



*David Rosengarten
Editor-in-Chief
The Rosengarten Report*

Dear Vinegar Club Member;

I admit it. I have a sweet spot for the sour stuff—vinegar! If I had to carry my kitchen on my back in a knapsack, vinegar would be right there, despite the bulky bottle and weight. I simply can't imagine preparing food without it. Salads, of course. But a splash can deliver a piquant punch to a stew or daube, reinvigorating flavors that have become "muddy" and depleted by long, slow-cooking. A few drops can save a sauce. Some pickled things wouldn't exist without it. And the list of condiments that need its tang is literally infinite.

There are only a few flavor profiles that can be recognized by the tongue—such as sweetness, saltiness, and sourness—and vinegar is a virtual celebrity in this line-up. These basic tastes are like paints on an artist's palette...and if you want to create culinary masterpieces, you must seek out the best representatives of each. (I don't know any successful watercolorists who are still using Prang Oval 8s.)

I sense you already understand this, as you have, by your membership in this club, eschewed the common vinegar offerings in your supermarket, or even your gourmet shop. (Balsamic...yawn.)

I am confident that your current shipment of vinegars from Origen Vinegars from Chile will astound you. Have you ever tasted anything like these before? In the meantime, I'm hot on the trail of vinegars for the next shipment that will burnish your reputation as a gourmet on the leading edge...

As always, I eagerly await your feedback. Please tell me all about the unique culinary uses you've found for these extraordinary vinegars!

Yours in fabulous foods,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David R." followed by a flourish.

David Rosengarten

Origen Vinegars

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

Located in Santiago Chile, Origen Vinegars is owned and operated by lifelong vinegar-philes, Verónica Larraín, a former winemaker, and M. Inés Irarrázaval. Both ladies were agricultural engineers who studied enology and fruiticulture, and needless to say, these ladies know what goes into making extraordinary vinegar. To make up for the absence of high quality mind-blowing vinegar in their homeland of Chile, they started Origen.

The key to their amazing vinegar is the excellent wine they use to create their vinegars. For their red wine vinegars, they use a Cabernet Sauvignon from the Colchagua Valley, and for their white wine vinegars they use a Chardonnay from the Casablanca Valley. These wines go through a hand-crafted process of acetification known as the Orleans Method, where a Mother Culture is added to each wine to jump-start the transformation into vinegar. The vinegars are matured in French oak, then bottled by hand. The first of the two vinegars you are receiving was macerated with fresh mint, and the second, with green chilies before being bottled.

Origen Vinagre de Vino Fino, Aji Verde Green Chili Chardonnay Wine Vinegar

TASTING NOTES:

Light, clear, yellow-ish vinegar--looking quite a bit like a five-year-old white Burgundy! Arresting nose. For starters, your nostrils are not assaulted by vinegar fumes--but, rather, intrigued by the pronounced aroma of pickled chile! Piquant but relatively gentle on the palate, with wonderful follow-through on the chile flavors--and even a bit of salumi-like funk in the finish.

Food-Pairing Suggestions: I love this vinegar on any salad that you wish to assist with a south-of-the-border kind of flavor. Brilliant, for example, with avocados, purple onion and cilantro. Creamy vinaigrettes made with this vinegar are ideal for light grilled foods, like chicken--and my favorite use of all is as a drizzle, with green-tasting olive oil, over slices of raw fish.

Origen Vinagre de Vino Fino, Menta Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Vinegar

TASTING NOTES:

Decidedly un-Cabernet-like in look--suggesting, instead, a pale red wine, such as Piemonte's Grignolino. Gentle nose, like the nose of the white vinegar, with hints of spicy Cabernet, and a large dollop of fresh green mint. Subtle on the palate, with more of that salumi-like funk in the finish.

Food-Pairing Suggestions: This is just a great vinegar for light tossed salads; the salumi dimension makes me feel that it's especially appropriate for old-fashioned Italian-American antipasto salad, with salami and provolone as well as greens. You will get with this vinegar the kind of Old-World vinegar-on-salad sparkle that disappeared with the rise of balsamic vinegar!

Recipes

MINT CABERNET SAUVIGNON WINE VINAIGRETTE WITH FRESH MINT

Makes About 1 Cup

1/4 cup Origen Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Vinegar
3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh mint
salt and pepper to taste

1. Whisk together the vinegar and olive oil. Whisk in the mint. Season to taste with salt and pepper. The vinaigrette keeps, covered, in the refrigerator for 2 days.

BASIC ITALIAN OIL AND MINT CABERNET SAUVIGNON WINE VINEGAR DRESSING

Enough For 12 Lightly Dressed Green Salads or 6 Heavily Dressed Green Salads

1 large garlic clove
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons Origen Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Vinegar
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1. Peel the garlic clove, and smash it with the side of a heavy knife. Add the salt, and chop garlic until mixture forms a paste. Place in a small bowl, and add the vinegar. Mix lightly.
2. Add the olive oil to salad greens in a large bowl. Mix thoroughly with your hands. Add the vinegar-garlic mixture. Mix again. Taste for seasoning.

BASIC MUSTARD VINAIGRETTE WITH MINT CABERNET SAUVIGNON WINE VINEGAR

Enough For 12 Lightly Dressed Green Salads or 6 Heavily Dressed Green Salads

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons Origen Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Vinegar
2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 teaspoon cold water (optional)
salt and pepper

1. Place the mustard in a small bowl. Slowly whisk in the vinegar, so the mustard remains creamy and smooth. Slowly whisk in the olive oil; once again, the dressing should remain creamy and smooth. (If the dressing "breaks," or separates into oil and vinegar, you can revive it by adding more mustard to another bowl, then beating the "broken" dressing slowly into the mustard.)
2. If desired, thin the vinaigrette with the cold water. Season with salt and pepper.

