

Wine Spectator

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TASTES: Friends of Wine

From verjus to vin cotto, grapes are used to create versatile cooking ingredients

An old axiom of charcuterie makers is that everything on the pig is used except the squeal. When it comes to the wine grape, you could say that everything is used except the wine whistling through the vineyard...Chefs also like oil made from grape seeds for its high smoke point and neutral flavor...

Until a few years ago, grape seed oil could be found only in restaurant kitchens or health food stores. "Chefs like Jean-Georges Vongerichten...and Daniel Boulud have used it for years as a secret ingredient," says Valentin Humer, founder of Salute Santé in Napa, Calif., which has been making grape seed oil since 1994.

Because of grape seed oil's light, neutral quality, {Lidia} Bastianich {owner of New York's Felidia restaurant} uses it in emulsions with lemon or orange juice on poached chicken, rabbit or white fish (like cod) and on grilled vegetables. Grape seed oil's high smoke point makes it ideal for frying foods. "It lets you have a nice sear. It gives fish a nice crust," says Vetri {chef/owner of Vetri restaurant in Philadelphia}, who also mixes grape seed oil with olive oil to "mellow out" dressings...

...Salute Santé also makes grape seed oils infused with ingredients such as basil and roasted garlic; they are very good on grilled meats, vegetables, pastas and pizzas...

Health stores have long carried grape seed oils because they are high in antioxidants and have been shown to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and raise HDL (good) cholesterol. Definitely something to squeal about.

BY SAM GUGINO



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