

HARICOTS VERTS WITH GRAPE TOMATOES AND ALMONDS

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

This appetizer is bright on both the plate and the palate, and it is also a Mediterranean hybrid: the haricots verts are distinctly French, but the almonds and sherry vinegar lend a taste of Spain to the dish.

1½ pounds haricots verts or thin green beans

2 pints small grape tomatoes, halved (or quartered if you can't find small ones)

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons sherry vinegar

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

⅓ cup slivered almonds

WINE:

Palacios Remondo Plácet

VIURA; RIOJA, SPAIN

The refreshing fruit and almond notes of this northern Spanish white are a strong match to the vibrant flavors of this dish.

1. Bring a large saucepan half filled with salted water to a rolling boil, add the beans, and blanch for 3 minutes. Drain in a colander and spray with cold running water. Cover the beans with a cup of ice cubes and let drain in the sink. (The cold running water and ice will stop the beans from cooking, and they will retain their bright green color.)

2. Toss together the beans and tomatoes in a large glass bowl. Whisk together the oil and vinegar and pour over the beans and tomatoes. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper, and toss until the beans are coated with dressing and tomato water. Using tongs or a slotted spoon, transfer to 8 salad plates, evenly distributing any dressing remaining in the bottom of the bowl. Sprinkle the almonds over each portion and serve. (This may be made several hours ahead of time and stored in the refrigerator, uncovered. Do not add the almonds until ready to serve.)

