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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

5 Wineries to Try in Temecula

Dining in Style
in Healdsburg

Strolling Through
Korbel's Garden

How to Keep
a Wine Journal

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Intrepid Wine Enthusiast, Chief Taster and Winehound:
Martin Stewart

Chief Operating Officer
(aka "The Buck Stops Here"):
Lawrence D. Dutra

Editor:
Robert Johnson

Wine Steward:
Katie Montgomery

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

This Summer, Take Time to Take a Winery Tour

By Robert Johnson

Whether you've been to "wine country" a dozen times or you're planning your first visit this summer, taking a winery tour can be both educational and fun.

Not long ago, my lady and I were fortunate enough to tour the magnificent gardens at Korbel Champagne Cellars in Guerneville, Calif. — that's in western Sonoma County. Sally Olson was an excellent tour guide, possessing encyclopedic knowledge not only of the estate's horticultural wonders, but also its fascinating history and outstanding lineup of sparkling wines.

I've been drinking Korbel's wines for the better part of three decades, but I'd never had the opportunity to explore the estate's gardens. Taking a formal tour, and having an experienced guide like Olson, made for two very enjoyable hours.

Not all wineries have gardens, but a good number offer tours of their winemaking facilities, and some even invite guests out to their vineyard.

Some of the best tours are offered by one of Napa Valley's most famous estates: Beringer. The "Introduction to

Beringer" takes approximately 30 minutes and touches on the highlights, while the "Taste of Beringer" excursion runs for an hour and includes small food bites with three wines.

No matter where you travel in "wine country" this summer — and "wine country" now can be found in all 50 states — take the time to take a tour. And especially during the busy summer vacation period, be sure to call ahead and make a reservation.

Many wineries offer tours of their facilities. At Korbel Champagne Cellars in California's Sonoma County, one tour focuses on the estate gardens.





The Importance of Tannin Ripeness

The catering business can be tough. Some people want to eat like princes but pay like paupers.

As a result, it's not unusual to see cheap red wines served with catered spreads. But those wines can be bitter. That's why smart caterers make sure there is lots of cheese around to accompany those wines: Cheese helps tame or tone down the bitterness so even a cheap wine tastes acceptable.

When a wine leaves a bitter impression on the tongue, the cause almost always is tannin, a compound that comes from the seeds and stems of grapes. Tannin can either help make a wine great or cause an inferior wine to be less enjoyable.

A parallel can be drawn with tea since it, like a grape's skin and stem, contains tannin. When a tea bag is placed in hot water, a flavorful, nicely balanced beverage results. But if that bag is left in the water too long, the tea can be so harsh it's almost undrinkable.

Can that cup of tea be "saved"? Yes, by adding a splash of milk. The protein and fat in milk basically camouflage



the bitter quality and make the tea drinkable.

Likewise, the protein and fat in cheese can tame the tannin of a harsh red wine. Caterers know this, so if the budget won't allow for a top-quality wine, you can bet the cheese tray will be stacked high.

There can be good tannin or bad tannin in winegrapes. Good tannin is fully ripened and enhances a red wine's color and structure. Bad tannin is unripe, and can make a wine almost one-dimensional and bitter. More and more, vintners pay as much attention to tannin ripeness as they do to

sugar levels at harvest time.

Dauntingly, there is no scientific measurement available for tannin ripeness. Furthermore, a grape that's ready to pick from a sugar perspective (for which a scientific measurement is available and utilized) may simultaneously possess unripe tannin. That leaves the vintners to depend on their experience and trust their taste buds.



