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Pairing: Rosé with watermelon salad



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Our Wine of the Week, **Lasseter Family Winery 2014 Enjoué (\$28)**, a rosé of three Rhone varietals, syrah, grenache and mourvedre, is refreshing, delicious and delicately engaging on every level, from its first aromas to its final sip. It's a perfect summer quaffer but welcome in cooler months, too, especially when you want a bit of figurative sunshine in your glass.

Aromas are both briny and floral, as if you were standing in a field of wildflowers as a sea breeze caresses you in the morning sun. On the palate, you can let the wine make you think of specific fruits if you like, but you needn't bother. I notice Santa Rosa plum, watermelon, mangosteen, strawberry and golden raspberry, all strung together like pretty pearls on a strand of bright acid. But these flavors, along with lovely river-rock minerality, are beautifully integrated into a seamless whole, so why not just relax and enjoy it?

When it comes to food, you almost can't go wrong. In the summer, the wine is lovely with tomatoes, sweet peppers, mildly spicy peppers, cucumbers, zucchini, grilled stone fruit and simple green salads. Grilled pizza with simple toppings make great matches. Pissaladiere, ratatouille and bouillabaisse are wonderful companions that mirror the wine's roots in the south of France. Bourride, a luscious fish stew enriched with egg yolk and aioli, is also a wonderful pairing. Salade Niçoise, made with wild

Pacific King salmon instead of tuna, is another fabulous match.

From my first sip to the last, two bottles (and a few days) later, I kept thinking about the gravlax I had just made with absinthe and black-pepper essential oil. It's a lovely pairing and I've posted it at "Eat This Now" at pantry.blogs.pressdemocrat.com.

For today's recipe, I've chosen something you don't have to wait a few days for, as you do gravlax. This recipe is adapted from a simple watermelon salad in "The Good Cook's Book of Salt & Pepper" (Skyhorse Publishing, 2015).

Watermelon, Bacon, Feta & Arugula Salad

Serves 4

4 bacon slices, fried until just barely crisp, drained

2-3 cups fresh ripe watermelon, in uneven cubes, seeded and chilled

3 handfuls small arugula leaves

— Kosher salt

— Best-quality extra-virgin olive oil

4 ounces feta cheese, broken into small chunks

— Black pepper in a mill

Break or cut the bacon into 1-inch pieces. Set aside.

Divide the watermelon among individual plates.

Put the arugula in a bowl, season lightly with salt, drizzle with a little olive oil and toss to coat thoroughly. Add the bacon, toss again and pile on the plates next to the watermelon.

Scatter the feta cheese on top, season generously with black pepper and enjoy right away.

Note: Vegetarians can omit the bacon and use 1/3 cup Marcona almonds instead.

Michele Anna Jordan is author of the new "Good Cook's" series. Email Jordan at michele@saladdresser.com. Her blog, "Eat This Now," is at pantry.blogs.pressdemocrat.com.