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Perfect Pairing

The owners of Wine Enthusiast toast the opening of their new headquarters with a wine-and-food pairing at their Chappaqua home.

BY: SUSAN HODARA PUBLISHED OCTOBER 9, 2008 AT 07:56 AM



Sybil Strum toasts good friends and good times.

Who better to throw a wine-and-food pairing dinner party than Adam and Sybil Strum, Westchester's own purveyors of everything wine? The Strums are the owners of Wine Enthusiast Companies, which they founded in 1979 to offer accessories—from corkscrews and glassware to fully installed wine cellars—to the wine connoisseur. In 1988, they began publishing Wine Enthusiast Magazine, which now reaches 680,000 readers 14 times a year with its highly touted wine reviews and buying guides. Today, the company boasts \$100 million in annual sales.

"Wine is our passion," says Sybil, the company's CEO, a petite blonde who might be spotted driving local roads in her cream-colored Thunderbird convertible. "It's our main source of socializing with family and friends. We plan our vacations around visiting wineries and vineyards across the world. And almost every night, we enjoy dinner with a bottle of good wine."

The Strums' party—an intimate gathering of 10 close friends—celebrated the October opening of Wine Enthusiast's new headquarters in Mount Kisco. The 100,000-square-foot space houses its showroom and all of its businesses, warehouses, and 150 employees under one roof, for the first time in the company's history.

On this festive evening, the dining table was dressed in a crimson-and-gold tablecloth with a decidedly Asian flair and set with floral dinner plates, gold-toned forks with branch-like handles, and Laguiole knives from France. The placecard holders, like the napkin rings, were each decorated with a miniature fork, knife, and spoon and held name cards with calligraphy hand-done by dinner guest Susan Buchman, a Chappaqua resident and a guidance counselor for the Byram Hills Central School District. Strains of contemporary rock meandered through the



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rooms, and the scent of the incense Sybil had burned before the guests' arrival lingered.



Adam Strum samples the Louis Jadot Chambolle-Musigny before sharing it with his guests.

Evidence of their passion for the business can be found throughout the Strums' 9,000-square foot Chappaqua home. Downstairs, there's the 2,000-bottle wine cellar, where each bottle is identified with a color-coded tag, and the 50-bottle wine refrigerator in the kitchen. A paned cabinet in the kitchen displays the Strums' numerous sets of wine glasses, and the wall tiles are interspersed with vintner-inspired patterns of bottles, glasses, and decanters.

And there's more outside, on the couple's 10-acre estate, where Roaring Brook flows and a fountain erupts in the center of a pond. On a quarter of an acre on the south side of the house is the newly built Chappaqua Vineyard, where the Strums will plant labrusca and vinifera grapes next season. Perusing his property from an outdoor patio, Adam explains that they are planning to landscape a vineyard walk, traversing several small bridges around the perimeter.

But that's in the future and there's plenty to toast right now. Adam raises a glass to his "beautiful wife," Sybil toasts "all my beautiful friends," and among utterances of "l'chaim" and "bon appétit," glasses are clinked and dinner is served.

the details

what: Wine-and-food pairing dinner at the Chappaqua home of Sybil and Adam Strum, owners of Wine Enthusiast Companies

why: To celebrate the October opening of Wine Enthusiast's new 100,000-square-foot headquarters in Mount Kisco

caterer: Giona Stanco, owner of Giona's Global Cuisine (914) 462-1590 gionascatering.com

recipes: From the newly published Wine Enthusiast Magazine Wine and Food Pairings Cookbook (Running Press, 2008), with the exception of the rugelach, courtesy of Sybil's mother, Pearl Brody

flowers: Yanni Papanicolaou, owner of Nilsson's Floral Company, with shops in Pleasantville and Briarcliff Manor (914) 769-1311

glass act

Each setting at the Strums' table included three glasses, all Fusion Stemware manufactured by Wine Enthusiast. "If I pour the same wine into different glasses, you'll taste a difference," explains Adam. The tongue has four taste zones, with sweet sensors closest to the tip. Next comes the area most sensitive to acidic tones, followed by the salty zone, and then the bitter one. A proper glass is designed to deliver the wine to the areas of the tongue where it can be most fully appreciated. Here is the rationale:



- Chardonnay/Chablis glasses have smaller bowls that focus the wine's fruity aromas and maintains its chilled temperature. The narrow opening funnels the wine to the front of the tongue.

