

2013 PIC SAINT LOUP “TOUR DE PIERRES” ERMITAGE DU PIC SAINT LOUP

The underrated Pic Saint Loup appellation has all the makings of a great *terroir*: Mediterranean climate, rocky limestone soils, and cool, high-altitude vineyard sites. It's no surprise that Kermit has touted the area since his first tastings there, detecting significant possibilities for Syrah and Mourvèdre especially. Brothers Pierre, Jean-Marc, and Xavier Ravaille have made it their mission to harness this potential since founding Ermitage du Pic Saint Loup in 1992. They eschew herbicides in their vineyards, choosing instead to plow the soils and treat with biodynamic plant preparations. The focus is on a pure and natural expression of place, so fermentations are spontaneous, aging takes place in used *foudres* and *barrisques*, and the wines are bottled unfinned and unfiltered. This smoky, chewy blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre is a great example of what Pic Saint Loup can achieve in the right hands.

\$18.00 PER BOTTLE **\$194.40** PER CASE

2013 BAROLO “RAVERA DI MONFORTE” BENEVELLI PIERO

Over many years, certain vineyard sites in Barolo country have consistently stood out for their ability to produce superior wines. While soils in the Langhe hills are fairly consistent, with variations of marl, the crucial determinant here is exposure, as proper ripening depends on abundant sunshine during the growing season. The steep Ravera *cru* of Monforte d'Alba faces south and southeast, ideal for capturing maximum rays throughout the day. From an early age Massimo Benevelli helped his father, Piero, farm these vineyards, and he has now fully taken the reins of the family estate. He follows traditional practices, aging the wine in large casks to make deep, powerful Barolos built to age. This 2013 comes from a classic, balanced vintage in which bright acidity and tightly knit tannins provide a firm structure while a floral, spicy, fresh-raspberry perfume seems to soar from the glass.

\$56.00 PER BOTTLE **\$604.80** PER CASE

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WILD FENNEL CAKES

by Christopher Lee

Wild fennel seems to grow just about everywhere in Northern California. You can forage it in parks, untended lots, and little-used alleyways, but be sure to harvest it from areas away from roads and traffic. I cook with fennel often, and it has become one of the defining flavors of my kitchen. In late summer I even make finocchietto, a Sicilian wild-fennel liqueur I learned of from a wonderful Sicilian friend, sadly passed away. For this recipe—also Sicilian—choose lush, young, green fronds. If you find a green caterpillar residing on one of the plants, it is probably a larval swallowtail butterfly. Gently remove the caterpillar, and transfer it to another stem. Give the fronds a quick rinse in cool water to remove grit or insects that may be hiding, followed by a good shake to remove any water. Allow them to dry in the gentle sun and warm breeze.

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| 4 cups tender fennel stalks with green fronds (from about 2 plants) | 2 whole eggs |
| 1 cup dried bread crumbs, finely crushed | ½ teaspoon sea salt |
| 2 cups Parmesan cheese, finely grated | ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes |
| 2 tablespoons garlic, finely chopped | ½ cup olive oil |

Strip the leaves from the stems and chop fennel stalks and fronds finely. Boil fennel in salted water for 2 minutes, then drain in a sieve. Squeeze out excess water with your hands. In a large bowl, mix fennel, bread crumbs, Parmesan, and garlic. Add eggs, salt, pepper flakes, and mix well. Form into flat 3-inch cakes and place on a baking sheet covered with baking paper. Fry cakes in oil until browned on both sides. Dry on paper towels for a few seconds. Sprinkle with salt and serve warm.

Makes twelve 3-inch cakes



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.