

Spooky snacks for Halloween

Get set for Halloween by trying out these delicious seasonal recipes from some of our top chefs – and there's not a pumpkin in sight...

THE nights are drawing in rapidly and Halloween will soon be upon us. It's thought that Halloween originated from ancient Celtic harvest festivals, in particular Samhain. In ancient times it was also widely believed that on October 31 the souls of the dead would revisit their homes seeking hospitality. Places were set at the dinner table and by the fire to welcome them. After that, the feasting began. If you'd like to prepare a 21st century feast for guests from this world (or the next, for that matter), then the following recipes will fit the bill.

ROAST BUTTERNUT SQUASH & SAGE RISOTTO WITH PICKLED WALNUTS & PERL LAS

From Jim Dobson, head chef at the Fox and Hounds, Llancafán

Ingredients (serves 4)
 1 ltr warm vegetable stock
 25 ml olive oil
 300g Arborio risotto rice
 2 shallots – finely diced
 1 clove garlic – finely chopped
 75 ml white wine
 1 butternut squash
 50g butter
 Salt
 100g Perl Las – broken into pieces (or alternative blue cheese)
 Jar of pickled walnuts
 Sage – finely chopped

Method
 Firstly, make the butternut squash puree. Peel and dice the butternut squash, heat a pan with a little oil and add the diced squash and season with salt. Try to get a nice light brown colour all over the squash, remove half from the pan on to a small

metal tray and bake in the oven at 180c for 10 minutes and save for later.

Cover the rest of the squash in the pan with water and simmer for a few mins until soft.

Carefully drain the squash into a blender keeping a small amount of the water. Blend with the butter and add some of the water if needed. Pass through a sieve and keep aside until you have cooked the risotto.

In a heavy bottom pan add the olive oil then gently cook the shallots and garlic until soft, add the rice and season with salt, stir for a minute or so until the rice turns translucent then add the white wine and reduce until almost dry.

Begin to add the stock, a ladle at a time. Simmer gently and stir occasionally until the liquid is absorbed by the rice, ensuring the contents of the pan do not stick to the base.

Continue to add the stock until all gone and absorbed (add more stock if required, the rice should be al dente). Remove the pan from the heat.

To finish, stir the squash puree, diced squash and chopped sage into the rice. Consistency should be thick but not stiff.

Spoon into serving bowls and garnish with sliced pickled walnuts, blue cheese and deep fried sage leaves (optional).

Champagne and therefore permeated with bubbles. So, red it is.

The CHATEAU CAMBIS CÔTES DU RHÔNE VILLAGES 2014 (£10.99, Virgin Wines) is hewn from syrah and grenache and has red and black fruits on the nose with soft boxwood notes adding structure and perfume to the bouquet.

In the mouth, the savoury black fruits are lifted through the mid-palate and given a slap on the backside from the crunchier red fruits delivered from the grenache in the blend.

The finish is quite full and long-lasting for such a vibrant Côtes du Rhône which shows off its versatility with a whole raft of foods.

From the Concha Y Toro stable comes the MARQUES DE CASA CONCHA CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2015 (£13, Tesco).

Two vineyards at the foot of the Andes in the Maipo Valley supply the fruit for this concentrated cab that is fermented for eight days in stainless steel tanks and aged for 16 months in 5,000 litre French oak foudres.



APPLE TART TATIN

From Simon King, chef/proprietor at restaurant 1861, near Abergavenny

Ingredients
 300g caster sugar
 100mls water
 8 apples such as Cox Orange Pippins
 4 puff pastry discs rolled into 15cm circles, 3 to 4 mm thick

Method
 Dissolve the sugar in the water in a copper pan, bring to the boil and boil hard until an amber coloured caramel is achieved. Then quickly pour the hot caramel into 15cm blini-style pans. (Alternatively any deep oven proof dish or frying pan will suffice, but cut your pastry discs accordingly.)

