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CALIFORNIA



HANDCRAFTED BARREL-AGED VINEGARS - OUR LEGACY FOR OVER 35 YEARS

## *edible* SACRAMENTO SPRING 2013



### **Being Creative with Kimberley Vinegars**

*By Georganne Brennan*

In the well-stocked pantry, good quality vinegars are secret ingredients. A local vinegar producer, near Lodi, is worth investigating. If you are looking for a taste of terroir in vinegar, you'll be delighted with Kimberley Wine Vinegars made with organic California wines. The vinegars have a deep, layered flavor, not unlike the homemade vinegars my friends in France make from their own wines. This isn't surprising since the owner and head vinegar maker, Tom Alexander, uses a French method to make his vinegars.

In this French method, one must begin with a good wine. You can't make a silk purse from a sow's ear, so to speak. In the Methode d'Orleans, the artisanal method which Alexander uses, the wines are naturally transformed into vinegar in oak barrels with specific cultures, and then the barrels are kept at a constant temperature. Once transformed, the vinegar is then aged another 12 months.

Most importantly for the cook, the vinegars have character. The Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Vinegar is dark and rich, almost voluptuous. It makes an intense vinaigrette ideal for salads of bitter greens such as escarole and radicchio, and it is a superb pan-deglazer for red meats, such as venison and beef, and best of all, for chicken livers. I like to use a double dose for Chicken Liver Salad; I deglaze the chicken livers with some Cabernet Sauvignon vinegar, and toss the greens with a vinaigrette made with the same vinegar. Then I simply top the dressed greens with the still pink inside, warm chicken livers and their pan juices.

The Champagne Wine Vinegar made with a California sparkling wine is light and crisply tart, like a memory of a glass of Champagne. I use this vinegar for deglazing chicken or pheasant dishes, and it is always my choice for a fresh herb salad that has shallots, and an abundance of chives, parsley, and tarragon combined with young lettuces and, in summer, cherry tomatoes.

I recently had a fresh beef tongue to pickle, but I wanted to give it some distinction beyond the usual and keep the pickling light. I decided to use Kimberley's Chardonnay Wine Vinegar and the result was exactly what I was looking for—something distinctive. In addition to the vinegar, I used cloves, bay leaves, a few juniper berries, coriander, and for a little kick, chili flakes along with the traditional peppercorns and salt. Using the Chardonnay Wine Vinegar instead of the more typical white wine vinegar or cider vinegar provided the delicate background flavor I was looking for.

The Kimberley Wine Vinegars are worth seeking out, and using them in creative ways will add an extra dimension to your cooking.

*Georganne Brennan is an award-winning cookbook author, journalist, educator and entrepreneur who is nationally recognized for her work. Her expertise ranges from farming and agriculture to history and food lore. Active in the Slow Food movement for many years, Georganne has served as a jury member for Slow Food International Award and a member of Slow Food's American Ark Selection Committee.*

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