

# HOME COOKING LOCAL FLAVOR

**Dani Sellers**, Kendall Carson (Edward Sellers Tasting Room manager), and Ed Sellers enjoy a glass of wine before dinner.



WINE COUNTRY DINNER: RECIPES START ON PAGE 114

## Flavor Profile

**Paso Robles, California**

**The Setting:** Vineyards and olive groves dot the undulating horizon in this charming Old California town 3 hours south of San Francisco and 3 1/2 hours north of Los Angeles.

### Peak Season:

Temperatures can hit 105° in the summer, so the cooler, drier period between September and mid-November is the ideal time to visit. You can also take advantage of the Harvest Wine Weekend, October 17-19.

**Specialties:** Rhône-style wines, olives, olive oil, almonds, and Paso Robles' famous hot springs.

**Be Sure To Try:** Rotta Winery's 2004 Black Monukka, \$22. This dessert-in-a-bottle tastes decadently like ripe honeyed apricots.

### Cottage Staple:

Pasolivo's signature handpicked Tuscan olive oil blend, \$30 for 500 ml. It will lend Paso's lush, peppery taste to your dishes.

FOOD STYLISTS: ANA KELLY, ROBYN VALARIK; PROP STYLISTS: LINDSEY ELLIS BEATTY, GENA SIGALA

## “It's the undiscovered wine country”

After an easy 3 1/2-hour drive from Los Angeles, we explored Paso Robles' markets and hillsides, seeking out local flavors in one of the Golden State's “last frontier” wine regions >

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**THE SUNSET OVER PASO ROBLES'** rolling hillsides wasn't what made me fall in love with the place. It wasn't even Sara Foster's delicious cooking or her brother-in-law Ed Sellers' award-winning wines or the unparalleled corn tortillas we had eaten earlier that day. It was the moonrise over young Syrah fields. Five silent minutes watching the full silver moon climb over the low-slung vines showed quite clearly how detached Paso Robles, about halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, feels from the rest of the world.

I didn't stay out too long after dark, choosing instead to return to the Hotel Cheval, a posh 16-room boutique hotel in Paso's historic downtown. My room was just off an outdoor courtyard with a magnificent fireplace. In the brisk October air I should have been reading *The Call of the Wild*, but blogging by firelight is a luxury I should afford myself more often.

The next morning, food editor Kim Sunée, contributing editor Sara Foster, and I explored Paso's downtown district and found an impressive diversity of stores tucked into its charming Old California side streets. Kim tried on locally made jewelry at Firefly Gallery, Sara got some cowgirl style at Boot Barn, and I sipped my way through an olive oil tasting at We Olive.

From there we traveled out into the rough-and-tumble countryside to gather ingredients for Sara's family meal. We stopped at markets for fresh meat, produce, and olive oil. While Sara grilled her Herb Rotisserie Leg of Lamb outside a small cottage on the vineyards, I spoke with Ed and his winemaker, Amy Butler. They told me Paso Robles, nestled between the Santa Lucia Mountains and the Cholame Hills, is an ideal place to grow Rhône grapes like Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Grenache. Amy touted the mineral-rich soil and daily 50-degree temperature swings as exactly what her grapes need to make earthy, smoky wines. Having tasted Ed's award-winning Cuvée des Cinq, we heartily agreed.

We shared Sara's meal sitting at the edge of Ed's fledgling vineyards, already imagining the many good harvests to come. >



### Cottage Industry

**Meet Amy Butler, one of a half-dozen women in Paso Robles producing award-winning wines. We asked her what it's like to be a woman in a mostly male profession:**

"True, there aren't many women in the production side of this industry, but that is changing. It is hard work and very physical, but it's also earthy and family positive," says Amy, a UC Davis grad whose wines for Ed Sellers have won nine gold medals this year. She and her female counterparts share "good camaraderie without a lot of hard-edged competition," she says. "We don't necessarily seek each other out or form a sewing circle or anything, but we support each other, which makes it nice. In some ways, it's a job cut out for women—it's creative, requires patience, perseverance, and organizational skills, and, at times, it calls for some pretty fancy juggling. I've never felt that my gender was a barrier to my success. I've had to prove myself, but everyone else does, too. And fortunately for all of us, winemaking attracts a lot of cute boys."

