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Celebrating Valentine's Day with French Flair: World Wines Paired with Cheeses From France Offer Tempting Menu

French cheese plate and wine meals growing in popularity

PORTLAND, Maine (February 2, 2009) — Preparing meals at home is “part of a national trend to eat at home and save money,” the Associated Press recently reported. Couples dining at home for Valentine’s Day this year, though, don’t have to pass on enjoying a unique, memorable meal to celebrate the special day — especially when tempting ingredients from France are just around the corner.

The solution? Premium cheeses from France paired perfectly with wines from around the world.

“Few things are as romantic as savoring a piece of France with your sweetheart over a quiet dinner,” notes Max McCalman, widely regarded as an authority on cheeses, and author of *The Cheese Plate*, the definitive book on the art of creating perfect cheese courses, and of *Cheese, a Connoisseur’s Guide to the World’s Best*. “It’s hard to imagine something more authentically French than a quiet, candlelit table, beautiful wines, and French cheeses that perfectly complement the entire experience.”

“Americans are really coming to appreciate the simple but genuine pleasure of sharing French cheese plates with well-matched wines,” according to Natasha Dame, wine director of the multiple-award-winning “The Edge” restaurant, situated at The Inn at Ocean’s Edge in midcoast Maine. “It has really been interesting to follow the trend of the cheese plate actually becoming the meal itself in more cases, rather than being viewed simply as an accompaniment,” she adds.

In the case of the Valentine’s Day cheese plate, the variety of combinations between the premium French cheeses and wine selections is nearly endless, Dame notes.

“For example, the lush, floral fruits of a nice Gewürtztraminer pair beautifully with Comté, while a Pinot Noir from Oregon’s Willamette Valley, with its earthy notes of ripe cherry, is also a perfect fit,” she says.

The buttery flavor of Camembert is well suited for a semi-dry Montlouis



Sparkling Vouvray, such as Domaine Francois Chidaine from France’s Loire Valley, Dame advises. “Champagne,” she says, “is also a natural match; Mountlouis is France’s unsung sparkling to watch for. And a fruity Cru Beaujolais, such as Domaine de la Roche St. Martin from Burgundy, pairs up quite well, too.”

Roquefort fits perfectly alongside whites like Muscat (Dame recommends Terra Rough, Petit Grains from California’s Amador County). “Don’t forget bold reds, too, to enjoy alongside Roquefort,” she adds. “A big, zesty Red Zinfandel is a great choice, such as the one coming out of Ridge Vineyards, Lytton Springs Dry Creek Valley in Sonoma – what a decadent way to finish the meal!”

Further information about The Cheeses of France – including tips on serving, storing, and purchasing – can be found at www.cheesesoffrance.com.

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