



JANUARY 2022  
IN PRAISE OF FISH  
CHEVALIER



## IN PRAISE OF FISH



**LET'S TAKE A MOMENT** to appreciate seafood. Its exquisite flavors, redolent of the deep blue and its endless wonder, take on myriad forms with the diverse varieties of crustaceans, mollusks, and fish we have come to know. The French term *fruits de mer* is fittingly evocative, as if the ocean were

an enormous blue garden full of heavenly fruits waiting to be plucked and bitten into. So universal is seafood that every culture on Earth has its own take on it, be it raw, grilled, deep-fried, cured, fermented, tinned, smoked, or in sauces, pastas, sandwiches, soups, and everything in between.

Seafood offers a unique canvas for the world's fine wines. While the old—and grossly simplistic—adage suggests that only white wines are a suitable match, any producer of red will counter that their creations are equally adept at complementing optimally prepared marine creatures. Coastal wine-making regions, where seafood is invariably a staple of the local diet, are home to recipes perfectly adapted to wines crafted from grapes grown along the shoreline, whether they be white, red, pink, or sparkling. Even landlocked regions historically made wine geared to be served with fish from nearby rivers and lakes, proving that “what grows together goes together” not only is true but also represents a mere drop in the proverbial ocean of possibilities when it comes to delicious pairings.

Today, we are fortunate to have access to excellent raw materials from all over the world, whether it's fresh Dungeness crab caught off the California coast, savory tinned anchovies from northern Spain, Arctic char from the frigid waters of Alaska, or pristine sushi-grade yellowtail flown in from Tokyo. The wealth of wines produced in France and Italy perfectly complement all of the above, leaving the home chef with endless options for mouthwatering pairings. So make a trip to see your local fishmonger, then pour yourself a glass of one of this month's club wines and savor one of life's great pleasures.

—ANTHONY LYNCH

FACING: Bouillabaisse stewing in Provence. © GAIL SKOFF





## 2020 BANDOL ROSÉ ♦ DOMAINE DE TERREBRUNE \$39

TERREBRUNE'S BANDOL epitomizes the idea of a terroir-driven rosé, from the nose of thyme and white peach, redolent of a Provençal summer, to its mouthwateringly salty finish, a reminder that the sea is just a stone's throw away. Accordingly, this 2020 is characterized by tangy minerals underlying beautiful citrus and herbal notes. Vigneron Reynald Delille is never shy about pointing out the aging potential of his rosé, often pulling out twenty-year-old bottles in pristine condition to prove his point. In its youth, its brightness makes it a great companion to shellfish in their most basic form, including raw oysters, urchin, or grilled *loup de mer* (sea bass). With age, it picks up weight and develops deeper aromatics, allowing it to stand up to richer and more elaborate seafood preparations.



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## 2020 PATRIMONIO BLANC "E CROCE" ♦ YVES LECCIA \$44



CONSISTENCY is key for sixth-generation winemaker Yves Leccia, who year after year bottles some of the most chiseled, sumptuous Corsican whites with Burgundy-like precision. His magical limestone terroir of E Croce in the northern commune of Poggio d'Oletta produces one of the island's—and the world's—most magnificent examples of the Vermentino grape. Always fresh and saline, with ample body and tuned-up aromatics

reminiscent of citrus, flowers, and fragrant maquis herbs, this is an *aperitivo* par excellence and works wonders with anything fresh from the sea. It is especially at home alongside Mediterranean preparations and light pastas from coastal Italy, but a simple *fritto* will more than do the job.



2017 CHABLIS 1ER CRU “VAILLONS” ♦ HENRI COSTAL \$42

MADE FROM OLD Chardonnay grown organically on rocky vineyards loaded with marine fossils, Costal’s Vaillons displays an intensity not commonly associated with this typically delicate, floral *premier cru*. Uncorking a bottle today offers a glimpse at the magic of aged Chablis: it is rich—unctuous, even—yet remains incredibly dynamic, with plenty of lip-smacking acidity. Currently at its peak, it offers a smoky, lightly honeyed bouquet along with a trademark suggestion of salted butter that only perfectly mature Chablis can provide. Accordingly, serve it with fish in butter or cream-based sauces, or savor how it slices through the deep flavor of seared scallops.



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2020 RIVIERA LIGURE DI PONENTE ROSSESE  
“VIGNETO ISASCO” ♦ PUNTA CRENA \$30

THE RUFFINO FAMILY, farmers in the seaside village of Varigotti for over five hundred years and counting, chose top-quality Rossese clones from nearby Dolceacqua to plant in their Isasco vineyard, where terraced slopes of *terra rossa* (red clay) overlook the Mediterranean perched at 240 meters elevation. All the care, attentiveness, and backbreaking labor required to farm this site

result in one of the most joyful and light-hearted reds you will encounter. Taking a sip is akin to crunching into a just-ripe cherry tomato, its nectar bursting onto the palate with sweet, spicy, piquant goodness. With virtually no tannin, this Ligurian red is perfectly adapted to the local bounty sourced from the sea as well as land. The classic dish *orata alla ligure*—baked sea bream on a bed of potatoes, herbs, seasonal vegetables, and taggiasca olives—is a match made in heaven with chilled Rossese.





