

Wine Pairing: Tablas Creek Vermentino and Grilled Cream of Asparagus Soup With Prosciutto "Tartare" and Truffle Oil

This recipe, provided by Chef Jeff Massey at Stone Brewing World Bistro and Gardens, in Escondido, California, was part of a delicious Tablas Creek wine dinner in late April. Asparagus is notoriously difficult to pair with wine, but grilling it eliminates the bitter character it imparts to wine, and the soup is a beautiful match with the 2006 *Vermentino*.

Ingredients

(serves 6-8)

3 to 3 1/2 pounds fresh asparagus
2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil
6 cups chicken or vegetable stock
2 cloves garlic, whole
1/2 medium onion, chopped
1 cup heavy whipping cream (more may be needed for a creamier style soup)
8 ounces prosciutto, thinly sliced
Salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste
Truffle oil

Trim the woody ends from the bottom of the asparagus. Place in a large mixing bowl with the olive oil and toss to coat. Lightly season with salt and fresh ground pepper. Place the spears evenly on a hot grill; be careful not to burn the spears, but some charring is good. Watch for flare up from the dripping oil.

Note: If you do not have a grill, place the spears on a cookie sheet and roast in a 350 degree oven for 5-10 minutes.

In a large saucepan, combine the stock, garlic and chopped onion with the grilled asparagus. Bring to a boil and simmer until the asparagus is tender. Pour the mixture into a food processor and set the saucepan aside. Blend until it reaches the consistency of puree, then pass the mixture through a strainer back into the saucepan.

Cut the prosciutto slices in half and place in a food processor. Pulse in 3 to 4 second bursts until the meat is finely chopped, then form into one ounce "tartare" meatballs and set aside.

Return the stock mixture to a boil and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes to thicken. Stir in the heavy whipping cream, bring the soup back to a boil then remove it from heat.

Season with salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste.

Place one "tartare" meatball in each bowl and ladle soup into bowls. Drizzle a little truffle oil in each, and serve.

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