

Dungeness Crab and Sauvignon Blanc

Chef Mark Dommen, One Market Restaurant, San Francisco

The origins of this dish reflect the background of Mark Dommen, chef and partner at One Market restaurant in San Francisco. He learned his trade from such masters as Hubert Keller, at local destination Fleur de Lys, and Jean-Louis Palladin in Washington, D.C. “The original thought process,” Dommen says, “is just that crab and apple are a classic combination.”



But his riffs on the classic have more down-to-earth roots. The crab is Dungeness, which is in season on the West Coast from November to June. He was raised in Sonoma, where his mother has a small vineyard, and is now raising a family in Napa, so local produce means more than marketing to him. He swapped out the apples because “I buy a lot of stuff at the farmers market, and this one guy has Asian pears, so I tried them. The texture is better—it has crunch.”

Further twists came from staff: “I have a lot of Latino cooks. They have a tendency to spice fruit with cayenne and lemon.”

The result is elegant and earthy, with sweet, briny crab, and bright pear lightly bound in creamy, tangy yogurt, with peppery mâche and snappy radishes for garnish. For wine matching, this dish is right in the strike zone. Clearly a white is preferable, but why this grape? “The fruit component of Sauvignon Blanc is pear, peach and apple, and Sauvignon Blanc and shellfish are a match made in heaven. Snowden reminds me of the French style—lighter, crisp, slightly mineral.”

I ask him how he might doctor the recipe to match with, say, a California Chardonnay. He pauses, then gives it his best shot, using mayonnaise instead of yogurt, for example. But his heart isn't in it: “I focus on the plate, then deal with the pairing.” —Owen Dugan

CHEF'S PICK: Snowden Sauvignon Blanc 2008

WINE SPECTATOR ALTERNATES:

Beringer Sauvignon Blanc Napa Valley 2008 (88, \$16)

Geysler Peak Sauvignon Blanc California 2008 (86, \$12)



TO MAKE DUNGENESS CRAB AND ASIAN PEAR SALAD:

2 Asian pears

1½ tablespoons lemon olive oil

Juice of 1 lemon

Cayenne pepper

Sea salt

1 sprig mint, about 10 leaves, plus a few small leaves for garnish

1 scallion

8 ounces cooked and cleaned Dungeness crabmeat (Dommen strongly recommends cooking and picking it yourself)

2 French breakfast radishes

2 ounces mâche

4 tablespoons yogurt

8 Dungeness crab legs, cooked and carefully removed from shell

1 tablespoon basil oil, or mild extra-virgin olive oil

1. Peel the pears and julienne with a mandoline or a knife, making long strips, each approximately ⅛-inch by ⅛-inch.

2. Place the pears in a bowl and add 1 tablespoon of lemon olive oil, 1 tablespoon of lemon juice, a pinch of cayenne pepper and sea salt to taste. Mix well and allow the flavors to meld.

3. Cut the larger mint leaves into a chiffonade, finely dice the scallion, and mix the mint and scallion into the pears.

4. In a separate bowl, add the cleaned crabmeat, (keeping the legs in reserve), and dress the meat with the remaining lemon olive oil and lemon juice. Mix well and set aside.

5. Clean the radishes and cut them into a fine julienne.

6. Wash the mâche and dry. Toss with a couple

drops of lemon olive oil and lemon juice.

7. To plate the salad, place a tablespoon of yogurt in the center of each of 4 plates.

8. Place four ring molds on top of the yogurt. Divide the pear mixture among the ring molds and press evenly.

9. Divide the crabmeat among the ring molds and press to compact the mixture in the ring.

10. Carefully remove the rings; the salad should hold its shape.

11. Top each salad with two pieces of leg meat and garnish with the radish.

12. Divide the mâche among the plates.

13. Drizzle with basil oil, and place small mint leaves around the plate.

Serves 4.