

SCOTT GREENBERG

VineGuy



Portuguese wines on the rise

One of the most common questions I get from readers is, "What's next big thing in wine?" Wine drinkers everywhere want to know exactly where the next batch of great wines is going to come from. While this is a little bit like asking the weatherman for a two-week forecast, I can definitively tell you one thing: It depends.

It really depends on what you think the next big thing is for you. For example, the Central Coast of California is producing some world-class, Rhone-style wines. Australia and New Zealand continue to export affordable, juicy wines. But if you're looking for mature wines with distinctive flavors of cherry, red berries and cedar, look to Portugal.

Portugal is quickly climbing up the wine scene ladder as a country capable of producing interesting and affordable table wines. This is due largely to a new generation of winemakers dedicated to expanding the nation's horizons beyond its famous port wines.

Portugal, a thin strip of land roughly the size of Indiana, is located on the Iberian Peninsula in Western Europe. Due west lies the cool Atlantic Ocean while the temperate Gulf of Cadiz forms the southern border.

Although grapes are grown throughout the country, the most notable wine-producing districts are located inland, away from the maritime influences of the Atlantic. Concentrating on the red wine producing regions and starting in the north, the Douro Valley is best known for growing Touriga Francesa and Touriga Nacional, the two main varietals found in port wines.

South of Douro, in the center of the country, is the Dao region, known for making distinctive red wines from several grape varietals. On the south side of the Tagus River, which bisects the country on its way to Lisbon, is the bountiful wine region of Ribatejo. Further south, in succession, are the Alentejo and Algarve regions. These last three areas are where the new breed of winemakers are starting to push the envelope by experimenting with both tradi-

tional and international blends.

Here are a few examples that I had the opportunity to taste last week at the Portuguese Embassy during its annual fall tasting. Retail prices are approximate.

■ **2004 Esporao Reserva White, Alentejo, Portugal** (\$14) — A refreshing white wine made from Roupeiro, Arinto and Antao Vaz grapes, it has beautiful floral notes (acacia) and flavors of honeysuckle and citrus. Perfect with grilled shellfish.

■ **2001 Tinto da Anfora Red, Alentejo, Portugal** (\$16) — Very fresh, fruit-focused wine with lovely red cherry/berry fruit up front and a smooth, easy finish. A good candidate to enjoy with creamier cheeses.

■ **2002 Quinta do Crasto Red, Douro, Portugal** (\$12) — The grapes, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca and Touriga Francesa, were trodden by foot in traditional old stone "lagares" and possesses a profundity of mature berry fruit with a well balanced finish featuring soft, ripe tannins thanks to ageing in American and French oak barrels for two years. Think flank steak.

■ **2001 Cortes de Cima Tinto, Alentejo, Portugal** (\$19) — A lot of different grapes went into this bustling red wine. Syrah, Aragonez, Tricadeira, Cabernet Sauvignon and Touriga Nacional (whew) give this wine plenty of depth with flavors of red cherry, boysenberry upfront and hints of cinnamon and mocha on the silky finish. Serve it up with a chocolate tort for a twist on dessert.

■ And finally, for you port lovers, try the **1998 Quinta do Crasto Traditional LBV (late-bottled vintage) port, Douro, Portugal** (\$20) It's smooth, lush black cassis and black berry flavors meld into a slightly spicy/smokey finish. Needs nothing but a big leather chair to enjoy it in.

Got a wine prediction you'd like to share? E-mail me at scott@vineguy.com.

STEW, from Page 24

2. Add the lentils, about 5 cups of the stock, cilantro and simmer for an hour or until the lentils are completely soft. Check every 15 minutes to see if more stock is necessary. Use as little stock as possible to develop a thicker stew.

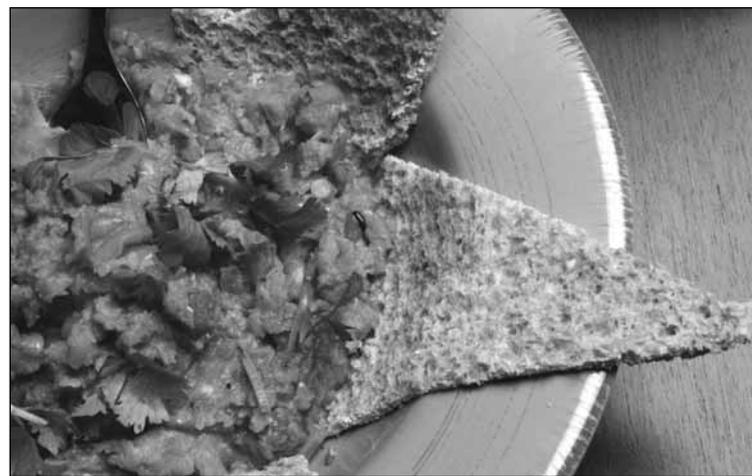
3. Once it's thick, fish out the bay leaf and add the vinegar, salt, pepper and paprika to taste. Bring the temperature back up, mix, and ladle into bowls, and then garnish with paprika and chopped fresh parsley. Serves 6.

HERBED BEEF STEW

A modern take on a classic recipe.

