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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

Spain's Rias Baixas: White Wine Nirvana

**Food & Wine Pairings:
Gastronomy of Galicia**

**Talkin' Baseball... and
Christopher Columbus**

**Small Plates, Big Glasses
Star at Vancouver's Cru**

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Lawrence D. Dutra

Editor:

Robert Johnson

Wine Steward:

Katie Montgomery

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

A Toast to the Man Who Discovered America... or Not

By Robert Johnson

American history is populated by scores of polarizing figures. But when I was growing up, Christopher Columbus was not among them.



We were taught that Christopher Columbus discovered America. No ifs, ands or buts about it. We even

were made to memorize a poem: "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue..."

Today, much of the Columbus story has been called into question. According to the website Time and Date, there is evidence that the first Europeans to cross the Atlantic were Viking explorers. Some also assert that Columbus didn't reach the American mainland at all — that he got only as far as some islands in the Caribbean.

Even the celebration of Columbus Day has become controversial in some quarters as some say the arrival of European settlers led to the death of a large portion of the native population — and they point the finger of blame at Columbus.

Columbus Day continues to be celebrated in 47 states (California, Nevada and Hawaii have opted out), though, and this year the "holiday"

falls on October 10 — the same date Canadians mark their Thanksgiving holiday.

And speaking of Thanksgiving — traditionally a day of feasting — it's interesting to note what Columbus and his shipmates had to eat on their long journey to America... or the Caribbean, depending on which historical account you choose to believe.

The following summary comes from the Europe-based Christopher Columbus website — a site that's a whole lot more positive about and supportive of Columbus' place in history:

"The menu for Spanish seamen consisted of water, vinegar, wine, olive oil, molasses, cheese, honey, raisins, rice, garlic, almonds, sea biscuits (hardtack), dry legumes (such as chickpeas), lentils, beans, salted and barreled sardines, anchovies, dry salt cod, pickled or salted meats (beef and pork), and salted flour."

Most, if not all, of the wine was red, and according to the site, fish was served more often than meat — which means a pretty good case could be made that people were drinking red wine with fish long before the book bearing that title came along.

So, say what you may about Christopher Columbus. Me? On October 10, I'll raise a glass to the world's greatest country — regardless of who "discovered" it.



Batter Up... and Don't Forget the Corkscrew

It has been quite a season on the baseball fields of America. And come October 19, the World Series will begin.

While Major League Baseball may have surrendered its claim as “America’s pastime” to NFL football, it’s hard for even a diehard pigskin fan not to get excited about the World Series. Rather than a single game, a la football’s Super Bowl, it’s a best-of-seven extravaganza. There’s also the home field advantage to consider in each game — something that rarely comes into play in the almost-always neutral-site Super Bowl.

As each game unfolds, so does the opportunity for a new hero to emerge. It may be a batter hitting a walk-off home run, or it may be a closer shutting down the opposition with his outstanding command of the strike zone. It could even be a great defensive play in the final inning or for the final out. And because there’s no time clock, no game is ever over until it’s over, to paraphrase a famous baseball observation.

In recent years, many major league ballparks have upped the ante on their food service. We now can nosh on

everything from sushi to stir fry, while taking in a game.

But what about the traditional fare found at ballparks? What if you’re planning to serve hot dogs or giant pretzels or nachos-and-cheese while watching this year’s Series on TV? Is it possible to pair that type of fare with wine? Yes!

With either the nachos (which can be spicy) or the pretzels (which can be salty), nothing beats a good Moscato (a.k.a. Muscat) wine, particularly one with a bit of effervescence.

And for almost any ballpark food you’d eat with beer — such as a hot dog — a sparkling Brut makes a tasty and refreshing companion.

October is here. And if you’re preparing to watch the World Series, don’t forget the wine.



