

Wine Spectator

WineSpectator.com

**OUR EDITORS PICK
THEIR FAVORITES
VALUES
FOR
EVERY
BUDGET**

**200+
WINES
TO TRY**



OREGON PINOT NOIR: ELEGANCE IN 2013

**VALENTINE'S DAY SWEETS
WITH MATCHING WINES**

A MASTER WHISKY BLENDER



A PERFECT MATCH

Apple Napoleons With Late-Harvest Sauvignon Blanc

Emily Luchetti thinks dessert should be simple. "You want to bite into it and then automatically, reactively, instinctually, your hand moves to take another bite because it's so good," she says.

Luchetti was working at Jeremiah Tower's San Francisco restaurant Stars in the mid-1980s, first as a line cook, then as lunch chef, when she discovered her love of baking. "I felt like I'd found my home," she says. She was pastry chef of Stars for eight years before moving on to San Francisco's Farallon, then Waterbar, both winners of *Wine Spectator's* Best of Award of Excellence. With six cookbooks to her name, Luchetti now runs the pastry programs of San Francisco restaurants the Cavalier, the Marlow and Park Tavern.

In a world where many triumphs are the work of years—publishing a book, growing a career, raising children—Luchetti marvels at the immediacy of spreading joy through making sweets. "And if you take those little memorable times and you add 'em up over 20 years," she reflects, "that can be quite symbolic."

An ideal Valentine's Day treat for two, Luchetti's napoleon recipe layers apple compote with delicate almond wafers, a dollop of crème fraîche and a drizzle of caramel. She and chief beverage officer Nicole Blakeley pair it with Hamel Family Wines Sauvignon Blanc Sonoma Valley Late Harvest 2012, redolent of lemon, apricot, macadamia and crème brûlée. The wine's balance of sugar and acidity harmonizes with the smoothness of the caramel and the creamy tang of the crème fraîche.

The caramel can be prepared up to two weeks ahead, so if you're new to making it, leave yourself time to get it right. To avoid burning it, Luchetti suggests using a light-colored pan and turning off the heat when the mixture is just shy of the perfect amber hue. It will continue cooking slowly, and you can turn the heat back on if it's not quite there. Once you nail it, Luchetti promises, "that is an epic moment."

—Hillary Sims

HOW TO MAKE APPLE NAPOLEONS WITH ALMOND CROQUANTS, CARAMEL SAUCE AND CRÈME FRAÎCHE

3/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar
1/2 cup heavy cream



EMILY LUCHETTI
BIG NIGHT RESTAURANT GROUP
SAN FRANCISCO



RECOMMENDED WINES

CHEF'S PICK: Hamel Family Wines Sauvignon Blanc Sonoma Valley Late Harvest 2012 (\$75/375ml)
WINE SPECTATOR ALTERNATES: Château Coutet Barsac 2012 (92, \$50), Giesen Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough The Brothers Late Harvest 2013 (90, \$35/375ml)

1 large Golden Delicious apple
2 to 3 tablespoons apple juice or water
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
Pinch of kosher salt
1 tablespoon sliced almonds, toasted
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 1/2 tablespoons firmly packed dark brown sugar
1 tablespoon light corn syrup
1 1/2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon old-fashioned oats
2 to 3 tablespoons crème fraîche

1. To make the caramel sauce, in a medium saucepan, stir together $3/4$ cup sugar and $1/4$ cup water, taking care not to slosh the mixture. Cook over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Increase heat to high and cook without stirring until sugar is amber-colored.

2. Remove from heat. Wearing oven mitts, slowly stir in 1 tablespoon cream with a wooden spoon or heat-resistant spatula. The caramel will sputter; let the bubbles subside, then carefully add the remaining cream. Stir to combine. Let cool slightly. The caramel will keep for up to 2 weeks in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Reheat gently in the microwave.

3. To make the compote, peel and core the apple, slice it $1/4$ inch thick and cut it into $1/2$ - to $3/4$ -inch pieces. In a small saucepot or sauté pan,

combine apples, 1 tablespoon sugar, 2 tablespoons apple juice, the lemon juice and the salt. Cook over medium heat, stirring gently, until the apples are soft. Add more juice as necessary until the apples have softened, making sure it cooks off entirely. Cool to room temperature. The compote will keep for up to 3 days in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Bring to room temperature before assembly.

4. To make the croquants, preheat oven to 350°F. Roughly crush almonds with a rolling pin on the bottom of a pot. In a small pot over medium heat, melt butter with brown sugar and corn syrup, stirring occasionally until just combined. Remove from heat and stir in flour, oats and almonds.

5. On parchment-lined baking sheets, drop 11 flat teaspoons of batter 3 to 4 inches apart. Bake until bubbling and golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool, then carefully remove. The croquants will keep for up to 2 days in an airtight container. (You will have extra croquants.)

6. To assemble, dab a bit of crème fraîche onto each plate to hold napoleon in place. Top with a croquant, a spoonful of compote, a spoonful of crème fraîche and a drizzle of caramel. Repeat with croquant, compote, crème fraîche and caramel. Finish with a croquant. Serve immediately.

Serves 2.