
ROASTED WALNUTS WITH SAGE LEAVES

BY CHRISTOPHER LEE

Sitting on the porch on a recent sunny afternoon, we sipped Champalou's Vouvray Brut with bites of a buttery yet tangy three-year-old Comté with slices of homemade wheat bread, and nibbled on a bowlful of roasted walnuts scented with fresh sage leaves. We felt like we were at a riverside auberge in the Loire Valley. The cleanliness of the Vouvray against the saltiness of the walnuts and perfume of the sage was a delightful combination. The Loire Valley is famous for its extraordinary goat cheeses that have been produced there for many centuries. The young cheeses tend to be bright and delicious, and are always a good choice for wines from the region. But that afternoon the nutty Comté was a perfect fit. In California, we also have a beautiful palate of local cheeses. Aged ones include Bandage Wrapped Cheddar, from Fiscalini Farms; Vella Mezzo Secco Jack, a classic and one of the originals of its kind; Winchester Gouda, from Temecula; and Rumble, from Weirauch Farm in Petaluma. All are superb. If you want to stick to goat's milk, Humboldt Fog is one of the best. The Champalou Vouvray would bring out the best in any of these cheeses.

- 2 cups walnuts, about ½ pound
- ½ cup fresh sage leaves, small if possible
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ½ teaspoon grapeseed or mild olive oil



On a baking pan lined with parchment, roast the walnuts at 300° F for about 25 minutes or perhaps a little longer. Turn the nuts over gently with a spatula from time to time to roast them evenly; the goal is to crisp the nuts with minimal browning, which can obliterate the delicate natural sweetness of the nut meat. Therefore keep an eye on the walnuts after about 20 minutes to avoid overbrowning them. At 25 minutes, toss in the sage leaves to scent the nuts. Do not crisp the leaves too much. When done, toss the nuts gently with the salt and oil. Cool to room temperature uncovered, or if you prefer, serve them warm with cheese and bread.

Makes 2 cups



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.



ADVENTURES







September 2020

VOUVRAY BRUT CHAMPALOU

Most peddlers of sparkling Vouvray seem to believe that its main value proposition is that it is a more affordable alternative to Champagne. But touting that feature alone is selling the best Vouvray Bruts short! Champalou's rendition, for example, is not only less expensive, but it is also more elegant and better balanced than many Champagnes. Made from Chenin Blanc in the Champagne method—and still hand-riddled—this cuvée is the quintessential apéritif sparkling wine. The Chenin's notes of apple and pear and the fine bead pair perfectly with Loire Valley *chèvres* from down the road, like Sainte-Maure and Valençay, but this sparkler is versatile enough to be served with a wide range of fare in many different settings. If you would like to try a cheese from beyond the Loire Valley, try Chris Lee's roasted walnuts recipe with some Comté and a loaf of bread. —TOM WOLF

\$26.00 per bottle \$280.80 per case



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| Vouvray Brut Champalou | Chenin Blanc | 20-year-old vines, on average | Serve cold 46–52° F Do not decant | Apple, pear, stones Elegant, balanced, crisp | Drink now |
| 2018 Monferrato Rosso Tenuta La Pergola | 55% Barbera, 30% Bonarda, 10% Dolcetto, 5% Freisa | 15-year-old vines, on average Sand, limestone | Serve slightly cool 58–62° F Decant optional | Cherries, blackberries, violets Juicy, versatile, joyous | Drink now |

COVER Céline Champalou. © Gail Skoff

RIGHT Tenuta La Pergola

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2018 MONFERRATO ROSSO TENUTA LA PERGOLA

If you've ever dreamed of moving to Italy and opening your own *agriturismo* or small-town *trattoria*, you've probably imagined the wine you would serve at lunch alongside your saucy *tagliatelle ai funghi* or tender *prosciutto crudo*. You want something juicy, versatile, and joyous: a red with some good acidity to complement your simple home cooking and just enough tannic spine to stand up to the meat-forward dishes on your table. It needs to be light and vibrant enough to leave you with postprandial energy. You just might not have known precisely which bottle from which region it would be. Well, here it is: a Piemontese red made mostly from Barbera and its supporting cast of Bonarda, Dolcetto, and Freisa, grown in sand and limestone soils around the picturesque hillside town of Cisterna d'Asti. In contrast to the exalted Baroli made to the south, Tenuta La Pergola specializes in the humbler side of Piedmont's wine culture, which can be every bit as satisfying. The *azienda's* Monferrato Rosso is the quintessential house wine, whether it's my apartment in the Bay Area or your future *casa* in Italia. It is *the* red to always have on hand. —TOM WOLF

\$14.00 per bottle \$151.20 per case