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***Benovia's Secret: A Vintner
Who Listens to the Wines***



Joe, Mary & Mike, Benovia Winery Owners

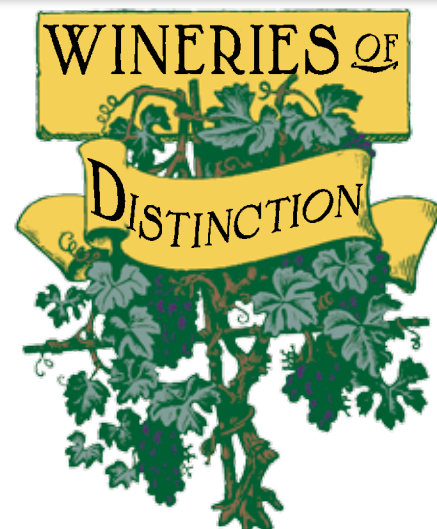
Mary Dewane and Joe Anderson experienced remarkably similar upbringings — in families with traditional values steeped in hard work and pride of craftsmanship.

It must have been fate that the two would find and eventually marry one another. And when they founded Benovia Winery in California's Sonoma County, they paid homage to their fathers — Ben Dewane and Novian Anderson.

"At Benovia, our team is an extension of an extraordinary family," Joe says. "It's a family that eats, drinks and breathes a lifelong passion for wine."

A key part of Benovia's extended family is winemaker Mike Sullivan, a man who is "wine country" through and through. Sullivan grew up in Sonoma County's Russian River Valley area and earned a degree in fermentation science at Fresno State. He became passionate about wine, particularly Pinot Noir, when he tasted great red Burgundies and, later, California bottlings of Pinot Noir.

"No wine reflects its place and time more than Pinot Noir," Sullivan asserts. "At Benovia, I have only one job: to create wines that capture the



essence of this place and this time."

Sullivan has been crafting exceptional wines on the Sonoma Coast since 1987, and has a long track record of excellence.

He says that, as a winemaker, he listens — to the vineyards, to what the grapes are saying, to nature unfolding each year, and to the wine during fermentation. He listens to what is needed and strives to make the wine his senses tell him is there.

Critic Robert Parker has named Sullivan the "Wine Personality of the Year," and the Sonoma County Harvest Fair awarded one his Chardonnays the sweepstakes award for white wines. Then it gave his Zinfandel the sweepstakes award for red wines.

Benovia Winery harvests grapes from



celebrated single-vineyard wines for Williams Selyem and Kosta Browne. Cohn is framed by redwood forests and offers incredible vistas of the Russian River Valley.

The vineyards of Martaella border Benovia Winery in the heart of the Russian River Valley AVA, an area known as the Laguna de Santa Rosa. It's named after the owners' mothers, Martha

and Eleanor, and encompasses 58 acres. Like most of the Russian River Valley, Martaella experiences heavy maritime influences with frequent foggy mornings throughout the growing season. Daytime temperatures rarely rise above 85 degrees, while nights often dip into the low 50s. The result of this temperate climate is wine of tremendous concentration and balance.

Falstaff Road is Benovia's coldest planted site, located just a few miles from the Pacific Ocean. Its vines are perched on a ridge-top near the town of Freestone in the Russian River Valley AVA. During the heat of the summer, the ridgelines near the coast are cooled by ocean breezes that precede a pervasive marine layer. Falstaff rarely rises above 75 degrees in the summer, and nighttime temperatures often slip into the low 50s. This cool environment is ideal for ripening Pinot Noir slowly, helping the grapes achieve a near-perfect balance between vibrant acids and ripe flavors.

With such well-situated vineyards and an award-winning vintner, it's little wonder the wines of Benovia are so coveted.

Benovia owns and farms three vineyards. Located off Westside Road outside Healdsburg, the historic Cohn Vineyard was planted in 1970, making it one of the oldest Pinot Noir vineyards in California. Over the years, it has gained fame for its superb Pinot and Zinfandel. In past vintages, grapes from this site have produced

estate vineyards that span more than 71 planted acres in three distinctive locations across the Russian River Valley and Sonoma County AVAs.

“Our goal,” Joe Anderson explains, “is to get to know each vineyard block intimately, learn its special qualities, and stay attuned to each vine’s needs — all to promote the optimum ripeness and flavor development of our fruit.”