1 tbs. olive oil
2 pounds beef stew meat, well trimmed
1 large onion, chopped
4 large garlic cloves, chopped
2/3 cup Burgundy wine
3 cups beef broth
2 plum tomatoes, chopped
4 Yukon Gold potatoes, 1-inch cubes
2 heaping tbsp. minced fresh thyme
2 heaping tsp. minced fresh rosemary
4 carrots, sliced into 1-inch pieces
1 lb. sugar snap peas, ends cut off
2 tbs. minced fresh parsley

1. Heat 2 teaspoons oil in heavy



Jay Westcott/Examiner

A warming apricot-lentil combo proves that stew is not just for meat lovers.

large Dutch oven, preferably non-stick, over medium-high heat. Add half of beef and cook until beef is brown, stirring occasionally, about 7 minutes. Transfer beef to bowl. Repeat with remaining olive oil and beef.

2. Add onion and garlic the pot and sauté until onion is tender, about 10 minutes.

3. Add meat and any juices in bowl. Stir in wine. Simmer until liquid is reduced to half, about 5 minutes.

4. Add beef broth, tomatoes, half the thyme and rosemary. Season

with salt and pepper.

5. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until beef is almost tender, approximately 30 minutes.

6. Stir in carrots. Simmer uncovered until carrots and meat are very tender and stew is slightly thickened, approximately 30 minutes or less.

7. Stir in peas, parsley, and remaining thyme and rosemary.

8. Cover and simmer until peas are tender, about 5 minutes. Serve over noodles or mashed potatoes. Serves 6.

Don't count out corn for fall dishes

Frozen deemed best after season

BY ADRIEN M. MARTIN

Scripps Howard

Learning the anatomy of a food strips it of some mystery. Once you know its parts, its chemical processes, economic value and its origin, the simple pleasure of tasting it somehow becomes more complicated.

Take corn, for instance.

"When you hear about all the different parts of corn, all the different names of the parts, it's hard to imagine eating it," said Ruth Levin, 72, at a recent U.S. Botanic Garden lecture in Washington titled "A Tasty History of Corn."

Chef Andreas Fleckenstein, who trained at the Culinary Institute of America, displayed details of the four parts of the corn kernel: the protective pericarp, the starch-saturated endosperm, the oil- and enzyme-filled germ and the tip cap, which attaches the kernel to the cob.

"We chose corn because it is uniquely American," said Christine Flanagan, program director at the Botanic Garden. "And we wanted to make sure we had a plant that represented the broad economic uses of plants."

Today's full, kernel-covered cob originated from a thinner, tougher grass that still dominates some fields in Mexico and Latin America. The United States is the world's largest producer of corn.

Levin, of Potomac, was at the lecture with her husband. The retirees used to grow corn, but no longer do so because deer kept pilfering the crop.

She said she was surprised at how many different products contain a corn derivative — like adhesives, aspirin, batteries and spark plugs.

Fleckenstein recommended using fresh corn during the summer when the crop peaks, but he said frozen corn is a better alternative to canned corn in the winter.

The audience got to sample two of Fleckenstein's dishes, Creamy Corn Pudding and Black Bean, Corn, Mango and Peach Salsa. Several people approached the table after the lecture was over to ask for more salsa — Levin was one of them.

BLACK BEAN, CORN, MANGO AND PEACH SALSA

1 can black beans
1 can of Niblet corn
1 mango, peeled and diced
2 fresh peaches, peeled and diced
1 pepper, diced
1/2 onion, diced
2 tomatoes, seeded, diced (chop flesh for body)
1/2 bunch cilantro, cleaned and chopped
5 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbs. cider vinegar
1 tbs. ground cumin
1 tsp. ground coriander
1 tbs. chili powder
1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper
Sea salt and black pepper to taste

1. Combine all ingredients in a large, non-reactive bowl.

2. Allow to sit, covered and refrigerated, for 24 hours.

3. Serve with tortilla chips.

CREAMY CORN PUDDING

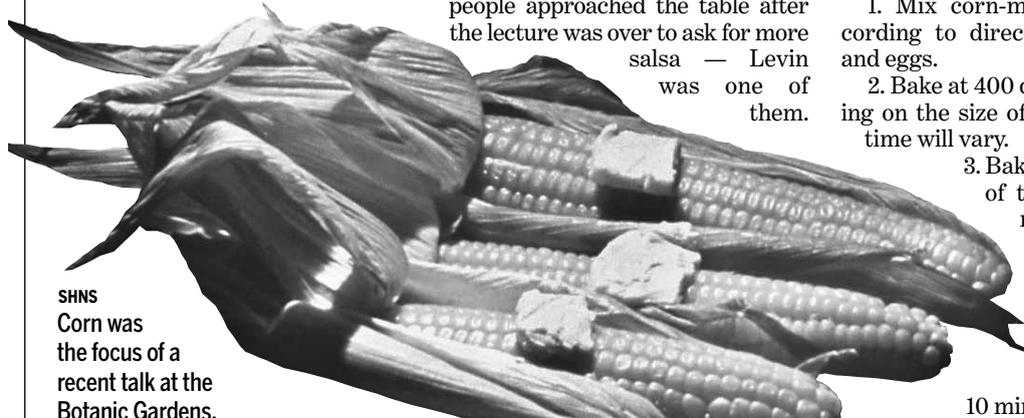
1 package Jiffy brand corn muffin mix
2 14-ounce cans creamed corn
6 eggs

1. Mix corn-muffin recipe according to directions. Add corn and eggs.

2. Bake at 400 degrees. Depending on the size of the pan, baking time will vary.

3. Bake until the center of the corn custard no longer jiggles, around 25 to 40 minutes.

4. Remove from oven, cool on baking rack for 10 minutes and serve.



SHNS
Corn was the focus of a recent talk at the Botanic Gardens.