

MERLOT  
LOS CARNEROS  
NAPA VALLEY - 2002



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R S V  
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

# MERLOT RENAISSANCE

Merlot has lost its cool so completely that it is now on the leading edge of hip. Like fashion, wine runs in cycles. If you stick around long enough your cool will come back around.

During the eighties and nineties, American artisan winemakers created the cult of Merlot by selecting appropriate growing regions and developing winemaking techniques to showcase the grape. Their prototypes were the great red wines of St. Emilion and Pomerol, where Merlot is king. The success of these efforts inevitably attracted the attention of the bean counters and prompted industrial wineries to exploit the Merlot trend by planting in lesser areas and using winemaking shortcuts to get their wine to market at low cost. They created the perfect “Chateau Cash Flow” wine, profiteering for nearly a decade on the popularity of the Merlot name, until the public, tired of bland and insipid industrial wines, largely deserted the variety.

Then the big boys got out of the game. They ripped Merlot out of their vineyards and began looking for the next big thing. Happily, Merlot is now largely back where it belongs in the hands of artisans.

Merlot can be many things depending on where it is grown and how it is handled in the cellar. We like ours elegant, balanced and complex, a wine best showcased at your table, not the cocktail bar.

Our Merlot is one of the best companions you can invite to dinner. It’s a wine that will please a broad spectrum of wine drinkers and pair with a wide array of cuisine. This booklet is dedicated to the cuisine of Merlot. All recipes herein will work with our interpretation of Merlot... I bet my wife on it.

Cheers,

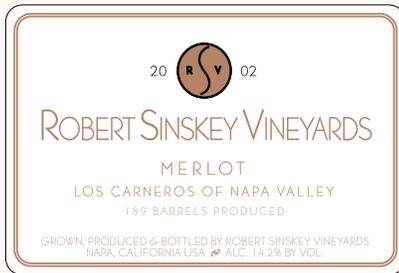
Rob Sinskey

## WINEGROWING NOTES

Back in the eighties, when we told people about our plans to plant Merlot in Carneros, we encountered some sidelong glances. Winegrowing pioneers in Carneros had early success with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and, naturally, those grapes dominated plantings in the appellation, but we had a hunch. We supported that gut feeling with research that pointed to many similarities between the soils and climate of Carneros and that of Merlot's kingdom in the vineyards of the Right Bank of Bordeaux.

The cooler weather in Carneros provides the vines with a longer, gentler growing season. Sugars build more slowly in the cooler weather, allowing the grapes to ripen physiologically, losing bitter green phenols and lengthening the structure of the tannins in the pips and skins. Merlot grown in unsuitably warm areas builds sugar ripeness too quickly, providing less hangtime on the vine. Less hangtime leads to harsher tannins from bitter seeds and skins. Grapes with high sugar levels tend to produce wines without regional or varietal character. All this leads to a beverage that winds up in the movies as the butt of a joke. Now, pause the film and consider that no one pokes fun at Chateau Petrus!

This wine rested in mostly neutral French Oak barrels for eighteen months before bottling. We emulate the custom of the Right Bank with the addition of a large dollop of Cabernet Sauvignon. As with all our wines, we kept the winemaking to a minimum, instead allowing the essence of grape, vineyard and vintage to come to fore.



## TASTING NOTES

A deep sniff of this wine rewards your nose with a *bouquet garni* of thyme, bay leaf and licorice mingled with the deeper scent of ripe blackberry. Senses merge as you taste the nearly opaque purple velvet tint with your eye. Upon first sip, the wine suggests an herbed jam of dark summer berries. Underpinning the rich fruit are well developed silky tannins, mouthwatering acidity, and a smooth, indulgent texture that echoes its velvety color. Quite simply, this Merlot is delicious!



# COOKING FOR MERLOT

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# Caramelized Onion Tart

Serves 8

*Quick Puff Dough, recipe follows*

*6 large yellow onions*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*1 tablespoon honey*

*1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*1 cup crème fraiche*

*1 large egg*

*6 slices thick-cut smoked bacon, cooked until crisp*

*1 tablespoon finely chopped chives*

1. Roll out the puff dough in a circle 1/8-inch-thick to fit a 12-inch tart pan. Press the dough into the pan well and chill in the refrigerator until firm, about 1 hour. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Remove the lined tart pan from the refrigerator. Prick the dough well with a fork and line it with a single sheet of aluminum foil. Use pie weights or beans to weight the foil. Place the tart pan in the oven and bake for 20 minutes until the dough is lightly golden on the edges. Remove the tart shell from the oven. Remove the weights and the foil and place back in the oven for 10 more minutes or until the tart shell is golden. Cool on a rack. The tart shell can be baked up to two days in advance. When thoroughly cooled, wrap tightly in plastic and store at room temperature.
3. Peel, remove the root core and cut the onions in half vertically from root end to point. Slice the onion halves into thin wedges.
4. Heat a 5 quart pot over medium heat. Add the olive oil and then the sliced onion. Cook the onions until wilted and beginning to sweat their liquid. Stir frequently to prevent hot spots and browning. Add the honey and thyme and season with salt and pepper.
5. After the onions have lost some volume and are soft, reduce the heat to low and cook the onions, stirring occasionally, until all the liquid in the pan has evaporated, about 50 minutes. The onions will lose their pallor and turn a pale gold. Their texture will be meltingly tender. Spread out on a pan to cool. The onions may be cooked up to a week in advance. Store in a sealed container under refrigeration.
6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Spread the cooked onion evenly in the bottom of the prepared tart shell. Whisk the crème fraiche with the egg and season with 1/2-teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper, then pour over the top of the onions. Crumble the bacon over the top and bake in the preheated oven for 25 to 30 minutes until the crème fraiche is golden and set. Remove from the oven and cool until warm. Sprinkle with chopped chives before serving.

# Quick Puff Dough

This dough is incredibly flaky, flavorful and tender. If you can perfect this recipe you will never have to seek out store-bought puff dough again. It freezes extremely well; therefore it makes good basic dough to keep in your freezer at all times.

*3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour*

*2 teaspoons salt*

*1 pound (4 sticks) cold butter, cut into 1" cubes*

*16 tablespoons ice water*

*2 teaspoons white wine vinegar*

- 1.** In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, mix together the flour and salt. Add the butter and mix until the butter is coated with flour and broken down into pieces the size of a hazelnut. Add the vinegar and then enough water until all of the flour is moistened and starting to come together.
- 2.** Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured counter or board and gather it into a ball. Knead it lightly so that the dough is uniform and then roll it into a rectangle 1/2-inch thick. Fold the rectangle into thirds so that each end overlaps over the center panel. Wrap with plastic wrap and let the dough rest in the refrigerator for 15 minutes to chill the butter slightly.
- 3.** Remove the dough from the refrigerator and roll into a rectangle 1/2-inch-thick. Fold into thirds again. Roll and fold one more time. Press the folded dough lightly on top with the rolling pin to “lock” the folds. Cut the dough in half, wrap each half tightly with plastic and refrigerate for 2 hours or overnight. The dough may be made 3 months in advance and frozen. Make sure that it is well wrapped. Defrost overnight in the refrigerator before using.

