



Chew on this: Jules Mercer's Caesar salad

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by [Georgina Crouth](#)



Jules Mercer's deconstructed chicken Caesar salad Photo: Supplied.

JOHANNESBURG – Not in the mood for a fuss in the kitchen this weekend? Take advantage of the last days of summer with food stylist Jules Mercer's quick to prepare Caesar salad which is packed with texture, flavour and colour – and pairs wonderfully with a crisp summery white wine.

Mercer suggests serving the deconstructed salad with Zonnebloem's fresh, zesty sauvignon blanc, which has lively notes of passion fruit and green fig. Crisp but mouth-filling, it has all the flavour and palate weight to match the Parmesan cheese and anchovies in the salad. Zonnebloem sauvignon blanc retails for around R52.

Deconstructed chicken Caesar salad

Serves: 4

Ingredients

For the salad:

2 handfuls sourdough or similar bread, torn into chunks

4 Tbsp olive oil

1 clove garlic, peeled and crushed

salt and pepper

4 chicken breasts with skin

2 whole baby gem or cos lettuces

For the dressing:

1 clove garlic (crushed)

4-6 anchovies

2 egg yolks

juice of ½ lemon – or about 2 Tbsp

1 tsp Dijon mustard

3-4 Tbsp finely grated Parmesan or Grana Padano

2 Tbsp olive oil

80ml sunflower or canola oil

100g Parmesan or Grana Padano shavings

Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Toss the torn bread in olive oil, seasoned with garlic, salt and pepper. Place in the oven and roast for 10-15 minutes until crispy and toasted.

Rub the chicken breasts with a swig of olive oil and heat a non-stick frying pan over medium heat. Place the chicken in the pan, skin-side down. Cook for 4 minutes, then turn and cook for another 4-6 minutes on the other side. Check if it's cooked through by inserting a sharp knife – the juices of the chicken should run clear.

Prepare the dressing: blitz together the garlic, anchovies and egg yolks in a blender. Add the lemon juice, Dijon and Parmesan. Slowly add the oil, pouring in a steady stream, until the mixture starts to thicken slightly.

Separate lettuce leaves or simply cut lettuce in half. Wash and dry thoroughly. Place on a board or plate, along with the torn crispy sourdough croutons and chicken. Garnish with micro herbs or other herbs, and serve with the dressing.

Other wine pairings:

Babylonstoren's 2014 viognier

Less is so much more and Babylonstoren's 2014 viognier is unbelievably drinkable. This Drakenstein Valley property, which is situated between Franschhoek and Paarl, epitomises Winelands grace.

Its recently released 2014 viognier is simply packaged in a stylishly clear bottle with the estate's "pipe, bird and flower" logo (respectively symbolising the farm, nature and their famed gardens), with white foil and minimal lettering.

It's a rich and balanced viognier, with layers of dried peach and apricot aromas, and soft spicy notes on the nose.

A small percentage of the wine was matured in French oak barrels for eight months, imparting a lovely creaminess to the wine. Good value at R108.

The estate also produces a knock-out, assertive chardonnay.

The 2012 Babylonstoren chardonnay, the second vintage of the wine, is produced in an oaked Burgundian style, displaying butterscotch and vanilla tones from 12 months of barrel maturation.

Nice balance of fresh citrus flavours, creamy textures, racy acidity and a refreshing mineral finish. R185.

Waterkloof Peacock Wild Ferment chenin blanc 2014

For their second label, Peacock Wild Ferment, the sustainable estate Waterkloof source their grapes from the Helderberg region – renowned for cool climate conditions which allow for slower ripening periods, which lend fresh acidity and concentrated flavours.

As the name suggests, only natural wild yeasts are used during fermentation of Waterkloof's wines, including the 2014 Wild Ferment chenin, allowing the vineyard's natural flavours expression.

The grapes come from old bush vines (aged between 20 and 50 years), which give the wine maturity and balance.

Typical quince and stone fruit – yellow cling peaches, ripe apricots and yellow plums – on the nose, which follows through on the palate. Nice acidity makes a pleasant everyday food wine. R65.

Oneiric Oh! chardonnay

Elgin boutique winery Oneiric – borrowed from the Greek for "dream" – has won double gold for two of its wines at this year's China Wine & Spirits Awards, the biggest and most prestigious wine and spirits competition in Hong Kong and China.

Both the Oneiric sauvignon blanc 2012 and the Oneiric Oh! chardonnay 2011 were awarded double golds, which is no easy affirmation from the largest wine market in the world.

Their cabernet sauvignon 2009 and sauvignon blanc 2010, which received points in the high 90/100, have been rated as two of the “best of” in the South African wine world.

Last year, under Luddite winemaker Niels Verburg, the fun Oh! label was released, and the Oh! chardonnay is oh! so good. Unoaked and reveals fresh lime, green pineapple and white fruit nuances, it has has been hailed as one of the best value for money chardonnays on the market. R115.

- eNCA