

Spring into salads with these wine pairings

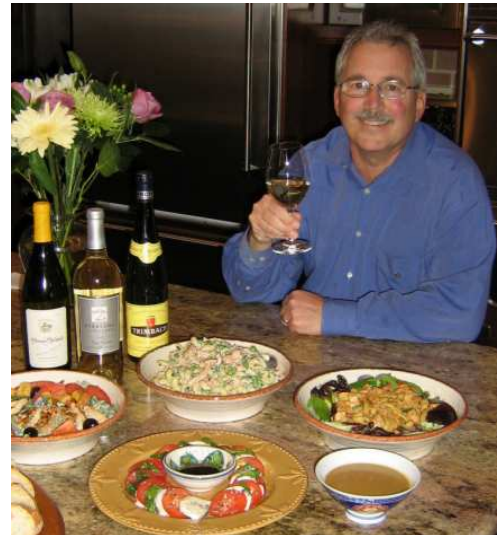
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By Bill Garlough

Springtime signals a time of change. As the outside temperatures warm up, we shift our meals from heartier fare to lighter cuisine and our wine choices follow suit.

Red wine selections move to lighter pinot noir, beaujolais and rosé. White wines are popular in warmer weather, as they offer a cool, lighter and more refreshing beverage choice. Another shift is the role of salads which can move from a starter course to the main entrée.

About dressings

As our tastes become more adventurous, salads now can contain a variety of exotic greens and ingredients, like toasted nuts, unusual cheeses, fresh fruits, lettuces and herbs that create more flavorful experiences. The following are general salad guidelines.



- Creamy style dressings pair well with light to medium-bodied dry white wines, such as pinot grigio, soave classico and chardonnay with good acidity, which help balance the richness of creamy dressings.
 - Traditional, acidic vinaigrettes overpower the acidity level of many wines, creating a less favorable pairing. The acidity of a homemade vinaigrette can be reduced by using a milder vinegar such as an Asian rice wine vinegar or a slightly sweet balsamic vinegar. Also, increasing the amount of oil in the dressing will reduce the acidity.
 - Adding fruit puree (raspberry puree as an example) or fruit juice to a homemade vinaigrette in place of up to half of the vinegar helps soften and balance the flavors. Here are some classic combinations: raspberry, cherry – pinot noir; citrus – sauvignon blanc; apple, pear – riesling.
- If you are using a bottled vinaigrette (not a creamy dressing), you can add a splash of the wine you'll be drinking directly into the vinaigrette, to help connect the flavors.

Food, wine pairings

Here are some of my favorite main course summer salads:

- Cold pasta salad with grilled salmon, chopped sweet onion and fresh green peas mixed with a creamy dill dressing. Rieslings complement the flavors of both salmon and dill and its slightly sweet acidity provides a perfect balance with this dressing.

- Grilled chicken caesar salad pairs well with an acidic style of Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio as they can stand up to the bold flavors of garlic and anchovies.
- Caprese salad, a combination of sliced, fresh mozzarella and tomatoes, is a perfect way to enjoy our homegrown or farm stand-fresh tomatoes. The somewhat bland mozzarella helps offset the high acidity of the tomatoes, allowing for a balanced white, like pinot gris, to pair well. When basil leaves or pesto are added to this salad, a crisp sauvignon blanc is a nice choice, as its herbaceous nature pairs well with basil.
- Asian chicken salad is popular and offers distinctive flavors of rice wine vinegar and sesame oil (add red pepper flakes to turn up the heat). Kabinett riesling's crisp acidity and sweetness balance these Asian flavors and helps counter the spicy characteristics. Also, an Alsatian gewürztraminer is another good choice, with its spicy, sweet and lychee nut notes.

Asian Sesame Dressing

Here's a dressing recipe that is easily made at home. This flavorful dressing created by My Chef Catering can be used on greens, cabbage or as a marinade for chicken or firm fish such as tuna.

4 cloves minced garlic

2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger

½ cup olive oil

¼ cup toasted sesame oil

⅓ cup rice vinegar (not sweet or seasoned)

¼ cup soy sauce (can use low sodium if you prefer)

4 tablespoons honey

¼ cup water

Place all ingredients in a one quart glass jar (or at least 1 pint size). Cover the jar with a tight fitting lid and shake well until all ingredients are mixed. Remove the lid and place the jar in the microwave. Heat for one minute just to ensure the honey is dissolved. Place jar in refrigerator with lid off until completely cool. Place lid tightly on jar and shake well before serving. Store covered in the refrigerator.

Serves 18.

Bill's Picks

Tiefenbrunner Pinot Grigio – Italy: \$14

Chateau Ste. Michele Indian Wells Chardonnay – Washington: \$15

Kessler Kabinett Riesling – Germany: \$16

Sterling Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc – Napa Valley, Calif.: \$14

Trimbach Gewürztraminer – Alsace, France: \$18

Allegrini Soave – Italy: \$14

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