# Cheese Fondue

Serves 4 to 6

*1 garlic clove, peeled & smashed*

*2 cups dry fruity white wine*

*1 pound grated Gruyere or Emmenthaler Cheese*

*2 tablespoons all-purpose flour*

*1/4 cup finely grated Reggiano Parmesan*

*2 tablespoons kirschwasser*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*1 baguette, cut into 1" chunks*

- 1.** Rub the inside of a heavy bottomed pot with the smashed garlic clove. Add the white wine to the pot and bring to a boil.
- 2.** Toss the grated Gruyere with the flour and add to the boiling wine a small handful at a time. Stir the cheese after each addition until it is incorporated. Do not allow the mixture to boil.
- 3.** After all the cheese has been added and is smooth, stir in the Parmesan and kirschwasser. Bring the fondue to a boil once and season with salt and pepper.
- 4.** Dip the chunks of bread into the hot cheese and enjoy.  
**Note:** If fondue thickens, reheat with 2 to 3 tablespoons of hot water and stir until it melts and reaches the proper consistency.

## Miniature Duck “Burgers” on an Herb “Bun”

These bite-sized burgers are great for entertaining. Prep can be done in advance and the burgers can be cooked just before guests arrive.

Yield - 28 1-ounce Duck burgers

*1 pound duck breasts or boneless leg meat*

*4 slices (4 ounces) apple wood smoked bacon*

*1/4 teaspoon Chinese five spice powder*

*2 garlic cloves, minced*

*1 tablespoon chopped parsley*

*1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper*

*2 teaspoons salt*

- 1.** Cut the duck meat and bacon into 1-inch pieces. Chill them until they are very cold. Grind the bacon and duck together using a medium grind attachment. Your butcher might do this for you if you arrange it in advance of pick up.
- 2.** Place the ground meat in a bowl and add the remaining ingredients. Mix well to combine evenly. Make a small patty and cook it to check the seasoning. Adjust salt and pepper if necessary.
- 3.** Portion the meat into 1-ounce patties and refrigerate until ready to use. A small 1-ounce ice cream scoop speeds the job along. The patties may be made in advance and frozen. Thaw the patties wrapped overnight in the refrigerator before using.
- 4.** Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Cook the burgers for 2 minutes on each side until pink in the center and crisp on the exterior.
- 5.** Slice the Herbed Choux puffs horizontally and serve the burgers using the puffs as a bun.

# Herb Choux Puff “Bun”

Add 2 cups of grated cheese mix, such as Gruyere and Parmesan, to make gougeres, the famous cheese puffs of burgundy. (They go with Merlot too!)

Yield: 30 puffs

*1 1/2 cups water*

*6 ounces (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter*

*1 tablespoon kosher salt*

*1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour*

*6 large eggs*

*1 teaspoon chopped rosemary*

*2 teaspoons chopped thyme*

*1 egg for egg wash*

1. Bring the water, butter and salt to a boil in a medium saucepan.
2. Remove the pan from the heat and add the flour.
3. Return the pan to medium high heat and stir until batter pulls away from the side of the pan. Scrape into the bowl of a standing mixer. Turn the mixer on and allow the paddle to cool the dough slightly for about a minute.
4. On low speed, add the eggs one by one. After each egg is added increase the speed to medium and beat until the egg is incorporated. The eggs may also be beaten in by hand. Beat well after all the eggs have been added.
5. Add the herbs. Beat until well incorporated.
6. On a parchment lined sheet pan, using a pastry bag, pipe the batter into half dollar sized rounds.

The batter may also be scooped into mounds with a tablespoon. Freeze for later use or bake immediately.

7. To bake the puffs immediately preheat oven to 450 degrees F.
8. In a small bowl, whisk 1 egg with 2 teaspoons cold water until smooth. Egg wash the puffs with a brush and place in the oven.
9. Bake for 10 minutes until the puffs begin to brown. Reduce the oven heat to 400 degrees F and continue to bake for 15 to 20 minutes until the puffs are puffed and golden.

**To bake frozen puffs:** Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Egg wash the puffs straight from freezer. Bake for 20 minutes and then reduce heat to 400 degrees and bake until puffed and golden, about 20 minutes. Serve warm.

# Herbed Mushroom and Cheese Beignets

Beignets are wonderful served warm from the fryer tucked inside a linen napkin and served on a big wooden platter or in a wicker basket. Have your guests gather around the kitchen table with a glass of merlot and nibble away as they await the entrée. For a more formal presentation, make the beignets smaller and serve them with lightly dressed greens. Served either way they make a hearty appetizer. Note: For a truly decadent beignet, substitute 3 tablespoons of thinly shaved fresh or frozen black truffles for the mushrooms.

Yield: 36 small beignets

*1 cup whole milk*

*1 stick unsalted butter*

*2-1/2 teaspoons salt*

*1 cup all-purpose flour*

*4 large eggs*

*1 tablespoon chopped Italian parsley*

*1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper*

*1/2 cup grated Parmesan*

*1 heaping cup grated Emmentaler or Swiss Gruyere cheese*

*1/2 cup cooked wild mushrooms, coarsely chopped*

*1 quart expeller pressed vegetable oil for frying*

*Mixed green salad (optional)*

1. Bring the milk, butter, cayenne and salt to a boil in a heavy bottomed saucepan. When the butter has completely melted, remove the pan from the heat and stir in the flour.
2. Place the pan back on the heat and beat the mixture with a wooden spoon until it is smooth and pulls away from the sides of the pan. Place it in a mixing bowl with a paddle attachment. Add the eggs, one by one, beating well after each addition, about 15 seconds. Add the chopped parsley, then the cheeses and mushrooms.
3. Pour the oil into a large saucepan. The oil should rise no higher than halfway up the side of the pan. If it is any higher you risk having the oil over boil the sides of the pan. Heat the oil to 375°F. To test, drop

a small piece of batter into the oil. It should dance merrily. Drop a tablespoon of batter into the oil one at a time. Be careful not to let the temperature of the oil drop too low. Each addition of dough should elicit the same amount of sizzle as the first. Adjust the heat under the pan accordingly. Fry the beignets until they are golden and puffed on one side then turn them over with a slotted spoon and repeat on the other side. Remove them from the oil with a slotted spoon and drain on a clean, lintfree cloth or paper towels. Serve the beignets hot in a basket or on the side of a mixed green salad (optional).

**Note:** A small ice cream scoop can be used to scoop the batter into the hot oil. Be careful not to drop the dough into the hot oil too abruptly or you risk being spattered.

# Braised Pork Shanks with Aromatic Vegetables

You can special order pork shanks at your butcher counter. Take the meaty top part of the shank and have them trim them to 6 inches so they fit on your dinner plates.

Serves 4

*2 medium carrots*

*1 medium yellow onion*

*1 medium celery stalk*

*4 large garlic cloves*

*2 pork shanks (4 pounds), cut 6-inches long*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*Extra virgin olive oil*

*1 bottle dry red wine, 750ml*

*1 cup canned peeled tomatoes, seeded and chopped with juice*

*1 bay leaf, fresh or dried*

*3 large flat leaf parsley sprigs*

*2 large sage sprigs*

*1 2-inch rosemary sprig*

*2 3-inch strips of orange peel*

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Peel and trim the carrots. Cut into uniform 1/2-inch pieces or cubes. Wash and trim the ends off the celery and slice into 1/2-inch pieces. Peel and dice the onion into 1/4-inch pieces. Peel the garlic cloves, trim off their tough ends and cut them in half. Reserve the vegetables, keeping them separate.
4. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Season the pork shanks well with salt and pepper. Sear in olive oil and brown well on all sides, 10 to 15 minutes. Adjust the heat if the pan gets too hot and smokes. You don't want the bottom of the pan to burn. Remove the shanks from the sauté pan and place in a roasting pan or dutch oven.
5. Add the garlic cloves to the sauté pan and toast until golden. Add the celery and onions and brown. Add the carrots and brown. Season with salt and pepper

and pour over the shanks in the roasting pan. Add the wine to the pan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, herbs and orange peel and return to a simmer. Pour the wine and tomatoes over the pork and vegetables.

