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EAT LIGHT, DRINK WHITE

Wineanswers.com and Leslie Sbrocco Perk Up Spring Plates with White Wine Mates

St. Helena, Calif. – The harmony between light, white wine and spring’s grassy, sassy, fresh flavors is, well, like...two snow peas in a pod, a spring fling, love at first bite. In fact, according to Leslie Sbrocco, wineanswers.com columnist and author of the upcoming book, *The Women’s Guide to Buying, Pairing and Sharing Wine**, spring not only heralds lighter foods and flavors but lighter, refreshing white wines too.

“After a long winter, light, fruity, white wines wake up your palate like a quick dip in a cool lake,” says Sbrocco. “The trick is to experiment with the variety of white wines and not be intimidated by those funny-sounding names like Gewürztraminer or Riesling.”

According to Todd Hess, the wine director for Sam’s Wines & Spirits in Chicago, some white wines still play second fiddle to Chardonnay. “There’s definitely a whole segment of white wines, including Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Gewurztraminer, Riesling and Pinot Grigio, which are always waiting in the wings for their well-deserved popularity,” says Hess. “But as customers learn more and more about wine, they’re willing to experiment – and that’s really exciting to see.”

Sbrocco recommends experimenting with both domestic and imported Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Pinot Grigio/Gris by buying a variety of affordable bottles at the wine shop or grocery store. She describes the flavors of these varieties and provides simple food pairings:

- ✓ **Riesling** – Riesling is one of the most underrated white wine grapes, which deserves to be more widely known for its lively acidity and great food affinity. The wine’s fruity aromas and flavors, such as green apple, peach and apricot, are balanced by a touch of spiciness. Enjoy this wine with a leftover Easter ham sandwich and spicy mustard; a roast pork and pineapple chutney; stir-fried snow peas with spicy shrimp; or a soft-shell crab sandwich topped with roasted red pepper aioli.
- ✓ **Pinot Grigio/Gris** – Few wines are as refreshing, affordable and versatile as Pinot Grigio. This light-bodied white makes delicate seafood sing, but is just at home served with fuller, spicier fare. Pinot Grigio from Italy has tart flavors of lemon/lime; while French and American versions called Pinot Gris (the same grape variety), sport exotic melon and peach notes. Try Pinot Grigio/Gris alongside prosciutto and melon; smoked salmon; hazelnuts whole or chopped and tossed on chicken salad; mushroom and scallop risotto or fettuccini Alfredo with shrimp and peas.
- ✓ **Sauvignon Blanc** – These wines are not only easy on the wallet; they have great chemistry with fresh, seasonal produce bountiful throughout spring. Flavors of lime, green apple, and grassy herbs give this wine a puckery character. Pair Sauvignon Blanc with steamed asparagus and shaved parmesan cheese; a goat cheese and herb salad; chilled fruit soups; fresh fish with a squeeze of lemon and a sprig of dill or alongside fresh fruit salsa studded with green peppers and cilantro.

“The biggest thing for people to remember about wine is if the wine tastes good to you – then it’s a winner,” says Sbrocco. “So, forget all the so-called rules about wine – just have fun with it, experiment and enjoy the experience.”

Springtime Sipping

Sbrocco provides the following easy tips for enjoying wines on wineanswers.com:

- ✓ **Crystal Clear** – You don’t need to break out the fine stemware to enjoy a glass of wine – any type of glass is a wine glass. So, don’t get confused about whether you need a special white wine glass – just pour and enjoy!
- ✓ **Cool it!** – These whites taste best when well chilled. You can put a bottle in the refrigerator for several hours, or fill a bucket with a mixture of half ice and half cold water and immerse the bottle for around 20 minutes.
- ✓ **Lighten Up** – White wines are great in the spring, but if you prefer red wine -- that’s fine too -- there are no hard and fast rules. Drink what you like, with the foods that you like.
- ✓ **Pack the Pantry** – A pantry is not just for food. Buy a variety of affordable white wines to have on hand to sample throughout spring and summer. Keep a few in the refrigerator so that you are always ready with a chilled bottle of white.

For those who need pairing advice, wineanswers.com features a Wine and Food Pairing Guide, where visitors can obtain recommendations on pairing wine with a specific dish or flavor profile. The site also offers a searchable archive that will answer any wine-related question in just seconds.

Wineanswers.com is sponsored by the Wine Market Council, an independent, non-profit trade association of grape growers, wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and other organizations affiliated with the wine industry.

*The Women's Guide to Buying, Pairing and Sharing Wine will be available in fall, 2003.

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