

STEAK WITH PEPPERCORN BUTTER

by Christopher Lee

Once a specialty of professional French kitchens, compound butters have recently become of practical interest to amateur cooks. The butters are versatile and delicious, are easy to make, and can be kept for several days in the fridge without much loss in quality, and they can be wrapped and frozen for longer keeping. I prefer European-style butter for compound butters, as it contains a relatively lower fraction of milk solids—and therefore higher fraction of butterfat—than typical American table butter. European-style butter produces a smoother, better-textured, fuller flavor for meats, as fats absorb flavor more readily than do liquids. I use compound butters for many savory dishes, including grilled chicken, lamb, and fish, and all are delightful. Roasted or fried potatoes are a good accompaniment to something finished with a compound butter. Other compound butters include shallots and red wine; green peppercorns; anchovy and parsley; shallots and white wine; fennel and coriander seed; parsley and shallot; black truffles; garlic and herbs; mustard and black peppercorn; and parsley and lemon zest. There are many to choose from and more to imagine. Our quickly sautéed, thinly sliced sirloin steak smeared with Tellicherry peppercorn butter paired superbly the other night with Châteaux Belles-Graves' full yet elegant Lalande-de-Pomerol. It was a very nice match and an enjoyable dinner.

2 tablespoons shallots,
diced or finely chopped
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
½ teaspoon red wine vinegar
½ pound unsalted butter,
softened to room temperature

4 teaspoons coarsely cracked
black peppercorns,
preferably Tellicherry
¼ teaspoon sea salt
Optional: ¼ teaspoon lemon zest

Sauté shallots in 1 tablespoon butter until soft, about 1 minute. Add vinegar to shallots and remove from heat. Allow to rest for a minute or two, and then cool in refrigerator. Mix peppercorns, shallots, and salt (and lemon zest, if using) into the softened butter. With a spatula, place butter on a piece of plastic wrap and shape into a rough log. Roll plastic and twist at both ends to shape butter into an even cylinder 1¾ inches thick. Chill in refrigerator for a couple of hours, until firm. To serve, slice butter into ½-inch-thick rounds and place on top of steaks just out of the pan or off the grill. Serve immediately so butter melts over the steaks at table.

Makes about 1 cup butter, enough for 8 steaks



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.



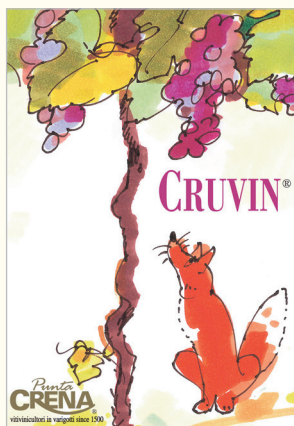
ROUGE

SEPTEMBER 2020

2018 COLLINE SAVONESI ROSSO “CRUVIN” PUNTA CRENA

AN D’AGATA’S 2014 BOOK *Native Grapes of Italy* is probably the most comprehensive you’ll find on the subject of Italian wine. The country boasts hundreds, if not thousands, of native grape varieties, and he devotes as many words to the most prevalent or interesting among them. If you turn to his section on Crovino, the red grape that forms this bottling, all you’ll find is the following passage: “Almost extinct because of its miserly productivity, Crovino was once famous in Ligurian areas around Genova and Finale Ligure. Today only the Punta Crena estate continues to make it.” Indeed, Punta Crena is a bastion for the preservation of wines made from some of Italy’s most interesting native varieties. The 2018 Cruvin is one-of-a-kind, with its minty, herbal, and peppery core that evokes walking in the Ligurian hills amid the wild herbs, pines, and coastal vegetation. Red and black berries are scattered about, but they are not in the foreground in this wine. Decant this bottling for an hour or two and serve with a pesto pasta or a sandwich on fresh focaccia. —Tom Wolf

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE \$378.00 PER CASE









2015 LALANDE-DE-POMEROL CHÂTEAU BELLES-GRAVES

AS YOU OPEN THIS BOTTLE, consider this description of Bordeaux reds attributed to Cardinal Richelieu by Alexandre Dumas: “They have an indescribably sinister, somber bite that is not at all disagreeable.” When you first swirl and sniff this red from just north of Pomerol, it might not make sense: the wine smells almost delicate, and you have a feeling it’s going to be light on its feet. When you take a sip, however, this memorable characterization begins to sink in. Beneath the notes of cherries, cassis, and tobacco lies a subterranean “bite”—there is no better way to describe it. Unlike in many modern, new-oak-polished wines from Bordeaux, this trait has not been buffed out in Château Belles-Graves’ *rouge*. You get a Lalande-de-Pomerol that tastes like it probably did when Richelieu had a glass by the fire. Speaking of fire, this red will match beautifully with almost anything off the grill, though Chris Lee’s steak recipe might just be the perfect pairing. —Tom Wolf

\$36.00 PER BOTTLE \$388.80 PER CASE



					
2018 Colline Savonesi Rosso “Cruvin” Punta Crena	Crovino	Vines planted in 1950, 1984, 1999 Sandy gravel	Serve slightly cool 56–60° F Decant 1–2 hours	Herbs, cherries, raspberries Minty, peppery, wild	Drink now through 2025
2015 Lalande-de-Pomerol Château Belles-Graves	88% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc	40-year-old vines, on average Clay, gravel	Serve slightly cool 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Cherries, cassis, tobacco Deep, earthy, classic	Drink now through 2035

COVER The view from Punta Crena’s vines. © Gail Skoff
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