

How about a nice bowl of soup and some wine?

As published in The Naperville Sun, The Beacon News, The Courier News and The Herald News – October 23, 2009
By **BILL AND KAREN GARLOUGH For GO**

Looking for a quick and easy dish this fall that helps take the chill off? Here's what we like to do. Make a stock pot of comfort food and enjoy a hearty glass of wine.

Food & wine pairing

We have created our version of a "Casual Cassoulet." This economical comfort food can be quickly prepared with what you may already have in your fridge and pantry. You can use any combination of meats, poultry and sausages with the same delicious results. This keeps for several days and, like most soups and stews, is even better the next day. Serve this fast and hearty meal with a fresh green salad, dressed with tangy vinaigrette and, of course, a nice glass of robust red wine. Heaven!



Bill and Karen Garlough,
owners and founders of
My Chef Catering in Naperville

Now that the meal is decided, we need a bold wine to complement this hearty soup. The sausage and seasonings in this dish create slightly spicy and earthy flavors. Wines that are bold and fruity are the perfect pairing for this dish. And there are a number of exciting wines to try that will create your perfect pairing.



Bill's Wine Picks (with suggested retails)

Yalumba Eden Valley Viognier – Not Rated \$17
 Juan Gil Monastrell – Robert Parker 91 pts. \$15
 Four Vines Old Vine Zinfandel – Wine Spectator 86 pts. \$10
 Shofire Australian Shiraz – Robert Parker 92 pts. \$18

Wine of the Month

Suggested Retail Price: \$18. This month's selection is a perennial favorite from Australia. Thorn-Clarke Shiraz Shofire Ridge is aged from 12 – 18 months in oak barrels and has a deep purple color with compelling aromatics of wood smoke, blueberry and mineral notes. The 2006 is a crowd pleaser and Robert Parker gave the 2007 a 92 pt. rating. Great wine at a great price from down under.

If you prefer white wines, a Viognier is a nice choice. Viognier wine is medium to full body with a creamy texture and exotic fruit and honey flavors and aromas. Viognier has a storied history in the Rhone Valley of France and is gaining popularity in Australia and the United States.

On the red wine side, there are a number of good choices. When you think of bold, fruity and spicy wines, Australian Shiraz, California Zinfandels and French Syrah come to mind. All are bold, fruity, not overly tannic wines that are perfect for barbecue in the summer or hearty, spicy winter fare.

These wines offer some differences to explore. Australian Shiraz can be divided by cool climate (less peppery) and hot climate (more spicy) wines. American Zinfandels that are produced from Old Vine vineyards tend to offer more subtle notes than wine grown on younger rootstock.

Recipe

Cassoulet is a rich, slow-cooked meat and bean casserole originating in the south of France. Traditional Cassoulet takes days to prepare. For a speedy version, we experimented with several recipes, resulting in a "Casual Cassoulet."

Sausage and White Bean "Casual Cassoulet"

Serves 8

10 oz. Sweet Italian Sausage, casings removed

10 oz. Hot Italian Sausage, casings removed

1 tsp. Olive Oil

2 cups Onion, diced

6 ea Garlic Cloves, chopped fine

1 ½ tsp. Herbs de Provence, dried

½ tsp. Kosher Salt

¼ tsp. Black Pepper

2 ea. Bay Leaves, whole

½ cup Fresh Parsley, chopped

3 ea. 14 ½ oz Cans Diced Tomatoes, including juice

1 ea. 48 oz. Glass Jar of Navy or any White Bean, including juice*

½ tsp. Red Pepper Flakes ? Optional

* Beans in glass jars seem to be creamier and do not have that slight taste of tin. If you have the time, soaking dry beans overnight is low sodium and an economical option.

Topping

4 slices White Bread, crusts removed and crumbled

2 ea. Garlic Cloves, chopped fine

3 Tbsp. Fresh Parsley, finely chopped

1 Tbsp. Olive Oil

1 Tbsp. Melted Butter

Salt and Pepper to taste

In a large Dutch oven cook sausages in oil until browned and just cooked through. Break up into bite-sized crumbles. Transfer to paper towel to drain. With fat remaining in skillet, sauté onions until translucent, then add garlic and cook until golden. Add herbs, salt and pepper, bay leaves, parsley, tomatoes and simmer for 20 minutes for flavors to meld. Add crumbled sausage and beans with juice to tomato mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, until heated through. Remove bay leaf. For topping, in a sauté pan heat butter and oil over medium high heat and sauté bread until lightly golden. Stir in garlic, parsley and salt and pepper to taste.

Top the Cassoulet with bread crumbs and serve immediately. If you want a crispier topping, place the Cassoulet under the broiler until the bread crumbs are golden brown and crunchy.

Bill and Karen Garlough are the founders and owners of My Chef Catering in Naperville, the winner of the 2007 U.S. Chamber's Small Business of the Year. Bill is a Level 1 Master Sommelier and pairs food and wine for My Chef's customers.