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TOP POURS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



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Fresh & Familiar

Three chefs give us their interpretations of Middle Eastern dishes, plus local wines and international bottles to complement them.

PROP STYLING: VANESSA VAZQUEZ

Considered among wine's ancestral homes, the countries of the Middle East and North Africa have recently experienced renewed international interest in their vinous output. As bottlings from Turkey, Morocco, Israel and more make their way stateside, chefs from these countries keep pace, serving their own versions of the foods they grew up with.

On the following pages, you'll find contemporary recipes rooted in tradition and pairings to help you explore the region now. There are also wine options from other parts of the world that offer equal opportunity to expand your horizons.

Fried Cauliflower with Herbed Labneh

Michael Solomonov is a five-time James Beard Award winner. The Israeli-born chef is co-owner of several Philadelphia restaurants. Flagship Zahav is known for its small plates; he says that this is its most popular item. If you can't find labneh, Greek yogurt is an adequate substitute.

Courtesy Michael Solomonov, chef and co-owner, CookNSolo restaurant group, Philadelphia

- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh dill, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh chives, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh mint, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, thin-sliced
- 1 cup labneh
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Canola oil, for frying
- 1 head cauliflower, broken into florets

Mix herbs, garlic and labneh in large glass bowl until well combined. Season with salt, to taste. Transfer to smaller serving bowl. Refrigerate until ready to use.

In heavy bottomed pot over medium heat, warm 2 inches canola oil until it registers 375°F on candy thermometer. Fry cauliflower in small batches until golden brown and crisp. Drain on paper towels. Season generously with salt. Serve with herbed labneh. *Serves 4.*

Pair It

Jeffrey Bartash, Zahav's manager/sommelier, recommends **Recanati 2017 Marawi**, an indigenous grape rediscovered in Israel and Palestine. Its rich body is complemented by acid and minerality on the finish, which will hold up to the earthy cauliflower and creamy labneh.

Vilarnau NV Brut Reserva Cava offers bright fruit flavors and more complexity. It can stand up to the rich texture of labneh as well as the depth of flavor of cauliflower and herbs.

Muhammara Spread

At Leyla on Manhattan's Upper West Side, Istanbul native Met Kaba prepares modern versions of dishes eaten in Turkey. Walnuts and pomegranate molasses come together with a little bit of peppery heat in his take on this all-purpose dish. Leave it on the table throughout the meal to slather on bread, and then to spread it on vegetables or meat.

Courtesy Met Kaba, executive chef, Leyla, New York City

- 14 ounces walnuts, shelled
- 1 cup panko
- 1 tablespoon sweet pepper paste
- 1 tablespoon hot pepper paste
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 red peppers, seeded and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 cloves garlic, roasted
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme

Process walnuts and panko in large bowl of food processor. Pulse 1 minute, or until well combined. Add all other ingredients, except thyme, and process until smooth, approximately 1–2 minutes. Transfer to clean bowl. Garnish with thyme. *Serves 4–6.*

For another version of muhammara, visit winemag.com/muhammara-dip

Pair It

Murat Akinci, Leyla's general manager, prefers Selendi 2017 Sarnıç Cabernet Franc from Turkey. Grown at high altitude, this wine is vibrant and spicy. Its rich berry flavors and moderate tannins are a great match to muhammara's bittersweet walnut and red pepper flavors.

Another Cabernet Franc, this one from France's Loire Valley, Sauvion 2017 Chinon has soft tannins, cherry and green pepper flavors, and strong acidity. It's ideal alongside muhammara's sweet and spicy qualities, as well as the astringent character of walnuts.

Beef Cheeks with Roasted Root Vegetable Jam

At his San Francisco Moroccan restaurant, Mourad, Chef Mourad Lahlou combines fresh California ingredients with the beloved dishes of his homeland. Although the beef cheeks he serves at Mourad would be prepared in a tagine along with the vegetables, sous vide allows for more even cooking and consistent texture. If you don't have a circulator, the braising technique below will still yield deliciously tender results.

Courtesy Mourad Lahlou, executive chef/owner, Mourad, San Francisco

- 6** 5- to 6-ounce beef cheeks or other tough cut of beef, trimmed
- 1** teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
- 1** tablespoon black pepper
- 1** pound yellow beets, diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1** pound purple-top turnips, diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1** pound celery root, diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1** pound rutabaga, diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1½** cups dry white wine
- 4** cups carrot juice
- ½** cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4** red onions, small dice
- 3** cloves garlic, thin-sliced
- 2** cups tomato purée
- ¼** cup berberé spice blend
- 1** teaspoon fine-ground Aleppo pepper
- 2** tablespoons Sherry vinegar
- Parsley, for garnish (optional)

Season beef cheeks with salt and pepper. In cast-iron pan over high heat, sear until browned on both sides. For sous vide method, transfer to bag, seal and cook at 164°F for 16 hours. If braising, set aside.

For either cooking method, heat oven to 375°F. Place vegetables on baking tray. Roast until fork tender, approximately 25 minutes. Remove from oven, and let cool.

Meanwhile, in heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, bring wine to boil. Add carrot juice and return to boil. Lower heat and simmer until reduced by one-third.

Add olive oil to large Dutch oven over medium heat. Cook onions and garlic until translucent. Add carrot juice mixture, and cook for about 10 minutes. Add tomato purée, berberé blend, vegetables and beef cheeks, if braising. Cook over low heat for 1 hour. Season with Aleppo pepper, Sherry vinegar and salt, to taste, just prior to serving. Top with beef cheeks, if sous vide, and garnish with parsley, if using. *Serves 6.*

Pair It

Tara Patrick, wine director at Mourad, suggests **La Ferme Rouge 2016 Terre Rouge**, a Rhône-style red blend from Morocco. She says the richness of the meat and the rustic nature and slightly sweet character of the root vegetables pair perfectly with the earthiness and fruitiness in the wine.

A South Australian wine with bold fruit flavors and touches of spice, **Yalumba 2017 The Y Series Shiraz** also complements the down-to-earth flavors of the roasted root vegetables. Meanwhile, silky tannins dissolve on the palate with each bite of well-marbled beef.