



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: Francly speaking

By [Janet Fuller](#) on September 16, 2009 9:30 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

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

As temperatures drop, chilled white wines begin to lose their appeal. What's a good grape for the cool-shifting months? Belinda Chang, former Chicagoan and wine director of [the Modern](#) in New York City, remembers writing the wine notes for *Charlie Trotter's Meat and Game*. She liked Cabernet Franc then, and she likes it now.

Chang views Cabernet Franc as an exceptional red "for transition times."

She's not just talking seasons. It's an excellent wine, Chang says, "for transitioning in the meal. It's great when you're going from lighter wines in a meal to a heavier, richer red wines."

Another asset: "It's one of the few red wines that goes well with vegetables. If you have a lot of green in a dish that can pose a problem for a Pinot Noir, Tempranillo, for Syrah - but Cabernet Franc is pretty amazing."

Red wine with greens -- it makes sense, once Chang explains it. "If you look at the classic descriptors for Cabernet Franc, it's invariably described as being leafy, sappy or herbaceous ... green. With that, you find that it pairs with any dish that has a strong green component. That's part of its brilliance as a red wine grape varietal."

When talking about Cab Franc, Chang pulls out some serious adjectives. "Cabernet Franc, to me, is an awesome wine, particularly in a tasting menu, or in a dinner where you have a lot going on in the menu." It's a versatile wine, and you can pair it with some surprising things. At the Modern, Chang says, "We have this great escargot gateau served with a sauce that's an ocean of green, and Cabernet Franc is delicious with that."

Red wine and snails - not a combination that would occur to most of us, but Chang's history with Cabernet Franc proves the wine's flexibility. If you want proof, head to a bookstore and pull out one of the Chicago cookbooks - Charlie Trotter's or Rick Tramonto's - whose wine notes Chang wrote.

Trotter's books, she says, were based in solid French techniques, "but definitely very American. In Rick's books, we were using Cabernet Franc - and rose, too - we used it for the whole litany, Italian everything, which was fun."

Cabernet Franc is a wine ready to take on the world -- or at least to join it at the dinner table. "I could see it with Spanish food," Chang says, "with Japanese - think about shiso and oba leaf, if you had a meat dish served with that. I can definitely see it in about a million places."

Finding a good bottle of Cabernet Franc won't be hard. According to Chang, it might be hard to find one that isn't good.

"If somebody's going to go for it, then he's going to make a great version of it. I honestly can't think of a bad one that I've had.

"For me, it's kind of a safe bet. Go to your wine store and buy one, and I think you'll be pleasantly surprised."

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