

# July - August 2009

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**Publisher:** James T. Young

**Editor:** Diana M. Jones

**Graphic Design:** Matt Jordan

**Contributing Writers:**

Skye E. Macbroom

Mary Miller

Jen Beltz

Timothy Horchler

Katie Goodwin

Marc Reisman

Rob Flory

Jorge Hernandez

James Sterner

Linda Duke

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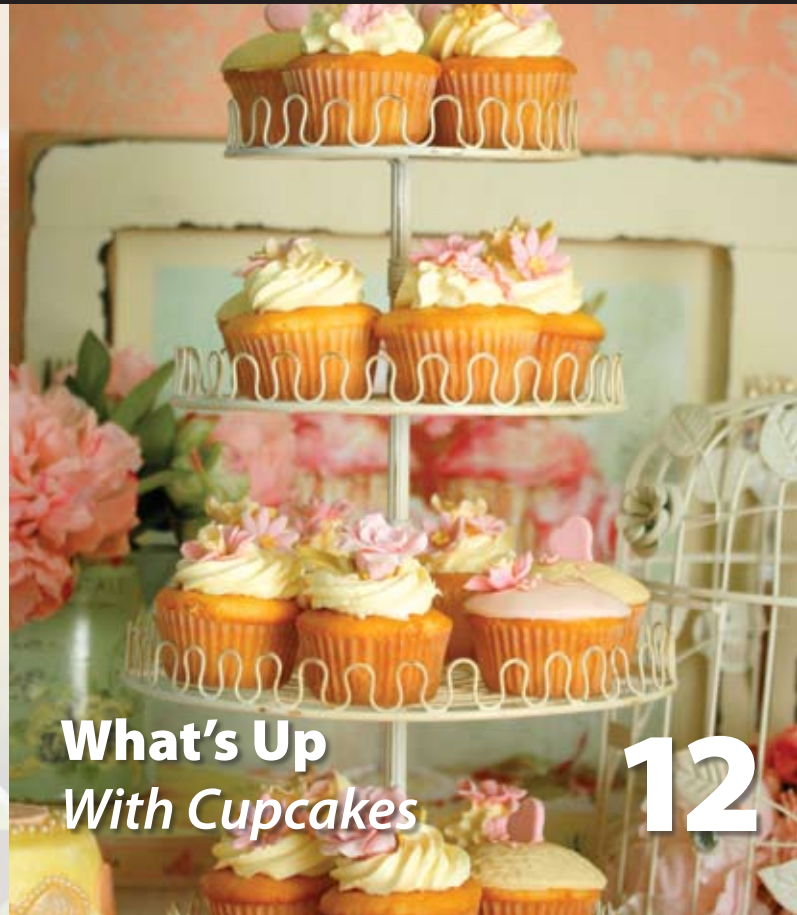
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### ON THE COVER

This issue's cover photo provided by Jim DeMicco of Skye Communication.

# Perfect Pairings:

## In Search of Ideal Mates

By Jen Beltz

### Old World Salads & New World Wines

**S**ummertime has hit. In the midst of “swimsuit season,” diners are watching their waistlines – but not quite as closely as they’re watching their wallets. Given still-shaky economic headlines, consumers – when they do visit restaurants – are being more particular about their dining choices. They’re hungry for unique but budget-friendly alternatives in restaurants, which restaurant owners and investors obviously will want to provide but without breaking the bank.

What to do?

Enter the “lowly salad,” which can be far from a Plain Jane on the menu when tried-and-true classic salad versions are paired with summertime New World wines.

“Classic salads as more filling options on the menu are generally going to be healthy, more cost-effective options for summer customers,” notes Ingrid Mahar, Wine Director and GM of Fredericksburg, VA’s Poppy Hill Tuscan Kitchen ([www.ciao-poppyhill.com](http://www.ciao-poppyhill.com)). “When you pair classic, more entrée-type salads with some of the high-quality, affordable New World wines hitting the scene today, you’re off to the races.”

Move over Caesars and Chardonnays, and make some room for these three classic salad and New World wine pairings this summer.

#### MAKING THE MOST OF A CLASSIC

Start off with the “bedrock salad of salads” in the culinary world, Salade Niçoise. One of the first dishes to be added to any culinary student’s repertoire, this classic salad originated in Nice and still is a specialty of

France’s Cote D’Azur region. The tuna, potatoes, tomatoes, green beans, egg and Niçoise olives in Sal-

ade Niçoise offer a more filling, satisfying alternative to standard menu salads, but could actually still be considered interesting “new territory” to some extent for many diners in the U.S.

“Depending on the type of restaurant, Salade Niçoise would likely be a welcome summertime menu addition for guests,” according to Mahar, who suggests this New World wine pairing: “Line this one up next to the really amazing 2007 Viognier coming from California producer Hawley Vineyards and Winery. The craftsmanship of their Viognier is evident. Definitely gets my vote.

“Think about the ingredients in a typical Niçoise, then think about the flavors in that Viognier,” Mahar adds. “In Viognier, you’ve got everything from apricot and pineapple to honeysuckle and peach. The citrus provides a really nice balance to the salad’s tuna and the slightly garlic-sweet

flavor of the dressing.”

The Viognier grape, originally from France’s Rhone Valley, performed quite well in Hawley’s California climate. According to Hawley ([www.hawleywine.com](http://www.hawleywine.com)) a small, certified-organic family winery on Bradford Mountain overlooking Sonoma County’s Dry Creek Valley, the 100% Viognier was fermented in neutral French oak barrels for five months, resulting in a “velvety mouth-feel” [with] a buttery complexity.”

