

**STOP THE PARTY** *Appetizers for "tasters. non-tasters". Wine columnist's latest book features appetizers that produce silence and moans.*

by Elizabeth Bower, Examiner Staff writer

When Shari Darling catered an exclusive wine tasting for several businesswomen, she had a "light-bulb moment."

The women, who were longtime friends, were talking and enjoying appetizers with matching wines, when they finally dug into the wild mushroom and brie bruschetta, served with an Australian shiraz.

Suddenly, there was silence.

Darling says she looked in to see if everything was OK when she heard a collective moan. "They were moaning with delight," says Darling, who lives just outside Peterborough on Wallace Point Road. "I call that the culinary orgasm."

Darling had served other appetizers, with matching wines, before the bruschetta so she asked herself, "What tipped the scales?"

"I wondered why there were certain appetizers that stop the party," says Darling, also known as The Sophisticated Wino in her weekly syndicated wine column that runs in The Examiner.

After researching the question, Darling compiled her findings in her new cookbook, **Orgasmic Appetizers and Matching Wines: Tiny Bites with the Moan Factor**, published by Whitecap Books.

The book, to be released early next month, offers more than 40 pages of information on the ways we sense taste, flavour and texture; how to pair food with wine; how all our senses can converge to make us moan with delight; how to ensure all your dinner guests, with their unique tastebuds, can experience a culinary orgasm; and tips for entertaining such as floral decor and garnishes.

On top of that, there are roughly another 170 pages of recipes for appetizers, with suggestions for wine pairings.

Plan to serve a sparkling wine? The book suggests several appetizers including southwest tequila and lime-marinated shrimp as well as virgin cherry tomatoes stuffed with goat cheese.

Perhaps you're in the mood for a "big fat white" wine. The book suggests pairing it with appetizers such as hot and creamy crab tartlets made with sour cream, horseradish and toasted almonds. (There are hints with each recipe for choosing the exact kind of wine. For the crab tartlets, for example, it's suggested you find a big fat white with toasty aromas and creamy texture to match the flavour of toasted almonds and the creaminess of the filling.)

More of an austere red wine drinker? Then try the stuffed olives with Gorgonzola cheese or the shiitake mushroom and toasted cashew pate.

Darling teaches a credited wine course at Fleming College and is also contracted by restaurants to train chefs, serving staff and sommeliers in food and wine pairing.

While Darling jokes that a love of food and wine is probably in her DNA because it's a trait found in her whole family, she didn't always know it would become the focus of her career. In her early 20s, Darling was a junior sports writer for the St. Catharines Standard and yearned to be an entertainment writer. Her editor, however, told her that to excel as a writer she should specialize in what she loves.

She loved wine. So she took courses in wine at Toronto's George Brown College and went on to write seven books including **Canada's Wine Country Cookbook** and **Harmony on the Palate**.

She says she's excited to release her eighth book, and has plans for a series, including orgasmic entrees and desserts.

In **Orgasmic Appetizers**, she discusses how every person has a unique pattern and number of tastebuds.

*"Even the tastebuds on one side of your tongue are different from the other side,"* she says. *"This determines what tastes good to you."* People with fewer taste buds, like Darling, enjoy lots of flavour such as strong blue cheese or loads of garlic. She calls these people *"non-tasters."*

People with more tastebuds, who she calls *"super-tasters,"* might enjoy a milder cheese such as mozzarella, and would enjoy less salt and garlic in appetizers. *"The kind of taster you are will determine what is orgasmic to you,"* Darling explains.

The cookbook reveals how to cater to certain tasters. Most cooks, Darling says, want to know how to delight guests. *"You know your job is done when the table stops talking and focuses on eating,"* she says. *"And if you get to the stage of moaning, you know you've pushed them over the edge."*

You can visit [www.orgasmicculinarycreations.com](http://www.orgasmicculinarycreations.com) for more information on Darling and her cookbooks.

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