

Chicken Dijonnaise

If you are driving into the Burgundy wine region of France from the north on A31 you will “experience” a wonderfully intimate city which looks as though it was frozen in time back in the 1700’s. Many streets are of cobblestone and most are so very narrow that it’s hard to believe any thing larger than a Vespa scooter could actually navigate them.

You have entered Dijon and even though it is surrounded by some of the great wine names of France...Gevry Chambertin, Saint Julien, Fixin...it will always be associated with that humble condiment, mustard. Specifically, we are talking about Dijon mustard, a brownish gray paste that can add a wonderful “bite” to the humble hotdog or produce a delightfully rich sauce served in some of the best restaurants of the world.

This area of Burgundy yields some of the most sumptuous “comfort foods” in the world and although many involve simple, easy to find ingredients, the combination is timeless. One of my absolute favorites is Chicken Dijonnaise and it’s both simple to make and a great hit with most diners. I would count this one as a “must have” in your personal collection of recipes.

Chicken Dijonnaise

(serves 4)

Your choice of chicken for this recipe is determined by your personal taste. I prefer to use boneless, skinless breasts and regular thighs in combination based on what my guests enjoy.

2 1/2 lbs. chicken (cut into pieces, washed and patted dry)
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/2 cup sweet onion (diced)
4 tablespoons good quality Dijon mustard
1/2 cup half & half
1/2 teaspoon thyme
1/2 teaspoon dried chives
1/2 teaspoon dried parsley
1/4 teaspoon dried sage
1 teaspoon minced garlic
4 heaping tablespoons sour cream
1/2 cup dry white wine

Using a heavy bottom deep skillet or Dutch oven (I prefer cast iron), melt half of your butter over medium heat and fry your chicken until lightly brown on both sides, about 8 to 10 minutes per side. Salt your chicken as you place it in the skillet. Once the chicken is done remove the pieces from the skillet onto paper towels to drain and hold aside.

Keeping your skillet temperature at medium, deglaze your pan with your white wine using a wooden spoon to remove any bits of chicken from the bottom of the skillet. Add

the remaining portion of butter and once it is melted add your sweet onions. Continue to cook them until they are soft and just beginning to brown. Add your Dijon mustard while stirring followed by your half and half. Bring everything up to heat until it is bubbling.

Place your chicken back into the pan adding your thyme, chives, parsley, sage and garlic. Reduce your temperature to medium low and cover. Allow chicken to cook for 15 minutes and then flip over your pieces. Continue to cook for another 10 minutes.

Remove your chicken to a serving dish. Stir your sour cream into the remaining sauce in your skillet allowing it to come up to temperature for a few minutes. Your sauce should be ultra rich and creamy. Ladle the sauce over your chicken and serve immediately.

This is a really simple way of presenting chicken and even for those who are not crazy about mustard the effect is subtle and the chicken will fall off the bone. It's absolutely scrumptious!

A really nice side dish to go along with your chicken now is fresh asparagus, which is coming in at most local markets. I've recently had the opportunity to get a couple of pounds of asparagus from Turner Farms in Indian Hill and I can tell you it is the best I've ever tasted. They are located at 7400 Given Road. Everything they produce is organic and it's worth the drive if you really want a treat. (Their fancy mixed salad greens will blow you away.)

If you want to try something a bit different with your asparagus I would recommend that you put away the steamer and opt to stir-fry it in two teaspoons of light olive oil just until it begins to soften but still has some crunch to it. Shake on a teaspoon of sesame seeds before you serve it and give it a little squeeze of fresh lemon juice. You'll be in for a thrill.

My wine recommendation this week comes as a result of phone calls I've received recently from readers looking for a red wine they can enjoy both for taste and the health benefits we've all been reading about over the past years. The problem these readers have been faced with is that they simply don't enjoy dry wines...they want to taste some fruitiness in the wine and residual sweetness.

In 1971 many things happened in Germany's wine industry. A new wine law was implemented, their vintage year was one of the greatest of the century, and a new hybrid grape was introduced with about 1,100 acres being planted in it. Little did we know then of how important that grape, Dornfelder, would become as time marched on and harvests began to come out of that vineyard.

Some of those grapes have been devoted to dry wine production, however the real triumph for Dornfelder has come from the seductive, ultra complex wine produced when the grape is harvested late in the season. The wine is both fruity and balanced. This is not a cloyingly sweet wine. It is just the right amount of all of the components needed to produce a real masterpiece.

The 2002 Essinger Rheinpfalz Dornfelder is produced by the legendary Dr. Strieth and he has done a remarkable job of presenting the very best characteristics of wonderful fruit produced in a great vintage year. The wine offers a subtle “black cherry” flavor base with hints of cinnamon, allspice, wild blackberries, and just a wisp of tannin. It has real style and elegance along with an “easy to enjoy” character that is sure to please most palates regardless of preconceived notions of “sweeter” wines.

This wine would be a strong recommendation for those of you searching for the perfect wine to enjoy when most out there just don’t do the trick. Years ago I was given one of several prescriptions for a happy marriage and so far it has worked well...a front porch or a fireplace (depending on the season), your soul mate, a glass of wine and conversation. Cheers!

If you have questions or comments contact us at the Winedog, (888) 288-0668 or you can visit us online at www.winedog.com.