BASIC VINAIGRETTE WITH OIL AND GREEN CHILI CHARDONNAY WINE VINEGAR

Enough For 12 Lightly Dressed Green Salads or 6 Heavily Dressed Green Salads

1 tablespoon Origen Green Chili Chardonnay Wine Vinegar
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
salt and pepper

1. Place the vinegar in a small bowl. Slowly whisk in the oil until a light, creamy emulsion is formed (about a minute). Season well with salt and pepper.

ROASTED GARLIC VINAIGRETTE WITH GREEN CHILI CHARDONNAY WINE VINEGAR

Makes About 1/3 Cup

1/3 cup firmly packed, peeled garlic cloves (about 1 head of garlic with about 16 cloves)
2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 cup Origen Green Chili Chardonnay Wine Vinegar
2 tablespoons water
1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest
salt and pepper to taste

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Place the garlic cloves in a small roasting pan and toss with the olive oil. Roast in oven for 15 minutes, or until garlic cloves start to brown. Cover with foil and roast until garlic cloves are soft, about 10 minutes more. Remove garlic and let cool slightly.
3. Place garlic in the work bowl of a food processor. Add the vinegar, water, and lemon zest, and puree thoroughly. If mixture seems too thick, add a little more water. Season to taste with salt and pepper. The dressing keep, covered, in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 days.

CREAMY LEMON AND GREEN CHILI CHARDONNAY WINE VINEGAR DRESSING

Makes About 1/2 Cup

2 tablespoons creme fraiche (or sour cream)
2 tablespoons minced shallots
2 teaspoons Origen Green Chili Chardonnay Wine Vinegar
1 1/2 teaspoons finely grated fresh lemon zest
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
pinch of granulated sugar
1/4 cup canola oil
1 tablespoon lemon-flavored extra-virgin olive oil
salt and pepper to taste

1. In a small bowl whisk together the creme fraiche, shallot, vinegar, lemon zest, mustard, and sugar until smooth. Add the canola oil in a stream, whisking, and whisk the vinaigrette until it is emulsified. Whisk in lemon-flavored olive oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. The dressing keeps, covered, in the refrigerator for 2 days.

THAI SWEET AND SPICY DIPPING SAUCE

Makes About 1/2 cup

1/3 cup Origen Green Chili Chardonnay Wine Vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic
4 small red chilies, stemmed and finely chopped
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

1. Combine the vinegar, sugar, and salt in a saucepan and cook over moderate heat, stirring until sugar has dissolved. Turn off heat.
2. Stir in the garlic and chilies, and let cool to room temperature. Just before serving, add chopped cilantro.

PUGLIESE BEET SALAD WITH FRESH MINT

Serves 6 to 8 As A Side Dish

2 pounds beets (weigh after removing roots and greens), unpeeled
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon Origen Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Vinegar
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons coarse salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/4 cup shredded mint

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil, and cook beets until fork tender, about 30 minutes for small beets. Remove from water and set aside until cool enough to handle. Slip off skins and cut beets into 1/4-inch slices.
2. Whisk vinegar, lemon juice, olive oil, coarse salt, and pepper together in a large bowl. Add beets and toss thoroughly. Gently fold mint into beets. Adjust seasoning and serve at room temperature.

GRILLED EGGPLANT WITH FRESH MINT AND MINT CABERNET SAUVIGNON WINE VINEGAR DRESSING

Serves 6 As A First Course

3 eggplants (about 1 pound each)
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil plus a little additional for brushing eggplant
3 medium onions, thinly sliced
28-ounce can of tomatoes
1 cup firmly packed, torn fresh mint leaves
2 tablespoons Origen Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Vinegar
8 flat fillets of anchovies, minced

1. Prepare a very hot charcoal fire.
2. Cut the top third off of each eggplant; reserve tops for another use. Cut a thin slice off of the other end. Stand each eggplant on a cut end. Peel one side of each eggplant (peeling away about one quarter of the eggplant skin), and then peel the opposite side (another one quarter of the skin). With each eggplant still standing on its cut end, and the unpeeled flesh of each one facing left and right, cut each eggplant into 8 vertical slices, approximately 1/3 inch thick. The 24 slices should be rectangular, with a thin border of peel on two sides. Plunge them into salted, simmering water for 2 minutes. Remove, and brush them lightly with olive oil.
3. When the fire is ready, place the eggplant slices over it in a single layer. Cover, but turn frequently, checking every 2 minutes or so to make sure the eggplant is not burning. (Alternatively, you can cook the eggplant under a broiler on an oiled cookie sheet.) The slices are done when they're sizzled brown on the outside, just tender within. Lay them out on one or more large platters, in a single layer, and season both sides with salt and pepper. Transfer to a large mixing bowl.
4. Prepare the tomato mixture: Heat the 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large, heavy pan over moderately high heat. Add the sliced onions, and saute until they just start to turn yellow and soften (about 3 minutes). Squeeze the juice out of each canned tomato in your hand (reserving juice for another use), and add the tomatoes to the onions. Saute for 1 minute. Season to taste.
5. In a large mixing bowl, cover the eggplant slices with the tomato-onion mixture. Add the mint leaves, and sprinkle the Origen Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Vinegar over all. Very gently, toss the salad together, trying to keep the eggplant slices as whole as possible. Let cool for 15 minutes, and serve at room temperature anytime within a few hours. Just before serving, top with the minced anchovies.