“We believe we have struck just the right balance between innovative viticultural techniques and traditional winemaking,” Anderson adds. “And even though we have made a significant financial investment in upgrading our vineyards with the latest farming and irrigation technology, we rely just a little bit more on old-fashioned instinct and experience to hand-craft Benovia’s exceptional, high-quality wines.”

Every fall, as harvest time nears, you can find Sullivan walking the rows of vines and tasting the grapes, all to make that critical decision of precisely when to pick the fruit. When the time is right, the grapes are harvested at night or very early in the morning to assure the clusters arrive at the winery in peak condition.

Winery 4-1-1

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There are Rhone wines to fit every season, and there's no season that isn't a good time to visit this very special winegrowing area of France.

In the southeast sector of the country, between Lyon and Avignon, the vineyards of the Cotes du Rhone unfurl within the Rhone Valley. To the north, the vines cover the steep slopes that closely follow the river. To the south, they spread out and stretch as far as they eye can see to the foothills of the Alps and the Massif Central.

Those vines share the landscape with olive trees and lavender, all in the heart of the authentic Provence.

This well-preserved area offers, among other things, an exceptional historical heritage. In addition to visiting the countless local cellars, one can view the antique theater in Orange or the Papal Palace in Avignon.

That palace and its inhabitants played key roles in the development of the Rhone as a wine region. During the 14th century, Avignon was the refuge of the Popes as they fled the dangers of Rome. They built the

largest gothic palace in Europe while their cardinals lived in sumptuous dwellings.

But they also contributed to the prosperity of the local artisans as they served as the driving force behind the development of the vineyards.

Avignon, referred to as "the pearl of the south," retains much of its medieval splendor to this day. It's still surrounded by walls, and it's home to so many spires that it's also known as "the city of bells."

The 17th and 18th centuries saw rapid progress in Rhone Valley wine production. In the 17th century, "Cote du Rhone" was the name of the administrative district in the Vicariate of Uzes (Gard), where the wines were particularly renowned. Regulations were introduced in 1650 to guarantee both their origin and quality.

By an edict of the king in 1737, all the wine casks that were to be used for carriage and sale had to be



TOURING TIPS

branded with the letters "C.D.R." It was only in the middle of the 19th century that Cote du Rhone became Cotes du Rhone, as the vineyards on the left bank of the Rhone River were included.

The ultimate recognition came in 1937 when the Cotes du Rhone was granted official Appellation d'Origine Controlee status, thanks to the work of Baron LeRoy. The AOC classification was emblematic of the area's clearly defined land (terroir)

Exploring France's Rhone Valley... Anytime of the Year





and the superb expertise in wine production.

Today, the wines of the Cotes du Rhone are known for their versatility and their ability to fit almost any occasion imaginable.

Visit during the spring or summer months, and you'll likely encounter the fruit forwardness of young Cotes du Rhone wines. Most of the region's wines are red, and they typically showcase delicate aromas of strawberries, raspberries or very ripe blackberries. They're excellent wines to enjoy with the simple, but delicious, local cuisine.

As the weather warms up, the white and rosé wines of the Cotes du Rhone make excellent aperitifs. The locals love to chill them down and sip them while they watch the world (and the tourists) go by.

When autumn arrives and the temperatures fall, it's time to switch to Cotes du Rhone Villages wines. These are more intense and complex than the regional Cotes du Rhone bottlings,

and their spicy quality is enhanced by the flavors of roast beef or lamb.

And when the holiday season beckons, it's time to pour the most prestigious wines of the region — the Cotes du Rhone crus. Examples include Vacqueyras, Crozes-Hermitage, Cornas and Cote-Rotie. Their

complexity will make any day of celebration a day to remember.

The best cellars of the Rhone adhere to a strict set of guidelines dealing with both the exterior and interior of the facility, as well as customer service.

Which wineries should one visit? Frankly, a unique adventure awaits at each establishment, and the best advice is to simply follow your nose — and the abundant signposts. And here's the best tip of all: Once you've found a winery you love, ask the proprietor where you should go next. He'll almost always point you in the right direction — and that applies to restaurants as well as other wineries.

