

OBSESSIONS



A Strawberry-Chile Balsamic Shrub (recipe p. 15) lends instant pizzazz to drinks.

TRENDSPOTTING

Spot-On Shrubs

Bartenders are reaching for these vinegar-based concoctions to add a sour kick to cocktails.

By Lucy Simon



3 TOP-SHELF SHRUBS TO TRY



KOSTERINA CRUSHED STRAWBERRY VINEGAR

The essence of strawberry captured in a bottle, Kosterina's sweet and tangy strawberry shrub is made of white wine vinegar from Greece. Mix it with smoky mezcal to bring out the roasted berry notes, or add it to an herbaceous gin and tonic. (\$15, kosterina.com)



PINK HOUSE ALCHEMY PINEAPPLE ROSEMARY SHRUB

Sweet pineapple is balanced by tart vinegar and woody rosemary in this unexpected shrub from Fayetteville, Arkansas. It makes a great addition to a piña colada on the rocks, or sip it solo with some seltzer. (\$18, pinkhousealchemy.com)



ACID LEAGUE CITRUS SAFFRON SYRUP

Vinegar brand Acid League's recently launched Ultimate Cocktail Kit includes this shrub, which combines fragrant saffron with two types of vinegar: plantain and orange. It pairs perfectly with sweeter spirits like rum or brandy. (\$145 for the *Ultimate Cocktail Kit*, acidleague.com)

FOOD STYLING: CHELSEA ZIMMER; PROP STYLING: CHRISTINE KEELY; PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY: FREDERICK HARDY II

photography by JENNIFER CAUSEY

THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE REACHING for a lime or a lemon to add to a cocktail, consider making a shrub instead, suggests Erin Healy, beverage director of Gramercy Tavern in New York City.

Shrubs are concentrated, vinegar-based syrups that have been either infused with or made from flavorings like fruit, flowers, and chiles. Shrubs have been around for centuries and were originally created to preserve herbs and roots by turning them into edible tinctures. They contain no alcohol, and their silky weight—similar to the texture of amaros and liqueurs—also brings body and depth to nonalcoholic cocktails, a segment of the drinks industry that was an early adopter of the vinegar-based syrup. More recently, shrubs are enjoying a renaissance on cocktail menus

around the country, as bartenders use them to bring brightness and acidity to boozy drinks.

"A shrub opens up a whole new dynamic set of flavor profiles to bring to a cocktail outside of the traditional lemon, lime, or grapefruit," says Healy. And a little goes a long way. "We never use more than a scant quarter-ounce of vinegar in a cocktail that may otherwise take up to an ounce of citrus to create balance."

Shrubs can be flavored with just about anything, from chile and strawberry (see mixologist Jillian Vose's shrub, opposite) to vegetables (see the celery-flavored shrub from NYC bar Katana Kitten's owner and self-proclaimed "Director of Deliciousness" Masahiro Urushido, opposite). Don't care to make your own? See our favorite cocktail-ready bottled shrubs at right.



Celery and Salt Shrub

TOTAL 5 MIN; MAKES 1½ CUPS

The flavor of this earthy, celery-forward shrub from award-winning bartender Masahiro Urushido of NYC's Katana Kitten is reminiscent of Dr. Brown's Cel-Ray soda, a soft drink that was popular in the Northeast. Urushido pairs his shrub with vodka, lime, and cucumber—using about 1 tablespoon shrub for a highball cocktail.

½ cup cold-pressed celery juice
½ cup granulated sugar
2½ Tbsp. white balsamic vinegar
¼ cup distilled white vinegar
Pinch of salt

Combine celery juice, sugar, vinegars, and salt in an airtight container with a lid. Shake vigorously until sugar dissolves, 1 to 2 minutes. Store in refrigerator up to 2 weeks. —MASAHIRO URUSHIDO, KATANA KITTEN, NEW YORK CITY

10 (2-inch) dried chiles de árbol, torn in half crosswise, stems discarded

1. Place strawberries in a blender with just enough water to cover berries (about ½ cup); puree until almost smooth and thick. Add more water, as needed, to reach desired consistency.

2. Combine sugar, balsamic vinegar, and remaining ½ cup water in a small pot. Bring mixture to a vigorous boil over medium-high, stirring to dissolve sugar. Reduce heat to a simmer; add blended strawberries and chiles. Simmer, stirring often, 20 minutes. Remove from heat; let mixture stand 2 hours to infuse.

3. Pour mixture through a fine wire-mesh sieve, pressing to thoroughly strain; discard solids. Strain again to remove any remaining seeds. Store shrub in an airtight container in refrigerator up to 2 weeks. —JILLIAN VOSE, HAZEL AND APPLE, CHARLESTON

Strawberry-Chile Balsamic Shrub

PHOTO P. 13

ACTIVE 30 MIN; TOTAL 2 HR 30 MIN
MAKES 2½ CUPS

Sweet strawberries meet up with tart balsamic and smoky chiles in this fruity shrub. For a piquant take on a spritz, add about 1 tablespoon shrub to an ice-filled highball glass (with or without mezcal), and top with soda.

