? They are graciously fruity, comforting, the perfect wine for garlic sausages and other mid-France treats, each bottle containing a virtual party within. Aromas of strawberries and cherries run rampant. We have a decent supply in the U.S. of Beaujolais of this ilk...but what our importers always ignore is Beaujolais-like wines from other wine regions! Almost every region has 'em, they are wildly popular on home turf...but we ignore 'em. And they are so magnificent with all kinds of food. If Riesling is the great white-wine matcher of the world, this kind of easy-to-love red is the great red-wine matcher.

(NOTE: Amazing carbonic maceration Grenache from the Languedoc is my next import, the ultimate bistro wine)

SAMPLE RECIPE: Chorizo Tapa (see page 15)

#8: Round, gentle, complex, affordable aged reds

And now we come to what is perhaps my favorite category of all. I think most seasoned wine lovers would agree that the most thrilling wine experiences in the world, with or without food, are provided by aged red wines...which, after a good slumber in the bottle, pick up the astonishing aromas of forest floor, mushroom, truffle, unmentionable body parts (laboratory scientists have found a pheromone ringer in aged red Burgundy!) I'd probably trust only Stanley Kubrick to film a taste of a wine like this, taking the viewer on a wild ride through the universe. But all you have to do is buy a bottle. Aha! Not so easy! Great aged red Burgundy will cost you at least $500 a bottle. In this country, great aged red anything will cost you buckets of semoleans. The other great reds of the world, little known and resting in crypts everywhere? Not an American thing. And that's why I plan to devote more effort to this category than any other: I do not want my fellow Americans to be deprived of these life-peak wine experiences! A few years ago I brought in a ten-year-old Tempranillo from southern Spain that tasted like twenty-year-old Rioja Reserva--at $20 a bottle! Coming up: a 1999 Kotsifali (local grape variety) from Crete that tastes like aged Amarone, at an amazing price! And then there's the food that loves this kind of wine! Years ago I stopped drinking bigboldbrash Cabernets with my rare steak, prime rib, rack of lamb...the wine was getting in the way! But when you drink aged, gentle, complex, gamy red with your rare/medium-rare meat...the planets line up!!! All is smooth, beyond your wildest dreams.

(NOTE: Currently awaiting my 1999 Kotsifali from Crete, which tastes like old Amarone...and costs like young Valpolicella!)

SAMPLE RECIPE: Perfect Prime Rib For The Holiday (see page 16)
#9: **Elegant mainstream reds...that's mainstream but ELEGANT!**

Now I must confess...aged, complex, harmonious...category #8, the prior one, is my red-wine mantra, and I love these red wines most dearly of all. However...I'm not always unaffected by bigger, richer reds...as long as they pass the elegance test! I recently blind-tasted a hundred Cabernets in Napa Valley, and had little love for most of them. But one of them shouted "elegance" at me, and I would include it in my portfolio in a second (if I could). So that's another part of my mission: scour the globe for bigger, more virile reds...that will go with your food!

(NOTE: Incredibly elegant red Bordeaux on the way from offbeat areas!)

**SAMPLE RECIPE:** Adana Kebab on Pide with Sumac Onions (Spicy Turkish Ground Lamb Kebab with Sour Onions) (see page 17)

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#10: **Complex, luscious, affordable dessert wines and fortified wines**

Probably because American wine drinkers are often embarrassed to admit that they like sweet wines (we talk "dry," everyone says)...importers don't gamble much on the dessert wines of the world. And, in a usual pattern, what does come is usually dominated by “big” names, “big” regions like Sauternes. Truth be told, most wine experts agree that a great sweet wine is one of the greatest wines in the world. “Great” trumps “sweet,” every time! When I'm on the road, I taste everything,... and I have found some amazing dessert wines that the U.S. has never seen. I usually like to drink dessert wine just before dessert comes, so I can savor the luxury and concentration. But then sweet wines are the only possible wines to go with dessert...and if you find the right combination (like Tarte Tatin and a luscious Coteaux du Layon)...you're in heaven! One more typical flaw here: lots of our dessert wine selections in America are young dessert wines, that haven’t benefited from age. My eye is out for age in these wines...particularly in categories like aged Tawny Port, which is magnificent. This kind of wine goes way beyond dessert.... you will not find a better partner for cheese or nuts anywhere in the world.

