

Sicilian wines a perfect match for foie gras

With the holidays upon us, it seems to be the time of year when many of us forego our diets, dig out our holiday recipe books and whip up a few old favourites and even some new dishes as we gather around the table with friends and family.

A lot of us will be feasting on the traditional turkey and stuffing, or those who live closer to the north or south shores may relish lobster or creamy seafood casseroles. For some, the holidays would not be complete without oysters and caviar.

Having been a chef for many years, I have often found myself behind the stove of many a kitchen preparing five, six or even 10-course meals. This holiday season I will be spending time with my family and friends trying to unwind from all the shopping trips and hectic schedules.

As a product advisor at NB Liquor, I can help you pair wine, beer and spirits with your meals, snacks and various holiday foods. For me I like to treat my loved ones to a bit of indulgence. That is why I love to make foie gras at this time of year. The nice silky texture, the rich creamy mouth feel and its unmistakable flavours are so enjoyable. I like to prepare it in many ways; pan-seared, lightly poached, in terrine form or whipped up in a mousse. Recently some of my friends prepared it in a very simple and easy way that I found marvellous and quite delicious.

Here's how it's done.

Preheat your oven on broil and place the rack on the second highest setting (a little higher than the middle setting). Slice a fresh lobe of foie gras to 3/4-inch thick, place on thick slice of country-style crusty bread slice and place under the broiler.

Remove once the bread starts to toast lightly and the foie gras is cooked to medium rare (the texture of soft dough). Finish with a sprinkle of fleur de sel and it is ready to serve. The golden fat from the foie gras will soak into the bread and you will be left with a taste heaven in your mouth. You can serve this as is or accompany it with dried fruit compote if you prefer a little sweetness.

In France the classic wine pairing would be with the Sauterne grape, a late harvest ice wine or a sweet dessert wine. I am recommending two products from the Donnafugata line. These wines come from the region of Sicily and are available in 375ml size. The first is Donnafugata Ben Rye DOC Ben Rye which retails for \$35.29. This wine is made from the Zibibbo grape which is allowed to ripen and dry under the intense Sicilian sun. The resulting wine is concentrated in intense dried fruit and nutty flavours. It also has a higher sugar level making it an ideal partner with the fatty foie gras.

The second option is Donnafugata Kabir DOC in 375 ml which retails for \$19.99. Again it is made from the Zibibbo grape, but in this case the grapes are not dried on the vine, but rather they are picked at their ripest and the wine is a golden colour with honey undertones and layers of orange peel. Not as sweet as the Ben Rye, Kabir would be more easily paired with foie gras terrine or mousse.

You will be rewarded with either of these two wines.

Happy Holidays.

Written by Marcel Richard, product advisor for NB Liquor's Dieppe store.