



ONLY IN THE AJC OUR UNIQUE LOOK AT GREEK COOKING

Simple, sophisticated Greek



Poached Halibut With Tomato Broth from "Modern Greek Cooking" by Atlanta chef Pano Karatassos. CONTRIBUTED BY FRANCESCO TONELLI

Atlanta chef Pano Karatassos shares recipes from Kyma in 'Modern Greek Cooking.'

By Bob Townsend
For the AJC

In his new cookbook, "Modern Greek Cooking: 100 Recipes for Meze, Entrees, and Desserts" (Rizzoli, \$50), Atlanta chef Pano Karatassos presents the dishes he honed at Kyma, his critically

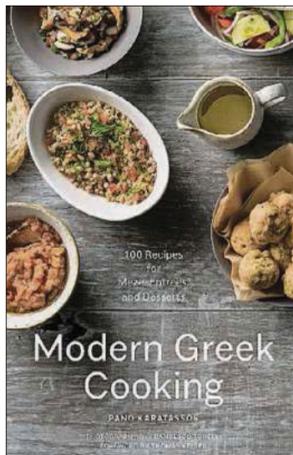
acclaimed and much beloved Greek seafood restaurant.

Drawing from his training at the Culinary Institute of America and experiences working in the kitchens of three of the world's greatest chefs — Eric Ripert, Jean-Georges Vongerichten, and Thomas Keller — Karatassos reaches back to his Greek roots and his family's recipes to create food that is at once simple and sophisticated. In other words, modern Greek cooking.

"I learned three different styles from each of those three different chefs, and three different ways

Greek continued on F2

ALSO INSIDE
» Delicious Greek recipes, F2



"Modern Greek Cooking" by Pano Karatassos



Chef Pano Karatassos.
CONTRIBUTED BY SARA HANNA

WINE

Walmart's wines good for the price

Chain sells 10 selections, with 11 more planned for next year.

By Dave McIntyre
Special to The Washington Post

Earlier this year, on a business trip out west, my colleagues and I checked into the motel that would be our home for four nights, then dashed to the local Walmart to stock up on provisions. We bought chips, dip, granola bars, bottled water (someone even bought salads to stick in the mini-fridge) and, of course, beer and wine.

Unfortunately, we were too early to discover Walmart's Wine-makers Selection line of wines, which the chain introduced to 1,100 stores nationwide in June. These were 10 private-label wines, exclusive to Walmart, from Italy, France and California, priced at \$11 to \$16 per bottle. Perfect for those late-night motel debriefs, or for everyday drinking.

Normally I'm skeptical about any large chain's private label, having cut my wine teeth on jugs of Kroger's Cost-Cutter brand back in the 1980s, before a visit to California wine country ignited my palate.

And I'm not the only one.

There once was a popular internet meme about "Walmart wine" that played on the company's Arkansas roots, blue-collar demographic and its selection of firearms to ridicule the idea that the stores would carry anything so classy as vino. For several years, I could count on someone forwarding me this joke every few months. But then last year I wrote about La Moneda, a delicious \$7 malbec from Chile that was a Walmart exclusive and won high marks from Decanter magazine. No one has sent me that meme since.

In fact, Walmart is one of a few national retail chains not specializing in alcoholic beverages — think Costco Wholesale and Lidl and Trader Joe's groceries — that have done an impressive job finding good-quality wine at affordable prices. This isn't easy: Remember when Trader Joe's Charles Shaw wines, known as

Wine continued on F2

AJC FROM THE MENU OF CENTURY HOUSE TAVERN

Seriously cheap wine is key to apple puree

Century House Tavern
125 E. Main St., Woodstock
770-693-4552.
centuryhousetavern.com

By C. W. Cameron
For the AJC

A few weeks ago, a few friends and I had lunch at Century House Tavern in Woodstock. We tried a variety of their meats and cheeses. The plate was served with several tasty additions. One of those was a delicious variation on traditional apple butter made with red wine. We liked it so much, it was the first thing to disappear from the plate. Do you think they would be kind enough to share the recipe? Thank you so much for this column. — Keri Lubell, Decatur

As always, executive chef Dan-

iel Porubiansky was happy to share this recipe.

