

Wine Pairing: Fusilli con Salsa di Pomodoro, Funghi e Salsiccia









(Fusilli with Creamy Tomato, Mushroom and Sausage Sauce)

Catherine Faris, Tablas Creek's former Director of Hospitality and Retail Sales and former chef/owner of Trattoria Primizia Restaurant in Capitola, California, contributed this richly flavored pasta recipe. The spicy depth of mushrooms, fennel and tomatoes makes it a perfect late fall entrée to serve with our *Côtes de Tablas*.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

½ lb. mushrooms (Shiitake mushrooms work well)
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2-3 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 large carrot, diced
2 tbsp. fresh Italian parsley, chopped
1 tsp. fennel seeds, chopped (optional if using sausage made with fennel)
½ lb. sweet Italian sausage meat, crumbled (remove from casings)
2 tbsp. tomato paste
½ cup water
½ cup red wine (*Côtes de Tablas*)
2 cups fresh or canned Italian plum tomatoes, pureéd (if fresh, peel and seed tomatoes first)
¾ cup heavy whipping cream
Kosher salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 lb. fusilli
Freshly grated Parmigiano cheese

-  Remove any dirt from the mushrooms with a soft brush or cloth. Trim the stems (discard if they are tough or woody). If the mushrooms are large, cut them into halves or quarters. Slice thinly.
-  Warm the olive oil in a large pan. Add the shallots, garlic, carrot and parsley and stir well. Sauté the mixture over medium-low heat until the vegetables soften, about ten minutes (take care not to let them brown).
-  Add mushrooms, fennel seeds and sausage meat to the pan, using a wooden spoon to break up the sausage. Sauté gently until the sausage loses most of its pink color and the mushrooms begin to sweat, about 5 minutes. Don't overcook the sausage or it will toughen.
-  Stir in the tomato paste and water. Let the mixture come to a simmer, then add the wine, tomatoes, salt and pepper to taste.
-  Simmer the sauce over low heat, partially covered, for about 20 minutes. Remove the cover, add the cream and raise the heat to medium. Cook uncovered for another 15 to 20 minutes, or until the sauce is a little reduced and creamy.
-  While sauce is cooking, bring at least 4 quarts of water to a boil and add the fusilli and 2 tbsp. of salt. Cook the pasta until *al dente* (still very slightly firm at the center), stirring frequently to prevent sticking.
-  Drain some of the pasta water into the bowl in which you plan to serve the finished pasta to warm the bowl. Drain the rest of the pasta into a colander. Drain all but about ½ cup of the pasta water from the serving bowl and transfer the drained pasta from the colander to the serving bowl. Be sure not to skip this step! Italian cooks know that the addition of a little starch-enhanced pasta water renders the finished dish smooth and creamy, amalgamating all of the sauce elements and binding them to the pasta.
-  Working quickly, add the finished sauce (make sure it's not still simmering), toss well and serve, passing grated Parmigiano at the table.