

Outdoor Dining: Simple And Beautiful Fresh California Figs With Fromage Blanc And Honey

(NAPSA)—Summer weather and a big shade tree create the ideal setting for the elegant form of outdoor dining perfected in Italy known as *al fresco* (“in fresh air”). Where the typical American barbeque stars steaks, burgers and beer, *al fresco* entertaining usually offers a full menu of the summer’s bounty, accompanied by refreshing wines.

Traditional *al fresco* dining often includes fresh figs grown in California, where the growing conditions closely resemble those of the Mediterranean, producing perfect fruit bursting with flavor that’s preferred by professional chefs.

This simple recipe, at once tart and sweet, crunchy and smooth, combines all the wonderful flavors of the season.

When pairing wines for *al fresco* meals, Ferrari-Carano’s bright and lively Fume Blanc perfectly complements the herbaceous flavors of the fresh figs with their lemony, creamy filling.

Fresh California Figs with Fromage Blanc and Honey

- 4 ounces fromage blanc
- 3 ounces cream cheese
- 1-2 tablespoons half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 20 fresh California figs
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped mint leaves
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cut a double piece of cheesecloth 10 by 10-inches and lay out flat on the counter.

Whip the fromage blanc and cream cheese with 1 tablespoon of the half-and-half. If the mixture is too thick to work with,



A honey of a dish: fresh figs stuffed with cheese and drizzled with honey.

add the remaining tablespoon until smooth. Fold in the lemon zest. Gather the mixture into a ball with your hands and place in the center of the prepared cheesecloth. Pull the cloth around the ball and twist at the top to tighten and compact the ball. Place in a mesh strainer over a small bowl and refrigerate overnight.

Clean figs with a damp paper towel and remove the tough stems. On each fig, make two cuts forming a cross cut at the top, and continue to cut into the fig, stopping about ½-inch from the base. Open each fig slightly, like a flower and arrange on a serving platter. Slip a spoonful of the cheese mixture into the center of each, drizzle with honey and sprinkle with mint. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Yields: 20 stuffed figs

Recipe created by Jeffrey Madura of John Ash & Co., Santa Rosa, California

Courtesy of the California Fig Advisory Board

For simple, beautiful recipes and wine pairings that enhance the *al fresco* experience, visit www.californiafigs.com.