

CONTACT:
Marisa Baile
312-988-2425
mbaile@webershandwick.com

SAY “I LOVE YOU” WITH WINE AND...AVOCADOS?

*Wine Market Council Offers Romantic Valentine’s Day Pairings for
Legendary Love Foods*

ST. HELENA, CA (January 26, 2005) – Since before the days when Marc Antony first fed grapes to Cleopatra, certain foods, beverages and ingredients developed a reputation as aphrodisiacs and have become intertwined with romance. Even the word “aphrodisiac” – with a nod to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love – conjures up images of magical ingredients and mystical love potions. Not surprisingly, wine tops the list of aphrodisiac beverages. “In today’s enlightened times, love potions have more to do with slowing down, relaxing and fully enjoying your senses. Wine is part of the equation because it fosters relaxation,” explains Martha Hopkins, author of *InterCourses: An Aphrodisiac Cookbook*.

“Wine pairs beautifully with so many of these classic ‘love foods,’ offering all sorts of inspiration for a romantic Valentine’s Day meal,” adds wine expert Andrea Immer Robinson, author of *Everyday Dining with Wine* and *Great Wine Made Simple* and host of “Simply Wine with Andrea Immer,” on the Fine Living Network. Immer Robinson has teamed up with the Wine Market Council to share wine pairings for some favorite legendary love foods.

- **OYSTERS** – Perhaps the most famous love food of all, oysters were documented as an aphrodisiac food by the Romans in the second century A.D. Aphrodisiac lore also holds that legendary lover Casanova ate fifty raw oysters every morning with his lady du jour. In reality, oysters are high in protein and loaded with zinc, which is known to increase the sexual health of both men and women.

ANDREA'S WINE NOTES: Blanc de Blancs Champagne or sparkling wine – racy acidity creates a sexy flavor counterpoint to the sea-brininess of oysters, while the elegant “bead” of bubbles streaming in the glass (use a flute) is a like a string of pearls for your loved one.

- **ASPARAGUS** – According to Hopkins, many foods owe their aphrodisiac status to the ancient Doctrine of Signatures and the Law of Similarities. For example, asparagus is thought to give a boost to your love life because of its phallic shape. “The fact that it’s packed with potassium, phosphorous, calcium and vitamin E doesn’t hurt either – and offers extra energy to the love-hungry,” says Hopkins.

ANDREA'S WINE NOTES: The slightly phallic-sounding name aside, Italian Pinot Grigio is the perfect choice to create flavor sparks with the fresh taste of asparagus.

- **AVOCADOS** – Aside from the creamy, sensual nature of the flesh of an avocado, once again, the Doctrine of Signatures is primarily responsible for avocados making the aphrodisiac list. Believed to resemble parts of both the male and female anatomy, in the Aztec culture, avocados were considered so powerful that village maidens were forbidden to set foot outside while the fruit was being gathered.

ANDREA'S WINE NOTES: The racy, vegetal flavor of the Sauvignon Blanc grape becomes rich and creamy when blended with the Semillon grape and barrel-fermented. You can get this style in wines labeled fumé blanc, and they are a love letter to the succulent fleshiness and slightly buttery-vegetal flavor of avocados.

- **CHILES** – Long believed to house a complete arsenal of aphrodisiac powers, eating chile peppers gets the blood rushing, the heart pumping, the face flushing and the pores sweating – “all reactions strangely familiar to what one can experience from even just a goodnight kiss,” explains Hopkins.

ANDREA'S WINE NOTES: You can pair the “Pow, right in the kisser!” impact of a spicy chile dish with a “Smack, right in the sniffer!” bouquet of floral scents from Riesling, and you’ll get a match made in heaven. Rieslings with a touch of sweetness are perfect, because the sweetness acts like a coolant for the spicy heat of chiles on your tongue.

- **BASIL** – Highly regarded in cultures around the world, basil is considered the royal herb of the Greeks, a sacred herb in India and Haitian lore claims basil comes from Erzulie, their goddess of love. As an aphrodisiac, its alluring power has long been used to keep wandering eyes focused homeward. Some stories even report that ancient wives with straying husbands would powder their breasts with crushed basil to entice them back home.

ANDREA'S WINE NOTES: Paint your tongue red: the heady aromatics of basil – especially in the form of pesto sauce – dance a sexy two-step with the cedary scent of Cabernet Sauvignon wines. Go for the biggest, boldest one you can muster for plush, rich tannins that are like a velvet robe for your tastebuds.

- **HONEY** – Known as an aphrodisiac extraordinaire as far back as the 5th century B.C., even Hippocrates prescribed honey for sexual vigor. Wedding traditions in some cultures include the offering of honey to a bridegroom and even the term “honeymoon” stems from an ancient tradition of couples going into seclusion and drinking a honey concoction until the first new moon of their marriage.

ANDREA'S WINE NOTES: Birds, bees *and* lovers would find a brunch of honey-drizzled hotcakes irresistible with Italian or California bubbies from the Moscato (Muscat) grape. They are typically *frizzante* (just a slight bubble) and very light in alcohol (around 8%), making them perfect for a romantic wakeup-together brunch.

- **CHOCOLATE** – Owing its aphrodisiac beginnings to the Aztecs and the Mayans, chocolate was considered “nourishment of the Gods” and the Aztec ruler, Montezuma, reportedly drank fifty cups of chocolate each day to better serve his harem of 600 women. Also a regular part of Casanova’s diet of love foods, today we know that chocolate also contains PEA (phenylethylamine), the same naturally occurring amphetamine that rushes through the veins of someone experiencing the situation known as love.

ANDREA'S WINE NOTES: Love can be bittersweet, and so are the best wine-and-chocolate marriages. Deeper, bittersweet chocolates with a high percentage of cacao (60-70%) create amazing flavor fireworks when paired with a huge array of sweet wines. My top picks are the toffee-caramel-burnt orange-flavored Malmsey Madeira from Portugal; heady, licorice-scented Italian Amarone; and nutty-rich tawny Ports and Spanish oloroso sherries.

“Whether you are cooking up a romantic meal or dining out, the timeless combination of food and wine provides the perfect modern day spark for an evening of love,” says Immer Robinson.

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Wine Market Council is an independent, non-profit trade association of grape growers, wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and other organizations affiliated with the wine industry. For more information, visit www.winemarketcouncil.com or www.wineanswers.com.