He likes it best made with Mutsu apples which are in season right now. If you can't find Mutsu, then Granny Smith apples would be your next choice.

When asked what wine to use, he smiles and says use "seriously cheap wine."

And if you want a white apple puree, substitute seriously cheap white wine for the red. If you have a bounty of apples, consider this as an alternative to traditional apple sauce.

Cook it to the consistency you prefer for the uses you have in mind.

In the photo, there are both red and white apple purees in small ovals accompanying a charcuterie board of cheese with house-made pate and pickles, including pickled figs.

CENTURY HOUSE TAVERN'S RED WINE APPLE PUREE

- 1 dozen Mutsu apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 1 (750-milliliter) bottle red wine
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 vanilla bean

In a large stockpot, combine apples, wine and sugar. Scrape beans from the inside of the vanilla bean into the mixture and add the beans and the pod to the apples. Cook over medium-high heat until all liquid has evaporated. Remove from heat and remove vanilla bean pod. Puree mixture in blender or with an immersion blender. Chill until ready to serve.

Makes: 5 cups
Per ¼ cup: 110 calories (percent of calories from fat, 2), trace protein, 22 grams carbohydrates, 1 gram fiber, trace fat (no saturated fat), no cholesterol, 24 milligrams sodium.



CONTRIBUTED BY DANIEL PORUBIANSKY

Is there a recipe from a metro Atlanta restaurant you'd like to make at home? Tell us and we'll try to get it. We'll also test it and adapt it for the home kitchen. Because of volume, we can't answer all inquiries. Send your request, your address and phone number to fromthemenu@gmail.com and put "From the menu of" and the name of restaurant in the subject line.

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FOOD

Recipes

These recipes with introductions and wine pairings from Atlanta chef Pano Karatassos are from “Modern Greek Cooking” (Rizzoli, \$50) and feature three dishes served at his celebrated Greek seafood restaurant, Kyma.



CONTRIBUTED BY FRANCESCO TONELLI

ROASTED BEET SALAD WITH MANOURI CREAM AND BUTTERED WALNUTS

Many chefs make a beet-and-cheese salad. I never wanted to join the club until one of my cooks presented me with an overabundance of manouri cheese. I placed it in the blender, heated some cream, and pureed the two. The result was an amazingly rich mixture with the texture of thick Greek yogurt.

The upshot: a salad like no other, with three temperatures and four textures, including butter-toasted walnuts.

1½ pounds mixed small beets, such as red, golden, and candy-striped, scrubbed

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

½ cup shelled walnuts, coarsely chopped

Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper

½ cup crumbled manouri cheese or shredded fresh mozzarella cheese

2 tablespoons heavy cream

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

Edible flowers, for garnish, optional

Heat the oven to 350. Wrap the beets individually in foil, transfer to a baking sheet, and roast until a cake tester slides easily into the center of a beet, about 1 hour.

Let cool slightly, then peel. Halve or quarter the beets, depending on size.

Meanwhile, in a small skillet, melt the butter. Add the walnuts and cook over medium heat, stirring often, until lightly browned, 4 to 5 minutes.

Remove the skillet from the heat and season the nuts with salt and pepper.

In a small saucepan, melt the cheese in the cream over medium heat, stirring often, 2 to

3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let cool slightly.

Using an immersion blender, puree the mixture until smooth.

In a medium bowl, whisk the oil with the vinegar. Season with salt and pepper. Add the beets and toss to coat. Mound the beets in serving bowls. Scatter the walnuts on top and add 1 tablespoon of the warm manouri cream to each bowl, and serve with a flower garnish, if desired.