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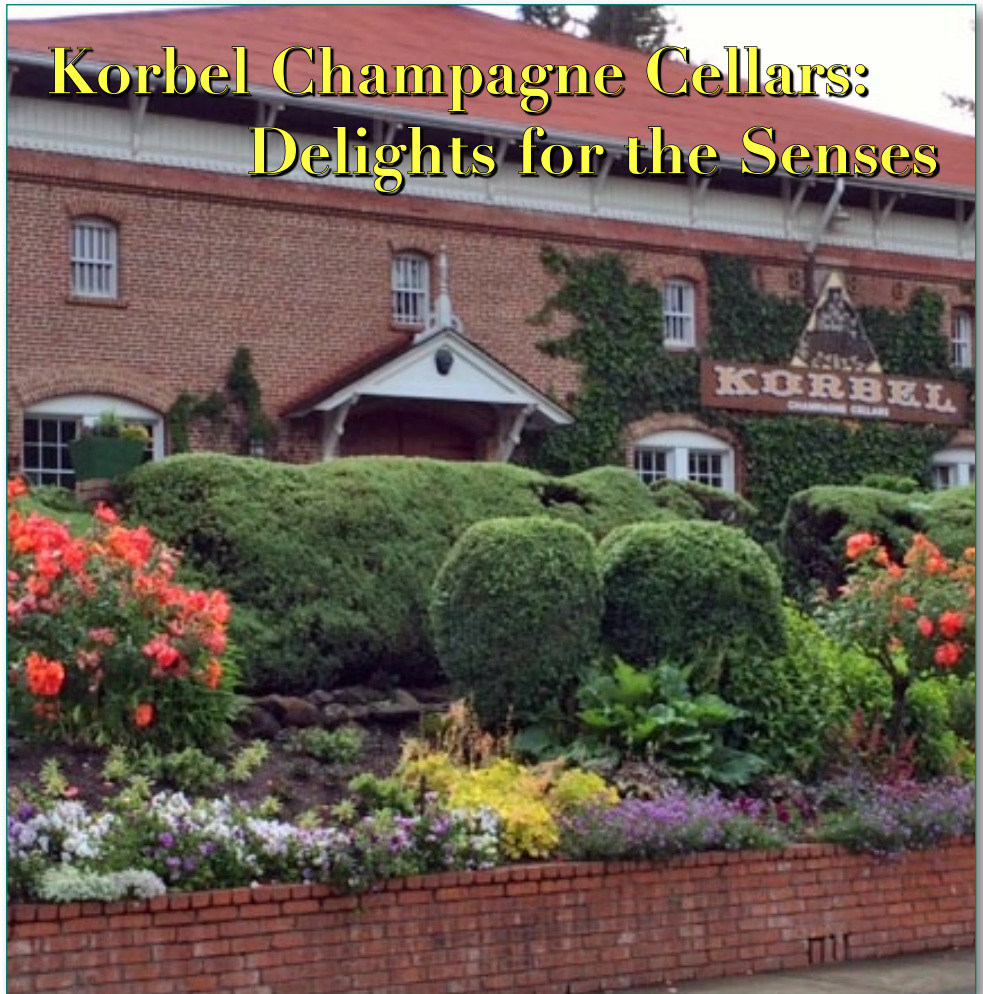
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Korbel Champagne Cellars: Delights for the Senses

Korbel Champagne Cellars' lush garden is one of Sonoma County's top visitor destinations for good reason: towering redwoods and the historic (circa 1882) Korbel House provide a spectacular setting for the garden's colorful plantings, including 250 different rose varieties.

A visit to the Korbel Garden is an awe-inspiring experience. Winding footpaths lead to vibrant plantings of agapanthus, pincushion plants, irises, dahlias and roses — old worlds, hybrid teas and damasks — all framed by box hedges, clematis, plume poppies and a 30-foot-tall climbing hydrangea.

Many travelers make the garden the centerpiece of a visit to Korbel. In addition to taking in the garden, they sample Korbel sparkling wines in the tasting room, tour the historic cellars and enjoy lunch at the gourmet delicatessen.

Until mid-October, free guided tours of the Korbel Garden are offered Tuesday through Sunday at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. On major holidays that fall on

a Monday, the garden will be open for tours that day, but closed the following Tuesday.





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5 Wineries to Try in the Temecula Valley

Thornton Winery is a sparkling wine pioneer in the Temecula Valley, and also hosts a summer-long jazz concert series.

In 1968, Southern California winemaking began a revival in the Temecula Valley with the planting of substantial vineyard acreage.

