

MATCHING FOOD AND WINE WITH ALAIN DUCASSE

# Wine Spectator

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## CHAMPAGNE CELEBRATIONS

### Festive gatherings for a couple or a crowd

By Owen Dugan // Photographs by James Worrell

Commemorating life's milestones—anniversaries, weddings, graduations—demands great food and wine. Whether an intimate dinner or a more inclusive get-together, you'll want dishes as momentous as the occasion. As for wine, bubbles are obligatory. From crowdpleasing Bellinis to rare vintage Champagne for two, effervescence spells celebration every time. On the following pages, find some helpful advice for party perfection.

## DINNER FOR TWO

For a truly special moment pull out a vintage Champagne. Made only in standout years, they represent the best qualities of a special growing season, and are generally richer, more complex and elegant. Pour them in a fine Burgundy glass, which Max Riedel says emphasizes fruit and takes away acidity. Executive chef William Bradley of *Wine Spectator* Grand Award-winning Addison at the Grand del Mar in San Diego suggests buttering up lush Dover sole—and gives an appetizingly bright and sweet-tart accompaniment that's perfect for vintage Champagne.

### Baked Dover Sole

With Lemon-Lime Jam and Fines Herbes

#### Ingredients

3 lemons, peeled, seeded, and cut in half // 3 limes, peeled, seeded, and cut in half // 2 cups lemon Perrier sparkling water // 1 1/2 cups cane sugar // 1/8 cup fresh ginger, finely diced // 2 8-ounce Dover sole fillets // Fleur de sel // 3/4 cup salted French butter, softened at room temperature // 2 leaves each of fines herbes (tarragon, chive, chervil and parsley) // 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

To make the jam: Combine lemons, limes, Perrier, sugar and ginger in a heavy saucepot, and cook over low heat, uncovered, for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. The liquid should become syrupy; if not, cook longer.

To make the sole: Season each fillet with salt, and place in an ovenproof pan. Using a piping tube, pipe the butter over each fillet until completely coated. Place sole in a preheated, 200° F oven for 8 minutes. Test for doneness; they should be warmed through. Remove, and let stand 5 minutes.

To serve: Use a large, thin spatula to transfer the delicate fish onto a plate. Arrange fines herbes atop each fillet, spoon on the olive oil, and sprinkle with fleur de sel. Place a dollop of jam on the side. Serves 2.

#### RECOMMENDED WINES

**MOËT & CHANDON** Brut Champagne Cuvée dom Pérignon Oenothèque Commande Spéciale 1975 (97 points, \$1,500)

**BRUNO PAILLARD** Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne 1996 (97, \$180)

**KRUG** Brut Champagne 1998 (96, \$300)

**BOLLINGER** Brut Champagne La Grande Année 2000 (95, \$125)

**CHARLES HEIDSIECK** Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne Blanc des Millénaires 1995 (95, \$200)

**HENRI GOUTORBE** Brut Champagne Spécial Club 2002 (94, \$86)

**CHARLES HEIDSIECK** Brut Rosé Champagne 1999 (94, \$100)

**PEHU-SIMONET** Brut Champagne 2002 (94, \$99)

**PERRIER-JOUËT** Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne Fleur de Champagne Cuvée Belle Epoque 2000 (94, \$349)

**PERTOIS-MORISSET** Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne 2000 (94, \$52)

**TAITTINGER** Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne Comtes de Champagne 1998 (94, \$200)

**VILMART** Brut Champagne Grand Cellier d'Or 2002 (94, \$88)

# A SMALL PARTY



Consistency is the name of the game with non-vintage bottlings, as producers blend reserve wines to achieve the house style. Make no mistake: The best are some pretty flavorful bubbles. The heat and vegetal notes in curry can be rough on wine, but the dish finds a happy partner in Champagne. Chef Bradley goes for sweet and hot in this recipe, with a slightly prickly red curry atop sweet and briny langoustines.

## Langoustine and Cucumber Canapés

### With Thai Red Curry

#### Ingredients

2 cloves garlic, peeled, and chopped // 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced // 1 tablespoon brown sugar // 3 tablespoons Thai red curry paste // 4 tablespoons olive oil, plus some for basting // 1/2 cup coconut milk // 1 tablespoon yuzu juice (or substitute lime juice) // 10 langoustine tails (or large shrimp) // Fleur de sel // 1 large cucumber, peeled, and cut into 1/2-inch-thick rounds // 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped

To make the curry sauce: Combine garlic, ginger, brown sugar, curry paste and olive oil in a saucepot over low heat. Sauté slowly, about 5 minutes, stirring continuously. Add coconut milk. Once mixture comes to a boil, remove from heat. Stir in yuzu or lime juice, then strain through a fine mesh strainer. Cover, and keep warm.

To make the langoustines: Split the tails in half lengthwise. Baste with olive oil and fleur de sel. Grill, shell-side down, for 1 minute. Flip, and grill meat-side down for an additional minute. Remove from heat.

To assemble: Pry the meat from the shell, cut into pieces roughly the size of the cucumber rounds, and place on top. Spoon curry sauce onto each canapé, and sprinkle with parsley. *Makes approximately 20 pieces.*

#### RECOMMENDED WINES

**RENÉ GEOFFROY** Brut Champagne Volupté NV (95 points, \$81)

**KRUG** Brut Champagne Grande Cuvée NV (95, \$150)

**NICOLAS FEUILLATTE** Brut Champagne Extrem' NV (92, \$42)

**LECLAIRE-GASPARD** Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne Grande Réserve NV (91, \$41)

**LOUIS ROEDERER** Brut Champagne Premier NV (91, \$43)

**VRANKEN** Brut Champagne Demoiselle Tête de Cuvée NV (91, \$43)

**BAUGET-JOUE** Brut Champagne NV (90, \$30)

**BEAUMONT DES CRAYÈRES** Brut Champagne Grand Prestige NV (90, \$38)

**DRAPPIER** Brut Champagne Carte d'Or NV (90, \$40)

**HEIDSIECK MONOPOLE** Brut Champagne Blue Top Premier Cru NV (90, \$37)

**LOUIS DE SACY** Brut Champagne NV (90, \$35)

**TRIBAUT-SCHLOSSER** Brut Champagne NV (90, \$35)