Food and Wine: Toast Dr. Seuss's creation with sparkling rose

by Ron James

THE INSPIRATION

"I do not like them in a box.

I do not like them with a fox.

I do not like them in a house.

I do not like them with a mouse.

I do not like them here or there.

I do not like them anywhere.

I do not like green eggs and ham.

I do not like them, Sam-I-am."

So says the morose and irritable friend who refuses to eat Sam's favorite dish. The wonderful story, first published by Dr. Seuss in 1960, illustrates the dilemma of foodies, like Sam, when they try to get nonfoodie friends to try "exotic" dishes. Sometimes, as in Seuss' tale, the foodies succeed in opening friends' eyes to glorious new flavors and culinary pleasures.

"Green Eggs and Ham" is one of Dr. Seuss's most popular "Beginners Books" written using just 50 different words - 48 of which only have one syllable. It was the result of a bet between Seuss (Theodor Geisel) and legendary publisher Bennett Cerf, who wagered $50 that Seuss could not write a book using only 50 words. We do not know if Cerf ever paid the bet.

GREEN EGGS AND HAM - If you like green eggs and ham, you might go for green guacamole eggs and green glazed ham, says Georgeanne Brennan, who has written a book of recipes inspired by Dr. Seuss. CNS Photo.We do know that Geisel's love of food and rhymes to tell his tales dates to his childhood. His mother, Henrietta Seuss Geisel, had worked in her family's bakery as a girl. She memorized the names of pies of the day so she could chant them to customers. When her son had trouble sleeping, she lulled him asleep with the pie rhymes. He credited his mother for his rhyming ability.

During his illustrious career, Geisel made many references to wacky food creations. These fanciful foodstuffs led foodie, teacher, cookbook author and mother of four, Georgeanne Brennan, to consider a cookbook featuring green eggs and ham and other Seuss dishes.

She and illustrator Frankie Frankeny pored through the entire 44 book Seuss collection to come up with dishes for their just-published children's cookbook, "Green Eggs and Ham: Yots in Pots and Schlottz's Knots, Who-Roast-Beat, 'Fritz-Fed Fred' Food Feast, Moose Juice and Goose Juice - Recipes inspired by Dr. Seuss" (Random House, $16.95).

THE DISH

"I've always wondered what green eggs and ham would really taste like and what Dr. Seuss had in mind when he concocted them," Brennan writes in her cookbook introduction.

GEORGEANNE BRENNAN - The fanciful foodstuffs of Dr. Seuss led cookbook author and mother of four, Georgeanne Brennan, to make a cookbook featuring green eggs and ham and other Seuss dishes. CNS Photo."Was it spinach? Green food coloring? Surely not basil or pureed broccoli. And just how would you get the yolk green, and what would stick on ham to cover it so neatly and be so bright green? Was it cooked on or added later? Would it really taste good or be just a gimmick?"

It was important for Brennan that the recipes not only be zany and fun, but be deliciously good and healthy, too.

She writes, "If you, like Sam-I-am, also like green eggs and ham, you will like these green guacamole eggs and green glazed ham - just try them. You can make the guacamole as mild or spicy as you like.

"If you don't want to cook a whole ham," Brennan continues. "Try making a tablespoon or two of the glaze for a slice of ham. You can eat them here or there. You can eat them anywhere."

THE WINE

The perfect drink for this adventurous breakfast combo is a sparkling rose. It is as deliciously fun and unpretentious as the meal. We've selected one of our favorite sparklers, a 2003 Schramsberg Brut Rose ($30). It boasts tropical fruit and strawberry flavors with a crisp acidity and clean finish.

For the kids there is also a perfect pairing - just mix a little cranberry juice into some sparkling water.

Schramsberg is located on a Napa Valley mountainside near St. Helena. It is one of the oldest wineries in the wine country founded by German winemaker Joseph Schram in the mid-1800s. Robert Lewis Stevenson immortalized the winery in his journal, admitting that he had tasted 18 different wines. The journal was the basis for his book, "The Silverado Squatters."

GREEN EGGS AND HAM

Ham:

1 (8- to 10-pound) fully cooked and smoked ham

1 cup apple or mint jelly

3 medium tomatillos, husked and minced

1 cup minced cilantro leaves, or 1/2 cup minced cilantro leaves and 1/2 cup minced parsley leaves

Green Eggs:

4 ripe avocados, halved and pitted

Juice of 2 to 3 limes

1 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons white onion, minced (optional)

2 serrano chilies, seeded and minced (optional)

4 ounces butter or 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil or other light cooking oil, such as canola or sunflower

12 pasteurized eggs (see note)

Yields 12 servings.

To prepare ham: Heat ham following package instructions. Let cool to almost room temperature, about 20 minutes.

Mix together jelly and tomatillos to make glaze. Spread all over ham except cut side.

Using your hands, gently pat cilantro, or cilantro and parsley, into glaze until it is solid green.

To prepare eggs: Scoop avocado flesh into bowl, mash with fork. Add lime juice, salt and, if using, onions and chilies. Mix again.

In large frying pan over medium heat, melt butter or oil. When hot, crack eggs into pan.

Cover pan and cook until yolks have pale white film over them and areslightly to very firm.

With spatula, gently slide eggs onto plates or serving platter. Spoon guacamole over each yolk. Serve immediately.

Note: Pasteurization is necessary for safety when egg yolks are not fully cooked.

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