Make ahead: The roasted beets can be refrigerated in the vinaigrette for up to 5 days.

Wine pairing: Fruity, demi-sec Xinomavro from Macedonia or aromatic white Assyrtiko—Sauvignon Blanc blend from Drama.

Serves 4
Per serving: 295 calories (percent of calories from fat, 88), 5 grams protein, 5 grams carbohydrates, 2 grams fiber, 29 grams fat (7 grams saturated), 18 milligrams cholesterol, 91 milligrams sodium.

GILLED OCTOPUS WITH OLIVES, CAPERS AND MARINATED RED ONIONS

I'll never forget the recipe-testing day before Kyma launched when Stratos Lambos, then my sous chef, now a Charlotte, North Carolina, restaurateur, nervously gave me my first bite of this meze. As soon as he saw me smile, he wrapped me in a hug and said, “Now we can open a Greek restaurant, my brother!” Accolades followed: “It’s the reason why Atlantans eat octopus.” This recipe, with just the right balance of salt, sugar, and tang, is my No. 1 menu item.

FOR THE RED WINE VINAIGRETTE

½ cup canola oil

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

¼ cup red wine vinegar

Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper

FOR THE OCTOPUS SALAD

1 medium red onion, halved and thinly sliced

Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper

4 tentacles from pickled red octopus in a jar

8 kalamata olives

8 cracked green olives

Drained capers and chopped parsley, for garnish

In a blender, emulsify both oils with the vinegar. Season with salt and pepper.

Scrape

the vinaigrette into a 1-cup jar with a lid and seal. Shake well before using.

In a medium bowl, combine the onion with ¾ cup of the vinaigrette. Let stand at room temperature for at least 1 hour and preferably 24 hours. Season with salt and pepper.

Heat a grill or a grill pan. Grill the tentacles over high heat, turning and brushing them occasionally with the remaining ¼ cup of vinaigrette, until lightly charred all over, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a carving board and let rest for 30 seconds. Slice crosswise ½ inch thick.

Spread half of the marinated onion on a platter or plates. Arrange the octopus, olives,

and remaining onion on top. Drizzle the vinaigrette remaining from the onions over the octopus, garnish with capers and parsley, and serve.

Note: The red onion needs to marinate for at least one hour, preferably 24 hours, so plan accordingly. The recipe for Red Wine Vinaigrette makes about 1 cup (250 ml) and can easily be multiplied to have extra on hand. Make ahead: The vinaigrette can be refrigerated for up to 5 days. The marinated onions can be refrigerated in the vinaigrette for up to two days; they're best after 24 hours.

Wine pairing: Crisp Robola from Cephalonia or Roditis from the Peloponnese or northern Greece.

Serves 4

Per serving: 460 calories (percent of calories from fat, 86), 9 grams protein, 7 grams carbohydrates, 2 grams fiber, 45 grams fat (4 grams saturated), 28 milligrams cholesterol, 461 milligrams sodium.

POACHED HALIBUT WITH TOMATO BROTH

This recipe owes a debt to my grandmother Athanasia's baked fish plaki. But this rendition uses firm fish fillets poached in herb-infused olive oil, and the tomato broth, surprisingly, has roots in the classic Greek salad. Inspired by the deeply flavored juices that collect in the salad bowl from tossing batch after batch of tomatoes with onions and herbs during service, I employ a similar technique to make tomato broth.

FOR THE TOMATO BROTH

½ cup verjus or ½ cup white wine — see notes below

1½ teaspoons tomato paste

1½ pounds tomatoes, coarsely chopped

1 small Vidalia (sweet) onion, sliced

¾ cup packed mint leaves, chopped

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper

FOR THE POACHED HALIBUT

24 small cherry tomatoes, half red, half yellow, each scored with a small X in the stem end