The first wines from the new vineyards were produced many miles away by Brookside Winery in Cucamonga. But in 1974, the founding of Callaway Winery marked the beginning of winemaking in Temecula. Since then, numerous wineries have been built, some with restaurants and overnight facilities, including luxury resorts.

Here are five to try on a Temecula Valley wine getaway weekend...

■ **Baily Vineyard & Winery** was established in 1986 by Phil and Carol Baily, with the goal of producing a small amount of excellent wine from their own grapes, with the bulk of the fruit to be sold to others. Since then, Baily wines have won gold medals at all of the major wine competitions in the state. The Bailys believe that good wine tastes better with food and food tastes better with wine. In that spirit, they, along with their sons Chris and Pat, opened Baily Wine Country Cafe

in 1992 (now owned by Chris and his wife Kim), and more recently Carol's Restaurant at the new wine tasting facility. Also available at the tasting room is a nice selection of wine and cooking related gifts.

■ Located at the far end of Rancho California Road, **Chapin Family Winery** offers the ambiance of a small producer with an inviting country setting. The Chapin family has owned the property since 1987, and began planting the first vineyards of Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Petit Verdot in 2002. By 2006, the first vintage of Cabernet was released to restaurants. Since then, additional vineyards have been planted to Montepulciano, Aglianico and Viognier. The tasting room opened in 2011, and offers a beautiful view of the vineyards and Temecula Valley. The Chapin family believes in small lots of handcrafted wines that offer intense flavor with depth and balance that best represent



TOURING TIPS

the Temecula Valley appellation.

■ **Frangipani Estate Winery** overlooks the DePortola Wine Trail. Guests are treated to breathtaking views of the estate vineyard and surrounding valley from either the boutique tasting room or a patio adjacent to the vineyard. Don Frangipani has taken French varietals Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot and melded them with old Italian style to create unique wines. Family owned and operated since 2006, Frangipani Estate offers a dynamic selection of wines, with a passion for reds.

■ **Ponte Family Estate Winery** is located in the heart of wine



Frangipani Estate Winery overlooks the DePortola Wine Trail.

country on a 300-acre vineyard. Conceived and built by the Ponte family — grape growers in Temecula since 1984 — the winery caters to visitors with a large tasting room, an award-winning restaurant, ample parking and world-class gardens designed to enhance the quality of one's visit. The Pontes believe that, "If you like it, it's good wine." Most of the 40-year-old vines on the property produce Cabernet, Merlot and Chardonnay. However, the family also farms Zinfandel, Sangiovese, Muscat, Pinot Grigio, Vermentino, Nero d'Avola, Grenache, Montepulciano and other Italian varieties. Ponte Winery offers a charming and comfortably sophisticated atmosphere.

■ **Thornton Winery** understands the formula for creating a premier estate that satisfies wine enthusiasts who are looking for award-winning wine, gourmet cuisine, live music, and beautiful grounds for wedding and banquet facilities. The philosophy of owners John M., Sally B. and Steve Thornton has been recognized, as Thornton Winery garners more medals than any other sparkling wine estate in major competitions throughout the United States. The winery, an elegant French-style chateau overlooking the graceful vineyards of the Temecula Valley, highlights Cafe Champagne, an annual Champagne Jazz Series, a breathtaking fountain terrace, herb gardens, gift shop, and the Champagne Lounge.

For Further Information

Baily Vineyard & Winery

33440 La Serena
951-676-9463

Chapin Family Winery

36084 Summitville St.
951-506-2935

Frangipani Estate Winery

39750 De Portola Rd.
951-699-8845

Ponte Family Estate Winery

35053 Rancho California Rd.
951-694-8855

Thornton Winery

32575 Rancho California Rd.
951-699-0099

Temecula Valley Wine Country

<http://www.temeculawines.org/>

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Winemaker Dinner Series. "Dinner With the Winemaker" is a Sonoma Coast tradition, now in its 28th year at The Inn at the Tides in Bodega Bay, Calif. Each multi-course dinner shines the spotlight on a specific winery or wine theme, and remaining dinners in 2014 will feature St. Francis Winery on June 13, Beaulieu Vineyard on July 18, Petroni Vineyards on Aug. 15, Italy on Sept. 19, and Cambria Estate on Oct. 10. Winemaker dinner guests receive reduced room rates at the Inn. www.InnattheTides.com

