

Digging in

Tasty morsels about Chicago's food scene

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JANET RAUSA FULLER



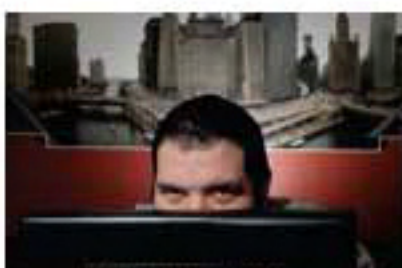
Sun-Times Food editor Janet Rausa Fuller is always thinking about her next meal.

LISA DONOVAN



For almost 20 years now, reporter Lisa Donovan has been hitting Chicago's neighborhood markets and restaurants not only for the best grub at the best prices but also as a way to understand the city's melting pot.

JAMES SCALZITTI



As Rhoda Morgenstern would say, food is the first thing Sun-Times Wire Service reporter James Scalzitti remembers liking that liked him back..

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Wednesday Wines: Bikini Blancs

By [Janet Fuller](#) on August 19, 2009 9:00 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

By guest blogger and New York writer [Sean Forbes](#):

Chicago native Belinda Chang, now wine director of the Modern, 9 W. 53rd, in New York, knows what to sip in summer's swelter.

When the weather is hot and sticky, Chang craves "acid, acid, acid" - something to bear in mind with clingy summer thunderstorms lurking in the region. She says you want "crisp, racy, bright and juicy in your glass. Anything that is naked and unmolested by oak is good. Anything unencumbered by high alcohol is good."

You're seeking cool wine, stripped and lean - white or red. "There are plenty of reds that have those adjectives - crisp, bright, racy, unoaked," Chang says, and mentions "Gamay grape Beaujolais with a little bit of chill."

Cold red wine?

That, Chang observes, is what Beaujolais Nouveau is for - "even the more serious Beaujolais, like Julienas ... They're refreshing, because they have great acidity." She recommends considering Pinot Noirs from California's Anderson Valley, New Zealand or Northern Italy - and broadening your varietal horizons. Grenache, Chang says, is great for Pinot Noir lovers.

Chang's summers are made for "thin-skinned grapes." Your lakeside picnic should feature delicate, sensitive wines in bottle green bikinis.



As Chang pours a glass of [Momo](#) Sauvignon Blanc 2008, a New Zealand wine, she says, "Momo is the Maori word for 'offspring'. This winery is an offshoot of one of the great wineries in New Zealand, [Seresin](#)."

Sir Michael Seresin, a successful cinematographer, worked on the Harry Potter movies, Chang says, and his magic extends to wine. "He makes these incredible, organically farmed and vinified Pinot Noirs, Sauvignon Blancs and Pinot Gris."

Returning her attention to the wine in her glass, Chang says, "I love this wine. You can find it for around \$17 in the store - if you can find it. I think I might have bought it all."

Chang describes the scent as "classic New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc: gooseberry, gobs of citrus, cat's pee - pipi du chat, which sounds much nicer in French than it does in English.

It's a classic Sauvignon Blanc character and a classic terroir character from New Zealand. It's zippy, even on the nose, with none of that oak spice, which to me is almost a hindrance in warm weather - you just don't want it. You want something that's really clean."

When it comes to pairing, don't restrain yourself to the norm. At the Modern, Chang has served Momo Sauvignon Blanc alongside the expected (tomato gazpacho and tuna tartare) and the surprising (seared foie gras with summer berries and tomatoes). This is a wine you can take to the grill.

Where should you buy your bikini Blanc? Chang worked at Cenitare, Osteria via Stato, and Charlie Trotter's, and she gets back to Chicago often. She knows wine - and wine stores.

Chang likes the [Juicy Wine Company](#), 694 N. Milwaukee. "It's run by Rodney Alexander. He's been both a restaurant sommelier and a retailer, so he really knows his stuff - and they do fun events like fried chicken and Champagne on their back patio. Cool spot."

"I've always thought that the wine-buying at [Binny's](#) was really smart," she says. "Don't hesitate to reach out to the guy who's walking the aisles. He may look like he's 17 years old, but if Binny's hired him, he knows his stuff."

Whatever's for dinner, a cool bottle of lean, crisp, juicy wine might be the perfect escort - bikini not mandatory.

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