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OCT. 15, 2014

Braised Short Ribs With Syrah

Chef Matthew Tropeano, Pain d'Avignon, Hyannis, Mass.

A 19th-century adage holds that there are two things you don't want to see as they are being created: laws and sausage. Witnessing the latter made a positive impression on a young Matthew Tropeano, however. "As a kid, cooking was part of a routine with my family," he recalls. "In the winter, my uncles would make different kinds of sausages." Another family pastime had culinary ties: Growing up near Boston, Tropeano tended a vegetable garden with his father, Alfonso. A cousin owned a restaurant, and before long, Tropeano dove into the business.



Life in the kitchen took the chef from Boston to Dallas, and then to New York—where Tropeano earned a three-star *New York Times* review for French stalwart La Grenouille—before he and his wife returned to Massachusetts to raise their family. For nearly two years, Tropeano has been executive chef of Pain d'Avignon, in Hyannis. The retail bakery, which also has a massive wholesale business, began serving lunch in 2008. A year later, the bistro opened for dinner, quickly drawing a loyal clientele for its French classics. The cuisine has wine to match: Floor-to-ceiling glass walls allow diners a view of the restaurant's 1,000 bottles. (The 105-selection list is exclusively French.)

Tropeano often looks to seasonal produce for inspiration. Tropeano and his sous chef have a plot at a nearby community garden, and plan to show it off. "A lot of [Cape Cod] cooks rarely get to go to the farm. We want to bring the connection to them." He adds: "Anytime you see the process, from the garden to the plate, you appreciate it more."

He is similarly involved in the role wine plays in both kitchen and dining room. To make this classic dish, Tropeano recommends "a full-bodied red [to] hold up with the short rib." To drink with it, though, he favors something slightly lighter: the Delas Crozes-Hermitage Les Launes 2011. This Syrah's blackberry aromas and smoky mineral note offer a lush counterpoint to the wine used for cooking. Tropeano's passion extends to the flavor pairing: "Just like food, I think wine is seasonal."

—Catherine Sweet



CHEF'S PICK: Delas Crozes-Hermitage Les Launes 2011

WINE SPECTATOR ALTERNATES:

E. Guigal Crozes-Hermitage 2010 (91, \$31);

Lavau Côtes du Rhône-Villages 2012 (88, \$15)

HOW TO MAKE BRAISED SHORT RIBS WITH SAGE-SCENTED BEEF JUS

1/2 cup olive oil
3 pounds boneless beef short ribs
1 large Spanish onion, diced
1 large carrot, diced
2 ribs celery, diced
1 750ml bottle full-bodied red wine (such as Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot)
4 thyme sprigs
6 sage leaves
1 tablespoon whole black peppercorns
1 quart beef stock

1. Set a large, heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat. Add olive oil to coat the bottom of the pan. Working in batches, sear the short ribs, rotating them so that all sides get caramelized.

2. Remove ribs from the skillet and place them in a large, heatproof container. Set aside. Add the diced onion, carrot and celery to the skillet and sauté until caramelized.

3. Add the red wine to the skillet and continue cooking until the wine is reduced by one-third. Once it thickens, carefully pour the wine and vegetables over the short ribs.

4. Place the thyme, sage and peppercorns in the center of a square of cheesecloth. Gather the corners and use kitchen string to tie the bundle. Add the sachet to the short rib-vegetable mixture.

5. Pour the stock over the rib and vegetable mixture and refrigerate overnight.

6. The next day, transfer the ribs, stock and vegetables to an ovenproof pot. Set the pot over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer. Once simmering, place the pot in an oven preheated to 350° F and cook until the ribs are tender, 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

7. Remove the ribs from the pot. Carefully pour the liquid through a fine-mesh sieve, straining the herbs and vegetables. Reduce the cooking liquid even further to make a sage-scented jus. (To preserve the ribs, pour the reduced liquid over them and refrigerate. They will be good for up to 2 weeks and become even more flavorful, according to chef Tropeano.) Serve with polenta or potatoes. *Serves 4 to 6.* □