Interested, I decided to try out the pairing. Call me odd, but I do actually make Niçoise salads on occasion (assembly is much simpler than pictures always seem to suggest). I got hold of Hawley’s Viognier, expect-

ing more of a fruit bomb. The table of folks I’d drafted for the experiment and I agreed: it genuinely was (in our admittedly

amateur view) a perfect pairing, and added so much to the simple salad. The suggested retail (\$23) didn’t hurt, either.

#### EARTH VERSUS THE SEA

Next up we look at Salade Francillon, a flavorful potato, mussel and black truffle salad. A bit more costly due to the truffle addition, the salad is nonetheless a winner, from both a flavor and appearance perspective. Its flavorful dressing of olive oil, white wine vinegar, fresh tarragon and parsley are well suited in a dish that’s sometimes called an “upscale potato salad.”

Jacques DeVilliers, longtime wine pro and

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“He’s [Prince Charles] very relaxed at the table, throwing his salad around willy-nilly. I didn’t find him stiff at all.”

– Madonna

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“The embarrassing thing is that the salad dressing is outgrossing my films.”

– Paul Newman

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owner of Old Port Wine Merchants ([www.oldportwine.com](http://www.oldportwine.com)) in Portland, Maine, suggests two ideal New World wine matches.

“Salade Francillon is so interesting because it presents a wine challenge, of sorts,” he says. “In this dish, you’ve essentially got two competing flavors – the sea flavor of the mussels, and the earthy flavor of the black truffles. Both are distinctive, and you’ve got a real ‘yin and yang’ situation going on in the mix.

“The interesting thing is that in this case, either a red or white could work well,” he adds. “For white, I’d suggest a nice, steely sauvignon blanc like New Zealand’s Oyster Bay Sauvignon Blanc. Their 2008 would be perfect. If you want to enjoy a red, go with Oyster Bay’s Marlborough Pinot Noir from 2006 or 2007.” (\$10.98-\$12.49, \$15.50-\$19.99, and \$16.99-\$19.99, respectively. [www.oysterbay-wines.com](http://www.oysterbay-wines.com))

A bit skeptical, I tried out both suggested options – and found they really did pair beautifully together, just in completely different ways. I’ve made and ordered this salad just a handful of times, but distinctly remember not being able to come even close to finding a good match on the wine menu. (Thank you, Jacques!)

## CARNIVORES’ DELIGHT

Finally, we check out Frisée aux lardons salad, a grand bistro classic featuring salted pork belly and chicory over the slight bitterness of frisée greens. (The salad also is known as Salade Lyonnaise after its namesake city of Lyon.)

“For this one, I’d go with a softer-style Syrah,” DeVilliers suggests. “You probably want to choose a nice one a bit south of northern California, since they tend to be softer and fruitier. A 2006 or 2007 Syrah from Santa Barbara Winery is not just a safe bet flavor-wise, but is likely going to be a bit less expensive than its northern California cousins.” ([www.sbwinery.com](http://www.sbwinery.com))

I’m genuinely surprised when I don’t see more “classic salads” on menus, from cost, variety and ease-of-assembly perspectives. They’re underrated, plain and simple. Consider pairing Old World salads like these with New World wines for an interesting menu change or wine dinner. They definitely make for tempting combinations!

*Jen Beltz is Founder and Principal of Front Burner PR ([www.frontburnerpr.com](http://www.frontburnerpr.com)), a public relations and strategic marketing firm based in Portland, Maine. Questions? Comments or suggestions? Email [jen@frontburnerpr.com](mailto:jen@frontburnerpr.com).*

“To make a good salad is to be a brilliant

diplomatist – the problem is entirely the same in both cases. To know exactly how much oil one must put with one’s vinegar.”

– Oscar Wilde

## SALADE NIÇOISE

### *Tomato Salad with Potatoes and Tuna*

The classic French salad, serve as a meal or hearty first course. Simple and easy, with opportunities to make it your own with variations of ingredients and vinaigrette.

#### Salad

Boston lettuce  
8 radishes, stems removed  
½ cucumber, sliced thin  
¼ cup celery, diced  
1 farm stand tomato, quartered  
½ cup green beans, blanched and diced  
¼ cup black olives, pits removed  
¾ cup potatoes, cooked, cooled, sliced thin  
2 eggs, hard boiled, cooled, quartered  
2 oz. quality tuna  
¼ red pepper, julienned  
¼ green pepper, julienned  
3 anchovy filets (optional)

#### Vinaigrette

2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 oz. wine vinegar  
3 oz. extra virgin olive oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

#### To Serve

In chilled serving bowl or plate, create a foundation of lettuce.  
Arrange other ingredients on lettuce to create an attractive presentation.  
Whisk together Vinaigrette ingredients and adjust seasoning as necessary.  
Drizzle salad with Vinaigrette and serve immediately.

## SALADE FRANCILLON

### *Potato and Mussel Salad*

Abundant mussels make this salad a perfect shellfish offering.

#### Salad

Chicory or bitter greens  
2 oz. potatoes, cooked and sliced thin  
¼ cup celery, diced fine  
1 Tbsp black truffle, diced fine  
Salt to taste  
1 lb. local mussels  
2 oz. white wine  
1 Tbsp. butter  
1 shallot, diced  
Salt  
1 tsp chives, minced

#### Vinaigrette

2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 oz. wine vinegar  
4 oz. extra virgin olive oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

#### To Serve

Steam the mussels  
Scrub the mussels and remove beards. Discard broken or open mussels.  
Sauté shallot in butter,

add white wine over medium heat

Add mussels and cover. Steam for 7-8 minutes until mussels open. Remove from heat and keep warm.

Arrange greens on serving plate and cover with potatoes and celery

Add warm mussels

Whisk together vinaigrette ingredients, adding a small amount of cooking liquid

Spoon vinaigrette over salad

Garnish with truffle and chives

