



In the Kitchen

with Barb Agee

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Good Grapes!

From easy to elegant, every meal is enhanced when you bring grapes to the table. Since they are always ripe and don't need peeling or coring, fresh grapes are a simple addition to recipes. Grapes add color, texture, sweetness and flavor without overpowering other ingredients. Since grapes are one of the most popular foods in the world, you can add excitement and flavor to your cooking and still please most eaters.

Grape, Celery and Couscous Salad

1 cup Israeli couscous*	½ cup walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped**
1 cup red seedless grapes, cut in quarters	¼ cup dried currants
1 tablespoon olive oil	1 green onion, thinly sliced
1 cup thinly sliced celery	Dressing (<i>see recipe below</i>)
½ cup celery leaves	

Cook couscous according to package directions. Toss grapes with olive oil; roast grapes on a baking pan at 450 degrees for 5 minutes. Cool for 5 minutes.

In a bowl mix couscous, celery, walnuts, currants, green onion and roasted grapes. Pour dressing over top and toss. Add celery leaves and toss again. *Serves 4*

*may use bulgur; **may use toasted pine nuts

Dressing

1 teaspoon orange zest	2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons orange juice	Salt and pepper to taste
1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar	

Mix orange zest, orange juice and vinegar together. Whisk in olive oil. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Seared Shrimp With Grapes, Citrus and Rum

12 large shrimp, peeled and deveined	1 jalapeño pepper, sliced into slivers
¼ teaspoon salt	1 teaspoon ginger, sliced into slivers
¼ teaspoon pepper	3 tablespoons dark rum
2 teaspoons grapeseed oil or vegetable oil	2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
1¼ cups red grapes, cut into halves	2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon slivered lemon zest	1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon slivered lime zest	

Pat the shrimp dry. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat; sear the shrimp in the hot oil until they are bright pink, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper then stir in the grapes, lemon and lime zests, jalapeno, and ginger. Pour on the rum; simmer for 1 minute. Stir in the brown sugar, lemon and lime juices; simmer until the sauce is slightly syrupy and the shrimp are cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes. To serve: arrange shrimp over fluffy couscous and spoon on the grape sauce. *Serves 4*

Grapes, Cheese, Walnuts and Honey Appetizer

2 cups halved red or black seedless grapes
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon balsamic or sherry vinegar
1 cup walnuts

1 to 2 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoon fresh thyme*
One 8 ounce package cream cheese**
Crackers or toasted baguette

Preheat oven to 350°F. Toast walnuts on a baking pan for 5 minutes. Remove and coarsely chop. Place in a bowl and drizzle honey over walnuts. Toss with thyme and set aside.

Preheat oven to 425°F. Toss grapes with olive oil and vinegar. Place grapes halves on a baking pan lined with foil. Roast about 5 minutes and turn over with a spatula; roast for 2 more times.

Place cream cheese on a serving plate. Spoon honeyed walnuts over top of cheese. Spoon warm grapes around the cheese. Serve with crackers.

* use lemon thyme if available; **may use a double or triple cream for more richness

Seared Fennel and Cayenne-Spiced Chicken with Pan-Roasted and Gastrique

Rice:

2 tablespoons butter
1 small onion, cut in small dice
1 long thin carrot, thinly sliced
1 leek, white part only, cut lengthwise, thinly slice
1 cup rice
2 sprigs thyme, finely chopped
Salt and pepper
2 ½ cups water

Chicken:

5 thin cut chicken breasts
¼ cup olive oil
2 teaspoons fennel seed, toasted
1 teaspoon Kosher salt
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons shallots, minced

Grape Sauce:

2 tablespoons shallots
2 cups red grapes, halved
4 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1 cup white wine, semi-dry
¼ cup chicken broth
3 tablespoons butter

Fennel:

2 fennel bulbs, cut in half and thinly slice
1 tablespoon butter

For the rice: In a large heavy sauce pot, heat 2 tablespoons butter over medium-heat. Sauté onion, carrot and leek for 4 minutes; add rice and sauté for 2 more minutes. Add thyme, water, salt and pepper. Cook until al dente, about 40 minutes.

For the Chicken: Toast fennel in a saucepan until toasted. Grind fennel, cayenne, pepper and salt together. Mix fennel mixture with olive oil in a baking pan; add chicken breasts and coat both sides. Marinate for 30 minutes.

For the grape sauce: Combine all the ingredients except butter in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer. Cook until the grapes are soft and the sauce starts to thicken. Remove from heat and place in a blender. Puree until smooth; strain through a mesh sieve pushing the sauce to extract all the pulp and intense grape flavor. Season with salt and pepper simmer until sauce is reduced by ½; keep warm.

To cook chicken: Preheat the oven to 425°F. Place a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. When hot add chicken breasts and sear for 1 to 2 minutes, then turn and sear the other side for 2 more minutes. Place chicken in a baking dish and place in oven. Roast for 8 to 10 minutes. Remove and let chicken rest for 5 minutes.

To cook fennel: In the heavy skillet used for the chicken, heat the skillet and add the butter. Sauté the fennel for 4 to 5 minutes until tender crisp.

To serve: Warm 5 plates in the oven for 1 minute. Remove and splash a little of the warm grape sauce on each plate; top with a small amount of fennel; then a small mound of rice; then a sliced chicken breast; drizzle a small spoonful of sauce over chicken. May garnish with a few fresh grape halves. *Serves 5*