(NOTE: Up next: de-classified Vendange Tardive from Alsace...that tastes like great and opulent Vendange Tardive, at half the price!)

**SAMPLE RECIPE:** Apple Fritters (see page 18)
Well, those are the first shots fired over the bow in my revolution! But every good revolutionary has a sense of history. How did we get to the place where we need a revolution?

If you feel like more manifesto in your life, here are some wine-in-America observations:

1) Most wine-shop wines are too heavy, too alcoholic, too oaky (and, if red, too tannic). The industry decided some years ago that effectively breaking wine into two “flavors”—Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, just like vanilla and chocolate!—will make it much easier for the American consumer to “get” wine. Therefore, Chardonnay and Cabernet dominate many wine conversations. And they are among the most difficult wines to match with food!

2) There’s another wine-shop problem, particularly with reds. Most reds are delicious in extreme youth, when they have their innocent fruit about them. Red wines lose that fruit over time...and, if they’re really good wines...slowly mature into something rounded, complex and magnificent, maybe 10-20 years later. The typical wine shop carries red wines that are, say, 3-5 years old. You get neither the boisterousness of young fruit, nor the majesty of accumulated age. You get red wine that I say is “in the dead zone.”

3) If you do find a magnificent aged red at a wine shop, it is almost certain to be one of the rock-star classic reds, usually kept under lock and key at the back of the shop. Sure...go buy a bottle of 1983 Chateau Margaux...spend a thousand bucks. Repeat for tomorrow’s dinner, because this is the best kind of wine with food! I don’t think so. Almost no one can do that. HOWEVER...there are red wines in cellars all over Europe that are 10-20-30 years old, and DON’T cost an arm and a leg! American importers don’t touch them, because they think American consumers don’t want them. OMG!!! The treasures they’re missing!!!

4) Another side of the problem concerns tingly-crisp white wines, the best wines for so many foods. It is almost impossible to find ‘em at our wine shops, mostly because they ain’t there (they’re crowded out by too many Chardonnays, and Sauvignon Blancs, and Pinot Grigios!) However, even if you know what you’re looking for (like a particular appellation, or grape variety)...often you have to taste through multiple bottles until you find one that’s crisp-tingly (and you usually won’t find it at all). We have made such a big deal out of big-scaled, fat-textured white wines, that the kind of buoyant, refreshing whites they drink every day all over Europe have become an endangered species here.

5) It boils down, essentially, to what I call the Wine Wars. You have, on the one hand, wine-drinkers in America who worship the European aesthetic: balanced, refined, elegant (but super-flavorful) wines that go so well with food. Then you have other wine-drinkers in America who grew up with lots of excess (one of them in California said to me recently “Dave, I know a wine is good when it hurts!”) I think of the new wine-drinkers, just coming to wine, who optimistically start off their wine lives by tasting a 97-point wine from the Wine Spectator ratings, assuming “this must be the good stuff.” They open the bottle...and can’t drink it! Because it hurts! We lose another potential wine drinker to Bud Lite!
My grand objective is to spread the gospel of the harmonious wine, the elegant wine, the one that is oh-so-easy to drink with food. Every day. These kinds of wines can be made everywhere: France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, the U.S., Argentina, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, and many other places. It all depends on the winemaker’s aesthetic, and what market he’s going for. But I decided, ultimately, that I cannot spread this gospel in America with the wines that are already here. I’ve tried for years. There are just too few of them, and they’re too hard to find.

So…I became an importer! I’m scouring the world for wines that are MY kind of wines…and finding there’s many of them, all over the world, available for export! It’s just that American importers rarely take them!

Every one of my wines will say “A David Rosengarten Wine for Food” on the label…and I mean it! You will find your life at the dinner table so much happier when you rely on my selections!

