

ADVENTURES CLUB

by Anthony Lynch • MARCH 2016

2013 PINOT BLANC KUENTZ-BAS

The historic Kuentz-Bas estate is producing some of its finest wines in recent memory. While winemaker Samuel Tottoli crafts stunning Rieslings and Pinot Gris from several esteemed *grands crus*, his everyday whites, like this Pinot Blanc (actually a blend of Pinot Blanc with Auxerrois), garner the most recognition: consistently delivering terrific value, they do not disappoint. Samuel's key is to treat his more modest bottlings with as much care and respect as his most coveted cuvées, always seeking to showcase *terroir* by minimizing intervention in the cellar. Farmed according to organic and biodynamic principles, the fruit ferments wild after being pressed and racked into the domaine's ancient wood *foudres*, where the wine naturally completes its malolactic fermentation for additional texture and length. Not many entry-level whites are made this way anywhere in the world, and the result—elegant, clean, and dry with abundant apple, pear, and peach fruit, floral nuances, and a focused minerality—suggests Samuel may be onto something.

\$14.95 PER BOTTLE **\$161.46** PER CASE

2004 BARBERA DEL MONFERRATO "VALPANE" CANTINE VALPANE

The Monferrato hills east of Torino are an agrarian paradise, home to some of Italy's most straightforward, delicious, and affordable wines. The warm climate here favors a rich, juicy expression of Barbera, the area's emblematic grape variety, and nowhere does Barbera shine like at Cantine Valpane. Pietro Arditì, the winemaker at this peaceful, rustic farm, is keen to honor Valpane's past by continuing to craft Barbera the traditional way—fermenting with native yeasts and aging in neutral vessels such as concrete tanks and large, used oak *tonneaux*. These simple yet proven methods have earned the estate's Barberas praise from even the snooty Bordelais, who have awarded them gold medals at tastings as far back as 1898. This 2004, which includes 15% Freisa, another local variety, has reached optimal maturity: plump and smooth with hints of earth and spices, it is the perfect accompaniment to roasted meats and savory ragùs.

\$24.95 PER BOTTLE **\$269.46** PER CASE

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

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SCALLOPS WITH ALMOND BUTTER AND BREAD CRUMBS

by Christopher Lee

I like to cook scallops simply, always with a touch of garlic and parsley. This recipe is an elaboration of that idea. The flavor of the almonds provides a nutty background to scallops; garlic gives them depth; parsley provides a spark of brightness. The butter is prepared ahead, so cooking is quite easy. The dish can be assembled and ready to go well in advance of dinner. In the United States, it's difficult to find scallops with their beautiful, delicious roe still attached. In France and generally throughout Europe, they're sold with the roe. Find a good local fishmonger who appreciates the subtleties of scallops and leaves the roe attached. You'll need shells, too, so ask the fishmonger to provide them. If the scallops are sold in the shell, ask to have them shucked for you. If you're lucky enough to find pink scallops from Maine, do not hesitate, but you'll need a couple per person, as they're smaller scallops.

ALMOND BUTTER

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| 1 pound unsalted butter, softened to room temperature | 2 teaspoons Espelette pepper (<i>piment d'Espelette</i>) |
| ½ cup whole almonds, lightly toasted, finely chopped | 2 teaspoons garlic, pounded in a mortar with a pinch of salt |
| 1 teaspoon sea salt | |

Mix all ingredients until well blended. Hold butter at room temperature.

SCALLOPS

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| 2 cups rock salt | Almond butter at room temperature |
| 6 scallop shells, cleaned | Lightly oiled bread crumbs |
| 2 ounces extra-virgin olive oil | 4 ounces Italian parsley, finely chopped |
| 6 large sea scallops with their roe | |
| Sea salt | |

Sprinkle rock salt on a baking sheet; the rock salt will stabilize the shells. Brush inside of shells with olive oil. Salt scallops and place in center of shells. Spoon 1 teaspoon almond butter on top of each scallop. Sprinkle each scallop with 1 ounce bread crumbs, pressing down gently, and drizzle with 1 teaspoon olive oil. Set on baking sheet on rock salt and place in refrigerator to chill. (Scallops can be held for several hours at this point.) Heat oven to 400°F. Bake for 12 minutes in center of oven, until crumbs are golden, butter is melted and bubbly, and scallops are opaque. Sprinkle with parsley and serve each on a folded white napkin on top of a white plate.

Serves 6