

Fabulous Food & Wine



Wine: A Worthy Teammate For Football

(NAPSA)—Football and beer go together like baseball and hot dogs, but what about football and wine? Traditionally, wine has been benched on Sundays. But if you prefer to serve your guests something a step up from a can of suds, a nice glass of Cabernet Sauvignon on a chilly, fall afternoon can score a touchdown with your friends.

Kim Caffrey, football fanatic and senior wine educator at Beringer Vineyards, shares her winning strategy for scoring big with wine on football Sunday:

Evaluate your players

First, look at the wines available to you and what each one has to offer. Some traditional favorites are Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

But don't forget about "the ringer," something no one will expect but that is sure to win applause, like the Shiraz-Cabernet from Stone Cellars by Beringer. This team-up of Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon has the deep, black fruit flavors of Cabernet combined with a kick of spice and red currant from the Shiraz—it'll be a favorite for Sunday afternoons.

Select your lineup

Second, you need to look at the food you will be serving and select wines that will support the team well. The flavors of the food and the wine should interact together, not overpower each other. The rich sauce and spiciness of the buffalo wings would play well with something like a Cabernet Sauvignon or the Shiraz-Cabernet mentioned above. Caffrey also suggests expanding the menu for a variety of different foods that complement wine, such as the spinach and mushroom football pastries below.

Spinach & Mushroom Puff Pastry Footballs

Makes 18 appetizers

Pair with Stone Cellars Merlot

- 1 large shallot, minced
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil



Wine can be an intriguing beverage choice for your next football get-together.

- ½ lb. mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 5 oz. frozen spinach, thawed, chopped and drained
- 3 oz. fresh chevre goat cheese
- 1 tsp. fresh tarragon
- 1 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 package frozen puff pastry sheets, thawed
- 1 egg, slightly beaten

Over medium heat, sauté onions and shallots in olive oil until soft. Add mushrooms and garlic and sauté. Add spinach, goat cheese, tarragon, nutmeg and salt and pepper to taste. Incorporate goat cheese and spinach well. Remove from heat.

On lightly floured surface, roll puff pastry sheet to 12"x12" square. Cut into sixteen 3"x3" squares and glaze edges with egg. Place a heaping teaspoon of the mushroom/spinach mixture in center of each square. Fold each square in half diagonally, forming a "football" triangle shape. Place on parchment paper-lined cookie sheet, seal edges with a fork and glaze tops with egg. Cook for 12-15 minutes in 400° oven. Let cool for 5 minutes and serve, or freeze and reheat at 350° as needed.