This is My Revolution!!! Welcome to it!!!

For more recipes, videos, and food-and-wine journalism, sign-up for my FREE weekly emails at www.dRosengarten.com

To buy wine and food products, visit www.dRosengarten.com/shop
SMOKED SALMON BUNDLES WITH HAMACHI CRUDO, AND RUMMY GINGER-LEMONGRASS MAYONNAISE

You'll need to go to a Japanese grocery to put this one together...but wow is this dish crazy delicious with Champagne! It's actually very easy to make...the trick is getting top-quality ingredients! Make sure to find a super-elegant smoked salmon, such as a good Scottish one.

Serves 6

2/3 lb. raw yellowtail
6 raw oysters, shucked
dashi powder (see NOTE)
furikake (see NOTE)
wasabi paste
soy sauce
sesame oil
4 stalks lemongrass
2 teaspoons pickled ginger (gari)
3 eggs
1/2 cup hazelnut oil
1/2 cup grape seed oil (or other neutral vegetable oil)
6 very thin, wide slices of fine smoked salmon
1/3 cup finely minced chive

1. Prepare the filling. Chop together the yellowtail and oysters into a coarse tartare. The flavoring ratios are up to you, but remain subtle: a sprinkle of dashi powder, a small shower of furikake, a smear of wasabi, tiny drizzles of soy sauce and sesame oil. The tastes should enliven the fish but not overwhelm it. Keep cold.

2. Cut away most of each lemongrass stalk, leaving only the thin, tender, chewable central portion. Chop this portion finely (this will yield just a teaspoon or so of useable lemongrass). Place this teaspoon in blender jar or Vita-Prep. Add the pickled ginger.

3. Prepare the mayonnaise. Add one whole egg to the blender jar, along with the yolks of the other two (save the two whites for another use). Turn motor on, and run at medium-high speed until the lemongrass and ginger are pulverized. Begin adding the two oils in a thin stream, until all is added—and the mayo in the jar is thickened and yellow. The consistency should be that of heavy cream. Season to taste.

4. Lay out on the kitchen counter all six slices of smoked salmon. Divide the reserved hamachi mixture among the slices, placing the tartare right in the center of each slice. Fold the bundles so that the tartare is completely enclosed; they should look like smoked salmon packages.

5. Place each bundle at the center of a wide-shallow bowl (like a pasta bowl). Pour the mayo all around the bundles, and top bundles with chopped chive. Serve immediately.

(NOTE: Dashi powder is the world’s best powdered “bouillon,” which yields cups of hot broth that really taste like Japanese soup stock. But the powder, as in this case, can also be used as a seasoning. Furikake is shredded nori, available in plastic containers, usually flavored with other Japanese ingredients (sesame seeds, bits of dried fish, etc.). It’s great as a topping for Japanese dishes, but also works perfectly as a seasoning in this tartare.

PERFECT WINE CATEGORY: Complex Toasty-Yeasty Champagne
WHOLE COLD CRABS, NORTHEASTERN-STYLE

Oh, I've done my share of hot crabs in Baltimore and Louisiana...hot spice, hot temperature. I love 'em! But I may love even better the way my Dad used to treat whole, living blue crabs. Definitely the New York, even the Northeast way. He'd not season them with anything, boil 'em up (in a carefully controlled way), chill 'em, then serve them later on. How much later? At least as late as the next day...but the secret was, the cold crabs were even better after 2 or 3 days! Everything inside the crab gels...the tomalley, the roe, the crabby flavors. Amazing with dry Riesling.

Appetizer for 6

24 kickin'-live blue crabs (preferably large, females, from Maryland)
salt

1. Bring a very large cauldron of water to the boil. Salt rather heavily (you should be able to taste the salt in the water).
2. Add the live crabs to the water. Cover immediately. Let boil for 1 minute.
3. Remove lid. Reduce heat so that the water is just simmering. Cook crabs for 12 minutes more (a little less time for smaller crabs).
4. Remove crabs from hot water, place on a platter, and hold overnight (or longer) in refrigerator. Serve cold within the next few days.

