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FOOD & DRINK



COLUMNIST JIMMY MCINTYRE

Jimmy McIntyre is a passionate foodie and the executive chef at Otahuna Lodge, Christchurch.

I love the individuality of cheese. Each variety has its own personality, which can change according to the way it was stored and the time of year it was made. Some cheeses change in flavour quite a bit and others are very consistent. My favourites at the moment are Waimata Camembert (cow), Gruff Junction Fromage Blanc (goat), Blue River Curio Bay sheep's milk cheese, Neudorf Mount Crusader sheep's milk cheese, Clevedon Valley Buffalo Company Mozzarella and Port Ahuriri Blue (cow).

My favourite cheese dish uses tiny zucchinis, grown in the Otahuna garden, with the flower still attached, which I stuff with Gruff Junction Fromage Blanc mixed with freshly chopped lemon thyme. I then coat them in a crisp tempura batter and top with a salsa vierge. They're amazing served with a Crater Rim Waipara riesling or Pegasus Bay riesling.

In early autumn I'll be looking to the Otahuna garden for inspiration. I'm making a simple dish of buffalo mozzarella with fresh

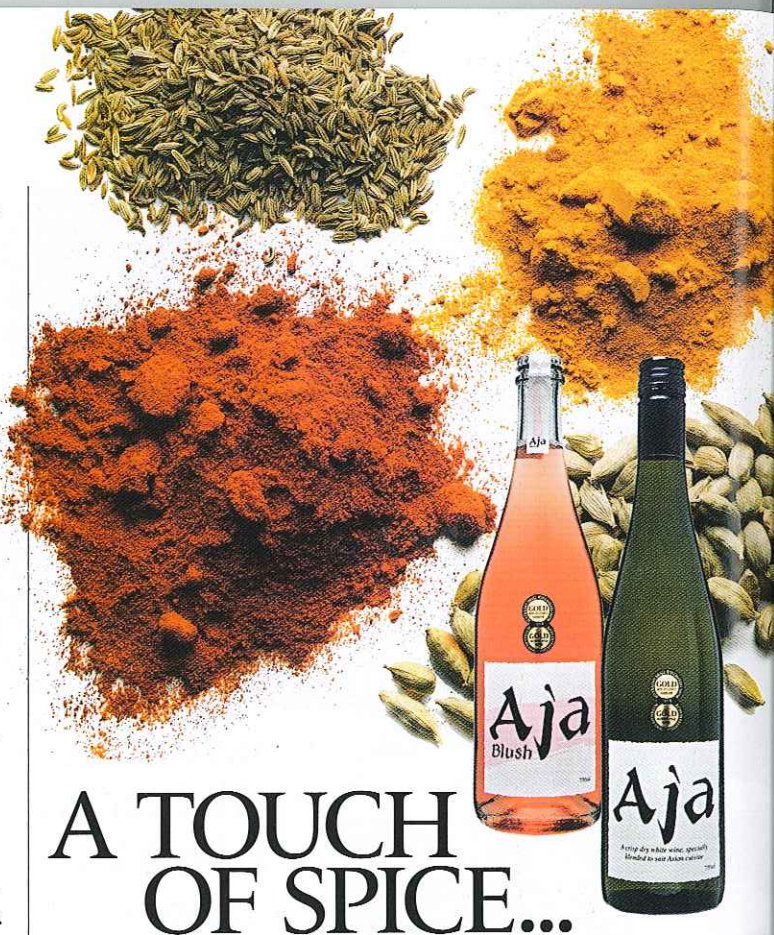
nectarine and prosciutto (from our own pigs). Add a little rocket, vanilla bean-infused extra virgin olive oil, a few drops of 12-year-old balsamic vinegar, and a couple of slices of ciabatta and, *voilà!* A delicious dish in minutes.

When shopping for cheese, remember that fresh varieties tend not to have a strong smell or aroma and no visible signs of mould or ageing. White mould cheese can have a little ammonia aroma with a nice even covering of mould. This can also grow on the cut surface, which is quite normal. White mould cheeses can vary in texture and softness with some being firm and others very runny. Washed rind cheese can be the stickiest, but has the most incredible flavour.

I could eat cheese at any time of the day, but it doesn't get any better than grazing over a delicious variety with a glass of wine in hand. You'd be surprised how many wines go with cheese – sparkling wines, riesling, chardonnay, pinot gris, viognier, any red wine, ports and dessert wines.

However, don't get too hung up on trying to get that perfect match between your wine and cheese. We all have different tastes and palates so your friend may have different likes to you. A good rule is to match cheese intensity to the beverage. For instance a creamy but robust blue cheese may work well with a port or full-bodied red as well as a noble riesling. A fresh sheep's milk or goat's cheese might work well with a livelier wine such as sauvignon blanc, a zingy riesling or a bubbly – or perhaps a nice cider.

For Jimmy's French Onion Soup with Sage and Cheddar recipe and to read his blog, Plot to Plate, visit mindfood.com



A TOUCH OF SPICE...

Nestled under the sprawling region of South-East Asia, Australia has inherited the very finest Asian cooking traditions – including the rich spices of Indian curries, chilli and herb-infused Thai broths and the piquant flavours of Vietnamese. It's often difficult to find a wine to match these divergent flavours, yet the Sydney-based duo David Mulham and Mark Silcocks claim to have developed the perfect wine blend, labelled Aja. With a shared passion for Asian food and an equal love of wine, Mulham and Silcocks are confident the Aja white (Hunter Valley verdelho and semillon, together with sauvignon blanc from the Adelaide Hills) and Aja Blush, a light sparkling moscato, will complement your favourite Asian meal. Visit ajawines.com.au



HAPPY CHICKS

The message behind PETA's vegetarianism campaign in China is 'don't eat meat if you want to be sexy'. The campaign is fronted by sultry Taiwanese actress and singer

Barbie Hsu. "My health has improved a lot since I became a vegetarian," Hsu, who said she had not touched meat for a decade, told Reuters. "I want to tell this good news to all of my friends, to tell them the advantages ... so this campaign is perfect for me." In the Chinese adverts, a smiling Hsu holds a little yellow chick up to her face above the slogan 'Vegetarians Make Chicks Happy'.