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A Grape Walked into an Olive Bar...

By Susie Iventosch



Grape-Olive Compote on 3-cheese spread. Photo Susie Iventosch

This wonderful recipe, sent to me by one of our faithful Lamorinda Weekly readers, Anna Morrison of Orinda, is most unusual ... and incredibly delicious, too!

I must admit, I was a bit leery of this concoction, created by epicurean Susan Jeter, and included in Robin Maxwell's novel, Signora da Vinci. Somehow grapes and Greek olives did not seem the perfect combination to me, though I love each-separately. Still, it was an intriguing recipe and I decided to give it a whirl, making a few changes of my own.

Oh my gosh ... what my family had been missing for all of these years! The compote is divine when served over a mixture of goat, blue and cream cheeses on baguette slices toasted with olive oil and sea salt. I have now served this dish to guests at eight different gatherings and everyone, from college boys to 80-year old adults, has absolutely loved it!

The recipe calls for seedless red grapes, and even though I tried it with green grapes one time, I don't recommend it. It is best to stick to the red grapes on this one. Perhaps you could try adding some green Greek olives, too. We used just Kalamata, but I think cracked green olives

would add a nice touch.

The compote can be made days ahead and refrigerated until ready to serve, and over the Thanksgiving holiday, when the oven was preoccupied, we also made the Grape-Olive compote on the stove top, cooking it down in a good saute pan.

Ingredients

Compote

21/2 cups seedless red grapes, cut in half or quarters (measure after cutting)

11/2 cups pitted Kalamata olives, cut in half

(measure after cutting)

1 teaspoon dried thyme, or 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Cheese spread (adjust

quantities as you like)

1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese

1 cup cream cheese

4 oz. Montrachet goat cheese

Directions

Compote

Toss all together and place in a greased or sprayed, small casserole dish Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Stir and cool. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Cheese Spread

In a medium sized bowl, beat blue cheese with an electric beater until as smooth as possible. Beat in cream cheese and goat cheese. Refrigerate until ready to use. Then spread in a round, about 1 inch thick, on a serving platter, and spread compote on top. Serve on crostini toasted with olive oil and a wee bit of sea salt

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