

ADVENTURES CLUB

by Anthony Lynch • JULY 2015

2013 PIC SAINT LOUP “CUVÉE SAINTE AGNÈS” ERMITAGE DU PIC SAINT LOUP

Biodynamic agriculture may seem like voodoo medicine to some, but few are more convinced of its worth than the three Ravaille brothers, who farm the limestone slopes around Pic Saint Loup in the Languedoc. Since beginning the conversion to biodynamics in 1999, the Ravailles have been quick to sing the praises of this philosophy, which treats the vineyard as a living being and relies on natural “preparations” instead of commercial pesticides—homeopathic remedies for vines, if you will. According to cellar master Pierre Ravaille, biodynamics brought noticeable improvements to vineyard health and overall quality within years. Here is a red to support that claim, a blend of mainly Syrah and Grenache from high altitude on poor, thin, rocky soil. Its mystical perfume evokes wild blackberries, smoke, spice, and olive brine in a chewy, mineral-driven expression of this underrated southern French *terroir*. Drinkable now, it is also a great bargain cellar candidate, and an excellent ambassador for biodynamic viticulture.

\$25.00 PER BOTTLE \$270.00 PER CASE

2005 BARBERA DEL MONFERRATO SUPERIORE “PERLYDIA” • CANTINE VALPANE

On a recent sales trip to New York, Cantine Valpane winemaker Pietro Arditì adapted admirably to the city’s frenetic lifestyle. He seemed somewhat homesick nonetheless, as he exclaimed during a short break from a hectic itinerary of nonstop tastings: “At home, I am content to simply sit on my tractor all day!” The pace of life is indeed much slower in the balmy Monferrato hills, where the Arditìs have cultivated Barbera since 1900. With the sun-baked Po Valley not far away, this peaceful agricultural sanctuary enjoys hotter summers than, say, the illustrious Langhe hills to the southeast. Pietro’s Barbera thus has no problem achieving optimal ripeness, expressing plump flavors of dark cherry, violets, and plum with a smooth, juicy texture. Perlydia ages for several years in cement tanks before bottling, so you can be sure it is ready to drink today. Valpane’s humble country Barberas undoubtedly represent some of the greatest values in Italian wine.

\$18.95 PER BOTTLE \$204.66 PER CASE

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

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POLLO AL MATTONE WITH SALSA VERDE

by Christopher Lee

I might describe this salsa verde as unusual. Italians generally like their salsa verde very simple: parsley, capers, and celery chopped together, and then made voluptuous with good olive oil and spiked with vinegar. The idea of tarragon with crisp-skin chicken comes from Lutèce, André Soltner's lovely New York restaurant, alas, now gone. The idea still lingers, perhaps sentimentally, but with reason, in a few restaurants around town. If you're skilled with a knife, cut up the chicken yourself; otherwise, ask your butcher to do it for you. Chicken is equally good cooked in a cast-iron pan or on your grill; it's all about the skin. For the weight, wrap a brick—the mattone—in foil. Prepare the salsa verde while the bird cooks, so the herbs have a chance to mingle.

SALSA VERDE

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| 1 small bunch Italian parsley,
mostly leaves | ½ teaspoon chili flakes |
| 1 small bunch tarragon, leaves
stripped, stems discarded | ½ teaspoon chopped garlic |
| 3 sprigs mint, leaves stripped,
stems discarded | ½ teaspoon lemon juice |
| | Grated zest of 1 lemon |
| | ¼ teaspoon sea salt |
| | ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil |

Roughly chop the herbs together. Combine in a bowl with chili flakes, garlic, lemon juice, lemon zest, and salt. Whisk in oil.

CHICKEN

- 1 chicken, backbone, breastbone, and wing tips removed, flattened
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ tablespoons sea salt
- 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper

Rub the chicken with olive oil. Then rub with salt and cracked pepper. Lay a sheet of plastic over it and allow it to rest at room temperature for 1 hour. Heat a cast-iron pan to smoking and then reduce heat to medium. Place chicken in pan skin side down, and place weight on top so skin is pressed evenly against pan. Cook for 25–30 minutes without moving chicken. Watch for burning and reduce heat slightly, if needed. When skin is dark mahogany, turn chicken over. Replace weight on top of bird, using clean side of weight. Cook bird 20–25 minutes longer, until second side is crisp and bird is cooked through. (Turn once more if needed.) When done, cut chicken into pieces, place on a warm platter skin side up, and spoon salsa over bird.

Serves 4–6

Christopher Lee is a former head chef of Chez Panisse and Eccolo in Berkeley and co-founder of the Pop-Up General Store in Oakland, California. Read his blog at <http://oldfashionedbutcher.blogspot.com>.