



CHOCOLATE AND CHERRIES FOR YOUR VALENTINE

By Brian Cohen

Flowers. Chocolate. Chocolate-covered cherries. Chocolate-covered cherries with flowers. And, a card. Valentine's Day gets old; it becomes routine. But how to break out of the rut?

Try thinking outside the candy box this year. Stick with the chocolate and the cherries, but in a new form . . . as a sauce for a romantic meal. (Of course, flowers might still be a nice touch, particularly if you're in the dog house. It worked for me.)

I ended up preparing a dinner of pork tenderloin in a semi-sweet chocolate sauce with cherries, cream, brandy and rosemary, accompanied by sautéed mushrooms and saffron rice. I used the accompanying wine to finish the mushroom sauté. The meal took about an hour to prepare and cook, but it was worth the effort and easy to organize.

As for the wine, I needed a bottle with a healthy dose of dark cherries, raspberries, a smidgen of smokey chocolate and bit of spices and herbs. The solution: King Family's 2010 Meritage. Blessed with soft tannins, full body, a strong hit of bright cherries on the nose and darker ones on the palate, the right-bank inspired blend was perfect for the fête de l'amour.

Preparing dinner, the interplay between the wine and food was somewhat metaphoric. In the attack phase, the slight sweetness of the sauce clashed a little with the dryness of the wine. During the evolution stage, however, things seemed to meld. Finally, at the finish, there was a beautiful melding of the darker undertones and texture of the sauce with those of the Meritage for a happy ending. It just goes to show you that sometimes it's worth the effort to stick with something until it all works out.



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