

Crème de la Crop

Roasted Tomatillo and Hungarian Wax Pepper Salsa

1 ½ lbs tomatillos
1 Hungarian Wax pepper, stem and seeds removed
1 pint Cherry Tomatoes, cut in 1/4s
3 garlic Cloves
½ cup fresh cilantro
Kosher salt
3 tbsp honey, sugar or Agave nectar
One lime
Optional: 1 cucumber, peeled if desired and fine dice to add texture to salsa

Remove husks from tomatillos and rinse under hot water to remove stickiness.

Cut tomatillos in half, oil and season with salt and either roast under the broiler for 5-8 minutes or char-grill. Roast or char the pepper and remove black skin.

Dice ½ of the tomatillos. Puree the rest with the wax pepper, garlic and cilantro. Tomatillos are naturally a bit sour. Taste and add a little honey or sugar if needed.

Mix the two and add the cherry tomatoes. Top with freshly grated lime zest & a squeeze of fresh lime juice. Serve with tortilla chips or atop Seared Salmon or Grilled Flank Steak. If serving as a meal, grilled squash slices would be great to accompany.

Simon's Wine Pairing

Wow! What a great dish for hot weather. I love tomatillos and prepare them at home often. Their tart/sweet tanginess really wakes up meat dishes and melts beautifully with spicy chilies.

A natural match to this salsa would be Torrontes, a sweet tart white wine from Argentina. Michel Torino makes a wonderful one called Cuma (around \$13 a bottle at your favorite local independent wine shop).

Torrontes has the perfume of a gewurtztraminer or viognier with the fruity ripeness of a Riesling and the sharp crisp finish of a sauvignon blanc all rolled into one magical wine! The fruitiness of this wine will cool off the chilies and the clean finish will balance the richness of fish or meat tortilla chips.

Got questions? Contact me at simonbarrios@aol.com or @FACEBOOK; Northwest Indiana Winers and Diners.

Peppercorn Seared Salmon over Quinoa with Bartlett Pear topped with Sorrel and Orange Relish, finished with Strawberry Glaze

2 6oz filets of fresh Salmon
(Sockeye is in season now)
1 cup quinoa
3 cups water
2 tbsp salt
1 small onion, diced, sautéed in olive oil and salt and pepper
2 cups finely diced pear or apple, sautéed in olive oil or butter
½ Hungarian Wax peppers (to taste), roasted, seeded and finely chopped
1/2 cup chopped cilantro
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
Splash of sherry vinegar
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Soak quinoa in water for 10 minutes and rinse well. Boil water, add salt then quinoa and cook on medium for 15 minutes until al dente, or somewhat translucent. Strain and reserve quinoa.

In the meantime, slice cucumbers thinly.

Crème de la Crop

Roast Peppers on very hot grill or over gas flame on stove until skin is blistered. Put in bowl covered with plastic wrap to steam just a few minutes, remove skin and seeds and dice finely. Sauté diced pears or apples in oil or butter. Toss all of the ingredients with the olive oil, sherry vinegar and lime juice. Can be made a day or hours ahead and keep cold. Reheat as desired.

Season Salmon with Cracked Peppercorn and Sea Salt. Sear top side (opposite side of skin) in hot oiled cast iron skillet until golden brown, flip to other side and finish in oven just 3-4 minutes until medium-well.

Sorrel and Orange Relish

Orange segments or nectarine slices
1 cup sorrel
½ cup shaved or sliced very thin, cucumber
Top with toasted almonds or pistachios, if desired

Vinaigrette for sorrel and orange relish:

1 shallot, minced
2-3 Tbps sherry vinegar
Zest and juice of fresh one orange
1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp honey

Simple Strawberry Glaze

1 lb fresh strawberries, stems removed and halved
1 small piece of fresh grated ginger, grated
¼ cup white wine
1 tablespoon brown sugar (or more to taste)
Salt and pepper to taste
1 Tsp chipotle juice from the can
Water to cover, if necessary
1 tsp salt

Bring the above to a simmer. Cook on medium 10 minutes. Puree in top blender.

To plate, place quinoa in center of plate, top with Salmon, then top with vinaigrette dressed salad of sorrel tossed with oranges or nectarine slices. Spoon a bit of the sauce around.

Simon's Wine Pairing

BINGO! I have the perfect wines for this dish.....when I saw orange, sorrel, ginger and chipotle I immediately thought sweet to semi sweet or semi dry white wine. I prefer semi dry to semi sweet whites with spicy food and the Snoqualmie Naked Gewurtztraminer would be perfect with this! Semi dry with a rich unctuous frame, finishing dry and crisp...this gewurtztraminer has the classic allspice, lychee and stone fruit flavors you'd expect but with some minerality and acidity perfect for complex foods such as this. You can find it locally for around \$14 but stock up now...we run out every year (it's made in small amounts) and it will be perfect on your Thanksgiving table!

If you like sweet wines you must try the Creekbend Traminette! It's local (Bloomington, In) it's sustainable and it's DELICIOUS! Sweet with rich melon and citrus notes, this wine will please even non-wine drinkers. Find it for around \$16. Traminete and gewurtztraminer are related and both can be made in a sweet to semi dry style. The main difference is that the Gewurtztraminer always has a spicy note to its bouquet.

Enjoy!