PERFECT WINE CATEGORY: Crisp, clean, non-fruity sparkling wine

RAW OYSTERS WITH JAMAICAN LIME CHILE EXTRACTION

I'm an oysters-with-nothing kind of guy: no cocktail sauce, no mignonette, no lemon even. I like the acid of a good Muscadet, or similar wine, to be my sauce! However, I must admit that I've become inordinately fond of our "house" green hot sauce with oysters--the Henry Family Farm Jamaican Lime Chile Varietal Extraction (just click on my web site to find it). Its natural citrusy kick is great with oysters, and its green flavor seems to provoke the oyster flavor. And...it goes supremely well with Category #3 wines, as well! Shuck, sprinkle, slurp and drink!

Appetizer for 6

3 dozen very fresh oysters

1. Place an oyster crankly-side-down on the kitchen counter. Hold it down with your left hand, which is either gloved or wrapped in a towel. Place the small crevice where the top shell meets the bottom shell to the right. Insert the point of an oyster knife into that crevice, and rock the knife, back and forth, until the top shell "pops." Proceed by cutting under the top shell all the way around the oyster until you can remove the shell, and have an oyster on the half shell.
2. Repeat 35 times, keeping the opened oysters chilled on a bed of cracked ice. Sprinkle each oyster with 2-3 drops of Henry Family Farm Jamaican Lime Chile Varietal Extraction before serving (available at www.dRosengarten.com/shop).

(NOTE: Without doubt, your oysters will STILL be terrific if you skip the chile extraction and serve them directly with a Category #3 wine!)

PERFECT WINE CATEGORY: Dry, sleek, racy whites
THAI YELLOW SHRIMP CURRY

Yellow curry paste in Thailand is often used in fish or chicken dishes. It is a medium hot paste, which gets its color from turmeric, and a good deal of its flavor from curry powder—which imbues it with a relationship to the “curry” tastes of India. You could think of it as a Thai-Indian “fusion” paste—and the following recipe reflects the way it might be used in another “fusion” environment, an upscale Thai restaurant in the U.S. Or in your kitchen! This dish is very fresh-tasting and, though it’s not unusual to use vegetables in a yellow curry in Thailand, you’re not likely to see asparagus. But the spears (which LOVE Riesling) work beautifully in this dish—which, despite the vegetable transplant, is brimming with authentic Thai flavor.

Makes 4 main-course servings

4 cups fish stock, preferably homemade
1 pound large shrimp (about 25 to the lb.), peeled and deveined, with shells reserved
6 tablespoons (about 4 ounces) Thai yellow curry paste (krung kaeng kari, see NOTE)
4 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro
grated zest of 1 lime
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 large yellow onion, peeled and thinly sliced
2 tablespoons palm sugar (crushed if solid), or light brown sugar
3 tablespoons tamarind concentrate diluted with a bit of hot water
2 tablespoons Thai fish sauce (nam pla)
1 red bell pepper, washed, cored, seeded and sliced about 3/8” thick
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons Thai coconut milk
1 small bunch asparagus (about 1/2 pound) tough stalks trimmed, sliced on the bias 1/4 “ thick

1. Bring the fish stock and the reserved shrimp shells to a boil in a medium saucepan. Reduce to a brisk simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes. Remove the stock from the heat and allow it to cool for about 10 minutes. Pass the mixture through a fine mesh sieve or cheesecloth, into a bowl, pressing hard on the solids to extract their flavor. Set aside.

2. Meanwhile, combine the shrimp with 2 tablespoons of the curry paste, 2 tablespoons of the cilantro, the lime zest and a few grindings of black pepper. Toss thoroughly, cover with plastic wrap and set aside at room temperature.

