



CLUB ROUGE *by Anthony Lynch*

JUNE 2017

2014 LANGUEDOC MONTPEYROUX ROUGE “LES COCALIÈRES” • DOMAINE D’AUPILHAC

A quick glance at the Cocalières vineyard is enough to inspire downright awe: this vast amphitheater stretches over a sloping eight hectares of rocky land, perched above the Languedoc plains that lead to the Mediterranean to the south. Convinced by the potential of this high-altitude *terroir*, vigneron Sylvain Fadat of Domaine d’Aupillac cleared the land of shrubbery and stones after purchasing the plot almost twenty years ago, then planted vines with the goal of producing wines of elegance and restraint. The slightly cooler climate in Cocalières is perfect for accomplishing this, as it allows Sylvain to harvest ripe, balanced grapes at lower potential alcohol levels than is feasible in the sunbaked foothills below. The 2014 vintage epitomizes his quest for freshness: rarely do Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre achieve such class and finesse. Today, it recalls black pepper, violets, and dried herbs, but if previous vintages are any indicator, there is no hurry to open this refined southern red.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE **\$378.00 PER CASE**

2013 ELORO NERO D’AVOLA “SCIAVÈ” • RIOFAVARA

Nero d’Avola is a grape variety that requires the right site and a talented *vignaiolo* to bring out its best qualities. In its home of southeast Sicily—not far from the town of Avola itself—it finds a natural affinity to the chalk soils of the Val di Noto. In spite of the hot, arid climate, the vines resist falling victim to drought thanks to the subterranean water reserves in the limestone. Organic farming is crucial to tapping into these natural riches, as it forces the roots to probe deep for resources. A long-time champion of organic viticulture, Massimo Padova of Riofavara has found the right formula for crafting uncommonly refreshing wines here. As the name suggests, his Nero d’Avola is truly black, densely loaded with wild fruit and spice. But fear not—with chalky tannins and a lively finish, this *rosso Siciliano* is utterly drinkable.

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KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

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PASTA ALLA NORMA

by Christopher Lee

Stories of the origins of this dish abound, though it's indisputably Sicilian and has been cooked for a long time. Cutting the eggplant in thick slices is the typical Sicilian approach. It's important to fry the eggplant in a single layer until deeply burnished; otherwise, the slices turn into an undesirable, glossy, gray mush. Aged ricotta salata may be hard to find, but the typically available younger ricotta salata is fine, as is pecorino romano. The Sciavè is great with this pasta.

- 3 small Italian or Japanese eggplants, dense and firm, without seeds, cut into $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch half-moons
- Sea salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup extra virgin olive oil, for frying and drizzling
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- One 14-ounce tin Italian whole peeled tomatoes drained of their juice, or 6 ounces tomato concentrate
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon chili flakes
- 300 grams penne rigate, rigatoni, or paccheri
- $\frac{1}{2}$ bunch fresh basil leaves, large ones torn in half and small ones left whole
- 4 ounces ricotta salata (aged, if possible)

Season eggplant lightly with salt and fry in a cast-iron pan in a generous amount of olive oil—you'll use about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil in total—in single-layer batches. Transfer eggplant to a tray lined with baking paper, laying eggplant on tray in a single layer. (Do not use paper towels.) Sizzle garlic in remaining olive oil in a low-sided saucepan. Squish tomatoes with your hands and add tomatoes, oregano, chili flakes, and a pinch of salt to the saucepan. Cook over low heat, further breaking up tomatoes with a wooden spoon, until well reduced and nearly dry. Boil pasta in abundant salted water to al dente, then drain, saving a few tablespoons of pasta water to thin sauce, if needed. Warm eggplant and tomato sauce gently in saucepan. Add noodles and half of basil leaves and stir to coat. To serve, place some of the eggplant on a warm platter in a circular mound. Pile pasta on top of eggplant, distributing remaining ingredients evenly through pasta. Garnish with remaining basil leaves and grate ricotta over pasta, using the largest holes of a box grater.

Makes 4 portions

Christopher Lee is a former head chef of Chez Panisse and Eccoli restaurants in Berkeley and co-founder of Pop-Up General Store in Oakland. Visit his website: oldfashionedbutcher.com.