

Pair This: Donelan Chardonnay and Tropical Chicken Salad

1 Comment

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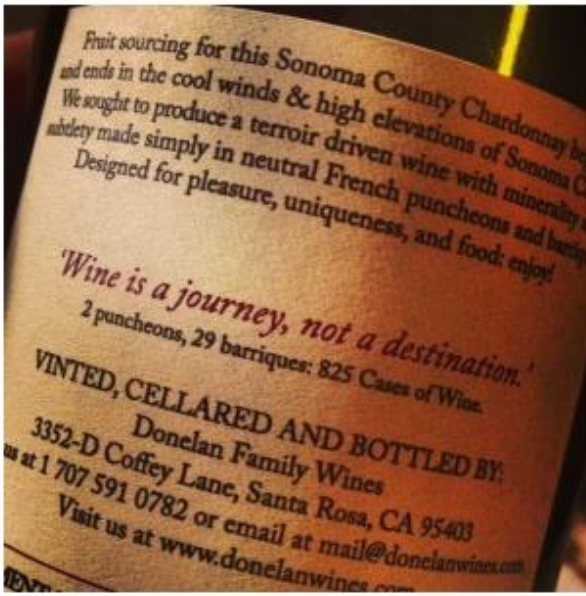
One of my all-time favorite salads for summer is a tropical-inspired chicken salad a friend told me about years ago, when I was living in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Although the recipe directions I wrote down on a Post-It note in 1999 (now food-stained with tattered edges) has no measurements included, a quick Google of the words *Tropical Chicken Salad*, immediately brought up the exact recipe on TasteofHome.com:

2 cups cubed cooked chicken
1 cup chopped celery
1 cup mayonnaise
1/2 to 1 teaspoon curry powder
1 can (20 ounces) chunk pineapple, drained
2 large firm bananas, sliced
1 can (11 ounces) mandarin oranges, drained
1/2 cup flaked coconut
3/4 cup salted peanuts or cashew halves (I use fancy mixed-nuts)

Place chicken and celery in a large bowl. Combine mayonnaise and curry powder; add to chicken mixture and mix well. Cover and chill for at least 30 minutes. Before serving, add the pineapple, bananas, oranges and coconut; toss gently. Sprinkle with nuts. Yield: 4-6 servings.

A leisurely, sunny Sunday summer afternoon called for a chilled wine to go alongside this refreshing salad. Because of the creamy texture and curried fruit flavors of the salad, I thought a Chardonnay would be an ideal pairing. **Until I popped the cork on the Donelan 2011 Nancie Chardonnay, I had no idea how perfect a pairing this particular Chardonnay would be.**





The Donelan 2011 “Nancie” Sonoma Coast Chardonnay (\$45) has gorgeous tropical fruit aromas, including pineapple, banana and mandarin oranges. That’s correct: pineapple, banana and mandarin oranges – the same ingredients that I had just blended together for the Tropical Chicken Salad. Thinking my palate had been slanted by the salad I had just prepared, I interrupted my husband (who has a great palate) from mowing the lawn to swirl and sniff the wine – he immediately said, “pineapple and oranges.” Not only did the flavors of the salad complement the flavors of the wine, and vice versa, but the solid acidic backbone sliced through the heaviness of

the mayonnaise and spices, leaving the palate refreshed and balanced. Although the mouthfeel was velvety and smooth, and the flavors were full and round, everything was balanced to perfection with the long lasting, lemon zesty finish. The richness, textures and flavors of the food and wine completely melded together, creating a perfect pairing.

With a priority that ‘quality prizes over all other factors,’ Donelan Wines in Sonoma County (a family-owned boutique winery) most certainly knows how to produce the type of Chardonnay I absolutely love. Their priority of prizing quality over all other factors shines through in this stellar Chardonnay. I can’t wait to try their Pinot Noir.

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