



## JUST DESSERTS

Stumped what wine to uncork for the dessert? Take a leaf out of Belgian Chef Roger Van Damme's book.

**S**weet wines... people love them or hate them. There's very little middle ground. Most dessert wines are desserts in themselves, with exaggerated sugars – the grapes are late harvest, have lost water and the sugar has consequently concentrated. Or they are made Sauternes like by pressing botrytis into service, a fungus that concentrates the sugar. Then there are the ice wines where grapes are harvested after they have frozen (the sugar is separated from the frozen water before pressing). The last resort of the dessert table are the fortified wines.

What all these wines have in common is the sweetness. If you love sweet wines, that's the way to go, but if you rather keep the sweetness in check, there are options. Also bear in mind that with traditional dessert wines, the dessert would have to be just as sweet as the wine for the pairing to work or it's a no contest. If a sugar high is not an option, or if you are looking for something different think of the wines Fin (a wine importer, [www.fin.com](http://www.fin.com)) paired with Chef Roger Van Damme's creations recently in Bangkok for the World Gourmet Festival. Chef Van Damme, from Belgium, is recognised as one of the culinary world's most creative pâtissiers and the 'godfather of molecular pastry'. Gault Millau has also recognised him as 'Chef of the Year' recently. His creations are works of art and just as delicious.

Van Damme began the five-course dessert dinner with 'Gin Fizz', an alcoholic light dessert that was paired 2010 TO, Heinz Velich, Neusiedlersee, Burgenland, Austria. Van Damme's creation is a cube of crème dulce de leche with a cube of lemon, tangarine,

bergamot and orange, topped with herbs and crème, cacao cookies pistache. The wine, a blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon with a touch of Welschriesling offered brightly fresh-fruit tones; it was subtly creamy, yet delicate. Its apricot and pineapple fruit tones tinged with citrus – a cross between Riesling and white Burgundy.

Next dessert was 'Half Moon-Chocolate biscuit brownie with milk chocolate tonka, caramel, fresh passion fruit, banana, mango and a coulis'. The wine paired with this was from Southern Rhone – 2010 Les Plans VDP de Vaucluse, Domaine Santa Duc. A tank-aged blend of 50 percent Grenache, 30 percent Syrah and 20 percent Merlot, Alicante and Cinsault, that offered a soft, uncomplicated red experience with a velvety texture. The wine, importantly, did not overpower the dessert, letting the chocolate speak for itself.

A delightfully fresh dessert – Lady in Red – followed. Essentially it was a sphere of yoghurt with raspberry with a white chocolate mousse, strawberry and a touch of basil. All this on a base of cookie dough. Paired with it was 2012 Moscato d'Asti DOCG, Vietti, Piedmont, Italy. A delicately sweet wine with a hint of sparkle; the acidity giving it freshness that perfectly complemented the raspberry and yoghurt. Chef Van Damme then plated his piece de resistance: 'My lovely Belgian Chocolate mousse' – a quenelle of mousse made from Belgian chocolate. For this pairing Fin brought out the port, their most traditional pairing of the evening – CLA Porto Special Reserve, Quinta Nova, Douro, Portugal. Fresh, intense and smooth with a long finish, it went down well. ■