

ASPARAGUS WITH MORELS HOLLANDAISE AVEC BLANC DES OEUFS

2 BUNCHES OF THICK ASPARAGUS
2 SHALLOTS
1/2 POUND OF FRESH MORELS
FRESH PARSLEY AND CHIVES

1 1/2 STICKS OF UNSALTED BUTTER
3 EGGS
1 LEMON

TRIM MOREL STEMS SO THEY ARE HOLLOW. FILL THE SINK WITH LUKEWARM WATER AND DUMP IN THE MORELS. SWIRL THEM AROUND WITH YOUR HANDS, TOSS GENTLY IN A COLANDER AND SCATTER ON A TEA TOWEL. ROLL LOOSELY TO ABSORB EXCESS WATER. UNROLL AND LEAVE TO DRY FOR AN HOUR OR PLACE IN A CONVECTION OVEN WITH JUST THE FAN FOR 30 MINUTES.

MELT THE BUTTER. LET STAND SO THE BUTTER FAT DRIFTS TO THE BOTTOM. POUR CLARIFIED BUTTER INTO A MEASURING CUP WITH A SPOUT, LEAVING BEHIND THE WHITE BUTTER FAT.

SEPARATE THE EGGS.

BEAT THE JUICE OF 1/2 LEMON WITH SALT AND WHITE PEPPER IN THE TOP OF A DOUBLE BOILER OR ANY SAUCEPAN WITH A CURVED BOTTOM. BEAT IN THE EGG YOLKS WITH A WIRE WHISK.

TRIM, PEEL AND DICE THE SHALLOTS. SAUTÉ WITH THE MORELS IN A SPLASH OF VEGETABLE OIL AND 1 TBSP OF BUTTER ON MEDIUM HEAT, FOR 3 MINUTES, TOSSING SO THEY DON'T BURN. RESERVE.

BRING A LARGE POT OF SALTED WATER TO A BOIL.

TRIM OFF THE TOUGH ENDS OF THE ASPARAGUS. HOLDING THEM FLAT ON YOUR WORK TABLE, PEEL FROM BELOW THE HEAD. SLICE ON THE DIAGONAL IN 2-3 INCH LENGTHS.

FILL THE SINK OR A LARGE BOWL WITH ICED WATER.

BOIL THE ASPARAGUS FOR ABOUT 6 MINUTES OR UNTIL THEY CAN BE PIERCED WITH A SHARP FORK. REMOVE AND PLUNGE INTO COLD WATER. AS SOON AS THEY ARE COOL, DRAIN ON A TEA TOWEL. KEEP THE WATER BOILING.

DOT THE TOP OF THE EGG YOLK MIXTURE WITH 2 TSPS OF BUTTER. WHISKING CONSTANTLY, GENTLY WARM THE EGG YOLKS BY TOUCHING THE SAUCEPAN TO THE BOILING WATER, TESTING FREQUENTLY WITH YOUR HAND TO ENSURE THE EGG MIXTURE THICKENS BUT DOES NOT COOK. IF THE POT GETS TOO HOT, COOL THE BOTTOM IN THE ICED WATER. WHISK TO A CUSTARD-LIKE CONSISTENCY.

SET THE SAUCEPAN IN THE DOUBLE BOILER AND SLOWLY BEAT IN THE BUTTER. LET THE BUTTER ABSORB BEFORE YOU ADD MORE. CORRECT SEASONING.

BEAT THE EGG WHITES INTO SOFT PEAKS AND FOLD INTO THE HOLLANDAISE. YOU NOW HAVE A HOLLANDAISE AVEC BLANC DES OEUFS.

BRIEFLY RE-HEAT THE MORELS.

ARRANGE THE ASPARAGUS AND MORELS ON INDIVIDUAL PLATES. SPOON THE SAUCE OVER THEM. SCATTER WITH CHOPPED PARSLEY AND CHIVES.

SERVES 4

WINE OF THE WEEK FROM DOMAINE L.A.

ASPARAGUS IS NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT TO PAIR WITH WINE AND DEMANDS EXOTIC CHOICES SUCH AS THE 2007 JACQUES PUFFENEY SAVAGNIN FROM THE JURA REGION OF FRANCE. THIS PARTICULAR WINE IS MADE WITHOUT TOPPING OFF THE WINE BARRELS, SO THAT THE WINE IS EXPOSED TO AIR DURING THE VINIFICATION AND AGING. THE LAYER OF YEAST WHICH FORMS ON TOP OF THE WINE IMPARTS ALL SORTS OF TEXTURAL AND FLAVOR CHARACTERISTICS. THE WINE ITSELF IS WAXY AND LUSH IN TEXTURE, AND WHILE TOTALLY DRY, ALMOST SHERRY-LIKE WITH NOTES OF HAZELNUTS, HONEY, AND AS FAR AS FRUIT IS CONCERNED THINK LEMON CURD. THERE'S A SALTY QUALITY TO THIS WINE, TOO, AS MUCH AS A FRUITY ONE. THE NUTTY EARTHINESS WILL COMPLEMENT THE MORELS IN THE DISH, THE LEMON CURD SHOULD STAND UP TO THE HOLLANDAISE. THIS IS A WINE THAT HAS LOADS OF UMAMI, JUST LIKE THE SAVORY COMBINATION OF ASPARAGUS, EGG, MORELS AND HOLLANDAISE WILL. \$28 A BOTTLE.