

Velenosi Villa Angela Pecorino 2020

The Marche' is a wine region on the eastern side of central Italy. It boasts Mediterranean flora like olive trees, cypress trees and vines spread across a hilly landscape dotted with medieval villages. The Pecorino varietal takes its name from shepherds bringing their sheep into the hilly areas surrounded by these vines, the sheep liked to eat this type of grape so the shepherds referred to these vines as pecorino, pakora means sheep in Italian. Velenosi Pecorino is ultra-vibrant and fresh with citrus, dry herbs, mineral and great acidity balanced by a slightly heavier mouthfeel. This wine loves shellfish and yes in case you were wondering, Pecorino cheese as well.

Steamed clams with spring herbs and lemon

This may be the easiest recipe I've done for the wine club, the only bit of work is scrubbing the clams. The reward is great with this dish. Unlike mussels, clams release enough juices to create a sauce that waits for a torn baguette for dunking. Have all your ingredients ready, this one is a quick and delicious dinner. Serves 2 as an entree', 4 as a 1st course.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2-3 pounds little neck clams
- 5 cloves of garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 shallot, minced
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 1/4 cup minced fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons freshly chopped Italian parsley
- 2 tablespoons freshly chopped basil
- 3 tablespoons butter
- Salt and freshly cracked pepper
- Warm baguette to serve

Method

Soak the clams in cold water in the fridge with a tablespoon of flour or corn meal. The clams eat it and spit out any sand. Lift the clams out of the water and refresh with another cold water bath, strain and rinse again, now scrub each clam. No one likes to eat sand. Get all your ingredients ready. Warm the olive oil in a large pot that has a tight fitting lid. Add the garlic, shallots and red pepper flakes and cook until softened about two minutes, add the lemon zest and juice, stir in the clams and cover the pot. Cook on medium high heat until the clams open 5 to 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon or tongs transfer the clams to a large serving bowl. Add the rest of the ingredients to the pot, whisking the butter as it melts, slightly thickening the sauce. Pour the sauce over the clams and serve with a crusty warm baguette for dipping and a second large bowl for the shells.

Domaine Gavoty Grand Classique 2020

Domaine Gavoty encompasses 50 hectares of vines on a Roman - era farm in the commune of Cabasse called campdumy, “harvest fields” in old Provencal, situated along the snaking Issole River in the northwestern sector of the Côte de Provence appellation. Rolle aka Vermentino thrives in the Triassic lime stone soils of the domaine where they produces a wine, that underlines this varietals inherent salinity and textural richness but also comes across as nimble and bright and has a long commanding finish. This is a magical wine and it just loves herbs and asparagus.

Asparagus, goat cheese & herb risotto

Easy? Yes. Delicious? Absolutely. Asparagus are everywhere in the markets right now, fresh and reasonably priced. This dish is seasonal and sings of spring.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 leeks cleaned well and diced
- One clove of garlic minced
- 1 1/2 cups arborio rice
- 2/3 cup Sauvignon Blanc or the Rolle from above
- 4 to 5 cups chicken stock, simmering
- 1 pound thin asparagus
- Zest and juice of one lemon
- 1/3 cup Cypress Grove or Chèvre goat cheese
- 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese & more for garnish
- 3 tablespoons freshly minced chives, 1 tablespoon set aside for garnish
- 1 tablespoon freshly minced tarragon
- 1 tablespoon freshly chopped chervil
- Salt and freshly cracked black pepper

Method

Heat the olive oil and butter in a medium sauce pan over medium heat. Add leeks and sauté for five minutes until tender, add garlic and rice, stirring to coat the rice. Add the white wine stirring constantly until most of the wine has been absorbed. Add the chicken stock, 2 ladles at a time always stirring and waiting for the stock to be absorbed before adding more. This process takes about 20 minutes. In the meantime, blanch asparagus in salted water for two minutes until al dente, drain and cool immediately in ice water and place on toweling. Cut the asparagus to bite size pieces. When the risotto has been cooking for about 15 minutes add lemon juice, lemon zest, goat cheese and Parmesan cheese. Continue cooking until the rice is tender but still firm, season with salt and pepper, stir the asparagus into the risotto and stir in the herbs. Check for seasoning, spoon into warmed dishes and finished with a sprinkling of chives and Parmesan for garnish.

