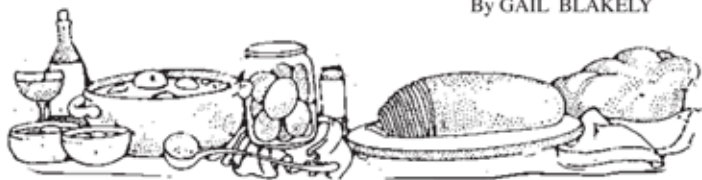


Gourmets And Good Eaters

By GAIL BLAKELY



"Working here would be a dream job—people get to talk about food and cooking all day long," declared Catherine Ferraresi, who, with her husband, Dave, owns Gustare Oils & Vinegars. I agree with her—those who enter the store in Mashpee Commons do so because they are curious about the products that are being offered. "We have lots of unique conversations with our customers," Catherine added, "and we always encourage them to try new ways to use our oils and vinegars."

Catherine and Dave lived in Europe for over a decade, and when they returned, they were disappointed in the oils and vinegars in this area. "We tried the North End of Boston, Federal Hill in Providence, but nothing seemed to come close to what we used to get in those small, quaint village markets," Catherine recalled. "It became a challenge, so we decided to try and replicate that little village experience that we had grown so accustomed to in Europe."

Last year they opened their first shop in Chatham (they live in Orleans), followed by one this spring in Mashpee Commons. "We wanted to share our passion for fresh, flavorful, healthful, high quality food products that are also affordable. We feature olive oils from around the world, and balsamic vinegars from Modena, Italy."

Catherine told me about the cooking classes she took with Giuliano Hazan in Verona, Italy. "I had the pleasure to meet his mother, Marcella, when I was there. Her cooking style and philosophy inspired me to create new and different flavor combinations that are simple to prepare and positively delicious to eat!" More than "to eat," I think—more like "to savor." In fact, the Gustare family brand in Italian means "to taste, to enjoy, to savor."

Both Catherine and Dave are committed to offering their customers a memorable experience while helping them make their choices. "Our staff is trained to

welcome our guests and assist them in choosing which products they need to enhance their cooking for family and friends. Once people become acquainted with our products, they return for more. We have a staff who range from age 16 to 65. No one is formally trained in cooking, but they are enthusiastic about what we offer." As an aside, Catherine mentioned that they are currently looking for more staff to work in both locations in anticipation of the summer season.

The shops offer traditional olive oils (from Italy, Spain and Greece) as well as flavor-infused oils. "These are best described as 'not containing an essence or an extract' but that the flavors are fused with the oil—that is, when the olives are crushed, the fruit is crushed along with it," Catherine explained. "That means that Persian limes, whole lemons, and blood oranges are used in the actual process of making the oil."

They also carry nut oils (sesame and walnut) and a white truffle oil from Italy. "That's our most expensive product," Catherine said. "The oils range from about \$15 for the traditional to \$35 for the truffle oil. We carry a couple of vine vinegars (champagne and zinfandel) and a sherry vinegar that has aged for 25 years, but it's our balsamic vinegars that are the biggest sellers."

These are significantly different from other commercial vinegars, Catherine declared. "Ours are from Modena, where they grow Trevisano grapes. These are naturally high in sugar content, which means the vinegar only gets sweeter and thicker as it ages. Also, all true balsamics must be aged for a minimum of 12 years; it's the type of grape and the aging, which are the two hallmarks of a true balsamic vinegar."

Gustare carries a number of flavor-infused balsamics, but it is their 18-year vinegar that is their biggest seller. "We have strawberry, blueberry, raspberry, Sicilian lemon, apple, pear, and coconut, to

name a few. We often have a little Sicilian lemon white vinegar in a glass of San Pellegrino in the afternoon here at the store—it's quite a nice pick-me-up," Catherine added with a smile.

For this writer, it's the combinations that are most intriguing, however. I will admit to being skeptical about this type of place; after all, how many diverse vinegars and oils does one actually need? Well, now I'm hooked—the other day I was playing with a combination of basil olive oil topped with a drizzle of lemon olive oil, and just a "dot" of Sicilian Lemon White Balsamic Vinegar. And this was just for a dipping sauce for bread!

Take a look at some of the recipes that Catherine provided, just to get an idea of how to use some of their exceptional products. Better yet, visit the shop and try a few flavor mixes of your own—and do it soon, so you can experience the dark chocolate balsamic vinegar drizzled over some of our local strawberries!