2 Hot Wine Country Restaurant. Cricklewood (tagline: "an eating and drinking place") is located in Santa Rosa, Calif., and specializes in slow-cooked prime rib, hand-trimmed steaks and fresh fish, as well as an extensive Sonoma County-focused wine list. www.cricklewoodrestaurant.com

3 Hot Sonoma County Concert Series. Where Highway 12 meets Farmers Lane in Santa Rosa, Montgomery Village provides an array of shopping and services. And during the summer months, the shopping center — which bills itself as "a premier entertainment experience" — hosts two concert series. "Rockin' Concerts" take place on Saturdays from 12 noon to 3 p.m., while "Concerts Under the Stars" are held on Thursdays from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Cover bands feature the music of everyone from the Beach Boys to Bruce Springsteen. www.mvshops.com



Grassy. A common descriptor for Sauvignon Blanc, and usually pleasant unless overly assertive. Shows up primarily in the aroma.

Heady. A term used to describe a wine that's high — perhaps overly so — in alcohol.

Imperial. A bottle that holds 6 liters of wine. Designed for special occasions, or to make an impression.

Jug Wine. An inexpensive, unremarkable wine typically sold in gallon or half-gallon bottles or jugs. Generally used as a critical term.

Kabinett. A German term that indicates a wine of quality. Generally, it is given to the country's best dry Riesling wines.

Loire. A wine appellation in France, primarily known for Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Franc.

VINESSE STYLE

Dining in Healdsburg

“Style” can be defined in many ways; it’s very much in the eye of the beholder.

When it comes to dining out in the town of Healdsburg, in the northern sector of Sonoma County wine country, there are so many options that there’s sure to be one that fits your definition. Probably more like one dozen. Here are some that we like a lot, and have visited often...

- **Baci Café & Wine Bar** — Features authentic regional Italian and Mediterranean food, paired with wines from Italy, Sonoma and Napa. 707-433-8111.
- **Bistro Ralph** — Upscale bistro on the Healdsburg Plaza. 707-433-1380.
- **Bravas Bar de Tapas** — Traditional tapas menu featuring the flavors and flair of Spain, including Spanish wines, Sangria and cocktails. 707-433-7700.
- **Café Lucia** — New Portuguese cuisine, including wines. 707-431-1113.
- **Dry Creek Kitchen** — Daily changing menu featuring primarily Sonoma-produced products. 707-431-0330.
- **Johnny Garlic’s** — Pasta, fish, steaks and pizzas. 707-836-8300.
- **Giorgio’s** — Classic Italian cuisine. 707-433-1106.
- **Madrona Manor** — High-end cuisine in a cozy, Old World setting. 707-433-4231.
- **Partake by KJ** — Wine flights and small bites. 707-433-6000.
- **Ravenous** — Don’t miss the crab cakes at this quaint restaurant featuring high-end cuisine. 707-431-1302.
- **Rustic Restaurant at Coppola Winery** — Offers an assortment of Italian and other international dishes. 707-857-1485.
- **Willi’s Seafood & Raw Bar** — East Coast oyster bar with a Latin flair and extensive wine list. 707-433-9191.
- **Zin Restaurant & Wine Bar** — American bistro focused on homegrown ingredients and locally made wines. 707-473-0946.

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Bennett Valley



Nestled among three mountain peaks in Sonoma County, the vineyards of the American Viticultural Area known as Bennett Valley lie along mountain benchlands that cradle the marine fog and capture the cool ocean breezes.

Bennett Valley is a series of high sloping ridges, hills and swales suspended from Bennett Mountain to the north, Taylor Peak to the west and Sonoma Mountain to the south. The AVA lies entirely within the Sonoma Valley appellation, and overlaps part of both Sonoma Mountain and the Sonoma Coast appellations. The boundaries of the AVA roughly correspond to the Matanzas Creek watershed.

It's more of an alluvial bench than a valley, as volcanic activity created both the diverse topography and a wide range of soil types, exposures and terrains. The volcanic history of the landscape defines the soils: Steep, rocky soils with good drainage encourage deep roots and intense flavors without dilution.