3. Once the stock has been strained, heat the oil in a stockpot or large wok over a medium flame and add the onion, stirring occasionally, until it’s softened, about 4 minutes. Add the remaining 4 tablespoons of curry paste and cook, stirring regularly, for 3 minutes. Regulate the heat so the mixture doesn’t burn. Add the palm sugar, tamarind paste, fish sauce and the reserved stock and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce to a brisk simmer over medium heat and cook for 20 minutes to combine and concentrate the flavors. If you’ve used good quality fish stock, the mixture should at this point be thicker than water, but not yet as thick as a sauce. If it still seems a bit watery, continue to simmer the mixture a little longer. It will thicken a bit further as the recipe proceeds. Stir in the bell peppers and cook until softened, about 10 minutes. Stir in the coconut milk, asparagus and the reserved shrimp and cook, stirring regularly, until the shrimp are just cooked through, but still a bit opaque at the center, about 3 minutes more. Serve immediately, garnished with the remaining 2 tablespoons of chopped cilantro.

NOTE: One of the things that distinguishes Thai curries from Indian curries is the fact that the flavor in Thailand is imparted to stews through the use of pounded pastes, not through the use of unblended
spices. Where do those Thai pastes come from? There is a long and noble tradition in Thailand of pounding various roots, spices and dried fish into a spectrum of curry pastes—each with its traditional color, flavors, and uses.

As you might imagine, there is no tradition in the U.S. of doing the same. In fact, the process is a little too long for most of our busy lives. But Americans who like to cook Thai at home have discovered that canned pastes, made in Thailand, are quick and excellent substitutes for pounding your own. And, they relieve the pressure of finding a lot of inaccessible fresh ingredients—like lemon grass, kaffir limes and galangal root—because those flavors are built into the pastes. One brand I particularly like is Maesri, which markets perhaps a dozen different pastes. They come in 4-ounce cans, or re-sealable 14-ounce plastic containers. The different curries are very distinct from each other, and the flavors are very vivid. Maesri Curry Pastes—as well as a wealth of other Thai goodies—can be purchased and shipped by logging on to: www.ImportFood.com.

**PERFECT WINE CATEGORY:** Dry Riesling, Chenin Blanc, and a few other light, food-loving, highly versatile white-wine grape varieties, young and old

**SUCCOTASH**

No one is quite sure what, other than corn, is in a classic succotash...or even where the center of succotash classicism is! There is a place called Succotash Point on Narragansett Bay, in Rhode Island, and the Narragansett Indians who lived there did use the word ‘misickquatash,” which meant “boiled whole kernels of corn.” Today, however, succotash is even more popular in the South than it is in New England...and lima beans are likely to be part of the mix. The following superb version is upscaled just a bit, with the inclusion of cream, butter and a few Mediterranean herbs.

Makes 6 side-dish servings

2 cups frozen baby lima beans, thawed
2 cups frozen super sweet corn niblets, thawed, or 2 cups fresh uncooked corn niblets
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
1 teaspoon sugar
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 cup whipping cream
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon each—chopped parsley and chives for garnish

1. Bring a large saucepan of salted water to boil. Add limas and simmer until almost tender, about 5 minutes. Drain immediately and refresh under cold water. Put about 1/4 of the limas in a small bowl and mash with a fork.

2. Bring another saucepan of water to boil. Add corn, boil 1 minute. Drain immediately and refresh under cold water. Set aside.

3. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, melt 1 tablespoon of the butter over medium heat. Add thyme, sugar and cayenne. Cook 1 minute, then pour in cream. Turn up heat, bring to a boil, and boil until cream is reduced by half.

4. Add mashed limas, whole limas, corn and remaining tablespoon of butter and bring to a boil, stirring until vegetables are coated in cream. Add lemon juice, season with salt and pepper, and garnish with parsley and chives. Serve immediately.

**PERFECT WINE CATEGORY:** Complex aged whites with tolerable wood (excellent cream sauce wines)
CHICKEN TANDOORI

This simple home version of the great northern Indian dish has correct flavors...and is great with a well-chilled rosé!

