

SOUP FOR SUMMER

TURNING EVEN THE MOST COMPLEX OF SOUPS INTO A DELIGHTFUL SUMMER MEAL IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK.

For some, soup is what you eat on a blustery winter night when you're chilled to the bone. On such nights, a steaming tureen will warm the body and salve the soul.

But soup is also a summer thing. When the garden and the farmer's market are overflowing with gorgeous produce, your homemade soup will come out of the pot bursting with flavors you just can't replicate any other time of year. And on sultry nights when it's too hot to think about solid food, soup—eaten either chilled or hot—is the perfect tonic.

Still, once the concept of summer soup is embraced there's another hurdle to overcome. Traditionalists hold that soup, whether in summer or winter, does not go with wine, as it dulls the palate to the charms of the grape. But tradition is giving way to a more relaxed and enlightened view of soup and wine.

"There's a bit of a stigma out there about pairing soup and wine," says Chef Michael Allemeier, winery chef at Mission Hill Family Estate in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. "The older sommeliers just cringe when they hear this, but we want to debunk that myth."

"Traditionally, one wouldn't serve alcohol with soup," says Chef Annie Wayte, of Nicole's and 202 in New York and London. "In the past the alcohol was *in* the soup." But in her restaurants today, she reports, "the majority do drink wine with soup."

Pairing modern-day soups

But can soup and wine work when the soup has characteristics of the so-called "emerging" flavor profiles—Latin and Asian—that are so popular today?

Yes, says Chef Richard Sandoval, who has won acclaim for his "modern Mexican" cuisine at Maya in New York and some six other restaurants in San Francisco, Denver and Las Vegas (with new ones opening soon in Mexico City and Dubai). "Latin soups—some of our soups—are a little bit heartier. You could

go into a nice Pinot Noir and it will stand up to the heartier soup. Asian, Indian and Mexican are similar in that they are very bold cuisines. They have a lot of flavor. These cuisines can even stand up to Zinfandels and Cabs."

When it comes to actual pairings, however, the virtue of summertime soups—all that fabulous summer produce—can, paradoxically, make the pairings a little tricky.

Take tomatoes, a highlight of summer. Their acidity has earned them a reputation as being tough to match with wine. Gazpacho, the chilled vegetable soup of Spain that traditionally features raw tomatoes, is a summertime staple. What to do? Allemeier suggests Sauvignon Blanc, particularly one made in the New World style. "The little bit of acidity on the palate from the tomato and the little bit of acidity from the wine kind of neutralizes both of them," he says. And the herbaceous notes of the wine work well with any herbal ingredients or garnishes. He serves Mission Hill's Sauvignon Blanc with both a tomato gazpacho and a chilled tomato consommé (the latter includes a goat cheese dumpling, and is garnished with fresh lovage).

And he'd pair the same wine, or perhaps a Pinot Blanc, with another notoriously difficult character from the farm: asparagus. "Any trace of bitterness in vegetables is a real challenge [when it comes to wine pairings]," says Allemeier. "Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Blanc are my favorite picks to deal with troublesome vegetables. You want to avoid oak and creaminess in the wine and turn to that natural fruit and acidity of the Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Blanc."

Sandoval is also a fan of pairing Sauvignon Blanc with any number of hard-to-match vegetable-based soups. He pairs it with his avocado-cucumber gazpacho. The soup has a little bit of spice from Serrano chilies. Chilies go well with acidity—you get the nice crispness of the wine."

But Sauvignon Blanc is not the only wine for summer soups.

Summer Squash Soup with Basil and Parmesan