2019 BROUILLY ♦ ALEX FOILLARD \$48



ALEX FOILLARD epitomizes the new generation of talent coming of age in the Beaujolais. Growing up in the Foillard household, he had privileged access to the brightest minds of natural wine, but that did not prevent him from exhibiting some ambition of his own. In order to really spread his wings, he purchased his own vineyards, including a one-hectare plot of fifty-year-old vines in Brouilly, a *cru* novel to the family cellars. Characterized by the deluxe silkiness that is the trademark of all Foillard bottlings, this versatile red shines when served slightly chilled with a simple grilled salmon steak.

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2018 ETNA ROSSO “I NOVE FRATELLI”

♦ MASSERIA DEL PINO \$58

THE WINEMAKING at Masseria del Pino is decidedly old-school. Federica Turillo and Cesare Fulvio, who left bustling Catania in 2005 for a calmer life on Mount Etna’s northern face, eschew modern technology at their small farm, working their vines and olive trees organically and making wine in a reconditioned old *palmento* (traditional Sicilian farmhouse) complete with fermentation vats carved into the lava rock. The resulting wine is undeniably terroir-driven—rich with smokiness from the volcanic soil, vibrant red fruit and spices from the high elevation, and a lovely fine tannin balanced by bright minerality from 120-year-old vines. This elegant 2018 is a less concentrated Etna rosso that would be delicious with a Sicilian specialty such as tuna or swordfish in a tomato, olive, and caper sauce.







2020 Bandol Rosé <i>Domaine de Terrebrune</i> <b>PROVENCE</b>	50% Mourvèdre, 25% Grenache, 25% Cinsault	10-year-old vines Red clay, Triassic limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–50° F Decant optional	Grapefruit, nectarine, thyme, sea spray Crisp, lean, briny	Drink now through 2035
2020 Patrimonio <i>Blanc</i> “E Croce” <i>Yves Leccia</i> <b>CORSICA</b>	Vermentinu	20- to 50-year- old vines Clay, limestone, schist	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–50° F Decant optional	Lemon, fresh herbs, white blossoms Direct, focused, saline	Drink now through 2030
2017 Chablis 1er Cru “Vaillons” <i>Henri Costal</i> <b>BURGUNDY</b>	Chardonnay	30-year-old vines Kimmeridgian limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Salted butter, honey, oyster shell, toasted almond Unctuous, broad, fleshy, stony	Drink now through 2026
2020 Riviera Ligure di Ponente Rossese “Vigneto Isasco” <i>Punta Crena</i> <b>LIGURIA</b>	Rossese	11- to 26-year- old vines Red clay	Serve <i>cool</i> 54–58° F Decant optional	Little red berries, strawberry, tomato leaf, pepper Tangy, gentle, ethereal	Drink now
2019 Brouilly <i>Alex Foillard</i> <b>BEAUJOLAIS</b>	Gamay	50-year-old vines Granite	Serve <i>cool</i> 54–58° F Decant optional	Violets, sour cherry, raspberry, wet soil Juicy, velvety, crunchy, nimble	Drink now through 2028
2018 Etna Rosso “I Nove Fratelli” <i>Masseria del Pino</i> <b>SICILY</b>	90% Nerello Mascalese, 10% Nerello Cappuccio	120-year-old vines Volcanic	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Black cherry, smoke, licorice, spices Supple, medium- bodied, rustic	Drink now

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Consider the wine you serve with fried seafood as a sort of garnish, not unlike the lemon wedge you squeeze over your plate to brighten the flavor. Dry, lean, zesty young whites such as Chablis, Muscadet, Sancerre, or Riesling have the acidity to cleanse the palate after each crispy bite; Champagne and other sparklers work just as well. Salinity in the wine is a bonus.



Grilled fish, with its charred bits and hints of woodsmoke, lends itself to a wide range of wine pairings. Most whites and rosés are perfect, while stronger fish such as sardines can stand up to certain reds, such as Rossese or Corsican Sciaccarellu. Fattier fish like salmon and tuna also pair excellently with elegant, low-tannin reds, including Burgundy and Beaujolais.



Seafood pastas vary tremendously from recipe to recipe, and a regional pairing is hard to beat. For delicate dishes such as *linguine alle vongole*, uncork a Vermentino or any coastal Italian white; with tomato-based sauces, a medium-bodied Mediterranean red is an excellent match.



Octopus is an outlier in the world of seafood. Its subtle flavor is a match for a number of white wines, while its fleshy texture allows many reds to shine. Fuller-bodied whites with some skin contact, such as those produced on Etna, represent a good compromise, while slightly deeper reds can work as long as they do not overwhelm the flavor. Bandol rosé, as always, is a dependable backup option.