

RABBIT WITH TOMATOES, BASIL, AND SAFFRON

by Gary Podesto

Though the sprightly rouge from Clos Saint-Joseph is technically made in the Provence AOC, the vineyard sits snugly in the cooler foothills of the Alps, giving it ample acidity and a refreshingly low ABV. A mash-up of inspirations led to this rustic summery pairing. Thinking of the foothills, I'm reminded of childhood visits to my cousins' home in Calaveras County on our way up to camp in the Sierra Nevada. The suburbs of Sacramento would give way to more rural environs where chicken coops and rabbit hutches were commonplace. My first taste of rabbit was my aunt's riff on cacciatore, a dish both familiar and exotic, which has been a favorite of mine ever since. A sustainable source of protein, inherently local, and low in saturated fat—I love to champion rabbit as an alternative to other “white” meats. I'm tipping my cap to Richard Olney by adding a few threads of saffron to the pot. With tomatoes, basil, and garlic rounding out the rest of the Mediterranean flavors of this stovetop fricassee, this pairing is a great way to bridge southern France and Northern California on a cool summer evening. Enjoy this dish outside with a cucumber salad and some buttered rice.

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| 6 hind legs of domestically raised rabbit (Devil's Gulch Ranch offers great rabbit) | ½ cup white wine |
| Kosher salt | ½ cup red wine |
| 4 tablespoons olive oil | 1 pound tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and diced |
| 4 tablespoons butter | Pinch of saffron threads |
| 1 head of fennel, diced | Pinch of cayenne |
| 1 yellow onion, diced | Sprinkle of sugar |
| 6 cloves of garlic, thinly sliced | Leaves from 1 bunch of basil |

Season rabbit with salt and let sit for 30 minutes. Pat meat dry and sear in olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until lightly browned on all sides, about 20 minutes. Reserve browned meat on a plate.

Over medium-low heat, sweat fennel, onion, and garlic in butter for 5 minutes, letting them brown just a little. Deglaze with white and red wines, scraping up all browned bits, and reduce by half. Add diced tomatoes with their juice, saffron, cayenne, sugar, and a good pinch of salt. Stir to combine and bring to a gentle simmer.

Add rabbit back to the pan, adding just enough water to barely cover the meat. Bring back to a gentle simmer and cook over low heat, covered, for about 1 hour. Check meat for doneness. The leg joint should collapse when flexed. If it is still firm and elastic, cook for another 20–30 minutes until it gives. At this point, the sauce should be cooked down by about half and nicely coating the meat. Fold in basil leaves and let simmer for another 5 minutes and taste for final seasoning. Serve immediately. *Serves 4–6*



Gary Podesto is a cook at Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California, and is the chief culinary collaborator for the Climate Farm School. His work aims to revitalize the ritual of gathering around the hearth and table while promoting the values of edible education and regenerative agriculture. Learn more at www.garypodesto.net.









2018 BARBERA DEL MONFERRATO SUPERIORE “PERLYDIA” • CANTINE VALPANE

NORTHEAST OF the region of Barolo lies Cantine Valpane, a small family winery focused not on Nebbiolo but on the possibilities of Piemontese grapes that too often fly under the radar, like Freisa, Grignolino, and even—despite its wide cultivation—Barbera. This stretch of the area is called Monferrato, and while names of nearby Asti and Alba may be more widely recognized today, Cantine Valpane’s Pietro Arditì is a firm believer that Monferrato yields the most faithful expressions of Barbera. This is due in part to the warmer climate and longer hours of sunlight here, which allow the grapes to ripen completely and unleash the full personality of the variety. You can see what he means in this Perlydia, his grandest wine, with its soaring aromatics and flavors of blackberries, sour cherries, and leather. This *rosso* is made for pleasure, but remarkable character, refinement, and complexity are on display, too. —Tom Wolf

\$23.00 PER BOTTLE \$248.40 PER CASE

Pairs well with a *ragù alla bolognese*,
grilled mushroom skewers, or pizza.

					
2018 Barbera del Monferrato Superiore “Perlydia” <i>Cantine Valpane</i>	Barbera	Vines planted in 2000 Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62°F Decant optional	Blackberries, sour cherries, leather Refined, complex, tantalizingly aromatic	Drink now through 2027
2020 Côtes de Provence Rouge <i>Clos Saint-Joseph</i>	50% Syrah, 20% Mourvèdre, 15% Grenache, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% varied	5- to 90-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62°F Decant optional	Red fruit, earth, spice Savory, wild, vivid	Drink now through 2032

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2020 CÔTES DE PROVENCE ROUGE CLOS SAINT-JOSEPH

WHILE DISCOVERING new growers may be much harder today than it was when Kermit started his voyage, we’ve nevertheless found some incredibly exciting, up-and-coming vigneron in recent years. Perhaps nowhere have we experienced more fruitful scouting excursions than on either side of the Alps that stitch together France and Italy. This beautiful *rouge* comes from one of the easternmost points in Provence, not along the Mediterranean coast but forty-five minutes north of Nice, tucked into the pre-Alps village of Villars-sur-Var. Fourth-generation vigneron Roch Sassi is the only producer to bottle his own wine here in town, where most of the historic but minuscule thirty hectares of vines are farmed and harvested for the locals’ own personal consumption. Roch’s Côtes de Provence brims with classic Provençal character—bright and vivid dark fruit, a hint of Syrah’s savoriness, and a touch of Mourvèdre’s wildness. But because Villars-sur-Var is tucked in among rocky limestone mountains that shield it from the Mediterranean heat, it enjoys a much cooler microclimate than most of Provence, lending Roch’s wines a freshness and elegance you’d struggle to find anywhere else in the region. Pair it with Gary Podesto’s rabbit with tomatoes, basil, and saffron for a Provence-inspired summer feast! —Tom Wolf

\$55.00 PER BOTTLE \$594.00 PER CASE



ABOVE Roch Sassi and Constance Malengé. © Clos Saint-Joseph

COVER Cantine Valpane’s Pietro Arditì. © Jimmy Hayes