Home to 1,574 private cellars, 96 cooperative cellars, 52 trading companies and six "unions of producers," the Rhone Valley is a slice of wine heaven on Earth. It belongs on the "bucket list" — or, perhaps that should be "barrel list" — of any lover of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre, or blended red wines in general.

For Further Information

www.rhonevalley.worldwideweb.com/Wheretostay/

A useful resource for determining where to stay in the Rhone Valley, organized by geographic area (Lyon, Tournon-sur-Rhone, Villeurbanne, etc.).

www.rhone-wines.com

Includes wine route maps, winery descriptions and hours of operation, a calendar of events and more.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Wine Cruise. Next Sept. 2-14, *Food & Wine* magazine's 3rd annual Wine Voyage will take place, beginning in Barcelona and concluding in Lisbon. Stops en route include Palma de Mallorca, Valencia, Granada (Motril), Funchal (Madeira), Santa Cruz de la Palma, Lanzarote, Agadir, Casablanca, Seville and Cadiz. The wine program features exclusive parties, winemaker dinners, seminars and a special tasting of top-rated Spanish wines. Rates begin at \$4,899 per person, including airfare. www.foodandwinetrails.com

2 Hot Nantucket Osteria. Pazzo is said to be the only restaurant on the island with a rotisserie, and chef Marco Coelho puts it to good use, fueling it with a mix of grapevines and cherry and pecan wood. The menu is unique, divided into sections for homemade pastas, Moroccan *tagines* and dishes cooked in Spanish earthenware pots (known as *cazuelas*). www.pazzonantucket.com

3 Hot Reims Hotel. When visiting the Champagne region of France, a stay at Les Crayeres will make you feel like you're a world away from, well, everything. The property has just 20 rooms, boasts a lovely garden, and is home to a restaurant with a wine list that includes nearly 300 different bottlings of the reason you made the trip in the first place — Champagne. www.lescraieres.com



Flute. A tall and skinny glass used for sparkling wine. It's designed to help extend the effervescence of the wine once the cork is popped and it's exposed to air.

Grip. A word used when describing substantial tannin in a wine — especially common in young reds.

Halbtrocken. A term found on some German wine labels. It translates to "half-dry," and describes a wine with some noticeable sweetness.

Isabella. A grape variety developed to withstand the often-harsh winters of America's northeast. Early settlers tried growing traditional European varieties with little success, so they used science to make winemaking possible.

Jerez. A town on the coast of Spain that is considered the home of Sherry, the country's well-liked fortified wine.

VINESSE STYLE

MODERN CANADIAN CUISINE

They have a great motto at Cru, a stylish restaurant in Vancouver, B.C.: "Small plates and big glasses."

Of course, small plates — a.k.a. "tapas" — have been all the rage for several years now. But at Cru, owner Mark Taylor and chef Alana Peckham execute them with imagination — never so "out there" that you're wondering what you're eating, but with little touches that bring the dishes to life.

Take the "Bacon & Eggs on Toast," for example. It features crispy pork belly, and a soft poached free-range egg on toasted brioche with maple Dijon. (Yes, it's the unusual mustard that makes this an unforgettable dish.)

Likewise, the flavors marry perfectly in the Beef Tenderloin



Carpaccio, which includes caperberries, truffle aioli, shaved Parmesan and crostini.

And we could go on about the small plates, but then we'd run out of space to tell you about the big glasses. Cru features more than 35 wines by the glass, each selected to complement

the cuisine. And just as some of the dishes change with the seasons, so do some of the wines. The restaurant updates the list weekly.

Cru also offers wines by the bottle, and has a special reserve list that includes some of the world's most coveted releases.

For further information on Cru, visit: www.cru.ca

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Rias Baixas, Spain



The vivacious varieties of Spain are complex and expressive, with a strong sense of place. That's why they are beloved by wine connoisseurs.

Spain's designation system — *Denominaciones de Origen*, or D.O. — identifies wines from specific regions that promise consistent quality and value. There are more than 70 D.O.s across the country, enabling Spain to offer a wide range of taste profiles for any occasion.

But for white wine lovers, there is only one D.O. to visit: Rias Baixas, in the northwestern sector of the country. It is known as the only exclusively white wine region in Spain.