6. Cover the pan with aluminum foil or a lid and place in a the oven for 15 minutes. Reduce the heat to 350°F and braise for 2 to 2 1/2 hours until the shanks are tender and meat pulls easily away from the bone. Turn the shanks every half hour. Uncover the pan for the last half hour of cooking. Remove the shanks and vegetables from pan. Discard herbs. Reduce the pan juices if they are thin. Serve the shanks with polenta or potatoes of your choice.

# Chicken Breasts Stuffed with Spinach, Pine Nuts, and Golden Raisins

Serves 4

*3 tablespoons pine nuts*

*4 6-ounce chicken breasts, boneless & skinless*

*4 tablespoons unsalted butter*

*1 tablespoon minced shallots*

*10 ounces cleaned spinach*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*3 tablespoons chopped golden raisins*

*1 large egg*

*1 cup all-purpose flour*

*1/2 cup red wine*

*1/2 cup strong chicken stock*

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Spread the pine nuts in a single layer in a small sauté pan or baking sheet and toast for 7 minutes. Cool and coarsely chop.
3. Place a chicken breast between two large sheets of plastic wrap. Position the breast on a large cutting board or sturdy counter and use a mallet or meat-pounder to pound the breast 1/4-inch-thick. Keep the breast encased in the plastic until ready to use and store in the refrigerator. Repeat the process with the remaining breasts.
4. To prepare the stuffing, heat a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of butter and heat until the butter begins to brown on the edges. Add the shallots and cook until starting to brown, about 30 seconds. Add the spinach and cook until it has wilted, season with salt and pepper, taste and remove from the heat. Transfer the spinach to a strainer to drain and cool. When the spinach has cooled, squeeze out any remaining moisture with your hands. Chop the spinach and mix together with the golden raisins in a small bowl and season mixture to taste.
5. Remove the chicken from the refrigerator. Remove the top layer of plastic wrap from the breasts and season the meat with salt and pepper. Divide the filling in half and spread it on top of the chicken breast so that there is a half-inch border free of filling. Place the second breast on top of the filling and pull the filling-free border of the bottom breast over the top breast to form a seal. Fold the plastic wrap that is under the bottom breast over the top breast to shape the sandwiched breasts into a rectangle. Wrap and store in the refrigerator until ready to sauté.
6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
7. Whisk the egg with 1/2 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of black pepper and place in a shallow bowl or pie plate. Season the flour with 1 teaspoon of salt and a few grinds of pepper and place in a shallow bowl.
8. Unwrap the breasts and dip in the egg mixture. Allow the excess egg to drip off and then roll in the flour mixture. Gently shake the breast to remove the excess flour. Place on a plate and repeat with the second stuffed breast.
9. Heat a sauté pan, large enough to accommodate the breasts over medium high heat and add 2 tablespoons of butter. When the butter begins to brown add the chicken breast and sauté until golden, about 3 minutes. Turn the breasts over gently with a spatula and brown the other side.
10. Place breasts in the preheated oven for 10 to 15 minutes until the filling is hot in the center. Transfer the breast to a plate. Allow the breasts to rest for 10 minutes before slicing.
11. While the breasts are resting, deglaze the pan with the red wine and reduce by half. Add the chicken stock and reduce by half, season to taste with salt and pepper. Whisk in the remaining tablespoon of butter.
12. Slice each breast into 4 equal pieces and arrange on a platter. Pour the pan sauce over and serve with the accompaniment of your choice.



# Five Spice Duck Confit with Braised Root Vegetables

Long ago meat was often made into a confit, meaning it was rubbed with salt, herbs and spices then cooked and stored in fat, to preserve it for the winter ahead when there would be little fresh meat available. These vats of fatted meat would be stored in the cool cellar for months with no adverse effect – the salt cured the meat and inhibited bacterial growth and the fat sealed out air. Pork and duck rillettes, duck leg confit and whole goose livers in fat gave the farmers and village people the extra energy necessary to keep warm and go about their winter labor. Any meat, game or poultry that has been made into a confit is flavorful and succulent.

Few people today need the calories provided by a meal of duck confit, but it's nice to indulge once in awhile. The dish can be made a little less heart stopping by substituting two cups of olive oil for two cups of the duck fat. Serve the duck legs whole with the skin crisped or remove the meat from the bone and serve in chunks on top of the vegetables. Removing the skin from the leg, then shredding and chopping the meat with some of the fat will make wonderful duck rillettes. Place the chopped meat in a crock or Mason jar then seal it with some melted fat to keep in the refrigerator for a month. Serve on toasted baguette for a flavorful appetizer.

**Note:** The duck confit may be prepared a week in advance of serving. They can be stored in their fat under refrigeration for one week and will develop more flavor as they sit.

Serves 8

*8 large duck legs*

*1/4 cup coarse sea salt*

*6 garlic cloves*

*2 teaspoons five spice powder*

*1 tablespoon cracked black pepper*

*6 cups rendered duck fat*

*1 cup chicken stock*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

1. Peel, trim and thinly slice the garlic cloves. Reserve.
2. Remove the thighbone from the duck legs. Leave the drumstick bone intact. Lay the duck legs on a flat surface so that the meat side is facing up. Rub each duck leg with 1/4 teaspoon of five spice powder. Sprinkle the meat side of the legs evenly with 1/2 teaspoon of coarse salt per leg. Distribute the garlic and black pepper and evenly over the legs, pressing into the meat well. Press two legs, meat side against meat side, together. You will have four pairs of legs. Sprinkle the skin side with 1 teaspoon for each leg, rub into the skin well. Place the legs in a shallow pan. Cover with plastic wrap and press lightly with a weighted pan on top. Turn the legs over the next day. Drain any juice in bottom of pan, re-weight and marinate overnight. The following day turn again, drain off excess juice in the pan, re-weight and marinate one more day.
3. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. To prepare the confit, unpair the legs and clean off the excess salt and garlic. In a large sauté pan over medium high heat, sear the legs skin side down until golden, about 10 minutes on each side. This may have to be done in two batches if your pan is not large enough. Adjust the heat if the pan gets too hot. Remove the seared legs to a pan large and deep enough to contain all of the legs when covered with duck fat. Pair the legs together as they were when they were marinated. Pour any duck fat that has accumulated in the pan over the legs.
4. Heat 4 cups of the rendered duck fat until it is melted and hot and pour over the seared legs. Melt more fat to cover the legs if necessary. Place in the oven and cook for 2 hours until the meat is tender and easily removed from the bone. Remove from the oven and set aside until cool to the touch and strain off the fat. Store the legs in the fat if you will not be using them immediately.
5. When the fat has solidified it will separate from the duck juices. The juices will settle on the bottom of the pan, or if you have drained off the fat, the bottom of the container. Turn the pan or container over and spoon off the jellylike juice from the fat and place it in a pan. Add 1/2 to 1 cup of chicken stock, depending on the saltiness of the duck juices and bring to a boil, strain and season with salt and pepper if necessary.
6. To serve the legs, preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
7. Heat a large non stick pan over medium heat and place the duck legs skin side down. Cook until the skin is crisp, about 5 minutes. Turn the leg over and place in the preheated oven. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes until the leg is heated through. Serve the crisped leg over the root vegetables and ladle 2 ounces of the duck juice around.

