



SMOKED TROUT SALAD WITH MAPLE VINAIGRETTE

Serves 4

Smoked trout are available packaged and refrigerated in many supermarkets. The maple vinaigrette and dried fruit are a sweet complement to the smoky trout. Hot-smoked salmon or smoked mackerel can be substituted for the trout. This is terrific with the 2021 Vine Hill Chardonnay.

Maple Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 teaspoons finely chopped shallot
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
5 tablespoons walnut oil
Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 small tart-sweet apple, such as Fuji, Gala, or Cosmic Crisp, quartered, cored, and cut into 1/4-inch- thick slices
4 large handfuls mixed young salad greens, such as arugula, spinach, cress, mâche, frisée
1 cup salad sprouts such as sunflower or mustard (optional)
1 smoked trout about 10 ounces, skinned, boned, and broken into bite-size pieces
1/4 cup golden raisins or dried tart cherries
3 tablespoons toasted slivered blanched almonds
Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

To make the vinaigrette, in a small saucepan, warm the maple syrup over low heat. Whisk in the vinegar, shallot, and Dijon mustard. Whisking constantly, slowly drizzle in the walnut oil to form a light emulsion. Season with salt and pepper to taste. The vinaigrette can be made in advance, covered, and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

In a large serving bowl, combine the apples slices with 2 or 3 tablespoons of the vinaigrette and toss gently to coat. Add all the remaining ingredients. Drizzle with some of the vinaigrette and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper and serve, passing any remaining vinaigrette at the table.



CORN AND BACON RISOTTO

Serves 4

The history of risotto is rife with conflicting theories about its origins, however, it is certain that rice was first introduced to Italy by the Arabs during the Middle Ages. Saffron traditionally flavors risotto. You can add it if you like but this version depends on bacon and sweet corn to match it to the rich 2022 Vine Hill Pinot Noir.

For the risotto:

6 ounces lean bacon or pancetta, diced
6 cups corn stock (see recipe below) or rich chicken stock
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
1 medium leek, white and light green parts only, finely chopped
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

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1 cup arborio or carnaroli rice
1/2 cup dry white wine
1 ½ cups raw corn kernels (from 2 ears corn)
1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons minced chives

In a skillet, cook the bacon over moderate heat until crisp, about 5 minutes. Drain the bacon on paper towels and reserve 1 tablespoon of the bacon fat

Bring the corn stock or chicken stock to a simmer in a saucepan and keep it simmering as you prepare the risotto.

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a wide, high-sided sauté pan over medium-low heat. Add the reserved bacon fat and rice and cook, stirring occasionally until grains look translucent. Add leeks and cook until they are softened but not browned, about 6 minutes. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

Pour in wine and cook, stirring, until it has all been absorbed, about 2 minutes. Add a ladleful of hot stock to the rice mixture and cook, stirring constantly, until rice has absorbed all of the stock. Continue cooking, adding ladles of stock whenever rice mixture looks dry and continue stirring regularly. When half the stock has been added, stir in corn. Continue cooking until all of the stock is incorporated, corn is tender and rice is creamy and tender, about 30 minutes or so total.

Remove risotto from heat and stir in Parmesan and bacon along with remaining tablespoon of butter. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Uncover risotto, stir vigorously and season to taste with salt and pepper. Before serving, stir in the chives.

For the corn stock (optional):

2 corn cobs (kernels removed and reserved for risotto)
1 onion, cut into quarters
1 carrot, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 celery rib, cut crosswise into 1-inch pieces
Dark green leaves from leek (reserve white and light green parts for risotto)
2 cloves garlic, smashed
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

Combine all ingredients with 6 cups water in a large pot. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat so liquid is simmering; cover pot and let simmer for 30 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer. Add enough water to bring liquid up to 6 cups.

Note: To shuck corn even in the height of the season, corn gets a bit sweeter when heated, and the easiest way to do it is in the microwave. It takes just 3 or 4 minutes to zap the corn cobs in their husks, which makes them easy to shuck. The silks will slip right off the sweeter and still-crisp corn.



NDUJA PASTA

Serves 4

‘Nduja is a spicy cured Italian sausage that is spiked with Calabrian chilies to give it a red sheen. It’s soft and spreadable, sort of like French pâté. “It’s possible you’ve enjoyed ‘nduja in dishes before, without being able to pinpoint exactly where that ever-so-slightly funky, meaty taste was coming from,” says Serious Eats. It’s also possible that if you’ve enjoyed ‘nduja once, you’re hooked.

‘Nduja originates from Calabria in southern Italy. Poor farmers in the region made do with the leftover offal and fatty scraps after they sold the prime cuts of pork. They added a mix of spices to these leftovers, stuffed it into a casing, then cured and fermented it, transforming it into a delicious foodstuff that had a long shelf life. Because of the high-fat content and the chili peppers, ‘nduja never becomes firm like typical salami.

Mixed with pasta it creates a rich, fiery sauce with unforgettable flavor. It’s available from Italian markets and on-line. It’ll make the 2023 Russian River Ranches Chardonnay sing!

12 ounces dry rigatoni pasta (or other short tube pasta)
1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 medium onion, diced (about a cup)
2 cloves garlic, minced
5 ounces 'nduja (casing removed)

28-ounce can whole San Marzano tomatoes, crushed with your hands
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
Freshly grated parmesan for serving

Bring a large pot of salted water to boil. Cook the pasta according to package instructions until just al dente. Save a cup of pasta water, drain pasta, and set aside.

In a large saucepan or skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add in the onion and cook for 3-4 minutes until softened. Add in the garlic and 'nduja and break up 'nduja using a spoon. Add in the crushed tomatoes and bring to a simmer. Cook, uncovered for 8 minutes or so until sauce has thickened slightly.

Pour pasta into sauce and add in pasta water if needed to loosen up the sauce. Add basil. Toss altogether. Serve immediately with a sprinkle of parmesan cheese on top.

Notes: Because there are just a few ingredients in this dish, use a good quality canned tomato like San Marzano. Just crush them in a bowl, using your hands, before adding them to the sauce. Be careful not to splatter the juice of the tomatoes while doing this.

Pasta Water: save about a cup of pasta cooking water before draining the pasta. Add it to the dish as needed to thin out the sauce.



TUNA AU POIVRE

Serves 2

This is a classic French preparation usually made with a tender steak cooked with a coating of freshly cracked black peppercorns. It's pronounced "oh pwa-vruh". It is also a delicious preparation for fresh tuna. The Owsley 2022 Pinot Noir would be delicious with this simple dish.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
2 teaspoons lemon juice, or to taste
Kosher salt
2 ahi or albacore tuna steaks, 6 to 7 ounces, 1-inch thick
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon medium cracked black pepper
Garnish: Salmon roe

In a small bowl, combine the butter with the zest and juice and salt to taste. Set aside.

Coat the tuna with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, then dip in the cracked pepper. Sprinkle lightly with salt.

Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in a cast-iron pan or a heavy nonstick pan over high heat. Add the tuna and sauté for about 3 minutes on each side. It should be crusty on the outside and medium-rare in the center. Transfer to a warmed plate and top with the lemon butter and salmon roe.

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