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- The Pinot Noir/Burgundy glass has a wider, shorter bowl to offer more surface area and less distance for the aromas to reach the nose. Delivering the wine to the front of the mouth, it offers plenty of swirling room to aerate the wine and soften the tannins.



- Sparkling wine/Champagne glasses have slender fluted shapes designed to maintain the constant flow of the bubbles to the palate, where the fizz, fruitiness, and acidity can best be enjoyed.

- Cabernet Sauvignon/Bordeaux glasses have large elongated bowls that allow the wine's aromas to build before reaching the nose and provides swirling room. The opening of the glass directs the wine to the front of the tongue.
- Like the Chardonnay/Chablis glass, the Sauvignon Blanc/Pinot Grigio glass has a narrow bowl that focuses the delicate aromas and minimizes warming. The bowl delivers wine to the front and sides of the tongue, where fruit flavors and acidity are detected.

the pairings

“Remember, this is not a wine tasting,” says Adam Strum, commenting to his guests on the wines he and Sybil selected for their affair. “It’s a wine-and-food pairing, so none of the wines is so rich that it overpowers the flavor of the food.” On the contrary, each wine is tuned to the food it accompanies, bringing out its subtleties and making it shine. “There are many other wines that could go with these dishes. We chose these because they’re both affordable and available.”



Passed hors d'oeuvres

Chorizo and shrimp made with dry sherry

Grilled sea scallops with apple-mint chutney and passion fruit sauce

Henriot Brut Souverain Champagne NV



(\$40)

Adam's note: "This is a non-vintage Champagne, which means it's a blend of different vintages. It's a fun wine, esoteric and light, yet still rich, perfect with hors d'oeuvres."

First Course

Maine Lobster Salad

Newton Unfiltered Chardonnay (\$57)

Adam's note: "This Napa Valley wine is barrel fermented; it has never seen a filter. It's a big white wine that can stand up to the lobster."



Entrée

Duck breast with caramelized apples and lavender honey, accompanied by wild rice salad with mushrooms, cranberries, and walnut oil

Louis Jadot Chambolle-Musigny (\$50)

Adam's note: "This is a village Pinot Noir from Burgundy, France. Its light, feminine flavor won't overwhelm the taste of the food."

Dessert

Pearl Brody's rugelach and fresh fruit

Dr. Pauly Bergweiler 2006 Bernkasteler alte Badstube am Doctorberg Riesling Auslese (\$46)

Adam's note: "What a name! Dr. Pauly Bergweiler is the estate; Bernkasteler is the town in Germany where the vineyard, alte Badstube am Doctorberg, is located. Riesling is the grape, and Auslese denotes the late harvest of grapes that are very ripe, making this a dessert wine. It's sweet, with hints of pineapple, cinnamon, honey, and apricots."

**Chorizo and Shrimp with Palo Cortado**

(Makes 8 skewers)

2 Tbs. olive oil
 2 large shallots, thinly sliced
 1 lb. Spanish chorizo sausage,
 sliced into 1/2-inch rounds
 1 1/4 cups dry red wine
 1/4 cup Palo Cortado sherry
 4 bay leaves
 8 sprigs fresh thyme
 2 Tbs. chili oil
 16 large shrimp, peeled and deveined
 1 loaf crusty bread, for serving
 Fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped, for garnish

In large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat until it ripples. Add shallots and cook, stirring until tender and translucent, about 5 minutes. Using slotted spoon, remove shallots from pan; set aside. Add chorizo to skillet and sauté, stirring until lightly browned. Add red wine, sherry, bay leaves, thyme, and reserved shallot. Simmer until wine is reduced in volume and slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove pan from heat and cover loosely with foil to keep warm.

In another large skillet, heat chili oil until hot. Add shrimp in one layer and sauté quickly, stirring until pink and firm. Do not overcook.

Thread shrimp and chorizo slices onto skewers, alternating them and allowing 2 shrimp per skewer.

Arrange skewers on serving platter. Slice bread and arrange on another serving platter.

Remove bay leaves and thyme sprigs from sauce, drizzle sauce over skewers, and garnish with parsley.

Serve immediately, with bread as an accompaniment.

Maine Lobster Salad

(Serves 4)

4 (1 lb.) lobsters
 1 cup diced celery
 1/2 cup mayonnaise

1 Tbs. chopped flat-leaf parsley
 1 Tbs. chopped shallot
 1 Tbs. olive oil
 1 tsp. white truffle oil
 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
 ½ tsp. sea salt
 ¼ tsp. white pepper
 6 cups mixed baby greens
 2 slices brioche, toasted and cut into triangles

Cook lobsters in large pot of boiling water for about 8 minutes, until shells are bright red. Plunge lobsters into pot of ice water to stop cooking and quickly cool them. Remove all meat from lobster, then cut meat into bite-size pieces.