# Braised Root Vegetables

Serves 8

*2 medium turnips or rutabagas*

*1 large celery root*

*2 large carrots*

*2 large parsnips*

*4 tablespoons unsalted butter*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*2 cups chicken stock or water*

*2 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley*

- 1.** Peel and dice the root vegetables into 1/4 inch cubes. The cubes do not have to be perfect. The carrot and parsnips can be sliced into half rounds if you wish. You will have about 12 cups of vegetables.
- 2.** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Ready a small roasting pan to receive the sautéed vegetables.
- 3.** Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add 1/2 of the butter and cook it until it starts to brown on the edges. Add half of the diced vegetables. Saute the vegetables until they are lightly browned on the edges about 2 to 3 minutes, season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a roasting pan. Repeat the sautéing process with the remaining vegetables.
- 4.** Add the chicken stock to the pan after the vegetables have been sautéed. Bring to a boil and pour over the vegetables. Cover the roasting pan with foil and place in the preheated oven. Cook for 30 to 40 minutes or until the vegetables are tender but holding their shape. Fold in the chopped parsley just before serving.

# Grilled Sausages (Country Style) with White Beans

## Sausage

Serves 8

*3 pounds ground pork shoulder*

*2 teaspoons minced garlic*

*2 tablespoons minced shallots*

*2 teaspoons fennel seed, toasted and chopped coarsely*

1. Mix together the ground pork through the salt. Season with a few grinds of black pepper.
2. Make a small thin patty and sauté over medium heat until cooked through. Taste for seasoning and adjust with salt and pepper to taste.

*2 teaspoons chopped rosemary*

*1 tablespoon chopped thyme*

*2 tablespoons chopped parsley*

*1 tablespoon salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

3. Form the sausage into eight equal patties. Grill the patties over medium high heat for about 5 minutes on each side or until cooked through. Serve over white beans.

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## White Beans

This is a basic preparation for beans and can be used for all types. The cooking time should be adjusted for larger and smaller beans. For best results, soak the dried beans the night before cooking. Fresh beans (recently harvested) will take less time to cook than beans that have been stored for a while.

For a flavorful white bean puree to spread on crostini, drain the beans well and puree them with a little extra virgin olive oil, just be sure to remove the bay leaf and any hard herb stems.

The recipe also makes a great soup, add a few cups of chicken stock until the beans are of soup consistency than puree one or two cups to add body to the broth. It's amazing what you can get out of a simple pot of beans.

Serves 8

*1 pound (2-1/2 cups) white gigante beans, or other large white bean*

*2 medium carrots*

*1 small yellow onion*

*1 medium celery stalk*

*6 large garlic cloves*

*1 large bay leaf, fresh or dried*

1. Soak the beans in 8 cups of cold water overnight. If your kitchen is warm (over 68°F) place the beans in the refrigerator so they won't begin to ferment.
2. Peel the carrots and cut into 2 pieces each. Peel and cut onion into quarters. Leave the celery stalk whole. Peel the garlic cloves, trim off the tough ends and leave whole.
3. Heat a large pot over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the vegetables and sauté until they begin to brown. Add the beans, herbs and enough water to cover the beans by 3 inches.
4. Bring the pot to a simmer. Season the beans with salt just as they start to become tender, otherwise the broth will be salty and the beans will be bland. Cook the beans for 1 hour or until they are tender. Older beans will take longer.

*4 thyme sprigs*

*4 Italian parsley sprigs*

*2 tablespoons sherry vinegar*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*Extra virgin olive oil*

*2 cups rich chicken stock*

5. When the beans are done, remove the deserted herb stems and vegetable chunks. Season with salt and pepper and add the vinegar. Cool and store the beans in their cooking liquid if they will not be used immediately.
6. To reheat, drain the beans from their cooking liquid and reheat in the chicken stock, season with salt and pepper. Drizzle with good extra virgin olive oil.

**Note:** If you forget to soak the beans place them in a large pot of cold water and bring it to a boil. Turn off the heat and let the beans soak for 30 minutes. Drain and rinse the beans. This method is helpful for those who have problems digesting beans. Heating the beans in boiling water and then draining off the water helps to break down the complex sugars contained in the beans, which are difficult to digest.

# Herb Roasted Chicken with Basmati Rice Pilaf

I recommend using free-range or organic chickens, their flavor is superior to their cooped up relatives. The chopped herbs are stuffed under the skin of the chicken to prevent them from becoming burned bits at the bottom of the pan. This technique allows you to crisp the skin to your hearts delight and still retain the unsullied flavor of the herbs. They intensely perfume the meat so it is important to spread them evenly and sparingly under the skin.

Serves 8

*2 tablespoons chopped rosemary*

*4 tablespoons chopped thyme*

*2 tablespoons chopped sage*

*Extra virgin olive oil*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*2 roasting chickens, about 4 to 6 pounds each*

*(Basmati Rice Pilaf, recipe follows)*

1. Preheat oven to 475 degrees F.
2. Combine the chopped herbs with 1/2-cup of olive oil to make a loose mixture, season it with salt and pepper. Starting at the edge of the breast at the shoulders, gently separate the skin from the meat without poking holes in it. When you get to the halfway point, turn the chicken 180 degrees and repeat the same maneuver starting at the point of the breast above the cavity and proceed to the top of the thighs and the legs. Rub the herbs into the pockets you've created covering as much meat as possible. The herbs needn't be spread thickly; a little goes a long way, pat skin back into place. Tuck the wing tips under the shoulders of each bird. Make a slit on either side of the breast just above the thigh/leg joint, parallel to the breast meat in the space where the breast meat ends and the thigh meat begins. It should be wide enough to stick the ends of the legs in. The slit should be about 2-inches in from the edge of the cavity. Turn the bird so that the cavity is facing towards you. Grab

the end of the drumstick and push the leg thigh joint back towards the wing. Tuck the end of the drumstick into the slit and pat the leg back into position, repeat with the other leg and remaining bird. The birds may instead be tied with string, see notes below. This step may be done a day ahead of time, allowing the birds to marinate overnight in the refrigerator.

3. Rub the skin of the birds with olive oil. Season the cavities and the skin with salt and pepper. Place the birds in a large roasting pan and oven sear in the preheated oven for 20 minutes.
4. Reduce the heat to 400 degrees F and roast for 1-1/2 to 2 hours, or until juices run clear when a knife is poked into the leg and thigh. Let the bird rest for 15 minutes before cutting up. The bird will continue to cook with the residual heat from the oven and the juices will settle. The bird may be served de boned or cut up with the bones intact, see the notes below. Serve the chicken with rice pilaf or the side dish of your choice.

**To truss a chicken:**

Tie the chicken with a string measuring 30 inches long. Loop the center of the string over the neck bone and under the shoulders. Run string over the wings and along the bottom of the breast so that it is tucked in between the breast and the thigh. Cross string at the point of the breast and tie once pulling the string tightly. Loop each end of the string around the end of each drumstick and tie once to pull the legs snugly against the point of the breast. Tie a second time to form a knot. Trim the ends of the string.

