

A Cordon Vert Wine Weekend

17th & 18th April 2004



Many people in this country find the issue of choosing wine to complement a meal quite intimidating. For special social occasions or personal celebrations, the choice of wine can be important, but people can easily feel 'spoilt for choice' or uncertain about where to start.

Well, think again! One of our new courses in 2004 will be an 'Introduction to Wine Appreciation' weekend run by Linda Ward. Linda will introduce a variety of wines from Europe and the New World, demonstrating and teaching how to taste and judge wines and how to match them with food. She will also be demonstrating some stunning new Cordon Vert recipes, and serving them with wines to match! Here's a sneak preview at some of the dishes on offer!



■ LEMON ASPARAGUS SERVED WITH CANNELLINI BEAN PUREE AND POLENTA SLICES IN A HERB BUTTER SAUCE

Serves 4

■ HERBY POLENTA

- 1 litre water or light vegetable stock**
- 1 tsp salt**
- 275g polenta**
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley or lemon thyme**
- 1 tbsp olive oil or butter**

Bring the water to the boil in a large saucepan and add the salt. Lower the heat to a gentle simmer and slowly add the polenta grains. Stir regularly so that lumps don't form. Add the herbs and oil or butter, lower the heat and cook gently for around 20-30 minutes. During this time continue to stir very regularly and crush out any lumps that may form.

Once cooked and moving away from the sides of the pan, switch off the heat and spread into a well greased flat baking tin, cool, and then chill for a couple of hours until firm.

Remove from tin when ready to cook. Slice into squares or rectangles and toast under a hot grill or fry in a little butter or oil. Keep hot in a warm oven whilst preparing the rest of the recipe.

■ PUREED CANNELLINI BEANS

- 300g dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight and drained**
- salt and black pepper**
- 2 tbsp good quality olive oil**
- 85g toasted pine nuts**
- juice of 2 lemons (reserve the zest)**

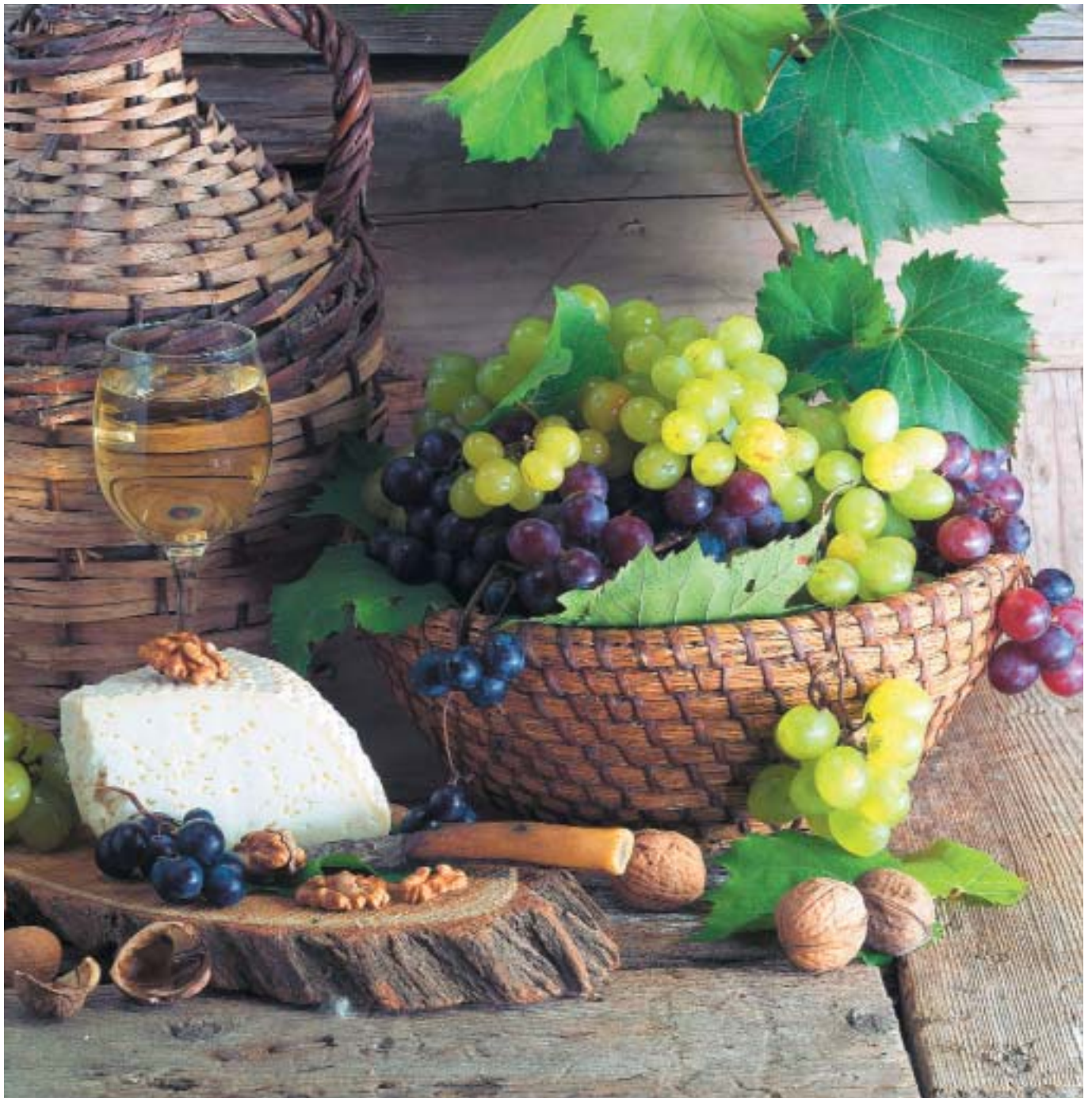
Put the beans into a saucepan, cover with fresh water and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for about 1 hour or until tender, then drain. Cool slightly.

