

ADVENTURES CLUB

— by Anthony Lynch • MARCH 2018 —

2016 VERDICCHIO DEI CASTELLI DI JESI AZIENDA SANTA BARBARA

Hailing from Le Marche, a region on a similar latitude as Tuscany but situated on Italy's eastern, Adriatic coast, Verdicchio is responsible for mouthwatering whites that are extremely refreshing, versatile, and, in certain cases, age-worthy. But this Verdicchio from Azienda Santa Barbara is not a profound, long-lived wine: this bright, zesty, lemony quaffer is destined for early drinking, at a price that encourages unlimited thirst-quenching pleasure for all. While Le Marche has a long coastline, complete with gorgeous beaches and fresh seafood, the region's interior stretches all the way to the Apennines, the mountain range that forms Italy's spinal cord from north to south. The rolling foothills of the Apennines, with views of the Adriatic in the distance, are where the region's vineyards are concentrated, and the town of Jesi is a historic stronghold for fine Verdicchio. Uncork this one with seafood pasta, or simply as an *aperitivo* to whet your palate in times of dire thirst.

\$12.00 PER BOTTLE

\$129.60 PER CASE

2014 CHIANTI CLASSICO • CASTAGNOLI

The Castagnoli vineyards, just outside of Castellina in Chianti, are a sight to behold: sprawling over stone terraces carved out of a steep hillside, they look out on the magnificent Tuscan landscape to the south, with towering Monte Amiata looming in the distance. The high altitude here—up to 450 meters—and stony soil, littered with flaky blue chunks of *galestro* (a schistous clay found locally), give a unique expression of Sangiovese showing minerality, lift, and exotic aromatics in contrast with the chunkier, more corporeal wines common elsewhere in the Chianti zone. Adding to this is the bright, fresh character of the 2014 vintage, a cooler and rainier year that yielded wines lighter in color and body than is typical in Tuscany. The result is a Chianti of great elegance and drinkability, refined by aging in large casks and still showing a pleasant fleshiness, thanks to the unfiltered bottling. It is the perfect match for rustic Mediterranean cuisine.



\$29.00 PER BOTTLE

\$313.20 PER CASE

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

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ABOVE *The Castagnoli estate* Photo © Anthony Lynch

BAKED FISH WITH ASCOLANO OLIVE SALSA

by Christopher Lee

Le Marche, a less-traveled part of Italy, has delicious food. Two-star Michelin restaurant Uliassi, in Senigallia, just up the coast from Ancona, is one of the most remarkable restaurants anywhere. Though Le Marche covers lots of mountainous inland area, its long Adriatic coast brings an extraordinary bounty of seafood to table. Fish often is served quite plain there, but it

also can be accompanied by enchantingly simple yet robust salsas such as this one, which includes olives, currants, and anchovies. It marries nicely with fillets of fish, and for my taste it goes especially well with whole fish in cartoccio—baked in a parchment envelope. The interplay of sweet currants, tart vinegar, and salty olives is fantastic. The bright Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi strikes a nice counterpoint. If you bake whole fish in parchment, black seabass, sea bream, branzino, or small rockfish would be the ticket. The envelope should include aromatics, olive oil, and a splash of wine. If, instead, you decide to pan-fry or grill the fish, a firm, flaky white fish—halibut, cod, hake, lingcod, snapper—is my preference. Buon appetito!



1 small onion, finely
chopped, about ½ cup
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup Ascolano olives,
pitted and chopped
½ cup currants, rinsed
2 ounces salted capers, soaked
20 minutes in water,
drained and chopped

¼ cup mint, finely chopped
1 tablespoon fennel seed,
pounded in mortar
¼ teaspoon chili flake,
pounded
6 anchovy fillets, finely
chopped
1 teaspoon lemon zest, grated
2 ounces red wine vinegar

Sauté onion over low heat in 1 tablespoon olive oil until golden brown. Cool to room temperature. Combine with all remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly. Serve as a condiment to warm fish in a bowl on the side.

Serves 4

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