Makes 4 main-course servings

8 large boneless chicken thighs
1 cup plain yogurt
5 medium garlic cloves, peeled
1/4 cup coarsely chopped ginger root
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon garam masala
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/4 teaspoon ground fenugreek
1/8 teaspoon ground clove
red food color (optional, see NOTE)
8 thick slices of sweet onion for garnish
2 lemons, quartered, for garnish

1. Score the thighs across the skin, cutting no more than 1/4” deep. Salt the chicken lightly and reserve.

2. Place the yogurt and the next ten ingredients in the work bowl of a food processor. Run machine until mixture is smooth. Place yogurt mixture in a large bowl. If you wish to add food color, do it now (see NOTE.) Add the chicken thighs, stirring well to coat them evenly. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours.

3. When ready to cook, prepare a hot outdoor fire, or turn on your indoor broiler.

4. Remove chicken thighs from marinade and dry well. Place the thighs either over the hot fire, or under the hot broiler. Cook until just done: brown and sizzled on the outside, just past pink on the inside. While the chicken is cooking, place the onion slices either over or under the same fire. They should be browned, but still slightly crunchy.

5. Divide the chicken tandoori among 4 dinner plates. Top chickens with sizzling onion slices, and serve lemon wedges on the side.

NOTE: Indian cooks love to turn their chicken tandoori red or orange. It doesn’t affect the flavor, but it does have a dramatic visual impact. If you wish to go this route, simply add enough red or orange food color to the yogurt marinade to turn it a deep, vivid color. Then add the chicken. If you have access to an Indian grocery, you might want to buy the red or orange powder they sell there for this purpose; about 1 teaspoon of red or orange powdered food color turns a cup of yogurt a gorgeous restaurant-tandoori red.

PERFECT WINE CATEGORY: Meaningful roses, light on their feet but...bursting with fruit, or smoldering with almost-red-wine interest.
CHORIZO TAPA

One of the great tapas bar items in Spain is simplicity itself: sautéed slices of the great, cured, paprika-laden Spanish pork sausage called chorizo. It has increasingly caught on at Spanish restaurants in the U.S.—especially now that the quality of chorizo available in the U.S. (made both domestically and in Spain) has risen dramatically. Unfortunately, there’s a lot of inferior chorizo out there—so if you can’t find a good one, you should refrain from making this dish (see Chorizo Note.) If you do get your hands on the right stuff, this recipe makes a wonderful party dish, or dinner-party first course. If you’re passing the cooked slices around, you could put them on toothpicks, or on small skewers with pieces of crusty bread attached. If you’re going the sit-down route, a nice presentation involves the careful arrangement of slices on small plates, garnished with a julienne of red pepper. Up or down...simple young party red from Spain, France, Italy is a revelation with this dish!

Serves 6 as a tapa

1 lb. good-quality cured chorizo
1/2 cup roasted red pepper, or roasted red pepper in a jar, julienned (optional)

1. Cut the chorizo into 48 longish, diagonal slices. Lay the sausage from left to right, then angle your knife at about 45 degrees from the tip of the sausage before you begin slicing. Each slice should be about 1/4” thick.

2. Place a large cast-iron pan over medium heat. If you have more pans, you can heat them all at once to accommodate the chorizo slices all at once; alternatively, you can cook the chorizo in batches. Place the chorizo slices in the pan (or pans) in a single layer. Cook until the slices are browned on the outside, heated through on the inside (about 2 minutes per side.) Remove and serve. If you’re using the roasted red pepper, arrange 6 slices of cooked chorizo in a circle on each of 8 appetizer plates, one end of each piece reaching the center of the plate. Top each circle with a tablespoon of room temperature red-pepper julienne at the center, where the ends of each piece meet.

(NOTE ON CHORIZO: Chorizo is a confusing subject, because it comes in such a variety of forms. Spanish, or Spanish-style, chorizo, can be anywhere from very lightly cured, and very fresh, to strongly cured and very aged. It can be loaded with paprika and spices, or mildly seasoned, tasting mostly of pork. It can be fiery hot, or not hot at all. It can be long and thin, or short and thick, or any other permutation of dimensions (most of the Spanish chorizos in our market are about 4” long and 7/8” in diameter.) To make matters much more confusing, there’s the whole world of Mexican chorizo. On the west coast of the U.S., buying chorizo often means buying fresh ground (not cured), strongly seasoned pork—sometimes not even in the casing. There are also plenty of Mexican chorizos in casings, but they usually retain that family character of fresh meat, and a good blast of Mexican spicing.

