

MIAMI HERALD.COM

Miami Herald

Tropical Life 7C

## Blends bring out the best in grapes

**T**aking my turn hosting dinner for my all-male amateur cooking club recently, I finally worked up the courage to attempt the Boeuf Bourguignon recipe from legendary chef Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of*



BY FRED FASSLER  
Trove News Service

**French Cooking.** It involved 19 ingredients, 16 steps and two days' work, but it was, I blush to confess, superb. Rich, complex, assertive, savory, silky — I could go on.

Wine is like that. Winemakers lucky enough to have a free hand say they live for the time the grapes are on the ground and they can sit around indulging in the joy of tinkering. Seeking the perfect blend. A balance of left and elegance, of power and finesse, steel fist and velvet glove. A pinch of this, soupçon of that. Everyone in the pool. The more grapes the better. Assuming it works.

There are tasting notes here for wines that contain as many as seven grape varieties. It's counterintuitive, but adding just 1 percent of a new grape to a blend can make a difference. That tiny dash of succulent semillon grapes can add detectable richness to an otherwise tart and ungenerous sauvignon blanc.

American winemakers are free to use just about any grapes they want in their wines. The only rule: A wine can't call itself by a varietal grape name such as "cabernet sauvignon" unless it has at least 75 percent of that variety in its blend.

Avallon winery's cab, for example, is 76 percent cabernet sauvignon with the rest syrah, zinfandel and merlot. Rules are more restrictive in France. That country's famous red Bordeaux must contain at least two of the following grapes: cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc, petite verdot and malbec. And no American wineries such as, shoulder, zinfandel or barbera.

U.S. winemakers these days are taking ever more advantage of their freedom to use any grape. Franciscan Estate's Magnificat red wine blend from Napa Valley is made of cabernet sauvignon, merlot, petit verdot, malbec and cabernet franc — all. Freeland Wines of Lodi,

California, created a hearty 2011 Coup de Grace red blend using zinfandel, petite sirah, petit verdot and cabernet franc.

Apothic Wines blends two grapes seldom otherwise seen in each others' company — petite sirah and pinot noir. Some of the unusual blends are white wines. Murrieta's Well Winery in California's Livermore Valley makes a rich, complex white called The Whip from semillon, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, orange muscat, viognier, gewürztraminer and white riesling. The winery also makes a red blend called The Whip, of petite sirah, cabernet sauvignon, petit verdot and merlot.

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** • 2013 Head High Winery Red Blend by Three Sides Winery, North Coast (86 percent malbec, 20 percent merlot, 20 percent cabernet sauvignon, 13 percent zinfandel, 11 percent grenache): \$30.

• 2013 The Whip White Blend by Murrieta's Well Winery, Livermore Valley (28 percent semillon, 24 percent domay, 14 percent sauvignon blanc, 11 percent orange muscat, 11 percent viognier, 11 percent gewürztraminer, 11 percent riesling): \$29.

• 2012 Franciscan Estate Magnificat Red Blend, Napa Valley (73 percent cabernet sauvignon, 19 percent mer-

percent petit verdot, 3 percent malbec, 2 percent cabernet franc): \$50.

**RECOMMENDED** • 2012 Avallon CAB Cabernet Sauvignon, California (76 percent cabernet sauvignon, 13 percent syrah, 7 percent zinfandel, 4 percent merlot): \$13.

• 2012 Freeland Winery Coup de Grace red blend, Lodi, California (64 percent zinfandel, 19 percent petite sirah, 11 percent petit verdot, 6

## DO THIS TODAY



Fairchild hosts a bird festival this weekend.

### BIRD FESTIVAL

Learn all about birds and their habitats with bird walks, lectures from birding experts, buy bird-attracting plants and interact with

FROM PAGE 1C

## CHEFS CRUISE

Schwartz has Michael's Gemine Pub, and Oliver has Jamie's Italian.

Schwartz partnered with Royal Caribbean in 2011, when he put his 150 Central Park restaurants on the line's Classic class ships.

Todd English and Jose Garcia also have at-sea restaurants aboard major lines: English has an operation on Cunard's Queen Mary 2, and Garcia will bring Latin-style seafood restaurant Buzano, as well as Pincho Tapas Bar, to the new Norwegian Escape, cruising out of Miami starting next month.

Even Food TV star Guy Fieri has partnered with Carnival to bring Guy's Burger Joint across many ships in its fleet.