With 8,140 total acres, about 650 are planted to vineyard, making it one of the smallest AVAs in Sonoma County. Most of the planted acreage sits on a benchland between 400 and 1,100 feet above sea level, while the elevation of the region extends up to 1,887 feet.

Consistent marine influence defines this cool-climate region. Through a deep gap in the mountains (known as the Petaluma Wind Gap), early morning coastal fog and cool marine breezes pour into the valley on a regular basis throughout the growing season.

While the AVA is classified as very cool climate, the mountains that define its boundaries shelter the vineyards and protect them from extremes. In the lee of the valley walls, abundant sunshine warms the fruit to a long, slow ripening where flavors develop ahead of sugars. These combined factors moderate summer temperatures and keep grapes on the vines late into the season. Bennett Valley typically harvests two to three weeks later than the Russian River Valley and Carneros.

The climate encourages even vine growth and produces notably balanced wines. The result: Bennett Valley wines are ripe and fully flavored, but maintain elegance and complexity that can sometimes be lost in warmer areas.



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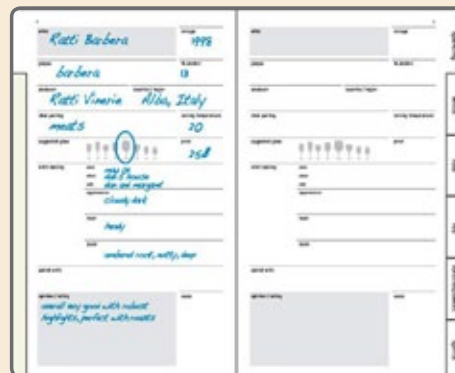
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Q I've been reading about wine labels, and was wondering if you could explain what a "vineyard-designated" wine is.

A Wine-speak can be confusing. Consider that an "Extra Dry" sparkling wine actually is somewhat sweet, and that the word "Reserve" has no legal meaning. But in the case of a vineyard-designated wine, the term actually provides an accurate description of what's inside the bottle. Geographic designations on wine bottles range from quite general ("California"... "North Coast") to very specific, and the most specific in America is the vineyard-designated wine. The term means that the grapes used to make the wine came from the vineyard named on the label. Such wines are made by vintners who believe that the unique character of the vineyard is deserving of special recognition.

Have you ever considered keeping a wine journal? It's a great way, over time, to help you identify the types of wines — and, even more specifically, the types of aromas and flavors — that you prefer. For each entry, jot down the full name of the winery, the name or variety of the wine, the vintage, and your impressions of it. Don't worry about using technical terms that you may see in wine magazines; use language that means something to you. Generally, it takes only about 25 entries in such a journal to develop a "pattern" that will help you hone in on what you like and what you don't.



200+

Number of cheeses available at V. Sattui Winery's Italian Market in St. Helena (Napa Valley), Calif. The market also features house-made sandwiches, panini and salads, and the Sattui estate offers extensive tree-shaded picnic grounds. Info: vsattui.com

The garden at Sonoma County's Korbel Champagne Cellars is subtly different this season, and it is all due to the current California drought and Korbel's ongoing sustainability efforts. For years, the Korbel Garden has utilized a range of sustainable cultivation techniques, including compost made from vineyard waste, low-flow drip irrigation (run only at night) and integrated pest management with beneficial bugs and nematodes — not unlike those used in Korbel's estate vineyards. But the drought has prompted Korbel to intensify its sustainability efforts to further conserve water. In the garden, the changes include replacing some annuals with perennials, adding more compost to some beds, increasing plantings of drought-resistant California natives, and limiting "color" plantings — all techniques applicable to home gardens. How's it working? Check out the photo essay in this issue's "Wineries of Distinction" feature.

“The more I have learned about wine... the more I have realized that it weaves in with human history from its very beginning as few, if any, other products do. Textiles, pottery, bread... there are other objects of daily use that we can also trace back to the Stone Age. Yet wine alone is charged with sacramental meaning, with healing powers; indeed with a life of its own.”