It is important to know if your chorizo is a cured, Spanish-style one or a fresh, Mexican-style one for a good reason above all: the fresh ones, made from raw pork, MUST be cooked. The cured ones can be sliced and eaten as they are, or they can be cooked.

My choice for the Chorizo Tapa on this page is Spanish, or Spanish-style chorizo, cured but lightly aged. When you squeeze it, it gives; imagine the feel of squeezing a hard-boiled egg, and you’ve got the idea.)

PERFECT WINE CATEGORY: Young, bouncy, juicy reds (other wines of the world in the sappy Beaujolais mode)
PERFECT PRIME RIB FOR THE HOLIDAY

There are two principles at play here: 1) the larger the prime rib, the more perfectly it cooks at low temperature; and 2) if you like it rare, as I do, or medium-rare...skip the brash, young tannic teds and find a red that's smoothed out with some age!

Serves 6 diners (though only 5 will get bones!)

5-rib prime rib roast, bone-in
salt and pepper

1. Bring prime rib to cool room temperature (about 1 1/2 hours out of the refrigerator). Make sure you know the weight of the roast.
2. Pre-heat oven to 275 degrees.
3. Season roast extremely well with salt and pepper. Place in roasting pan, fatty side up, and place in oven. Estimate the cooking time: for rare meat (which I prefer), the roast should take about 20 minutes per lb.
4. When you're within half an hour of your estimated finish time, remove the roast from the oven, and insert a quick-read thermometer. If you want rare meat, stop cooking the roast at 115 degrees; after it sits for a few minutes out of the oven, the temperature will rise to about 120. If you want medium-rare meat, stop cooking the roast at 120 degrees; after it sits for a few minutes out of the oven, the temperature will rise to about 125. If you have not reached the desired temperature, return roast to the oven, and keep checking every few minutes.
5. When the roast reaches the desired temperature in the oven, remove it, place it on a cutting board, uncovered, and let it rest for 15 minutes.
6. When ready to serve, cut the meat away from the bone in one enormous chunk. Then, cut the “filet” of meat into thick slices and serve immediately. Cut through the 5 bones, and distribute them to 5 lucky diners.

NOTE: If you wish to serve an “au jus” gravy with the meat, spill all but a few tablespoons of fat out of the pan. Add about 2 cups of light beef stock, or veal stock, or water to the pan, and place pan over high heat on the cooktop. Reduce liquid by half. Season with salt and pepper, then pour a few tablespoons of gravy over and around each slice of prime rib.

PERFECT WINE CATEGORY: Round, gentle, complex, affordable aged reds
ADANA KEBAB ON PIDE WITH SUMAC ONIONS (SPICY TURKISH GROUND LAMB KEBAB WITH SOUR ONIONS)

There is no question about the origins of this terrific dish: Adana, in the south of Turkey, makes a specialty of spiced minced meat shaped into rectangular blocks on long, sword-like skewers. Happily, the dish is now starting to turn up in Turkish kebab houses across the U.S. We normally do it a little differently here, since the Turkish hot pepper called kirmizi biber is not normally available; paprika or chili powder are used instead. Of course, if you do have access to a Turkish grocery, by all means buy kirmizi biber... AND the wide, sword-like Adana skewers on which you shape the meat. I have described the technique in the recipe below. In reality, however... if you just shape these guys into patties and grill 'em...they're still delicious! And even more so with Category #9 wine!

Makes 4 sandwiches

1 lb. ground lamb, not lean
1 teaspoon hot paprika or hot chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon dried mint, crumbled
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 egg white
4 pide

1. Place the ground meat in a mixing bowl, and work the paprika, cumin, mint, oregano, salt and pepper into it with your hands. Add the egg white, and pummel the mixture until it's like a paste. Please note: The meat will be very wet just after the egg white addition, but after five minutes or so of pummeling it becomes paste-like.