All told, a dozen white grape varieties are permitted in Rias Baixas, but about 90 percent of all vineyard land there is devoted to a single variety: Albarino. That's saying a lot about the variety, considering there are more than 6,500 growers and some 20,000 individual plots of land planted to grapevines.

While one might think that other varieties would command a larger share than a combined 10 percent, the simple fact is that Albarino seems to be tailor-made for Rias Baixas.

The soils are alluvial over granite

in Val do Salnes, granite and slate in Condado do Tea, and mainly alluvial in Ribeira do Ulla. And the maritime climate offers the perfect combination of cool air and abundant sunshine — keys to a long harvest season that provides for optimum ripening of the grapes.

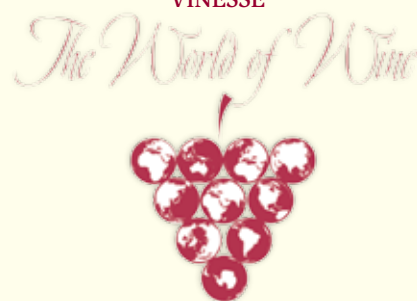
And what's not to like about Albarino? It's a wine that can show off aromas and flavors of honeysuckle, citrus, ripe melon, pear, apricot, mango and other exotic fruits. Some say the aroma reminds them of a piece of Jolly Rancher green apple candy. (Again, what's not to like?)

At last count (in 2010), Rias Baixas was home to 187 wineries, 56 of which ship their wares to the United States. In addition to Albarino, you'll find some growers devoting vineyard space to Treixadura, Caino Blanco and Loureiro.

Rias Baixas truly is nirvana for those who love white wines.

(Editor's Note: Rias Baixas is located in the region of Galicia, which is featured in this issue's "Food & Wine Pairings" department on page 11.)

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Q We haven't been to New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina, but we're planning a trip this fall. Could you recommend a nice place to stay that's not right in the Bourbon Street neighborhood? (We actually like to sleep at night.)



A Try the Park View Guest House in Uptown. It's located alongside the St. Charles Avenue streetcar line and just a few steps from the Audubon Zoo. There are just 21 rooms, and a sumptuous breakfast is included. Then in the afternoon, you can sip a glass of wine or Sherry on the front porch. For more information, go online to: www.parkviewguesthouse.com



Do you like Riesling, but aren't sure what to serve with it? Riesling is among the more versatile food wines, but because it's made at a variety of sugar levels, the best matches can be challenging to achieve. Here are a few tips: With dry Riesling, try broiled or grilled seafood. With fruit-forward, off-dry Riesling, opt for neutral or hard cheeses. And with sweet Riesling, blue-veined cheeses match perfectly, as do fruit-based desserts made from apples, plums, pears, apricots, peaches or mangos. Of course, the sweetest of the sweet wines need no food companion at all; think of them as dessert in a glass.

50,000

Number of direct or indirect jobs created by winegrowing in France's Rhone Valley, making the wine industry the valley's leading employer.

“A little Merlot... can round out those harsh tannins, tame Cabernet's innate aggressiveness, making it a bit more forgiving; flip that by adding a bit of Cabernet to a wine that's primarily Merlot, and it's like giving your juice assertiveness training.”



— Ray Isle, writing in Food & Wine magazine

Wine of the Languedoc region in southern France will be featured at selected restaurants in New York, Chicago and San Francisco during the first 23 days of October. Some restaurants are offering flights of wine, others are focusing on food pairings, and all are providing an opportunity for patrons to win a trip to the Languedoc. For further information, visit: www.languedocadventure.com



The Sonoma Green Business Program is a partnership of government agencies and utilities that assists, recognizes and promotes local organizations — focusing on small- to medium-sized consumer-oriented businesses — that volunteer to operate in a more environmentally responsible way. To be certified, participants must be in compliance with all environmental regulations and meet program standards for conserving resources, preventing pollution and minimizing waste. Seventeen Sonoma County wineries have been certified thus far.