Lobster Salad with Herbes de Provence Aioli

2 lbs lobster meat cut into 1/2 inch chunks (approximately 4 steamed lobsters—1 1/2 lbs each)
1/4 cup celery, minced
1 tsp shallot, minced
Herbes de Provence aioli (recipe follows)
sea salt, to taste
black pepper, freshly ground, to taste
tender, leafy lettuce of your choice
8 hot dog buns—toasted or not

In a large mixing bowl, combine lobster meat, celery, onion, 2 tablespoons of aioli, salt and pepper, to taste; you can always add more aioli, if desired. Line the buns with some lettuce, fill with lobster salad and finish with a generous grating of black pepper. Note: for ease in the kitchen, ask your fish market to steam, crack and split the lobsters. It saves time, eliminates some of



Catherine Ferraresi of Gustare Oils & Vinegars at Mashpee Commons.

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the mess, and you won't feel as guilty!

Serves 8

Herbes de Provence Aioli

2 eggs, room temperature (recipe uses 1 whole egg, 1 egg yolk)
1 cup Gustare Herbes de Provence Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 tsp lemon juice, freshly squeezed
pinch of pressed garlic
1/4 tsp sea salt
black pepper, freshly ground, to taste

In the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade, add the eggs and begin to whisk the eggs to "get them going." Once they've pulled together in about 5 seconds, begin to add the oil in a very, very fine stream. If the oil is added too quickly, it will not emulsify. Continue adding the remaining oil.

Blend in the lemon juice, pinch of pressed garlic, sea salt and pepper to taste. Taste and correct for seasoning. Note: pressing 1 clove of garlic will enable you to use more if you like; taste as you go for the desired result.

Gazpacho with Roasted Shrimp Garnish

1 hothouse cucumber, halved and seeded (not peeled)
1 large yellow bell pepper, cored and seeded
1 large red bell pepper, cored and seeded
1 large orange bell pepper, cored and seeded
4 plum tomatoes
1 medium red onion
3 garlic cloves, finely minced
3 cups tomato juice
1/4 cup Gustare Zinfandel Wine Vinegar
2 tsp Gustare Sherry Reserva
1/3 cup Gustare Harissa Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1/2 tsp sea salt
1 tsp black pepper, freshly ground

Roughly chop the cucumbers, bell peppers, tomatoes, and red onion into 1-inch cubes. Put each vegetable separately in food proces-

sor bowl fitted with a steel blade and pulse until coarsely chopped, pulsing just to avoid pulverizing. After each vegetable is processed, combine them all in a large bowl and add the garlic, tomato juice, vinegars, olive oil, salt and pepper; stir well to combine. Correct for seasoning; chill several hours before serving (overnight is better to develop the flavors).

Serves 6

Shrimp Garnish

3 tbsp Gustare Herbes de Provence Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 tsp lemon juice, freshly squeezed
1/2 tsp fresh thyme leaves
1/4 tsp sea salt
1/2 tsp black pepper, freshly ground
1/2 lb large shrimp, peeled and deveined (leave tails intact) - approximately 15

In a large bowl whisk together olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, thyme, salt and pepper. Add shrimp and toss to coat. Spread shrimp on a baking sheet in a single layer and roast in a preheated 400°F oven for 5 to 8 minutes (size depending) or until just pink. Hang a shrimp on the rim of the glass of gazpacho or skewer with long wooden skewers balancing across the rim when serving.

Patriotic Fruit Salad with Coconut Balsamic Reduction

4 cups seedless watermelon, cut into 1 1/2 inch cubes
1 pint fresh blueberries, washed and stemmed
4 white peaches, peeled, stone removed and cut into 1/2 inch chunks

In chilled martini glasses (or dish of your choice) layer the fruit evenly. Drizzle with the coconut balsamic reduction and garnish with a sprig of mint.

Serves 8

Coconut Balsamic Reduction

1 cup Gustare Coconut Balsamic Vinegar

1 tbsp agave nectar
1 tsp lime juice, freshly squeezed

In a small saucepan over low heat, simmer the balsamic vinegar and agave nectar until reduced and thickened, approximately 10 minutes; remove from heat, add the lime juice and let cool before using to drizzle over the fruit salad.

Lemon Ricotta Cookies with Lemon Balsamic Icing

Cookies:
2 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp sea salt
8 tbsp unsalted butter, room temperature
1 3/4 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 (15-oz) container whole milk ricotta cheese
3 tbsp lemon juice
1 lemon, zested
Glaze:
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
2 tbsp lemon juice, freshly squeezed
1 tsp Gustare Sicilian Lemon Balsamic Vinegar
1 lemon, finely zested

Cookies: Preheat oven to 375°F; in a medium bowl combine flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. In a large bowl of an electric mixer, beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating until incorporated. Add the ricotta cheese, lemon juice, and lemon zest and beat well. Stir in dry ingredients. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or Silpat. Using a teaspoon, spoon the dough onto baking sheet leaving an inch between cookies. Bake for 12-14 minutes or until slightly golden around the edges. Remove from oven and cool on baking sheets.

Makes 4 dozen

Glaze:
In a small bowl, combine powdered sugar, lemon juice, balsamic vinegar, and lemon zest stirring until very smooth; spoon about 1/2 teaspoon onto each cookie and let dry before serving.

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