

WINE TALK

Pairings for romantic evening

By Fred Tasker

MIAMI HERALD

You romantic devil, you. You're going to make dinner at home for your best girl on Valentine's Day, aren't you? Good for you. Everyone knows the way to a woman's heart is through her stomach. And, of course, her palate. You can do it. Here are some tips:

First impression: As she walks in the door, hand her a glass of bubbly. Let her relax on the sofa while you bustle, whistling, over final dinner preps.

The setting: Candle light. Table for two. A single rose in a vase on the table. Barry White on the sound system.

The menu: Here are some ideas. I'm providing wine matches, but you'll have to Google the recipes. I can't do everything.

Appetizers

- ▶ Caviar with champagne. Only the good stuff. True, two servings of good caviar like Petrossian's will set you back \$80 or more, and a good French Champagne will be at least \$40 — so you might save this for when you plan to pop the question.
- ▶ Rich stone crabs with crisp sauvignon blanc.
- ▶ Smoked salmon with real French Rose Champagne. Pink. With bubbles. Delicate, smoky tenderness with the world's most romantic wine.
- ▶ Raw oysters on the half-shell accompanied by a delicate French Muscadet wine.

Entrées

- ▶ Steamed lobster with butter sauce, with a big California chardonnay.
- ▶ Bacon-wrapped filet mignon with cabernet sauvignon. The classic red-meat, red wine combo.
- ▶ Chicken rollatini, stuffed with prosciutto and provolone and rolled, served with an Italian chianti.
- ▶ Pumpkin ravioli with sage cream sauce with a Hungarian gruner veltliner.
- ▶ Roast duck with pinot noir. Dark. Mysterious. Sensual.

Dessert

- ▶ Chocolate molten lava cake with sweet, decadent ruby port. Two of the sexiest flavors on earth.

- ▶ Chocolate biscotti with a soft, sweet, red, fizzy Brachetto d'Acqui from Italy. Pour it in a wide-mouth bubbly glass and dip the biscotti in it. This is what those glasses are made for.
- ▶ Vanilla bean-flecked ice cream with dark, sweet Sherry made from the ultra-concentrated, extra-viscous Pedro Ximinez grape poured over it. Get the super-expensive ice cream with the highest fat content possible.
- ▶ Bananas foster with sweet Italian Moscato. Turn off the smoke alarm and flame the bananas at the table. That should impress her.

Highly Recommended

- ▶ 2009 Charles Krug Family Reserve Generations Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (81 percent cabernet sauvignon, 10 percent merlot, 9 percent cabernet franc): hint of oak, flavors of black cherries, black coffee and spice, big and rich and smooth; \$50.
- ▶ 2012 Nautilus Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand: crisp and lively, with aroma and flavors of gooseberries and herbs, creamy and smooth; \$14.
- ▶ Nonvintage Barbadillo Pedro Ximinez Sherry, Sanlucar de Barramea, Spain: made of grapes dried on mats in the sun, it is dark and rich, with aromas and flavors of raisins, toffee and candied orange peel; \$15.
- ▶ Nonvintage Moet & Chandon Rose Champagne, Epernay, France (pinot noir, pinot meunier, chardonnay): floral aromas, myriad tiny bubbles, firm structure, crisp, with flavors of tart strawberries, spice and minerals; \$50.

Recommended

- ▶ Nonvintage Piper-Heidsieck Brut Cuvee, Reims, France: fine bubbles, yeasty, smoky, full-bodied, with dark fruit and mineral flavors; \$40.
- ▶ 2011 Karolyi Estate Gruner Veltliner, Tolna, Hungary: crisp and zingy, with aromas and flavors of white grapefruit and minerals; \$11.
- ▶ 2010 Wild Horse "Unbridled" Chardonnay, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley: hint of oak and bread dough, rich, opulent flavors of pineapples and toffee; \$24.
- ▶ 2010 Reata Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast: dark hue, aromas and flavors of black cherries, cinnamon and earth; deep and rich; \$30.
- ▶ 2009 Piccini Chianti Classico DOCG Tuscany (85 percent sangiovese, 15 percent merlot): floral aromas, tart cherry flavors,



medium body, smooth; \$16.

▶▶ 2012 Vietti Moscato d'Asti "Cascinetta Vietti" DOCG, Italy: delicate yellow color, sweet, with balancing crispness, aromas and flavors of apricots and cloves, \$15.

▶▶ Nonvintage Sandeman Ruby Port, Portugal: bright red color, sweet, hearty red berry and cinnamon flavors, full-bodied; \$15.

▶▶ 2009 Banfi "Rosa Regale" Brachetto d'Acqui,; red and soft and sweet and fizzy, with aromas and flavors of strawberries and cherries; \$20.

▶▶ 2010 Sauvion & Fils Muscadet de Sevre et Maine Sur Lie, Loire Valley, France: pale green color, delicate and light and dry, with crisp green apple flavors and a tiny fizz; \$10.