**To de-bone a chicken:**

Cut the string and remove it from the bird. Hold the tip of the drumstick in your hand. Pull it gently away from the breast and slice the skin between the breast and the thigh. You will now see the natural gap between the breast and the thigh. Pull the thigh away from the breast with your hand and crack the thigh joint by forcing it away and back from the breast toward the backbone. Cut the thigh at the exposed joint and pull it away from the body. Use your knife to cut away any attached skin and tendons. Try not to cut into the breast meat. You have now liberated one leg and thigh. Go back and repeat the process with the other leg thigh combo. You will now be staring at a carcass with two plump breasts attached. Locate the breastbone with your finger. Starting at the widest part of the breast at the beginning of the breastbone, run your knife blade along the edge of the breastbone using the bone as your guide, cutting straight down into the carcass. Use gentle pressure as the bone turns to cartilage at the tip as you don't want your knife plunging anywhere it shouldn't. After you reach the tip of the breast return to the shoulder and run the knife down towards the wing using the collarbone, often called the wishbone, as a guide. When you hit the wing joint stop and crack the joint by pushing down and back toward the backbone. Use your knife to cut any tendons or skin and to cut through the joint. Grab the

partially liberated breast at the shoulder and pull it away from the carcass. Run your knife along the rib cage and down toward the backbone keeping your knife as flat as possible against the bones. If your knife is not running along the bone it is cutting into the meat, which is highly undesirable, but understandable if this is the first bird you have de-boned. Don't worry you will get better with practice. Cut away the breast as you reach the backbone. You should have a breast with the partial wing attached. This is called an airline breast. Repeat with the second breast. Trim any excess skin off the edges of the breast and tidy them up. Cut the breast into two pieces in the following manner: The part with the wing should be cut one third the length of the breast so that the piece of breast without the wing bone is two thirds or twice as long. This makes the portions fair so no one feels cheated. Go back to the legs; use a chef knife to cut through the thigh leg joint so that you have two parts. Each chicken will be cut up into 8 pieces, 4 white meat pieces and 4 dark meat pieces, enough for everyone to have a sample of each. Don't worry if you mangle the chicken a little, the birds are large so it won't be very noticeable, just a little rustic.

**To cut the bird up on the bone:**

I recommend roasting chicken parts if you want to serve the bird this way. Cutting up a roasted bird is a hot, slippery messy affair. Have your butcher quarter the bird and remove the backbone and then roast the bird in quarters. Cut the roasted parts into two pieces in the same manner as the boneless breast. Use a chef knife to cut firmly through the bones of the breast. Cut the thigh at the leg joint in the same manner as above so that you end up with 8 pieces of chicken.

# Rice Pilaf

This is a basic rice pilaf that can be served as a side dish with most anything. Adding herbs such as thyme or rosemary during cooking, or aromatics such as saffron and lemon zest provide variations for this pilaf. Make any of these additions before you add the chicken stock. Saffron threads must be steeped in a little hot water before adding to release their perfume. Do not rinse or soak the rice before using or you will end up with mush.

Yield: 6 cups

*1 medium yellow onion*

*1 tablespoon unsalted butter*

*2 cups basmati rice or other long grain rice*

*1 tablespoon salt*

*4 cups chicken stock or water*

- 1.** Peel, trim and dice the onion finely.
- 2.** Heat the butter over medium high heat in a heavy bottomed medium-sized saucepan until it begins to brown.
- 3.** Add the onions and sauté them until they are golden. Add the rice and stir it until it starts to toast and turn golden. Add the liquid and salt. Cover the pot with a tight fitting lid. Bring the pan to a boil and then turn the heat down to low. Simmer for 15 minutes.
- 4.** Turn off the heat and let the rice sit covered for another 15 minutes. Remove the cover from the pan, fluff the rice with a fork and transfer to a large bowl for service.

# Osso Buco With Herbed Polenta & Gremolata

Osso Buco is the perfect meal for a cold snowy or rainy winter evening. The smell of the braising shanks rushes to meet you in a burst of fragrant warmth as you enter the kitchen. Your diners will be tantalized by the aroma and satisfied by the flavors of the tender falling from the bone bits of succulent meat sinking into the soft herbed polenta bathed in a rich bath of wine scented juices.

Buy the meatiest shanks you can find and have the butcher cut them into four inch thick pieces. Braise all parts of the shank. The lower parts, although not having a lot of meat, are rich with flavor. Serve the meaty portions and discard the meatless bones after removing the marrow, or better, save them for deserving pets. Sprinkle the gremolata over the marrowbone with a bit of coarse sea salt; this will balance the richness of the marrow. Don't sprinkle on too much gremolata, it is quite pungent and should be used only as an accent.

*Serves 8*

*4 medium carrots*

*2 medium yellow onions*

*2 celery stalks*

*8 garlic cloves, peeled*

*8 pieces of meaty veal shank, cut 3-inches thick*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour*

*Extra virgin olive oil*

*1 bottle red wine, 750ml*

*2 cups canned peeled whole tomatoes, seeded and chopped with juice*

*1 bay leaf*

*8 sprigs of Italian parsley*

*Fleur de sel*

*Gremolata, recipe follows*

*Herbed Polenta, recipe follows*

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
  2. Peel the carrots, onions and garlic cloves. Trim off the ends. Wash the celery and trim off the ends. Dice the onions into 1/2-inch cubes. Slice the carrots and celery into 1/2-inch pieces. Leave the garlic whole. Reserve the vegetables separately.
  3. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Season the shanks well with salt and pepper and dredge in the flour, shake off the excess. Add 3 tablespoons of olive oil to the pan. Add the shanks and brown on all sides, 10 to 15 minutes. Do the shanks in batches to prevent crowding. When they are browned, remove from the pan and place in a roasting pan large enough to hold all of the shanks and vegetables.
  4. Pour off the excess fat in the sauté pan and add the wine, simmer for 5 minutes. Pour the wine over the browned veal shanks.
  5. Wipe the sauté pan dry with a paper towel and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Toast the garlic cloves in the pan until golden and then add the onions and celery. Saute until the vegetables are lightly browned. Add the carrots and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Continue to sauté for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes with their juices and bring to a boil.
  6. Add the bay leaf and parsley to the tomatoes and then pour everything over the veal shanks. Shake the roasting pan so that the vegetables and shanks are distributed evenly.
  7. Cover the pan and place in the preheated oven for 2-3 hours until the meat falls easily away from the bone. Turn the shanks over after one hour. Uncover the pan the last 30 minutes of cooking.
  8. When the meat is tender, remove the shanks and vegetables from the pan with a slotted spoon and place on a platter. Discard the herb stems and bay leaves. If necessary, reduce the pan juices until thickened, taste for seasoning. Pour enough pan juice over the osso buco to moisten. Place the remainder in a pitcher. Garnish the marrow in the bones with fleur de sel and a sprinkle of the gremolata. Serve the vegetables and polenta on the side.
- Note:** Leftover polenta can be re warmed and beaten with eggs and cheese. Shape into patties and fry in butter until the edges are golden and crisp and the polenta is puffed. Serve as a breakfast side with homemade sausages or with leftover veal that has been shredded and mixed with its braising juices to form a ragu. Use 1 egg and 1/4-cup of shredded cheese per cup of cold polenta. Mash the polenta with a fork before adding the beaten egg a little at a time.