In large bowl, combine celery, mayonnaise, parsley, shallot, olive oil, truffle oil, lemon juice, and salt and pepper. Add lobster meat and combine gently. Spoon lobster salad into small ring mold or ramekin and pack down lightly.

To serve, spread greens on serving platter. Invert mold onto greens. Garnish with brioche triangles.

Alternatively, lobster salad can be spooned atop greens on individual plates.

Duck Breast with Caramelized Apples and Lavender Honey

(Serves 4)

Peking or Moulard duck breasts
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
 ¼ cup lavender honey (or other wild honey)
 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
 1 tsp. vegetable oil
 8 Granny Smith or Fuji apples, peeled, cored, each cut into 8 sections
 2 Tbs. sugar
 2 pounds fresh spinach, stemmed, rinsed, and patted dry
 ¼ cup dried lavender flowers or fresh thyme leaves, for garnish

Pierce skin on each duck breast lightly with a fork. Turn over and season meat with salt and pepper.

Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in large, ovenproof sauté pan over medium-high heat until it ripples. Place duck breasts, skin-side down, in pan and cook. Using spatula or tongs, lift breasts every minute or so to keep from sticking. As duck fat builds up in pan, use spoon to remove fat and maintain original oil level.

Cook duck until skin starts to crisp and turn dark brown, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Turn breasts over so meat side is down. Brush skin, now facing up, with about 1 tablespoon of honey.

Place pan in oven and roast for 7 minutes (for medium-rare). Remove breast from pan, place on cutting board, and let rest for 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in another pan, heat butter and vegetable oil over medium-high heat until butter is melted. Add apples and sugar and cook, stirring often, until they start to brown, or caramelize, about 10 minutes. Lower heat and continue to cook until slices soften, making sure sugar does not burn.

In third pan, heat remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium-high heat until it ripples. Slowly add spinach and stir until it starts to wilt, 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Divide spinach evenly among 4 dinner plates.

Thinly slice 1 duck breast, and place slices on dinner plate, fanning them out in a semicircle around mound of spinach. Repeat with remaining duck breasts. Divide apple mixture evenly among plates, arranging most on opposite side of spinach from duck and a few on top of spinach.

Drizzle remaining honey over each serving and around edge of each plate. Garnish with lavender flowers

or thyme leaves. Serve immediately.

Wild Rice Salad with Mushrooms, Cranberries, and Walnut Oil

(Serves 6)

grains

1 tsp. salt

1 cup wild rice

½ cup wheat berries

salad

½ cup dried cranberries, coarsely chopped

1 Tbs. canola oil (or other

neutral-flavored oil)

1½ cups coarsely chopped Portobello mushrooms

½ tsp. salt

1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted

2 shallots, finely chopped

1 Tbs. chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 Tbs. walnut oil or good-quality extra virgin olive oil

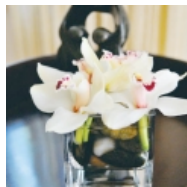
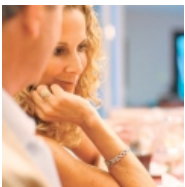
Freshly ground black pepper

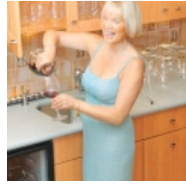
To cook grains: Fill large saucepan with 3 cups water and ½ teaspoon of salt. In another large saucepan, add 3 cups water and remaining ½ teaspoon of salt; bring both to boil over high heat. Add rice to first saucepan and wheat berries to second; cover both and reduce heat to medium. Simmer, stirring occasionally. The rice should take about 40 to 50 minutes, and wheat berries about 1 hour and 45 minutes. (Note: Wheat berries will cook in about half the time if first soaked in water, covered, overnight, preferably in refrigerator.) Drain if necessary and let cool slightly.

To make salad: Place cranberries in small bowl, cover with 2 tablespoons of warm water, and set aside to soften, about 10 minutes. Drain.

In small skillet, warm canola oil over medium heat. Add mushrooms and ½ teaspoon salt and sauté for 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool slightly before transferring to serving bowl; add walnuts, shallots, parsley, and softened cranberries. Add cooled grains. Toss gently to combine. Drizzle mixture with walnut oil and season with pepper to taste. Serve salad warm or at room temperature.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TODD SHAPER





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