

# Gourmet

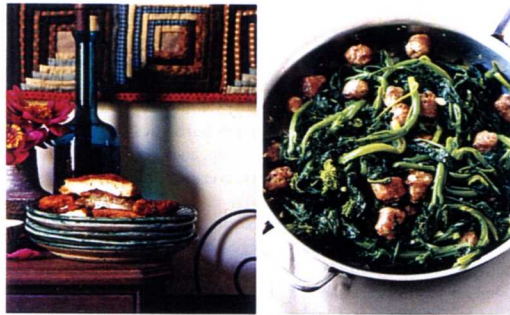
THE MAGAZINE OF GOOD LIVING

## GOOD LIVING DRINKS

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BY GERALD ASHER

### WINE ADVICE



#### WHITES AND REDS FOR YOUR "A FAMILY AFFAIR" MENU

The white wines of Italy's Alto Adige region, in the Alps, make wonderful aperitifs. The clean, refreshing style of these Pinot Biancos stimulates the taste buds and sharpens the appetite. To accompany this menu's antipasti of marinated eggplant, *mozzarella in carrozza*, and *polpette*, I chose the Alois Lageder Haberle '07. Its bright, almost peachlike fruit is delicious, as are the fresh and elegant Peter Zemmer '07 and the crisp Tiefenbrunner '07. The single-vineyard Schulthausen '07 from St. Michael-Eppan is rounder and fruitier, with notes of apricot and pear—delicate, but just a little luscious. Terlan's Vorberg Riserva '05, another single-vineyard wine, is even softer. This Pinot Bianco's natural fruit has a creamy, vanillin overlay that gives the wine a silky, glossy finish.

For this special occasion and its centerpiece of homemade fettuccine and rich *ragù*, I turned to Amarone, the apotheosis of Valpolicella. The finest grape bunches from Valpolicella Classico are dried in trays until they have shriveled by more than a third of their weight, almost to raisins. Then they are pressed and fermented slowly before long aging in large Slavonian oak casks. As they dry, the grape bunches often attract a touch of botrytis, which further broadens the wine's flavor and adds an additional rich layer of texture. This ancient drying technique—known as *appassimento*—produces wines as rich on the nose as they are on the palate, ripe with the aromas of dried plums, spices, and licorice. An Amarone will encourage everyone at the table to sip rather than gulp, to enjoy each other's company, and to truly relish the moment. The Tenuta Sant'Antonio '04, which is smooth and long, accomplishes all those things. Masi's Costasera '05 has hints of chocolate and coffee; the Sartori '04—with more Rondinella, the flirtatious grape of Valpolicella, and less of the somber Corvina—is lighter and more supple than most others; and the Corteforte '01 is astonishing for its bright flavor of plums and cherries. But perhaps the most remarkable of an extraordinary group of wines is Michele Castellani's Cinque Stelle '03, with its bouquet of both fresh and dried fruits, cedarwood, chocolate, and clove. It flows across the palate like molten velvet. An expensive wine, to be sure, but worth every penny.

#### PERFECT CHIANTIS FOR YOUR "A TUSCAN SON" MENU

There is something comfortingly familiar about roast chicken, and the same could be said about Chianti, despite all the changes in the region in the past 30 years. I chose the Badia a

### RECOMMENDED WINES

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##### ALTO ADIGE PINOT BIANCO

- \$23 Alois Lageder Haberle '07
- \$21 Peter Zemmer '07
- \$20 St. Michael-Eppan Schulthausen '07
- \$28 Terlan Vorberg Riserva '05
- \$15 Tiefenbrunner '07

##### AMARONE DELLA VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO

- \$54 Corteforte '01
- \$65 Masi Costasera '05
- \$105 Michele Castellani Cinque Stelle '03
- \$40 Sartori '04
- \$50 Tenuta Sant'Antonio '04

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##### CHIANTI CLASSICO

- \$26 Badia a Coltibuono '06
  - \$16 Banfi Estate '06
  - \$46 Castello di Volpaia Coltassala Riserva '04
  - \$29 Montesecondo '05
  - \$18 San Felice '06
  - \$16 Vignamaggio Terre di Prenzano '06
- ##### DESSERT WINES
- \$90 Arele Vino Santo, Trentino '97
  - \$48 Borgo Scopeto Vin Santo del Chianti Classico '00

Coltibuono '06 for the roast chicken with pancetta and olives of Tony Oltranti's menu. Made mostly from Sangiovese grapes (with 10 percent of the softer Canaiolo) that are cultivated organically in vineyards just north of Siena, this Chianti Classico has the grace, gentle tannins, and smooth, mild fruit that are the hallmarks of Tuscan wines. The Terre di Prenzano '06 of Vignamaggio (the property where the Mona Lisa is said to have been born) has firmer structure and brighter fruit, while the San Felice '06—made from 100 percent Sangiovese—is brisker yet, its bright fruit well supported by a fresh, lively acidity. The Banfi Estate '06 is gentler, with only a touch of Chianti's teasing rasp, but the Montesecondo '05, made from grapes grown under a strict biodynamic regimen (by an Italian-American who returned to Tuscany more than ten years ago to manage and elevate the vines on his mother's land), is scented, lively, and enticing. It has an edge, as biodynamic wines often do, but it serves only to give greater definition and distinction. The Coltassala Riserva '04 of Castello di Volpaia, an incredible property located in an old hilltop hamlet, has a deliciously perfumed style, thanks to the tiny proportion of Mammolo blended with the traditional Sangiovese.

For sipping with crisp almond biscotti at the close of this meal, I chose a Vin Santo del Chianti Classico—Borgo Scopeto '00—that is drier and nuttier than most. But those who like to try the unusual might prefer Arele, a Vino Santo (note the difference in spelling) produced from Nosiola grapes grown in Trentino. Made in the traditional way, by drying the grapes under the rafters for months before pressing them, this wine is then aged for six or seven years in very small oak casks. It is deep gold, rather than amber, and has a compelling sweetness, with none of the *rancio* usual in Tuscan Vin Santo. ■

FROM LEFT: JONNY VALIANT; MARCUS NILSSON