2. If you wish to do it the Adana way, it is important to use 2 sword-like skewers with blades that are at least 3/4” wide. Divide the meat in half. Shape each half onto a skewer, creating a rectangular block on each that is about 6 inches long. The skewer blade should be right in the center of the rectangular block. Square the meat with your hands. Refrigerate the two skewers with their rectangular blocks for 2 hours. Or shape into 4 patties and chill.

3. When ready to cook, prepare a hot fire. Brush the grill, and the kebabs or patties, with olive oil. Cook quickly, about 2 minutes per side. The rectangular blocks or the patties should be crusty on the outside, medium-rare and juicy within. Remove from fire.

4. If working with skewered kebabs: cut the kebabs off the skewers, dividing each kebab in half (you’ll have a total of 4 halves.) Place the kebabs or the 4 patties on 4 pide, and add sumac onions. You may also add yogurt and flat-leaf parsley.

SUMAC ONIONS

I love using ground sumac either in my Middle Eastern dishes, or as a sprinkle on top. The dark-garnet powder, made from the sumac berry, looks great, and it adds a delicious, sour, lemony tang. Sumac berries are red, and can be purchased whole (in which case you’d grind them yourself), or you can buy ground sumac. Sumac is now widely available in Middle Eastern groceries, and in some fancy groceries. A good and reliable source is Dean & DeLuca, at 800 221-7714. If you can’t find it, toss the onions with a little paprika, cayenne, and lemon juice.

2 medium-large sweet onions, peeled
1 1/2 teaspoons ground sumac

1. Slice the onions as thinly as possible. Toss with the sumac.

PERFECT WINE CATEGORY: Elegant mainstream reds... that’s mainstream but ELEGANT!
APPLE FRITTERS

There are two ways of making fritters, those irresistible deep-fried clouds of flavor popular in the Midwest and throughout the country: you can either dip whole pieces of food in batter so that the food is coated, or you can cut the food into small bits and incorporate them into the batter. And there’s one more choice: you can either make savory fritters (like clam fritters), or sweet fritters (like fruit fritters.) This recipe takes the latter road in both decisions: they are apple fritters, with small chunks of apple suspended in the batter, dusted with powdered sugar just before serving. Lovely with yellow-gold, lightly sweet late-harvest wines.

Makes about 20 golf-ball-sized fritters

2 apples (preferably Golden Delicious), peeled, cored and coarsely chopped
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
4 tablespoons apple sauce
3 tablespoons apple juice
1 cup, milk
1 egg, beaten
4 tablespoons butter, melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 cups cake flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
3 1/2 cups vegetable oil for frying or more, depending on your saucepan
powdered sugar for dusting

1. In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine the chopped apples, sugar, and cinnamon. Cover the mixture with plastic wrap and refrigerate it for 1 hour.

2. Remove the bowl of chopped apples from the refrigerator. Add the apple sauce, apple juice, milk, beaten egg, melted butter and vanilla extract. Stir the mixture to combine the ingredients thoroughly.

3. In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, salt, and nutmeg. Using a fork, stir the mixture to combine the ingredients thoroughly.

4. Using a fork again, slowly combine the dry ingredients into the bowl with the wet ingredients; stir them together just until they are combined into a batter. Do not over-mix the batter.

5. In a saucepan that has sides at least 5” high, pour in the oil; the oil must be at least 3” deep in the pan. Heat the oil to 350 degrees. Using a spoon or a tablespoon measure, drop pieces of batter that are a little smaller than golf balls into the oil. Fry the fritters for about 5 minutes, or until they are golden brown and completely cooked throughout; to achieve even browning on the outside of each fritter, turn it frequently while it’s in the oil using a slotted spoon. Using a slotted spoon again, remove the fritters from the oil and place them on paper towels to soak up any excess oil. Sprinkle them with powdered sugar and serve hot.

PERFECT WINE CATEGORY: Complex, luscious, affordable dessert wines and fortified wines