— Author Hugh Johnson, writing in *Hugh Johnson's Story of Wine*

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

Salty Food



We all know that too much salt in our diet is not a good thing. But, when used in moderation, salt can bring dull dishes to life and elevate such everyday food as sliced cantaloupe.

And these days, specialty salts are all the rage. At the Dean & DeLuca store in the Napa Valley, more than 25 specialty salts from around the world typically are on display.

Salt has a love/hate relationship with food. On the “love” side, there’s the aforementioned “elevating” role that it plays in cooking. “Mom always used to say that salt brings out the flavor in food,” a member of the Vinesse tasting panel observed. “It makes a hamburger taste like a hamburger, or a roast taste like a roast.” And when you know exactly how a dish tastes, it makes selecting a complementary type of wine a snap.

The “hater” aspect rears its ugly head when a dish tastes “salty.” Think of prosciutto or ham or bacon. While other flavors certainly are present, the saltiness often dominates. And that can be a nightmare for wine pairing.

That said, not all salty foods present vinous conundrums. In fact,

as a general rule, Champagne or other sparkling wines make pretty safe “go-to” pairing partners for most salty dishes. (For a special and surprising treat, try sparkling wine with French fries.)

One more general rule: Avoid red wines with salty foods. Salt generally will make red wines taste “hot.”

But there are plenty of solid choices among non-red wines. For instance, with ham, a crisp rosé works very well. With popcorn, try a buttery Chardonnay.

With other salty foods, try wines that are crisp — a trait that generally equates with a solid acid core. Options in this realm include Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Riesling and Gewurtztraminer.

And with specialty salts, the pairing partners multiply because the main food-and-wine rule still applies: Match the wine to the dominant flavor of the dish. It’s true of the sauce poured over a plate of pasta, and it’s true of the salt sprinkled on almost any dish.

Four Seasons



WINES THAT MATCH THE SEASON

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CITRUS ROASTED CHICKEN WITH BASIL CREAM

Sauvignon Blanc is among the most flavorful and refreshing wines on Earth. But the characteristics that make it unique — its relatively high acid level, its “grassy” impression in the nose, its mild herbal flavors in the mouth — also render it a real challenge to pair with food. But we’ve found a recipe that works beautifully, primarily because of one ingredient: basil. The recipe will serve 2 to 4 people, depending on your appetites... and your willingness to share.

Ingredients

- 1 whole roasting or frying chicken
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon, 1 lime and 1 orange
- 1 tablespoon garlic
- 1 stick butter, softened
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1/4 cup fresh chopped basil leaves

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Rinse and dry chicken, and prepare for roasting.
3. Mix butter, juices, zests, garlic, salt and pepper in a small bowl. Brush or rub over entire chicken.
4. Roast in oven until temperature is 165 degrees internally. Remove from oven, move chicken to a cutting board, and let rest.
5. Strain pan juices into small heavy-bottom sauce pan. Bring juices to a boil and reduce by one-half.
6. Pour cream into sauce pan and add fresh basil. Bring to a boil and reduce until sauce coats the back of a spoon.
7. Check seasoning and adjust with salt and pepper, if needed.
8. Divide chicken into desired portions and serve with basil cream... and a glass of Sauvignon Blanc.

GRILLED FIGS WITH GORGONZOLA

Grilling season is in full swing, and this dish is easy to prepare and makes a wonderful starter course. Petite Sirah, Zinfandel or a bold red blend would match nicely with it, and this recipe makes enough to fill a party pass-around platter.

Ingredients

- 6 to 8 large ripe figs
- Small wedge of Gorgonzola cheese, cut into cubes
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Aged balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Crackers

Preparation

1. Trim fig tops and cut each open half-way down the middle. (Note: Do not cut into pieces.)
2. Add olive oil, salt and pepper to cut figs.
3. Grill on heated outdoor barbecue, 3-4 minutes for each side over medium heat.
4. Remove figs from grill and stuff with pieces of cheese. (Note: The cheese will begin to soften and melt.)
5. Arrange figs on a serving dish and drizzle with balsamic vinegar.
6. Serve warm with crackers.



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