

SPAGHETTI NERO WITH DUNGENESS CRAB AND CALABRIAN CHILI PASTE

BY GEORGEANNE BRENNAN

Black pastas and risottos made with squid ink are popular in the Veneto region of Italy, where they are frequently paired with the region's abundant seafood. This, in turn, is an exemplary pairing with the crisp, clean Gambellara Classico wine produced in the area, like El Gian from producer Davide Vignato. In our case, I've opted for West Coast Dungeness crab for the seafood element, but meat from Alaskan king crab legs or other crab meat could be used as well. I like to buy the crab live and cook it myself to ensure perfect freshness, but if that's not possible or desirable for you, purchase quality crab meat from your favorite fishmonger.

Spaghetti nero can readily be found at markets that carry Italian imports or online, or you can make it yourself using squid ink purchased the same way. Nero pastas are actually quite mild, with a subtle hint of brine from the ink.

The crab meat is warmed in burst cherry tomatoes spiked with a dash (or more) of Calabrian chili paste, just enough to bind the crab together before topping a nest of the pasta. The dish is finished with a super-simple pesto of only basil, a touch of salt, and extra-virgin olive oil.

FOR THE PASTA

1 teaspoon sea salt
4–5 ounces spaghetti *nero*

FOR THE PESTO

1 cup fresh basil leaves, plus small leaves
for garnish
¼ teaspoon sea salt
1½–2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

FOR THE CRAB

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons minced shallots
12 cherry tomatoes, halved
¼ teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon Calabrian chili paste
8 ounces Dungeness crab meat,
preferably freshly cracked,
about 1¾ pounds whole crab

Over high heat, bring a large pot of water to a boil and add the teaspoon of sea salt. Add the pasta and cook according to the package directions until al dente.

To make the pesto, combine the basil and salt in a mortar and grind to a paste with a pestle, and gradually add the olive oil, mixing well. Alternatively, combine all in a small food processor and process to a pourable paste. Set aside.

For the crab, heat the olive oil in a frying pan over medium-high heat. When it is hot, add the shallots and the halved cherry tomatoes. Reduce the heat to medium, and cook, stirring, until the tomatoes burst and begin to release their juice. Stir in the salt and chili paste. Gently turn the crab into the mixture, keeping the pieces of crab intact as much as possible.

To serve, drain the pasta and arrange it in a nest on each of 4 salad or dinner plates or shallow bowls. Top equally with the crab mixture and drizzle with the pesto. Garnish each with a few small basil leaves.

Serves 4 as a first course



The James Beard award-winning cookbook author Georgianne Brennan is also the author of the best-selling food memoir *A Pig in Provence*. She continues to write about food and cooking from her longtime homes in Provence and in Northern California, where she co-owns an aperitif wine bar. You can find more of her recipes at www.georgiannebrennan.com.



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ADVENTURES

2020 VENETO GARGANEGA “EL GIAN” DAVIDE VIGNATO

When we talk about the most crisp and mineral white wines from France and Italy that so clearly convey their terroirs, we often use Muscadet and Chablis as the benchmarks. But it's time that the best Garganegas, like this one from Davide Vignato, join their French counterparts in the conversation. Take one sip of Davide's El Gian and you know immediately that its almost salty stoniness bespeaks a unique and exhilarating terroir. In the foothills of the Italian Alps east of Verona, Davide farms fourteen hectares of mostly Garganega planted in soils composed of basalt columns originating from a small, extinct volcano just a few hundred meters from the winery. His decades-long organic and biodynamic practices have made him a pioneer here in the small village of Gambellara, and they are crucial to capturing an astonishingly pure expression of terroir in the glass. Bracing, floral, and stony, this *bianco* offers notes of herbs, citrus, and pear that make it a perfect match for all varieties of fresh seafood. Try it with Georgeanne Brennan's spaghetti *nero* with Dungeness crab for an exquisite and regionally inspired springtime feast. —TOM WOLF

\$19.00 per bottle

\$205.20 per case

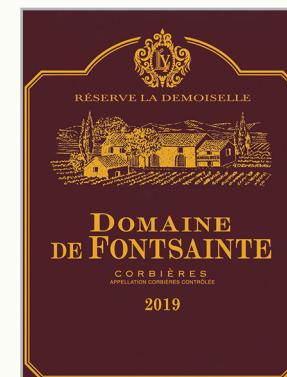


2019 CORBIÈRES ROUGE “RÉSERVE LA DEMOISELLE” DOMAINE DE FONTSAINTE

From north to south, the Languedoc has made great strides in recent years in proving that it is a region full of noteworthy terroirs and outstanding wines. But, in reality, there has been proof of this for decades. Take Domaine de Fontsaïnte's Demoiselle, for example, which Kermit began importing in the mid-eighties. It's made with Carignan vines so old—over a hundred years—they would fill any vigneron with envy. And it comes from one of Corbières' best sites, surrounding the hamlet of Boutenac in the area known as “The Golden Crescent.” This swath of land is one of the sunniest in Corbières, and a nearby 500-hectare forest protects it from the region's cold northeast winds. Hailing from a rugged and windswept hillside vineyard that benefits from just the right amount of sunlight and drainage, La Demoiselle is full of character, soul, and deliciousness. Succulent and beautifully balanced, it evokes dark fruit, leather, and spice and would pair perfectly with pretty much anything right off the grill. —TOM WOLF







\$23.00 per bottle

\$248.40 per case



ABOVE The Corbières appellation of Languedoc-Roussillon. © Domaine de Fontsaïnte

COVER Basalt columns from an extinct volcano define the terroir. © Davide Vignato

					
2020 Veneto Garganega “El Gian” Davide Vignato	Garganega	25-year-old vines, on average Basalt	Serve cold 46–50° F Do not decant	Herbs, citrus, pear Bracing, floral, stony	Drink now
2019 Corbières Rouge “Réserve La Demoiselle” Domaine de Fontsaïnte	60% Carignan, 30% Grenache, 10% Mourvèdre	Carignan vines planted in 1904 Silica, clay, limestone (gravelly with large <i>galets</i> , or rounded stones)	Serve slightly cool 58–62° F Decant recommended	Dark fruit, leather, spice Succulent, soulful, beautifully balanced	Drink now through 2035

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