## Herbed Polenta

Serves 8

*2 cups whole milk*

*6 cups water*

*4 tablespoons unsalted butter*

*1 tablespoon kosher salt*

*2 cups coarsely ground polenta*

1. In a large heavy bottomed pot, bring the milk, water, butter and salt to a boil.
2. Whisk in the polenta. Stir it with a wooden spoon until the polenta has thickened. Add the rosemary and thyme. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 20 minutes, stirring constantly.

*1 teaspoon chopped rosemary*

*2 teaspoons chopped thyme*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*1 cup finely grated Parmesan, 4 ounces*

*2 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley*

Add more water if the polenta gets too thick before it is creamy and tender.

3. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper. Fold in the Parmesan and parsley. Serve immediately

## Gremolata

Gremolata is used as a palate reliever when eating braised meat. The heat of the raw garlic, the zip of the lemon zest and the fresh clean flavor of the parsley wake up your palate and provide contrast to the gelatin rich meat with its thickened juices and the fat of the marrow from the bone. Gremolata can be used for this purpose with all simply braised meats.

Yield: 1/2 cup

*2 teaspoons minced garlic*

*2 teaspoons lemon zest, finely minced*

*1/2 cup finely chopped Italian parsley*

*Fine sea salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

1. Mix the minced garlic and lemon zest with the chopped parsley, season with salt and black pepper.

# Paillard of Chicken with a Tarragon Cream Sauce



Serves 4

*4 6-ounce boneless chicken breasts*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*1 cup flour*

*2 tablespoons plus 2 tablespoons*

*unsalted butter*

*1 tablespoon minced shallots*

*1 cup white wine*

*1/2 cup heavy cream*

*1 1/2 teaspoons chopped tarragon*

1. Remove the skin from the chicken breasts. Trim off any fat, cartilage and sinew. Place one chicken breast half between two sheets of plastic wrap and place it on a sturdy counter or a large cutting board. Pound the breast with a mallet or the flat side of a cleaver until very thin, about 1/4-inch-thick. Chicken breasts may be stored in the plastic wrap overnight.
2. Season both sides of the breast with salt and pepper. Dredge the pounded meat in flour seasoned with a few grinds of black pepper and a teaspoon of salt. Move to a single layer on a sheet pan to ready for sautéing.
3. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of butter and heat until lightly browned on the edges.
4. Add the chicken breasts, do not crowd. You will have to cook the breasts in two batches. Cook until the chicken turns opaque on the edges and is golden, about 4 minutes. Flip the breasts over and brown on the other side. Remove the chicken from the pan and place on a serving platter. They can be kept warm in a low (250 degree F) oven.
5. Add 2 tablespoons of butter to the same sauté pan that was used to sear the chicken breasts. Heat it over medium high heat until butter begins to brown.
6. Add the shallots to the pan and cook for 1 to 2 minutes. When they turn golden, add the wine.
7. Boil for 4 to 5 minutes to reduce the wine by half. Add the cream and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes to thicken slightly. Add the tarragon and season to taste with salt and pepper. Spoon the pan sauce over the chicken breasts and serve.

# Pan-roasted Veal Chops with Morels

There is nothing more simple and elegant in the world of veal than a good free range double cut veal chop. I prefer free range to Provimi Veal. Provimi stands for protein, vitamins and minerals, which are fed to the calves in formula form. The calves are not allowed to roam in order to keep their muscles soft. The meat is very pale and tender which some people hold in the highest regard, but the meat tends to take on an undesirable smell from the formula. Milk fed free-range veal is an older animal, much darker in color, almost dark pink, but has much more flavor and a little more chew. Some people label this veal cruelty free or even go to the extremes of calling it baby cow instead of veal to avoid any unpleasant connotations.

Serves 8

*8 double cut veal rib or loin chops, about 12 ounces each*

*1 bunch thyme*

*Peel of 2 lemons*

*Extra virgin olive oil*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*2 tablespoons unsalted butter*

*1/4 pound dried morels, reconstituted with boiling water*

*or 1 pound fresh morels, trimmed and cleaned*

*2 tablespoons finely chopped shallots*

*1/2 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, lightly chopped*

*1 cup dry white wine*

*1/2 cup reduced chicken or veal stock*

*1/2 cup heavy cream*

1. Remove the yellow part of the lemon peel without the white pith by using a vegetable peeler. Marinate the veal chops by tossing them with a 1/2 cup of extra virgin olive oil, the lemon peel and thyme. Let them marinate overnight.
2. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
3. Remove the chops from the refrigerator 30 minutes before cooking. Pull the veal chops from the marinade and scrape off any thyme or lemon peel. Season them well with salt and pepper.
4. Heat 2 large sauté pans over medium high heat until sizzling hot. Add the chops to the pans taking care not to crowd them. The chops will have enough oil on them so it is not necessary to add additional oil to the pan. Sear the chops for 5 minutes on each side and then place them in a preheated oven for 5 to 10 minutes to the desired doneness. Look closely, when juices rise to the surface and glisten the chops are medium, the temperature that best brings out the best flavor of the veal.
5. Remove the chops from the pan to a serving platter and allow them to rest while you make the pan sauce. They may be covered loosely with foil to keep them warm.
6. Drain the fat from the pans that you used to pan roast the veal. Divide the butter between the 2 pans and heat it over medium heat until it turns golden on the edges. Divide the morels between the two pans and cook for 5 minutes until the juices exude and evaporate.
7. Add the shallots and season with salt and pepper. Continue to cook until the shallots are lightly golden. Add the thyme leaves.
8. Deglaze the pan with the wine and reduce it by half, about 5 minutes. Add the veal stock and cream and bring to a boil for 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper and pour over the chops.

# Pork Medallions with a Mustard Seed Crust

Serves 4

4 6 ounce boneless pork loin chops

Salt

1/4 cup coarsely ground whole mustard seed

Extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 teaspoon finely chopped shallots

1 teaspoon chopped fresh sage leaves

1/2 cup red wine

1/2 cup reduced chicken stock

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

1. Pound the pork between two sheets of plastic wrap to flatten slightly to about 1/2-inch thick. Season the medallions with salt and then “bread” with the mustard seed.
2. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
3. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat and add 1 tablespoon of oil to the pan. Add the medallions to the pan and sear for 4 minutes on each side until they are golden. Place the pan in the preheated oven for 5 to 7 minutes to finish roasting the pork. Remove from the pan and allow the chops to rest on a serving platter.
4. Add the butter to the pan and when it begins to brown add the shallots and sauté until they are golden. Add the chopped sage and then deglaze the pan with the wine. Reduce the wine until almost dry then add the chicken stock and bring to a boil. Whisk in the Dijon mustard and season with salt to taste. Serve the sauce over the pork medallions.

# Roasted Duck Breast with Sour Cherries

This dish has very few components. But the components it has can be challenging to work with. Try to secure the magret of muscovy duck through your butcher or mail order\*. Smaller duck breasts such as the pekin or regular muscovy can be substituted but the meat is not as dark or rich so the contrast with the cherries is not the same. The principles of the sauce are based on the classical gastrique method in French cooking. In this method sugar is heated until it has caramelized and is then deglazed with an acid such as vinegar or wine, which gives the sauce the yin/yang of sweetness and acidity. If not enough acid is used the effect can be cloying rather than seductive. Think of the classic Duck a l'Orange. Taste your compote to make sure that the sweetness and acidity is balanced. If it needs more sugar or acid add it until you achieve the right balance.