Peel and core the apples, arrange neatly in the pan (on top of the caramel and bearing in mind that your display will eventually be upside down).

Cover the apples with the pastry disc. Pierce a couple of holes in the pastry to allow steam to escape and place in a pre-heated oven at 200c and bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until bubbling at the edges and the pastry is golden brown.

Remove from the oven and leave to stand for a few minutes. Turn the tart out onto a plate and serve with cream or ice cream.

BAKED BRIE

From the Topstak Gallery Café in the Vale of Glamorgan

Ingredients
 1 whole brie
 4 tbs honey
 Slices of garlic
 Rosemary sprigs

Method
 Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. Place the brie on a sheet pan covered with parchment paper and drizzle with the honey, and dot with garlic cloves and fresh rosemary sprigs. Bake for five to seven minutes, or until it starts to ooze but not melt. Serve with cheese biscuits or crusty bread.

STRAIGHT OFF THE VINE

Neil Cammies



I DON'T know about you but I'm finding the evenings a little damp and nippy despite the uncharacteristic bursts of balmy weather. So much so that I bought a little oil-filled radiator for our 'summerhouse'.

And as the good lady has just commented as I tap away at the keys it's 'gorn orf dark' at seven... how sad.

As my regular readers would note I'm a bit of a fair-weather creature, even though I spent many years freezing my extremities off on various rugby pitches up and down this fair principality... nesh, I think it called.

So, I doubt that many glasses of rosé will see the light of day on our table at the moment – unless of course it hails from

“So, I doubt that many glasses of rosé will see the light of day on our table at the moment”

NOT JUST AN AMAZING WINE LIST...

EXCITING developments are afoot at the Parkhouse Restaurant and Wine Bar in Park Place in Cardiff.

Adam and Claire have, for years, tried to keep a level of quality with their food to keep pace with the frankly incredible wine list that has garnered many national and international awards.

The arrival of fine Welsh chef Matt Waldron, who has created a top brigade in the kitchen including another ace chef Rickie Ash, will certainly help.

So with that in mind we headed over to continue our anniversary celebrations at the Parkhouse for a simple bit of lunch – or so we thought.

After a lovely greeting by Adam, Claire and Matt we enjoyed flawless, exuberant cooking and brilliant wine matches – obv's – from sommelier Michael.

Bottom line, get yourselves down there to enjoy some of the best cooking in Wales using some of the finest ingredients in a handsome setting.

I mean £25 for a three-course lunch is an absolute steal or, at the other end of the scale, go large and hit the eight-course taster menu for dinner for £75. Whichever you choose you won't be disappointed by Matt's flawless cooking and beautiful presentation.

And don't forget to have some fun with that magnificent wine list.

There are some earthy authentic tones to the blackcurrant fruit on the nose. On the palate the deep, concentrated dark fruit shows a little spice heat across the mid-palate and some freshness from brisk acidity. A little note of pencil shavings

start to show as it develops in the glass in this en point Chilean cabernet with a fine sense of place.

Before it gets properly cold and gnarly, there's always room on



the dinner table for a glass of Rioja and the CUNE RIOJA RESERVA 2013 (RRP £15.55, Whole Foods, Luvians Bottleshop, Hailsham Cellars, Waitrose Ltd, Majestic Wine Warehouse Ltd) is a benchmark drop.

Worth paying an extra couple of quid, if you can spare it, for reserva Rioja, as all the ageing has been done for you.

The time in French and American oak shows up on the nose, but in a more restrained style than normal.

Soft vanilla notes mingle with ample red fruit from the oak influence across the nose.

The same can be said on the tastebuds with a smidge of sweetness initially, then the rich, forthright fruit takes hold with a nice, drift of acidity ambling along.

Classic, integrated tannins and elegant wood tones across the finish complete this ace Rioja.

@NeilCammies
 email: neil.cammies@walesonline.co.uk
 Columns online log on to walesonline.co.uk
 Click on the WHAT'S ON/FOOD & DRINK tab