**"Amy touted the mineral-rich soil and daily 50-degree temperature swings as exactly what her grapes need to make earthy, smoky wines"**

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get better  
with age.



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### TASTE OF PASO ROBLES

Contributing editor Sara Foster prepares a meal that captures Paso Robles' bold, rustic flavors:

“I had a great time getting insider info at area markets, shops, and vineyards. The pumpkins, squash, cheeses, and olive oils produced here inspired me to create a meal that would stand up to Paso Robles' amazing wines. The Herb Rotisserie Leg of Lamb highlights the deep red cherry notes of Ed's Cuvée des Cinq. And I love the fruit and salty caramel in my Caramel Apple Upside Down Olive Oil Cake, which pairs well with the region's dessert wines.”

**RECIPES** Field Greens with Pears, Brussels Sprouts, Fennel, and Mint • Cider Roasted Winter Squash • Herb Rotisserie Leg of Lamb with Mint Chimichurri • Caramel Apple Upside Down Olive Oil Cake



Joeli Yaguda, one of the founders of the family-owned Pasolivo, drizzles her favorite handcrafted olive oil over heirloom tomatoes.

### Field Greens with Pears, Brussels Sprouts, Fennel, and Mint

Frisée and endive taste great in this recipe, but feel free to substitute any other fall lettuce. Wash any greens well before using.

**MAKES:** 6 to 8 servings

**PREP:** 15 minutes

- 3 heads endive, torn
- 1 head frisée, torn
- 2 pears, thinly sliced
- 1 large fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- 12 Brussels sprouts, thinly sliced
- ½ cup walnuts, toasted
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, or to taste
- Sea salt, to taste
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 ounce pecorino Romano cheese, shaved

Combine first 6 ingredients in a large bowl. Sprinkle with chives and mint. Drizzle with lemon juice and olive oil, and add sea salt and pepper. Toss gently to coat. Top with pecorino Romano, and serve. >

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### Cider Roasted Winter Squash

This is one of my favorite ways to cook winter squash. I also love to use small pumpkins when they're available; the sweetness of the cider really brings out their flavor and helps them caramelize.

**MAKES:** 6 to 8 servings **PREP:** 20 minutes **COOK:** 50 minutes

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1/4 cup unfiltered apple juice or fresh apple cider        | cut into 2-inch wedges  |
| 2 tablespoons cider vinegar                                | 1 small butternut squash (about 1 1/2 pounds), halved, seeded, and cut into 2-inch wedges |
| 3 tablespoons olive oil                                    | 4 sprigs fresh sage, chopped  |
| 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted                      | 4 sprigs fresh thyme  |
| 4 small acorn squash (about 3 pounds), halved, seeded, and | Sea salt, to taste  |
|  | Freshly ground pepper, to taste   |

Preheat oven to 400°. Whisk together first 4 ingredients in a large bowl. Add acorn squash and remaining ingredients, and toss to coat. Place vegetables in a single layer on a shallow baking pan, and roast at 400°, turning once, for 50 to 55 minutes or until tender and light golden brown around the edges. Serve immediately or at room temperature. >



### Regional Wines We Love

These are all great values.