Puree the beans in a food processor, season and add olive oil and lemon juice and pine nuts and continue to puree for a couple minutes. Can be kept warm for a few minutes in an ovenproof dish in a warm oven. Drizzle over some olive oil to keep moist if you put in oven.

■ WILTED ROCKET

- 1 large bunch rocket, washed, drained, trimmed and chopped**
- 2 tbsp light olive oil**
- 3 crushed garlic cloves**

Heat oil gently in pan and add garlic. Cook for a couple of minutes then add in chopped rocket. Cook gently till wilted. This will only take about a minute. Take away from the heat.



■ ASPARAGUS

750g asparagus spears, trimmed Zest of 2 lemons

Plunge the asparagus into a large pan of boiling water for about 2 minutes, until it is just tender. Switch off the heat, and remove the asparagus from the pan. The lemon zest will be used to decorate the assembled dish.

■ HERB BUTTER SAUCE

3 finely chopped shallots 6 tbsp vegetarian white wine 4 tbsp white wine vinegar 225g chilled butter cut into small cubes salt and black pepper 3 tbsp finely chopped lemon thyme chopped parsley to decorate the plate

Put the shallots, wine and vinegar into a pan and slowly bring to the boil. Lower heat and then cook gently until the mixture has reduced to about a third of its original size.

Start to add in the butter cubes a couple at a time, whisking continuously till all the butter is used up and the sauce is quite glossy. Do not let the sauce overheat or bubble as this will cause it to split.

Season with salt and pepper and the herbs. Either pass the sauce through a strainer to remove the shallots or keep them in, according to your preference.

Use the sauce immediately, or if you need to, keep it warm either in a vacuum flask or over a pan of hot water for a few minutes.

OPTIONS

You can add some cooked flageolet beans to the sauce to add texture and colour.

TO ASSEMBLE THE FINAL DISH

Place a few wilted rocket leaves in the centre of a warm plate, place a slice of grilled polenta on top of the rocket, scoop a portion of pureed beans on top of the polenta and top the whole dish with a few spears of asparagus and lemon zest. Drizzle the sauce around the edge of the plate and scatter chopped parsley around.

Serve the dish with new potatoes and a green leaf and green pepper salad.