Domaine Font Sarade Plan de Dieu

Plan de Dieu translates to god's plan. Its name refers to the Middle Ages, when the area was a hotbed of bandit activity and travelers were putting their lives into god's hands to survive the journey. The region was also occupied by the Knights Templar and later on the Benedictine monks who planted the first vines. Bandits no longer hide behind the trees, but the area remains a quality winegrowing region in the southern Rhône. Only red wines are produced here, and they must account for a minimum of 40% Grenache of any red blend. Font Sarade is a blend of 60% Grenache and 40% Mourvèdre. Aromas of blackberry, dried herbs, lavender and the surrounding garrigue are present. Be sure to give this wine a ten-minute chill, no warm wine on the palate please. The ten minutes brings it down to cellar temperature and gives the wine brightness and lift in the finish.

Hanger Steak with Spinach, Arugula and shaved Parmesan

Look for spinach that is bunched and a bit larger than that in the plastic tubs, this is a hearty fork and knife salad that just wants a baguette on the side for extra measure.

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 pounds hanger steak, cleaned of fat and sinew
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Kosher salt and cracked black pepper
- 4 cups arugula, cleaned and dried
- 1 bunch of spinach, cleaned and dried
- 1/2 small red onion, very thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon aged balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- Flaked sea salt and cracked pepper
- 1 oz Parmesan cheese for shaving
- Lemon wedges, for serving
- Warm baguette with good butter to serve

Method

Season the steak all over with kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper. Heat the vegetable oil in a cast iron pan. Sear the steak over medium high heat until crispy on all sides. Cover the skillet and lower heat to medium, total cook time (including searing) should be 8 minutes for medium rare. Transfer the steak to a cutting board and let it rest for 5 minutes. Toss the arugula, spinach, red onion, lemon juice, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, sea salt, cracked pepper in a large bowl and arrange on a large serving platter. Slice the steak against the grain, add it to the platter and finish with shaving Parmesan over everything, serve with lemon wedges for squeezing and baguette with butter.

Pietranera Rosso di Montalcino

From the heart of Montalcino, Pietranera has been producing wine since 1983. They grow exclusively Sangiovese, farmed organically, the wine is aged in Slavonian Oak followed by 6 months in bottle, average year of the vines is 15 years old, soil composed of marl with lime and clay. Pietranera's rosso is juicy, with bright cherry notes, refined and elegant with integrated tannins and a lingering and smooth finish.

Spaghetti alla Norma

Sangiovese loves eggplants and tomatoes, so Spaghetti alla Norma it is! Ricotta Salata, a dried and salted sheeps milk cheese is grated over the pasta.

Ingredients

- 3 small eggplants about 1 1/2 pounds cut into quarter inch dice
- Kosher salt
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves minced
- 4 cups whole canned plum tomatoes
- 3 sprigs fresh basil, plus 10 more basil leaves, torn
- Pinch of red pepper flakes
- Cracked black pepper
- Rind of Parmesan, 2 inches
- 1 pound dried spaghetti
- 4 oz ricotta salata, shaved
- Best quality extra virgin olive oil for finishing

Method

Toss the eggplant with salt and place in a colander, let drain for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 375. Dry off the eggplant with paper towels. Toss the eggplant with 3 tablespoons of the olive oil and place on a well oiled parchment baking sheet in a single layer. Roast turning occasionally until the eggplant is lightly golden and tender, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile heat the remaining olive oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook until golden, crush the tomatoes with your hands and add them to the pot, add the basil sprigs, a pinch of red pepper flakes, freshly cracked black pepper and a Parmesan rind. Add the cooked eggplant to the sauce, cook for 20 minutes, discard the basil, check for seasoning, sometimes with canned tomatoes a pinch of sugar is needed to the sauce to balance it. Bring a large pot of water to boil, add salt, when it returns to the boil add the spaghetti, stirring immediately and cook until al dente 8-10 minutes. Drain the pasta reserving a little bit of water in case your sauce is too concentrated. Toss the pasta with the eggplant tomato sauce, serve in warmed bowls with the shaved ricotta salata, basil leaves and finishing oil.