

Taste

Medical ticks and tuts for red

Is red wine a panacea or a problem?

KYLIE WALKER reports

THEY consumed it in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, it's a centrepiece of Christianity and Judaism and poems have been penned in tribute to it for thousands of years.

Now, 21st century medicine can't stop coming up with healthy reasons to imbibe a glass or two of good red wine.

Female wine drinkers are mulling over the news that a couple of glasses a day are thought to keep ovarian cancer at bay. It was the latest in a long line of health benefits conferred by the moderate consumption of shiraz, pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon, merlot and the like.

In the past four years, scientists and doctors have fallen over themselves to prove the health benefits of their favourite drop. Their research has found red wine protects



against damage to the heart caused by cigarette smoking; lowers cholesterol and blood pressure; helps prevent stroke, heart disease, prostate and ovarian cancer; and

may even stave off diabetes, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Antioxidants, compounds that protect body cells against oxidative damage, are believed to be responsible for most of the anti-cancer and heart health benefits of red wine.

Studies suggest a moderate intake of red wine could reduce illness and death related to heart disease by up to 60 per cent, says cardiologist Dr Bronte Ayers.

"There are many avenues of research based on epidemiological data suggesting wine is superior to spirits and beer in its protective ability — and many studies suggest red wine is best," says Ayers.

"This may be partly through the protective effects of alcohol itself and partly due to the high levels of antioxidants in red wine, particularly aged red wine."

Besides its antioxidant properties, it also seems two compounds in red wine can behave like an antibiotic, inhibiting the growth of a bacteria implicated in heart disease. US researchers found the amount of the substances in one glass of wine drastically stunted the bacteria's reproduction.

Like that other indulgence, good-quality

dark chocolate, red wine contains plant chemicals known as polyphenols, which scientists have found to lower blood pressure in animals. One polyphenol, quercetin, also could help in preventing and treating prostate cancer, research indicates.

Red wine's ability to interfere with female hormones may be partly responsible for its protective effect against ovarian cancer, says Dr Penny Webb, of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research.

In a study of nearly 1500 women, Webb and colleagues found those who drank two or more standard glasses of wine a day appeared to have half the risk of non-drinkers of contracting ovarian cancer.

However, Webb warns that its interference with female hormones could also contribute to a higher risk of breast cancer.

There are other reasons for drinkers to hesitate before uncorking a celebratory bottle of red: like any alcoholic beverage, in excess it behaves as a cancer promoter, increases the risk of heart disease, sometimes causes irreversible damage to the liver and kidneys, lowers fertility and raises blood pressure.

AAP

Go Danish to suit the occasion

ALL the news about the impending wedding of Frederik and "our Mary" triggered a memory of another much-celebrated royal wedding, the now-infamous union of Charles and Diana.

On the evening of the telecast I prepared a "royal" dinner which we enjoyed with friends as we watched the procession and service. There was a Queen Pudding for dessert but I can't recall the rest of the menu.

John Cogan, who until recently was the Danish consul in the state, told me how interested Danes have become in Tasmanian produce and recipes and that baker shops and cafes are presenting some of our dishes.

We are all familiar with the delectable Danish pastries and open Danish sandwiches. I've selected a few, easy to make Danish dishes that will be sure to satisfy as you watch the most talked about Tasmanian to be wed this year.

Danish Apple Cake is probably the best known of the dishes and is just right as an autumn dessert. Traditionally it is freestanding but it can be made in a glass



Eating in

Judith Sweet

serving dish so the attractive layering can be appreciated.

Smoked salmon tidbits

These little balls can be served as part of a selection of finger food or with stuffed celery and gherkins.

- 250g smoked salmon**
- 125g cream cheese, slightly softened**
- 1 tbsp sour cream**
- ½ tsp worcestershire sauce**
- Salt and pepper to taste**
- 1 tbsp fresh dill, finely chopped**

Chop the salmon finely and combine with the cream cheese. Add the flavourings and half the dill and mix well. Roll into small balls about 2.5cm in diameter. Scatter with the remaining dill.

Stegt hone med cognac (roast chicken in brandy)

This is a rather extravagant dish but suited to a special occasion. Have serving plates and accompanying vegetables organised before serving the chicken — and be sure you have everyone's attention when you carry this flaming dish to the table.

- 1 large organic chicken, cut into serving sized portions**
- 3 cups dry white wine**
- 2 cloves crushed garlic**
- 150g butter**
- Salt and pepper**
- 1 cup brandy**

Season the chicken pieces with salt and pepper and marinate for at least 8 hours in the white wine and garlic. Remove the chicken from the marinade and pat dry with kitchen paper. Preheat the oven to 180C.

In a large pan melt the butter and brown the chicken pieces on both sides.

Put the browned chicken pieces, along with the butter and marinade, in a covered baking dish. Cover and bake for 50 minutes, then reduce the heat to 160C. Check if more wine is required and continue cooking until the chicken is tender.

Heat a serving platter that will withstand the flaming brandy. It should have an edge to ensure the brandy doesn't run off the dish. Pile the chicken on to the warm platter, pour over the brandy and ignite and take to the table flaming.

Have any pan juices in a gravy boat and pour

over the chicken to quench the flames.

Danish apple cake

This recipe is based on one from Margaret Fulton, who has spent quite a deal of time in Denmark. The dessert has variations from town to town but all include these simple ingredients. I have successfully used quince jelly and crab-apple jelly as a substitute for the redcurrant jelly.

- 1.5kg cooking apples, peeled and sliced**
- 1 cup water**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 60g butter**
- 4 cups fine breadcrumbs from white or wholemeal bread**
- 1 tsp cinnamon**
- 3 tbsp redcurrant jelly**
- 1 cup cream, whipped**

Cook the apples with the water and all but 2 tablespoons of the sugar until they become a thick puree. Melt the butter in a heavy pan and add the breadcrumbs, the remaining sugar and the cinnamon. Mix well together and make sure all the breadcrumbs are coated with the butter mixture.

Grease a 20cm spring form tin and spoon one third of the crumbs into the bottom of it. Cover with half of the apple puree.

Spread 1 tablespoon of the jelly over the apple puree and then repeat the layering, ending with a third layer of breadcrumbs.

Bake at 170C for 45 minutes.

Remove the cake from the oven, cool and then refrigerate for a few hours or overnight.

Unmould it and spread the whipped cream over the top and drizzle with the remaining redcurrant jelly. You can leave some of the crumbs exposed if you wish.

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