When Norwegian Escape debuts at Port Miami, it will feature Miami flavors in the form of Food Republic, a food-hall concept from the Pubbelly Restaurant Group, a version of longtime Miami bar Tobacco Road, and a Brew House bar area featuring beers from Miami's Wynwood Brewing Co. The celeb-chef restaurants are among the cruise lines' extra cost offerings, usually a \$20 upcharge per diner, but as high as \$75 on some lines. The chefs often make appearances on the ships as well as get their hands dirty in the kitchen.

"Everyone... knows I'm a bit of a control freak," Stone said. "I'll be jumping on and off

ships." The design of the restaurant is meant to encourage a pass-the-plate type of meal sharing in a setting where the lighting, seating and adornments all try to make guests feel more at home than eating out at a fancy restaurant.

Example menu items include butter-roasted lobster with caramelized onion and emerald foam, twice-cooked duck leg with fennel, bacon jus and parmesan cheese, and scallops with roasted Alaskan crab, chile and parsley, and chocolate cremses with blueberry, feuilletine and burnt vanilla ice cream.

"You're creatures of comfort and while we didn't want people completely out of their comfort zone, to just push that button ever so lightly would be nice," Stone said.

The new restaurant will debut in December on both the Ruby Princess out of Los Angeles and Emerald Princess out of Fort Lauderdale, and then followed by the Coral Princess on Panama Canal cruises that also sail out of Fort Lauderdale beginning in January. A fourth ship, the Sun Princess, will get the restaurant in April 2016, sailing out of Stone's home country, Australia.

Fleetwide, Stone also is working on menu items to be offered nightly and served in the main dining room as well as a chef's table experience.

While planning fresh menu items for ships that are so or more nights is something new for Stone, he has taken advantage of Fieri's knowledge to bring his concept fruition.

"They have such a strong culinary reputation in that industry, they know the job of getting ingredients where they need to and making the most of what you take on board. They literally have a tomato room on board kept at a specific temperature and specific humidity," Stone explained. "This said there's always challenges you can see them as opportunities or obstacles."

It doesn't always work, though. Norwegian Cruise Line this year ended its relationship with Geoffrey Zelman, who had set up shops on board both Norwegian Getaway and Breakaway with Ocean Blue and The Backlot.

Still, cruise lines give chefs another option for spreading their food gospel to a whole new audience. "You're constantly deep up ideas of bringing food people, whether on land or sea," Stone said. "I'm not excited to get into this and hopefully bring something quite new to the cruise industry. People ask me, 'What's going in doing this?' My goal is the restaurant for it to be incredible restaurant."

Miami Herald food editor S. Benn contributed to this report: [ebenn@miamiherald.com](mailto:ebenn@miamiherald.com), @EvanBenn

FROM PAGE 1C

## TACOS

Frida Kahlo house in Coyacan (the color is said to ward off the evil eye).

The menu at Coyó offers a dozen tacos that can be converted to a burrito or salad bowl. Here's what to order: carnitas de pinto, bringing crisp shreds of duck confit with serrano salsa; al pastor "shepherd-style" roast pork and pineapple cochinita pibil or Yucatan-style slow-roasted pork shoulder with achote, pickled onions and fresh chiles; sautéed shrimp and cream mushroom (honey-garlic with truffile-like huila-coche (corn smut grown from spores in galls on Florida corn) with crumbles of hard, salty queso cotija and seared Gulf shrimp in a flour tortilla with citrus slaw, pascanole and chipotle aioli.

There are also guajinca and cheese "falafel" fritters with strips of grilled nopales cactus and tender octopus tentacles that have been blanched, grilled and charred on a plancha and cut up and tucked in a corn tortilla with pickled jalape-

ños. Wash it down with a sweet lemon and chila seed drink.

Then it's "sacres" lounge and bar with a DJ at night in back.

### BODEGA TAQUERIA Y TEQUILA

1220 16th St., Miami Beach, 305-704-2145, [bodegasouthbeach.com](http://bodegasouthbeach.com), @BodegaSoBe  
Bodega is as famed for its tacos as it is for its "hidden" nightclub with a full bar in the back (notice a trend here?). There, you can order cocktails such as the Midnight in Paradise or a shot called the Fuego with overproof bourbon infused with cinnamon and chile de arbol.

