

WILD SALMON BAKED IN FIG LEAVES WITH ROSÉ BUTTER

BY CHRISTOPHER LEE

A happy alignment of the stars: delicious wild local king salmon in season and obliging fig trees that provide us with beautiful, tender young leaves to wrap the fish. Salmon cooked in this way has become a standard of the repertoire. The delicate flavor of the spring-run fish scented with the gentle perfume of the fig leaves is enchanting. Any variety of delicate flesh fish—halibut, cod, ling cod—can be prepared with this method, but the early-season local king has everything right for this recipe. A lighter rosé is my favorite choice for the sauce, but Prosecco will work as well—a perfect pairing with Kuentz-Bas Pinot Blanc. If you're drinking the Patrimonio, build the sauce with a lighter red wine, such as Grenache or Gamay.

- 4 fig leaves, each about the size of your open hand
- 2 ounces extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 five-ounce skinless center-cut fillets wild king salmon, bones removed
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 2 shallots, peeled, finely diced
- ½ cup rosé wine
- ½ pound unsalted butter, cut in ½-inch-thick pats, chilled in freezer
- Pinch white pepper

Wipe shiny side of leaves with a damp cloth to remove dust or debris. With a pair of scissors, cut a notch about half an inch into the base of each leaf and remove stem. Brush the shiny side of each leaf with a little olive oil.

Season salmon fillets with salt. Place a salmon fillet fatty side down on the oiled side of a fig leaf and enclose the fillet inside the leaf. Turn the packet over and lay it on a baking sheet to hold the fold closed (or close with a toothpick).

Bake fish at 425° F until cooked through, about 12 minutes; fish should be pink in the center. While the fish is cooking, reduce the wine to 2 tablespoons with the shallots in a small pan. Whisk chilled butter into wine over lowest flame one piece at a time to form a light sauce. Move pan off heat if butter becomes too hot. You can tell by the amount of steam rising off the butter, or with a secret swipe of your finger. Salt to taste (usually a pinch is enough) and add a pinch of white pepper. Open each fig leaf carefully and spoon butter over the salmon.

Serves 4

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

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AMERICA'S

2018 PINOT BLANC KUENTZ-BAS

Olivier Raffin produces this charming *blanc* using mostly Pinot Blanc, along with some Auxerrois, from the quaint village of Husseren-les-Châteaux in Alsace. He ferments the grapes in *foudres* assembled in 1894, during the construction of the domaine's "new" cellar. Given their age and how many vintages they have held, these massive wooden casks no longer impart flavor to the wine. Their main purpose is to allow a slow exchange of oxygen between the inside and outside of the vessel, which enhances fermentation and adds complexity to the aromas. This dry and generous *blanc* delivers that dreamy combination of floral aromatics and crisp flavors of orchard fruit and citrus, which make it perfect for all kinds of spring fare, such as Chris Lee's salmon baked in fig leaves. —TOM WOLF

\$17.00 per bottle \$183.60 per case



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2019 PATRIMONIO ROUGE "CRU DES AGRIATE" DOMAINE GIACOMETTI

If you make a fist with your left hand and point your index finger in the air, looking at the back of your hand, you have a rough diagram of the island of Corsica. From the western base of your index finger to the knuckle of your middle finger lies one of the island's—and France's—most exciting appellations, Patrimonio. There lies Domaine Giacometti, specifically in the Agriates Desert, a rugged and arid stretch of northern Corsica, swept year round by a hot and dry wind called the *libecciu* and covered in the aromatic shrubs called *maquis*. There are no cities or towns here, only one hamlet with a dozen or so inhabitants and a small paved road. The Giacomettis moved here thirty-five years ago and have coaxed the vines into thriving in a difficult terrain. They make this *rouge* from Niellucciu and a splash of Grenache, and the result is a triumphant testament to their terroir. Pretty notes of cranberries, blackberries, and citrus coat your palate before giving way to a fine tannin and transportive flavors of the *maquis* that surrounds the domaine. This red is a meal unto itself, but for an ideal pairing, try rosemary lamb chops right off the grill. —TOM WOLF

\$26.00 per bottle \$280.80 per case



					
2018 Pinot Blanc <i>Kuentz-Bas</i>	70% Pinot Blanc, 30% Auxerrois	25- to 45-year-old vines Loess, silt, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Do not decant	Orchard fruit, citrus, chamomile Floral, crisp, dry	Drink now
2019 Patrimonio Rouge "Cru Des Agriate" <i>Domaine Giacometti</i>	97% Niellucciu, 3% Grenache	10- to 45-year-old vines Clay, granite	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Cranberries, blackberries, herbs Structured, dry, complex	Drink now through 2030

LEFT Vines at Kuentz-Bas, Husseren-les-Châteaux in the distance. © Sarah Hernan
COVER Vines at Giacometti. © Domaine Giacometti