There's a new destination for art and wine lovers in Tasmania: the Museum of Old and New Art. It's a 64,500-sq.-ft. facility built by gaming mogul David Walsh, and includes Sir Sidney Nolan's "Snake," an epic piece that consists of 1,620 paintings. The museum also is home to Walsh's Moorilla winery, brewery and restaurant, so when you're done ogling the art, you can sip and nosh in style. To learn more about the \$80 million facility, visit: www.mona.net.au

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



THE GASTRONOMY OF GALICIA

In reality, Spain's Galicia region is like any other when it comes to gastronomy. To understand Galician fare, one must understand the land.

Described as the “Celtic fringe of Spain,” Galicia is wet, misty and green, a place where hills and pastures meet the Atlantic Ocean. Its “terroir,” to borrow a word from the French, accommodates the growing of mouthwatering vegetables and fruits; an abundance of beef, pork and lamb; the crafting of artisan cheeses; and, of course, a bounty of fresh seafood.

It is the gifts of the ocean for which Galicia is best known. Because the seafood is so fresh, it requires very simple ingredients and flavor enhancements to achieve what many consider perfection on a plate.

Among the more popular dishes are *caldeiradas* (fish stews) that are layered with onions, potatoes and vinegar. And then there's *pulpo gallego* — octopus that's boiled and seasoned with olive oil, cayenne and paprika. With each dish, one of the fine white wines of Rias Braixas, most of which are made with Albarino grapes, would be an ideal

pairing partner.

The abundance and mix of seafood is truly impressive in Galicia. On any given day, diners can select from fresh mussels, clams, oysters, shrimp, crab, lobster, hake, tuna, monkfish, turbot, sea bass, sole and sardines.

Scallops are another tasty treat. They're typically baked and eaten right out of their shells. When they're prepared in this fashion, Sauvignon Blanc makes a sublime companion.

Another delicacy is *percebes* — barnacles that cling tightly to the rocks below the ocean's surface. Divers retrieve the barnacles at great personal risk, which accounts for their high price at the local restaurants and bars. Because of their saltiness, barnacles are best enjoyed with a glass of sparkling wine.

Yes, there are red wines to pair with the local meats, but when the seafood is so fresh and delicious, it's hard to resist a meat-free dining expedition.

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LACON CON GRELOS

This traditional recipe from the Galicia region of Spain makes 6 servings. The dish matches beautifully with most Spanish red wines, as well as Rhone blends from France and varietal wines such as Syrah, Grenache or Mourvedre.

Ingredients

- 1 whole shoulder of pork
- 2.2-lbs. potatoes
- 3 homemade chorizos
- 1 bunch parsnip tops
- Salt, to taste

Preparation

1. Sear the pork shoulder and wash it in lukewarm water.
2. Cook it for 60 minutes and prick it with a fork to check whether it is ready. (Note: Some cooks recommend slow cooking — about 30 minutes per pound at 350 degrees.)
3. Alternatively, turn off the heat and leave it all night in the cooking water. The next day, continue cooking the shoulder in the same water for two hours, and then add the chorizos.
4. Add salt to taste.
5. Take off a small amount of the water and use it to cook the potatoes and parsnip tops for about an hour. Increase the cooking time as necessary so the vegetables are done.
6. Serve the pork shoulder very hot on a tray, whole or in slices, together with the chorizo.
7. Place the well-dried parsnip tops in the center of another tray with the whole potatoes around them.

LEMON-GARLIC HALIBUT

This tasty recipe makes 2 servings. Serve this dish with either a creamy Chardonnay or a zesty Sauvignon Blanc for a satisfying, palate-pleasing meal. (Note: For a “healthier” result, olive oil may be substituted for the butter.)

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp. butter
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 tsp. lemon pepper
- 2 Alaska halibut steaks, 4- to 6-oz. each, thawed if frozen
- Lemon wedges

Preparation

1. Melt butter in large skillet over medium-high heat. Stir in garlic.
2. Season halibut steaks on both sides with lemon pepper.
3. Place steaks in pan and cook for 10 minutes per inch of thickness (measured at thickest part) or until fish flakes when tested with a fork.
4. Flip steaks halfway through cooking to brown on both sides.
5. Sprinkle with lemon juice before serving.

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