Enjoy with a large glass of well-chilled vegetarian New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc!

■ CORDON VERT TUTOR PROFILE: LINDA WARD

The Cordon Vert Cookery School has many tales to tell of how its courses have inspired and helped many different types of people to explore cookery ideas, learn new skills, widen their interests, and even try new business ventures. Some people attend courses as a hobby or leisure interest, some come forward with a more formal aim in mind, for example, to qualify as a Cordon Vert diploma holder. All reasons are valid and as important as one another. One person who started attending just out of interest but then went on to develop two highly successful businesses is now one of Cordon Vert's regular tutors, Linda Ward, of Pinto's Restaurant, Lochgilhead, Scotland and Cruachan Bed and Breakfast.

'I have always been interested in food and wine, although I must admit it was coming to the Cordon Vert Cookery School that made it a passion of mine, leading to a complete change in lifestyle and career. One of the most exciting achievements to date has been seeing Pinto's through to The Vegetarian Society's National Awards ceremony as Scotland's only finalist this year, when we were just one year old as a business.'

'As a restaurateur, my primary concern is to ensure that everyone has the most complete and enjoyable dining experience possible, and I have found that the subject of wine choices can be quite daunting. The customer may be faced with a variety of wine labels that don't exactly explain what the contents will taste like, or whether the wine will match the chosen menu. There is much emphasis in the trade on certain styles of wine going with certain types of food dishes, and the subject can be quite a wide one. However, what disappoints me is that when suggestions are made as to what food matches a particular wine, then often a vague statement like 'goes well with vegetarian food'



will be made. It seems that the writer thinks that all vegetarian food must have the same flavour and texture, which is not true at all!

'The aim of this course is to give its audience a broad appreciation of vegetarian wines and how they can be matched with certain types of food dishes. It's a chance to have good food, good wine and good company for a weekend and come away with more great ideas from Cordon Vert.'

■ TOFU AND BEAN CHILLI WITH PECAN WILD RICE

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250g wild rice, rinsed and drained

1 finely chopped green pepper

1 finely chopped onion

2 sticks finely chopped celery

200g lightly toasted pecan halves, roughly chopped

handful chopped parsley

salt and pepper

2 tbsp groundnut oil

¾ litre water or light vegetable stock

Heat the oil in a large pan and fry the onion, celery and green pepper gently for a few minutes.

Stir in the rice and cook for about 2 minutes - stir frequently to coat the rice in the oil so it does not stick.

Add stock or water and bring to boil. Lower heat and simmer for about 45

minutes or until the rice is tender. Add chopped pecan nuts, parsley and season to taste.

■ TOFU AND BEAN CHILLI

250g firm tofu, rinsed, drained and pressed

50ml olive oil

25ml red wine

2cm piece fresh ginger, grated

2 cloves crushed garlic

4 tbsp groundnut oil

1 onion finely chopped

1 tsp chilli powder

½ tsp cumin

1 green chilli, seeded and finely sliced

1 aubergine, degorged and chopped into cubes

1 green pepper, finely chopped

¾ litre vegetable stock

2 tbsp fresh oregano

4 skinned tomatoes, chopped

6 cloves of roasted garlic, mashed to pulp

300g cooked kidney or pinto beans

50g dark organic chocolate

Cube the tofu and place in a bowl with the olive oil, red wine, ginger and crushed garlic. Cover and leave to marinate for at least 2 hours.

Heat the groundnut oil in a large pan. Add the onion, spices and green chilli and cook gently till onion is tender. Add aubergine and chopped green pepper. Then add stock and oregano, tomatoes, roasted garlic pulp and cooked beans, reduce heat and cook for about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, drain the marinated tofu and toast under hot grill for a few minutes.

Add chocolate and grilled tofu to chilli, cook gently for another 10 minutes or so until the chocolate is melted into the sauce and season to taste.

Serve on the pecan wild rice and garnish with chopped fresh coriander, and a 'blob' of sour cream, creme fraiche or vegan yoghurt, with warmed tortillas and a nice glass of vegetarian Californian Zinfandel!