The kitchen in this hipster place is in an airstream food truck decorated with Day of the Dead skulls. Culinary director Bernie Matz and director of operations Robert Pereira traveled the United States and Mexico, tasting tacos to come up with the menu.

The tortillas are made in a small mom-and-pop plant in La Belle and are soft and pillowy

but hold up to the fillings and sauces. Tacos are sold here singly, except for the flame-broiled chicken and pork from vertical spits tenderized with pineapple juice that come as a deuce.

Other tacos to try are the Texas pulled pork with charred onions, frijolitos and sweet blackberry barbecue sauce; shrimp po'boy with small, lightly breaded crustaceans with Sriracha remoulade; and Mexican chorizo with stewed tomatoes and peppers with skinny fried onion rings and refried black beans with avocado and red chile crema. The taco special is lengua (tongue) that is slow-braised and comes in crispy shreds reminiscent of short ribs, smothered in spicy ranchero salsa.

### TAQUERIA

1506 Collins Ave., Miami Beach, 305-748-6099, [taqueria.com](http://taqueria.com), @TaqueriaMI  
Taqueria is named for a taco party, buffet-style, where guests help themselves to fillings and fixings. Chef-owner Steve Santana was a web developer until attending the first class of the Miami Duke Culinary Institute in downtown Miami and doing stints at Eating House and the

Broken Shaker. Santana is now into the ancient Aztec technique of nixtamalization, meaning he soaks heirloom dried blue corn he buys from farmers in Michoacan, Mexico, in an alkaline solution of water and dried limestone powder until the outer skin breaks down, making it easier for the body to absorb nutrients from the maize. The softened kernels are then ground into masa between two rotating volcanic stone wheels and are hand-pressed into dark blue-purple tortillas.

Tacos to try in the open-air patio here: rajás (charred strips of poblano peppers) cooked with onions, Mexican oregano and marjoram topped with jalapeño crema and cojita cheese; pork carnitas with sour orange, achote, cinnamon and cloves; earthy huitlacoche corn fungus mixed with corn off the cob and Fresno chile; and the chapulines, grasshoppers from Oaxaca tossed with lime juice and chile powder on a bed of guacamole.

Best to pair a taco here with Victoria cervasa from Mexico.

Linda Bladholm: [lindabladholm75@gmail.com](mailto:lindabladholm75@gmail.com)



BY GALINA MOSCOWIC  
Special to the Miami Herald

• **THE DRINK:** The Pink Lady.  
• **THE PRICE:** \$15.

• **THE STORY:** Corsair bartender Rob Floyd goes by the title Liquid Chef, and this month he wants you to drink pink. Floyd created The Pink Lady (no relation to the classic cocktail) from peach vodka, maraschino liqueur, fresh strawberries, basil leaves and prosecco. To help support Breast Cancer Awareness Month, \$1 from the sale of each Pink Lady in October will go to Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

• **WHERE:** Corsair, 19999 W. Country Club Dr., Aventura.  
Galina Moscowic: [galina@galenawrites.com](mailto:galina@galenawrites.com), @GalinaWrites

but hold up to the fillings and sauces. Tacos are sold here singly, except for the flame-broiled chicken and pork from vertical spits tenderized with pineapple juice that come as a deuce.

Other tacos to try are the Texas pulled pork with charred onions, fried jalapeños and sweet hickory barbecue sauce; shrimp po'boy with small, lightly breaded crustaceans with Sriracha remoulade; and Mexican chorizo with stewed tomatoes and peppers with skinny fried onion rings and refried black beans with avocado and red chile crema. The taco special is lengua (tongue) that is slow-braised and comes in crispy shreds reminiscent of short ribs, smothered in spicy ranchero salsa.

## BODEGA TAQUERIA Y TEQUILA

1220 16th St., Miami Beach, 305-704-2145, [bodegasouthbeach.com](http://bodegasouthbeach.com), @BodegaSoBe

Bodega is as famed for its tacos as it is for its "hidden" nightclub with a full bar in the back (notice a trend here?). There, you can order cocktails such as the Midnight in Paradise or a shot called the Fuego with overproof bourbon infused with cinnamon and chile de arbol.

The kitchen in this hipster place is in an airstream food truck decorated with Day of the Dead skulls. Culinary director Bernie Matz and director of operations Robert Pereira traveled the United States and Mexico, tasting tacos to come up with the menu.

The tortillas are made in a small mom-and-pop plant in La Belle and are soft and pillowy