Serves 8

*4 magret of Moscovy Duck*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*6 shallots, peeled and sliced 1/4-inch-thick*

*3 tablespoons sugar*

*2 cups dried sour cherries*

*2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, lightly chopped*

*1 cup dry red wine*

*1 small bay leaf, fresh or dried*

*1/2 cup strong chicken stock*

*2 tablespoons unsalted butter*

1. Clean the duck breasts of any excess fat and silver skin. Silver skin is the silvery looking fan of nerves on the underside of the breast. Remove the tenders\*\* from the breasts and reserve. Trim the edges of any over hanging skin and tidy them up. Score the skin almost to but not into the breast meat in a crisscross diamond pattern. This will help render the fat and crisp the skin. The duck breasts can be cleaned a day in advance.
2. Preheat oven to 400°F
3. Heat a large sauté pan over medium heat so that the pan is warm but not too hot. The duck should sizzle when it is placed in the pan but not smoke. Season the duck breast well with salt and pepper. Place it skin side down in the pan and begin rendering off the fat. Be sure that the fat in the pan doesn't smoke. Reduce the heat if necessary. As the pan fills with fat, carefully pour it off into a heatproof container so that the breasts do not deep fry in their fat. Hold the breasts in place with a carving fork or metal spatula. Keep rendering the skin side until no more fat is released and the skin is crisp, about 15 to 20 minutes.
4. Turn the breast over and place the pan in the oven to roast for 5 minutes for medium rare, more if you like your breast less rare. Remove the breasts from the pan and let them rest for 10 minutes before slicing to allow the juices to distribute evenly throughout the breast.
5. Drain all but 2 tablespoons of fat from the pan and add the shallots. Sauté them until they are golden and sprinkle with sugar. When the sugar starts to turn brown, add the cherries and thyme. Deglaze the pan with the wine and add the bay leaf and reduce until liquid is almost dry. Add stock and bring to a boil. Remove bay leaf, whisk in the butter and season to taste with salt and pepper.
6. Starting at the small pointed end of the breast. Slice the breast at a 45 degree angle thinly across the grain. If you see long striations of muscle in the slice cut it the opposite way, or taste a piece. It should be tender not chewy. If it's too chewy, slice it at the opposite angle. Place the sliced duck on a serving platter or individual plates. Top with cherries and shallots.

**Note:** The rendered duck fat can be strained and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for one month. Use it in place of butter or oil to sauté potatoes for extra flavor.

\*Online source for magret; [www.grimaud.com](http://www.grimaud.com)

\*\*Duck tenders are the same body part as chicken tenders. They can easily be pulled away from the breast with your fingers. Sauté them separately for a snack while you are preparing dinner.

## Sage and Potato Dumplings

These delightful dumplings full of potato flavor can be shaped and then frozen on a floured sheetpan in a single layer. Gather the frozen dumplings and place immediately in a zip lock bag for storage. Keep frozen until ready to use. Do not defrost the dumplings before sautéing. Use them directly from the freezer. They will need more oven time to thoroughly cook the dumplings through and through. The dumplings are delicious slathered in melted butter or pan juices.

Serves 4 to 6

*1 1/2 pounds baking potatoes*

*1 cup all-purpose flour*

*1/4 teaspoon baking powder*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*1 large egg, lightly beaten*

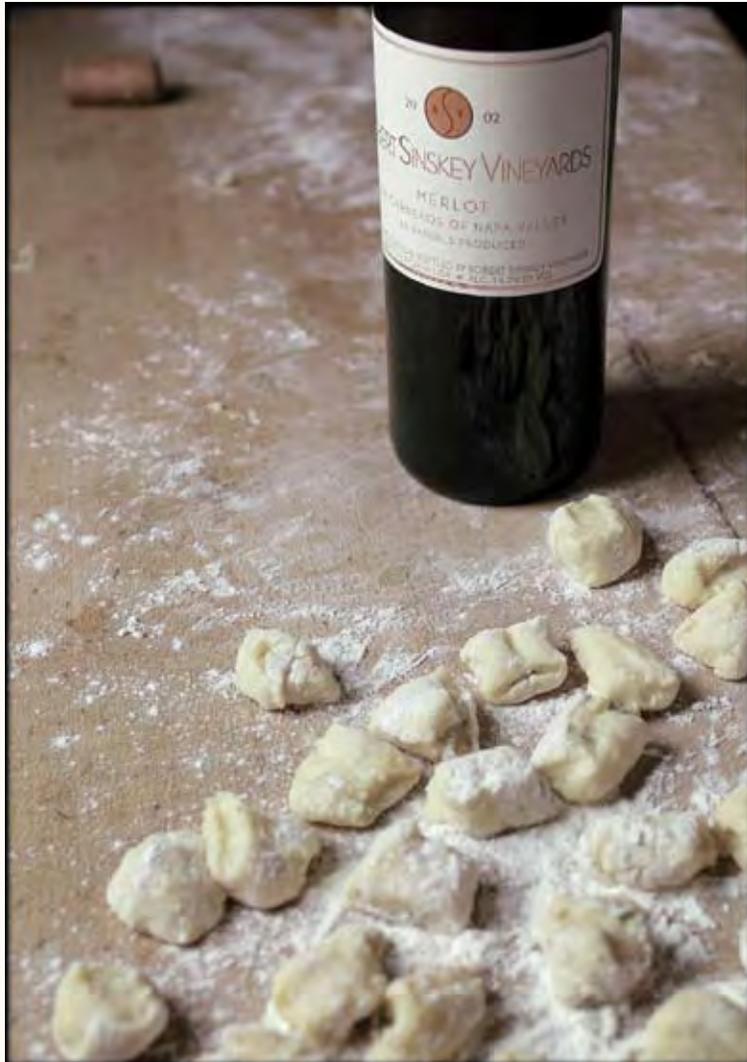
*1 teaspoon chopped fresh sage*

*4 tablespoons unsalted butter*

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Wash the potatoes, prick them with a fork, and place them on a sheet pan. Bake them in the preheated oven for 1 1/2 hours, until they are very soft. Do not turn off the oven. Cool them slightly and scoop out the insides. Rice the scooped out potato with a ricer or mash them with a fork. Place them in a bowl with a damp cloth to retain their heat. The potatoes must be used while they are still warm.
3. Mix together the flour, baking powder and 2 teaspoons of salt and add to the potatoes. Grind some pepper over and taste the potatoes to make sure there is enough seasoning.
4. Add the egg and the chopped sage to the potato mixture. The dough should be slightly sticky, if it is too sticky, add a little more flour.



5. Place the dough in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Let dough rest for about 10 minutes.
6. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead lightly and add a little more flour if the dough is overly sticky. Roll the dough into thin 1/2 inch logs and cut into 1 inch pieces. Place the pieces on a lightly floured sheet pan.
7. Heat a medium size sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of butter. Add enough dumplings to cover the pan in one layer. Cook them until they are golden on one side. Use a spatula to flip the dumplings over. Cook until the other side is lightly golden and finish in the oven for 5 minutes to finish cooking. Repeat with the remaining dumplings. Serve immediately.