12 small green seedless grapes, each scored with a small X in the stem end

3 cups canola oil

1 cup olive oil

2 garlic cloves, halved

4 thyme sprigs

1 large rosemary sprig

Four 6-ounce skinless halibut fillets

1 cup Vidalia Onion Stew — see recipe below and make ahead

Micro celery leaves or tender inner celery leaves, for garnish

In a large bowl, whisk the verjus with the tomato paste. Add the chopped tomatoes, onion, mint, and ½ cup (125 ml) of the olive oil and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 6 hours and up to 24 hours. Pass

through a food mill into a medium saucepan (see notes). Just before serving, warm the tomato broth over medium-low heat. Stir in the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. In a medium saucepan of boiling water, blanch the cherry tomatoes and grapes until the skin begins to peel, about 10 seconds; drain. Rinse in cold water and peel. In a large deep skillet, heat the canola oil with the olive oil, 1½ teaspoons of salt, the garlic, thyme, and rosemary to 145. Season the fish with salt and pepper, add to the skillet, and poach, turning halfway through, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of a fillet registers 120, about 10 minutes.

Using a slotted spatula, transfer the fish to a paper towel-lined plate to drain. In a small saucepan, warm the Vidalia Onion Stew over medium-low heat. Mound the stew into the center of wide serving bowls. Alternate the red cherry tomatoes, yellow cherry tomatoes, and grapes around the stew and garnish with celery leaves. Pour some of the tomato broth around the bowls, set the fish on top, and serve. Pass the remaining tomato broth separately.

Notes: Peeling the cherry tomatoes and grapes is optional. The tomato broth needs at least 6 hours to steep and tastes better the next day, so plan accordingly. Verjus is the pressed juice of unripe grapes. Its mild acidity heightens the flavor of marinades, dressings, and sauces. You can substitute ½ cup of white wine that's been simmered for 2 minutes and cooled. Instead of using a food mill, you can puree the tomato mixture in a food processor until smooth, then strain it through a medium sieve into the pan. At the restaurant, I'm particular about peeling the grapes and tomatoes, but it's not absolutely necessary.

Wine pairing: Medium-bodied, fruity Malagousia with stone-fruit aromas or citrusy Vidiano from Crete.

Serves 4

Per serving: 683 calories (percent of calories from fat, 65), 39 grams protein, 21 grams carbohydrates, 4 grams fiber, 50 grams fat (5 grams saturated), 54 milligrams cholesterol, 672 milligrams sodium.

VIDALIA ONION STEW

The trick to these sweet, melting onions is fully cooking them with salt and pepper in extra virgin olive oil, then whipping in fresh oil and lemon juice.

1 cup extra virgin olive oil

2 medium Vidalia (sweet) onions, sliced ½ inch thick

½ teaspoon freshly found white pepper

¼ cup fresh lemon juice

In a small saucepan, warm ½ cup olive oil. Add the onions, salt and pepper, cover and cook over low heat, stirring every 5 minutes, until very tender, about 45 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, and using a wooden spoon, stir in the remains ½ cup of olive oil, then the lemon juice.

Makes about 2 cups

Greek

continued from F1

of running a kitchen and a business,” Karatassos said during a recent conversation. “I guess I never really made a bad choice when it came to working with great chefs.

“Eric whipped me into shape, as far as what New York fine dining was all about. Then I explored my mind a bit with Jean-Georges and Wylie Dufresne. And I headed over to French Laundry to put it all into place. It was just a perfect scenario for me.”

But as the son of Buckhead Life Restaurant Group founder and CEO Ignatius Pano Karatassos, the younger Karatassos finally heeded his father's call to return to Atlanta, and he soon opened the restaurant that would become Kyma.

“I got a phone call from my dad, like I wrote in the book,” Karatassos said. “And it was basically, ‘When are you going to be done?’ I always wanted to hear those words. I never wanted to be the chef who my father had to give a job to because I was the son.

“I thought it was extremely important to learn from the best, so that when I came back to Atlanta one day, my

father would want to hire me because of my talent. Did I overdo it? No. But looking back now, as a young 20-year-old, I definitely went for it.”

