

hope & grace

NAPA VALLEY

Napa Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon and steak can be a simplistic and logical train of thought as the winter sneaks up on us. The vines are shedding their leaves and we are donning scarves and jackets and huddling by the fire at night. The fresh burrata from the farmer's market has all been eaten and the Riesling bottle is empty. Our souls and bellies (despite being stuffed from turkey and gilette gravy) are craving all things country and French this time of year. With the 2006 hope & grace St. Helena Cabernet Sauvignon revisiting us we have found culinary inspiration. The team has been busy sharing recipe secrets for boeuf bourguignon, texting pictures of buttery brioche popovers and smoking our own sea salts to perfectly finish a juicy steak. One classic recipe we have all appreciated is the Steak au Poivre. Simple, elegant, robust and satisfying. . . .

Steak au Poivre

Serves Four

Preparation Time: 30 Minutes — Total Time 1 ½ hours

“If you would like to fancy up a steak, there are fewer better options than this bistro standby. It is quick and easy, but has a very sophisticated flavor, thanks to the cognac and shallots in the sauce. It is important to crush the peppercorns rather than grind them in the peppermill, because the intense bursts of flavor caused by biting into the little chunks of pepper are the hallmark of this dish.”

3	tablespoons black peppercorns
4	(¾ - inch thick) boneless top loin steaks (about 8 ounces each)
1	tablespoon vegetable oil
3	tablespoons unsalted butter
¼	Cup Cognac
2/3	Cup of heavy cream
Garnish	Flat leaf Parsley, chopped Salt, to taste

750 ml '06 hope & grace Cabernet Sauvignon

Coarsely crush peppercorns in a sealed plastic bag or between two sheets of wax paper with the bottom of a heavy skillet. Pat steaks dry. Press pepper onto both sides of steaks and let stand at room temperature, loosely covered with wax paper, for one hour. Preheat oven to 200°F.

Season steak with salt. Heat oil and 1 tablespoon butter in a 10-11 inch heavy skillet over moderately high heat until the foam subsides. Add steaks in two batches and cook, turning once, until meat is just springy to the touch, 4 to 5 minutes per batch for medium rare. With a slotted spatula, transfer steaks to a baking sheet with sides and keep warm in the oven.

Pour off the fat in the skillet, then add shallots and remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and cook over moderate heat, stirring, until shallots are softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Add cognac, bring to boil, and boil until reduced to glaze, about 2 minutes. Add cream and any meat juices accumulated on the baking sheet, bring to a boil, and boil, stirring occasionally, until sauce is slightly thickened and reduced to about ¾ cup, about 3 minutes. Season with salt, parsley.

Serve steaks with sauce, garnish with watercress, if desired.

(inspired by Gourmet)

. . . the watercress is not to be missed for some, some put pats of butter on the steaks as they enter the oven to rest and so the details vary just as the sides. Anything from Thyme Potato Puree to Roasted Root Vegetables, Green Beans to Brussel Sprouts, Caesar Salad to Arugula with a Lemon Vinaigrette. . . . We encourage you to make it your own and add it to your arsenal of perfectly paired Cabernet recipes. . . .

Thyme Potato Puree

4-6 Yukon Gold Potatoes
1 cup milk
4 tbsp. butter
Salt, pepper, fresh thyme

Cook cut potatoes in fast salted boiling water until tender. Drain and rest to draw out the moisture. Heat milk with thyme

sprigs and butter. Puree potatoes adding butter and blending with hand-held mixer. Scrape sides. Season to taste.