# Semolina Gnocchi



Serves 4 to 6

*3 cups milk*

*1 cup water*

*2 tablespoons unsalted butter*

*2 teaspoons salt*

*1 cup semolina*

*1/2 cup grated Parmesan*

*2 large eggs*

*1/4 teaspoon nutmeg*

*Butter for greasing dish*

*1/2 cup heavy cream*

1. Bring the milk, water, butter to a boil in a large pot, season with salt.
2. Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the semolina. Place the pan back over low heat and stir with a wooden spoon until it is smooth and creamy, about 10 minutes.
3. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in 1/4 cup of the Parmesan. Then quickly stir in the eggs and nutmeg. Pour onto a lightly greased sheet pan and spread with a spatula into a 1/2-inch thick mass. Place the sheet pan in the refrigerator and chill for at least 3 hours or overnight.
4. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Position an oven rack in the top third of the oven.
5. Grease a 12-inch by 12-inch round (or square) oven proof baking dish with butter.
6. Use a 1 1/2-inch round pastry cutter to punch circles out of the semolina. Layer in concentric circles overlapping each round by half until the semolina is used up. Semolina scraps can be pressed together, chilled and cut again.
7. Pour the cream over the gnocchi and sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup of Parmesan. Bake until bubbly and golden, about 20 minutes. Broil to lightly brown the top if it does not brown enough when baked.



# Slow-cooked Spice-rubbed Pork Ribs

Serves 4 to 6

*2 slabs pork spare ribs*

*1/2 cup Pork Spice Rub, recipe follows*

*2 cups red wine*

- 1.** Rub two tablespoons of spice rub into each side of the pork ribs. Wrap well in plastic and refrigerate overnight.
- 2.** Heat a grill or oven broiler. Cut the ribs into 3 equal pieces. Grill or broil the ribs on both sides to sear, about 5 minutes per side.
- 3.** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Place the pork ribs in a deep pan and add the wine. Bring the wine to a boil on the stovetop. Turn off the heat, cover the pan and place it in the preheated oven.
- 4.** Cook the ribs for 2 hours, turning every half hour until the ribs are very tender. Baste the meat with the juices after every turn. Add a little water to the pan if the juices become dry and start to burn. Leave the ribs uncovered for the last 30 minutes of roasting.  
**Note:** The ribs may be cooked in advanced and then re warmed. Wrap the ribs in foil and re warm for 30 minutes in a 350 degree F oven.



## Spice Rub



Yield: 1 cup

*2 tablespoons fennel seed, toasted*

*3 sticks cinnamon, crushed and toasted*

*1 tablespoon black peppercorns, toasted*

*4 dry bay leaves*

*2 tablespoons chinese five spice powder*

*1/2 cup kosher salt*

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- 2.** Spread the fennel seed, cinnamon sticks and black peppercorns in a pan so that they are in one layer. Toast spices for 5 to 8 minutes to release their aromatic oils. Cool.
- 3.** Use a spice or a well-cleaned coffee grinder to grind the toasted spices and bay leaves into a fine powder. Stir in the 5 spice powder and then mix with the salt. Store in an airtight container in a cool dark place for up to 3 months.

# Slow Roasted Spiced Pork Shoulder Agre Dolce

Serves 4 to 6

*3 pounds boneless pork shoulder butt, cut into 3 equal pieces*

*3 tablespoons spice rub (on page 32)*

*Salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil*

*8 large shallots, peeled, trimmed and sliced 1/4-inch-thick*

*2 tablespoons granulated sugar*

*1/2 cup 8 to 10 year old balsamic vinegar*

*2 cups chicken stock*

*2 medium sage sprigs*

*4 large thyme sprigs*

*2 4-inch rosemary sprigs*

1. Cut away excess fat from the pork shoulder. Rub all sides well with the spice rub. Wrap well in plastic and refrigerate overnight.
2. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Place an oven rack in the middle of the oven.
3. Season the pork shoulder with salt. Heat a Dutch oven or 12-inch sauté pan over medium high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil to the hot pan. Add the pork and brown well on all sides, about 10 to 15 minutes.
4. After the pork is browned, remove it to a plate. Pour off the grease in the pan and add the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the shallots and season with salt and pepper and sauté until golden, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add the sugar, stir it in well and allow it

to caramelize for about 30 seconds. Add the vinegar and reduce it until it is thick and bubbling, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add the stock and herb sprigs to the pan and then the pork. Bring the pan to a boil and cover it tightly with a lid or aluminum foil.

5. Place the pan in the preheated oven and cook for 1 hour and 45 minutes to 2 hours. Turn the pork over on the hour. When the pork is tender and pulls apart when prodded with a fork, remove it from the pan to a serving plate. Remove the stems of the herb sprigs and degrease the pan juices with a ladle. Taste the juices for seasoning and add more salt and pepper if necessary. Spoon the pan juice over the pork. Pull the pork apart with a knife and fork to serve in chunks.

# The Ultimate Grilled Cheese and Ham Sandwich

The golden crisp buttery brioche stuffed with melted cheese and smoked ham creates a gustatory delight. Use these pint-sized sandwiches as a snack or as a light supper with a bowl of hearty soup or simple salad. Cut them into triangles and serve them as a down home hors d'oeuvre with a glass of wine. Extra brioche freezes beautifully up to one month well wrapped.



Serves 8

*1/2 loaf brioche, recipe follows*

*16 thin slices Matus Family*

*St. George or Gruyere Cheese*

*8 medium thick slices smoked ham*

*8 tablespoons unsalted butter,  
softened*

1. Slice the loaf of brioche into 16 thin slices.
2. Place 8 slices of bread on a board or other flat surface. Place one slice of cheese on top of the bread. Top with one slice of ham then another slice of cheese. Top each stack with the remaining bread slices.
3. Butter the top slice of bread generously with the softened butter, about 1/2 tablespoon per slice.
4. Heat a large skillet over medium heat and add the sandwiches butter side down, the number

- will depend on how large your pan is. Press the sandwiches with a lid or the back of a plate. Cook the sandwiches until they are golden on one side.
5. Remove the lid or plate and butter the tops of the sandwiches. Turn the sandwiches over and press once again with the plate. Cook until the second side is golden and the cheese has melted.
  6. Remove the sandwiches from the pan and serve whole, halved or cut into triangular shaped quarters.



# Brioche

Yield: 1 large loaf pan

*1 tablespoon dry yeast*

*1/2 cup warm water*

*3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour*

*4 large eggs*

*1/4 cup granulated sugar*

*2 teaspoons kosher salt*

*8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened*

*Egg wash – 1 large egg beaten with 2 tablespoons water*

1. Butter the loaf pan lightly and set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, dissolve the yeast in the warm water and then whisk in 1/2 cup of the flour to form a loose paste. Let it rise in a warm place until the dough has risen and fallen, about 1/2 to 1 hour.
3. Add the eggs, sugar, salt and the remaining flour to the fallen yeast mixture. Knead the dough with a dough hook or by hand on a lightly floured counter until it is smooth. Add a little more flour if the dough is too sticky.
4. Add the soft butter to the dough and knead until it has been fully incorporated into the dough and the dough is smooth and elastic. Let the dough rise in the bowl in a warm place, covered with a damp cloth or plastic wrap until doubled in size, about 1 hour.
5. Punch the dough down, press out the air bubbles and shape it to fit the buttered loaf pan. Divide it equally in half to fit two pans. Brush the top with egg wash and let it rise until it is half doubled, about 1/2 hour.
6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F while the dough is rising.
7. Bake the loaf in the preheated oven for 35 to 40 minutes until the bread is golden and cooked through. Cool thoroughly before slicing.

Note: The brioche can be baked a day in advance. Cool thoroughly and wrap well.

MERLOT  
LOS CARNEROS  
NAPA VALLEY - 2002

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