At Kyma, Karatassos asked himself, “How can I take all my French training and make a Greek restaurant one of the best in the country.” And he sought to take the example of what Keller did at the French Laundry and it apply to the food of his family.

“Coming home to Atlanta, I really didn't think that Kyma was going to be a restaurant that I would fall deeply in love with. I always envisioned that I'd open this restaurant, and set it up so I could hand it to another chef without a blink of an eye. Then I'd wind up being the chef at Pano's and Paul's and doing all this French food with all the techniques I'd learned.

“But I'm still here today. And I fell in love with that whole idea of bringing my family's recipes to life in a restaurant. It started with the teachings my grandmother gave me. And it was about finding out how I was going to do that with modern cooking techniques. I was able to take all my experiences with my grandmother, and my aunts in Athens, and create food at Kyma that became classics for our guests.”

Wine

continued from F1

“Two-Buck Chuck,” were so inconsistent that customers would buy a bottle, taste it in the parking lot, then — if it was any good — run back into the store for more?

So how does a company develop a private-label line of wine that can supply more than 1,000 stores with a consistently available product at good quality? I reached out to Nichole Simpson, who carries the rather unromantic title of “senior adult beverage buyer” for Walmart at the company's headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas, to ask her secrets.

“I looked at the data to see what gaps we were missing, and I saw that our customers are looking for more premium or super-premium wines,” Simpson told me. That's wine-biz speak for consumers who are willing to pay a little more for a quality product. Rather like the way I felt at that Walmart, scratching my head at all the uninspiring national brands on the shelves. But I'm much older than the demographic that caught Simpson's attention.

“You have the major popular brands driving the business, but millennials are less loyal to brands and eager to explore cool labels or different



Wine critic Dave McIntryre found this Cabernet Franc “impressive” and the rosé “nice and fun.” Both are part of Walmart's new Winemakers Selection line.

PHOTO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST BY DEB LINDSEY

varietals, and they're willing to buy up,” Simpson told me. Millennials are inspiring their boomer parents to experiment too, she said. The Winemakers Selection labels are colorful and inventive, none identified as a Walmart product but each carrying a banner with a distinctive “W” that hints at its corporate identity. Contrast that with Costco, which labels its wines with its Kirkland brand, and Walmart wins points for marketing.

To develop the Winemakers Selection line, Simpson put out a request for proposals and eventually teamed with five importers and distributors around the country to work the 10 wines through

the labyrinthine three-tier distribution system. She plans to add 11 more wines next year, including some from Argentina, Chile, Bulgaria and Champagne, and expand the price range to \$36 per bottle.

One of those importers is G&B Wines, based in Maryland, which brings in an \$11 cabernet franc and a \$16 sparkling rosé, both from France, for the W series. I tried both and found the cab franc particularly impressive, especially for the price, and the rosé nice and fun. G&B — which helped introduce the D.C. area to wines from Bulgaria — will contribute a Bulgarian red blend to the Walmart line next year.

Such a line is possible because winemaking around the world has improved so much over the past two or three decades that good-quality wine can be found at good prices. But Simpson and her team don't rely just on their importers.

They blind-taste hundreds of samples before deciding which wines to include in the program. And they travel regularly to meet with the growers and winemakers at the wineries and cooperatives that produce the wines.

Simpson knows the risks. She worked at E&J Gallo when that company was stung with the Red Bicycle scandal several years ago. (French brokers were caught passing off inexpensive red wine as pricier pinot noir to unsuspecting American customers.) This year, French authorities clamped down on companies misrepresenting inexpensive Spanish rosé as more prestigious French.

“That's why relationships are so important,” Simpson said. “In the end, you have to trust the people you are dealing with.”

She's willing to take that risk to develop a quality line of affordable wines, knowing there are more gems out there waiting to be discovered. “It's a treasure hunt,” she says.

I'm looking forward to joining the quest.