#### \$20 and under

- 2006 Robert Hall Rhone de Robles, Central Coast
- 2006 Edward Sellers Grenache Rosé, Paso Robles
- 2005 Wild Horse Winery Zinfandel, Central Coast
- 2005 Eberle Vineyard Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles

#### \$30 and under

- 2006 Tablas Creek Vineyard Rosé, Paso Robles
- 2005 Edward Sellers Cognito, Paso Robles

#### \$40 and under

- 2005 J. Lohr Hilltop Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles
- 2006 Edward Sellers Blanc du Rhône, Paso Robles

- 2006 Four Vines "Anarchy," Paso Robles

#### Splurge (\$40-\$55)

- 2005 Edward Sellers Cuvée des Cinq, Paso Robles
- 2005 L'Aventure Optimus, Paso Robles
- 2005 Treana Red, Paso Robles
- 2006 Justin Vineyards Savant, Paso Robles
- 2004 Windward Monopole Pinot Noir, Paso Robles

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### Herb Rotisserie Leg of Lamb with Mint Chimichurri

Anyone who has been faced with charred but undercooked grilled meat can understand the benefits of indirect heat. Moving the food from directly over the hot coals or gas flame helps ensure even cooking and a tender, juicy result.

**MAKES:** 6 to 8 servings **PREP:** 15 minutes

**COOK:** 1 hour **STAND:** 10 minutes

- 1 (4 1/2- to 5-pound) boneless leg of lamb, trimmed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fennel seeds
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
- Sea salt, to taste
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme or marjoram
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Mint Chimichurri (recipe at right)

**1. Build** a fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to hot. Rub inside of lamb with 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1 tablespoon fennel seeds, 1 tablespoon rosemary, and next 4 ingredients. Roll lamb lengthwise into an evenly shaped piece, and secure by tying with string. Rub outside of lamb with remaining oil, fennel seeds, and rosemary.

**2. Let** grill cool to medium-high heat or 350° to 400°, and brown lamb over direct heat 5 to 7 minutes on each side. Push coals to 1 side of charcoal grill, or turn 1 side of

gas grill off, and grill lamb over indirect heat 50 minutes to 1 hour or until internal temperature reads 145° for medium rare. Remove lamb from grill, cover loosely with aluminum foil, and let rest about 10 minutes before slicing. Serve warm or at room temperature with Mint Chimichurri.

### Mint Chimichurri

**MAKES:** 1 cup **PREP:** 5 minutes

- 1 1/2 cups packed fresh mint leaves
- 1/2 cup packed fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- Juice of 1 lime (about 2 tablespoons)
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3/4 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Combine first 7 ingredients in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a metal blade, and puree until smooth. Add oil in a slow, steady stream with sea salt and pepper. Store in an airtight container in refrigerator for up to 1 week.

### Caramel Apple Upside Down Olive Oil Cake

**MAKES:** 8 to 10 servings

**PREP:** 25 minutes **COOK:** 17 minutes

**BAKE:** 25 minutes **COOL:** 5 minutes

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 cups sugar, divided
- 3 Granny Smith apples, peeled and quartered
- 5 large eggs, separated
- 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse sea salt

**GARNISHES:** 1/4 teaspoon coarse sea salt and lightly sweetened whipped cream or vanilla ice cream

**1. Place** oven rack in middle of oven, and preheat oven to 350°. Melt butter over low heat in a 10-inch (2-inch-deep) cast-iron skillet. Stir in 3/4 cup sugar, combining well.

Arrange apple quarters in a circular pattern around the outside of the skillet, and fill in the center with additional quarters. Increase heat to medium, and cook, without stirring, 15 to 20 minutes or until sugar turns golden.

**2. Beat** egg yolks and 1/2 cup sugar in a large bowl of an electric mixer at high speed about 3 minutes or until thick and pale. Reduce speed to medium, and slowly add olive oil and vanilla until well combined. Remove from mixer, and stir in flour just to combine.

**3. Place** egg whites and 1/2 teaspoon sea salt in a separate large bowl of an electric mixer, and beat at medium speed until frothy. Add remaining 1/4 cup sugar, and continue beating just until soft peaks form.

**4. Fold** one-third of the egg whites gently into the yolk mixture. Fold in remaining whites, being careful not to overmix. Pour batter into skillet with apples. Bake at 350° for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown and a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean.

**5. Cool** cake about 5 minutes, then run a knife around edges to loosen. Invert onto a large platter, and, if desired, sprinkle 1/4 teaspoon sea salt over the apples and caramel. Serve warm with lightly sweetened whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. ■

