

LIFE BY THE GLASS with Chef John Ash



LEMON SAUCE WITH SPAGHETTINI

Serves 4

This simple pasta with its forward lemon flavors is a perfect match for the bright 2020 Russian River Ranches 2020 Chardonnay.

12 ounces spaghetti (thin spaghetti)
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot or green onion
1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
2 tablespoons finely grated lemon zest
3 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon drained capers
Salt and freshly ground pepper
3 tablespoons each chopped fresh basil and parsley
3/4 cup or more freshly grated Pecorino, Parmesan or Asiago

Bring at least 4 quarts of lightly salted water to a boil in a large pot. Stir in spaghetti and cook until al dente. Drain reserving a cup of the pasta cooking water.

While pasta is cooking, melt butter and oil over moderate heat in a large sauté pan. Add shallot and garlic and sauté until softened but not brown. Stir in lemon zest, juice and capers if using and season lightly with salt and pepper. Stir in hot spaghetti.

Add herbs and 3/4 cup cheese and toss quickly adding enough of the reserved pasta water to keep everything moist. Serve in warm bowls with additional cheese on top if desired. Serve immediately.



WELCH RABBIT (RAREBIT)

Serves 4

The origins of this famous dish are a little murky. There are no definitive explanations of how “rabbit” became “rarebit”. It is however one of the original English “comfort” foods. It periodically reappears on menus especially in cold weather months. Lovely for brunch or supper on a brisk fall day. It would go very well with a glass of the 2019 Cutrer Chardonnay. A good Cheddar is a must here. One of my favorites is Cougar Gold produced by Washington State University which comes in a can! Go to www.creamery.wsu.edu for ordering information.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt or to taste
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 cup dark beer
3/4 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup chicken or vegetable stock
12 ounces shredded Cheddar, about 3 cups (see note above)
Drops of hot sauce to taste
4 slices toasted rye or pumpernickel bread
12 slices crisp smoked bacon, optional

In a medium saucepan over low heat, melt the butter and whisk in the flour. Cook, whisking constantly for 2 to 3 minutes, being careful not to brown the flour. Whisk in mustard, Worcestershire sauce, salt, and pepper. Add beer and whisk in. Pour in cream and stock and whisk until smooth. Gradually add cheese, stirring constantly, until cheese melts and sauce is smooth; this will take 3 to 4 minutes. Whisk in a couple of drops of hot sauce to your taste. Pour over toast topped with bacon, if using, and serve immediately.



NEW YORK STEAK WITH MISO BUTTER

Serves 4

Here we are creating a compound butter which is a classic French accompaniment to meats and vegetables. Miso paste makes a great butter. It brings that “umami” flavor to the meat. You’ve no doubt heard chefs talking about umami. It roughly translates to “deliciousness”. This would go great with the equally delicious 2019 Russian River Pinot Noir.

1/2 cup (1 stick) softened unsalted butter
2 tablespoons white or yellow miso paste
1 tablespoon minced chives
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1/2 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper plus more for seasoning steak
4 New York steaks, each 6 – 8 ounces at room temperature
Olive oil
Kosher salt
Garnish: Grilled scallions and cultivated wild mushrooms

In a small bowl beat the butter, miso, chives, garlic and black pepper together. Spoon mixture onto a square of plastic wrap, fold wrap over and form into a sausage shape, twisting the ends to about 1-1/2 inches thick. Refrigerate till firm. Can be made several days ahead and stored refrigerated or frozen.

Pat steak dry, brush with oil and season liberally with salt and pepper. With a grill or grill pan on moderately high heat, grill the steaks until medium rare (135 degrees or so), about 5 minutes. Good time to pull out your instant read meat thermometer.

Top each steak with a tablespoon of the miso butter and serve with grilled scallions and mushrooms of your choice.



DUCK BREAST WITH DRIED CHERRY SAUCE

Serves 4

Duck breast should be considered as tender as red meat and cooked similarly. The perfect finished temperature is 135 degrees. Time to use your instant read thermometer! You can find duck breast at most upscale markets. Two favorites are Mary's, www.marysducks.com and Liberty Ducks www.libertyducks.com for details. You can buy directly from both. Duck breast and Pinot noir are a great match, and I can't think of a better one than the 2018 Founders Reserve Pinot Noir.

4 Pekin duck breast halves
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons finely minced shallots
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, preferably white or golden
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Sundried cherry sauce (recipe follows)

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Trim the breasts of excess fat and score the skin in a crosshatch pattern cutting almost but not thru to the meat. Whisk the olive oil, shallots, and vinegar together and brush the breasts with the olive oil mixture, season well with

salt and pepper and set aside for at least 15 minutes. Scoring of the fat helps it render and helps the heat penetrate the duck breast.

Place the breasts with the scored-fat side down in a cold cast iron or heavy non-stick pan set to medium-low heat. After 8 minutes or so you will notice quite a bit of fat in the pan and the duck breast noticeably smaller and the meat-side starting to cook. At this point you can flip it over and finish it in the oven meat-side down, about 3 minutes. Check the temperature periodically until it reaches your desired doneness. Please don't cook it more than 130 - 135 degrees Fahrenheit (medium rare) or it will be tough and chewy. Remove pan from oven and then remove breast from pan to a cutting board and allow to rest for at least 3 minutes. Cover loosely with foil to keep warm.

To serve: Spoon some of the cherry sauce on warm plates. Slice the duck breasts, arrange on top and serve immediately.

Sun dried cherry sauce

Makes about 1 cup

This is a classic reduction sauce, which depends on having a flavorful stock. Sun dried cherries typically contain some added sugar. Look for tart, unsweetened ones which you can find at Trader Joe's among other stores. You want to make sure sauce doesn't end up being too sweet.

1/4 cup chopped shallots or green onions
1-1/2 cups chopped cremini mushrooms
2 tablespoons olive oil
6 cups rich brown chicken or other meat stock
1-1/2 cups hearty red wine
3/4 cup tart sun-dried cherries
1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest
1/2 cup fresh orange juice
2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme (1 teaspoon dried)
1/2 cup vintage style or Ruby port (or to taste)
2 tablespoons unsalted softened butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Sauté shallots and creminis in oil until very lightly browned. Add stock and wine and reduce by half. Add half the cherries, zest, orange juice, thyme and port and reduce to a light sauce consistency. Strain, pressing down on solids and discard solids. Add remaining cherries to plump in the warm sauce. Off heat and whisk in butter. Correct seasoning with salt and pepper. Keep warm. Can be made up to a week ahead and stored refrigerated. Gently reheat to serve.