10 medium frozen strawberries

1 cup water, divided, plus more as needed

1¾ cups granulated sugar

½ cup balsamic vinegar (such as Carandini Emilio Balsamic Vinegar)

EDITORS' PICKS

Bagging Up the Bottles

The F&W wine editors' favorite ways to carry wine

THERE'S A LOT TO LOVE ABOUT BEING A WINE editor, but there is one downside: carrying heavy wine bottles from place to place. We've learned through years of experience that having a functional, sturdy, and attractive wine bag can make all the difference. So whether you're a beverage professional who constantly carries a bottle or two around, or you're just someone looking for a reusable alternative to bring to the wine store, trust us to help you discover your new favorite wine bag. —LUCY SIMON

WINEBAG by NIMES

Handcrafted in Buenos Aires, this stunning bag neatly cradles two bottles with a divider to keep the glass from clanging as you walk. Made from soft yet durable vegetable-tanned leather, the bag's thick strap distributes weight evenly over your shoulder, alleviating fatigue. (\$151, nimesba.com)

VIN ONE BOTTLE PICNIC TOTE by Àplat

Àplat relied on the art of origami and the principles of sustainable design to create this sleek tote. "The canvas side pockets are perfectly sized for shatterproof cups or wineglasses," says Oset Babür-Winter, senior drinks editor. (\$62, aplat.com)

CARRIER TOTE BAG by Vinarmour

Executive Wine Editor Ray Isle first saw this bag at the F&W Classic in Aspen. "When a friend sauntered in with one, I thought, 'Damn, nice wine tote!' The waxed cotton recalls a classic Barbour jacket—so, good for carrying your aged Bordeaux across a Scottish moor." (\$200, vinarmour.com)



AT HOME

Decan't Touch This

Our editors' favorite design-forward decanters marry form and function.

By Oset Babür-Winter

1.
For the Wine Lover
Who's Short on Space

**RIEDEL WINE
FRIENDLY DECANTER**

Don't let the petite size of this decanter fool you—we were pleased to find it decanted a big, bold red wine quicker than most of the decanters we've tried, and the ribbed glass lip helps trap any drips before they ruin your carpet. (\$55, [riedel.com](#))

2.
For the Seasoned Pro

**RABBIT PURA
DECANTER**

The stainless steel strainer in this utilitarian decanter catches any sediment and stays put while you pour, making it ideal for those with a large collection of older wines, which tend to accumulate sediment over time. (\$70, [williams-sonoma.com](#))

3.
For the Dinner
Party Host

MADE IN DECANTER

With an angled neck and easy-to-grip, wide bowl, this decanter is a must-have for the host who wants to top off everyone's glasses without a drip in sight. Pro tip: You can buy the wineglasses and decanter in a set for a wonderful gift. (\$90, [madeincookware.com](#))

4.
For the Design-
Minded Drinker

**ICHENDORF MILANO
ALCHEMY DECANTER**

Made with borosilicate glass, this is the statement decanter you'll want on your bar cart. While the two-toned piece looks beautiful, it also does a fantastic job of allowing wine to breathe. (\$110, [hawkinsnewyork.com](#))

5.
For the Glassware Geek

**JOSEPHINE BRILLIANT
DECANTER**

This handmade, paper-thin glass decanter from Kurt Josef Zalto is pure minimalist chic. The cone-shaped bottom resembles a little mountain top and helps you achieve the perfect swirl to start aerating wine as soon as it's poured. (\$170, [us.josephinen.com](#))

DECANTERS CAN BE MINIMALIST AND SLEEK or strikingly decorative. But regardless of their style, shape, or size, decanters help to aerate wine, drawing out more of its aromas and flavors: Think of decanters as you would a pair of eyeglasses, designed to help you see the blurrier, more complicated aspects of wine with a bit more clarity. They are also great to use with older wines, making it easier to keep sediment out of your glass. Read on for five of our favorite beautifully designed decanters.



THE INNOVATOR

Small Bites, Big Flavors

Chef Sunny Lee pairs Korean banchan with funky, effervescent natural wine.

By Elyse Inamine

I KNEW I WAS AT THE RIGHT APARTMENT in Brooklyn. Above the doorbell was a tiny handwritten sign: “Banchan by Sunny.” Sunny is chef Sunny Lee, and for the past seven years, she has been bringing her ingredient-forward, technique-driven Korean food to New York City diners.

Lee specializes in banchan, a broad category of small dishes that are traditionally served with a meal in Korean cuisine. (The word translates literally as “side dishes.”) In a restaurant setting, banchan are typically included in the price of the meal, “so there is no incentive to make it really good,” Lee says. “But I love cooking Korean food and banchan because it makes me feel like I’m actually taking care of people.”

THE BEST BOTTLES FOR BANCHAN

Natural wines Sunny Lee suggests pairing with her banchan

2021 RUTH LEWANDOWSKI ROSÉ (\$27)

This rosé blend is fruit-forward, bright, and light in texture, which pairs nicely with the richness of Lee’s Gaji Namul (Gochujang-Marinated Eggplant) (recipe opposite).

2021 ALESSANDRO VIOLA NOTE DI BIANCO GRILLO (\$30)

To pair with Danmuji (Golden Beet and Radish Pickle) (recipe opposite), Lee reaches for this more robust, skin-contact white from Sicily, which can hold its own next to the sweet, acidic pickle.

In her kitchen, she sized up eggplants with a tape measure before chopping, roasting, and marinating them in fish sauce and gochujang for her high-octane Gaji Namul (recipe opposite). She contemplated whether she should use a sachet of shredded golden beets and turmeric for cooking down half-moons of daikon in white vinegar or just sprinkle the vibrant mix directly in the pickling liquid for her Danmuji (recipe opposite). Eventually, she chose the latter option so not even a little bit of flavor would be lost. “Banchan is how you gauge how much the chef cares about what they do and cook,” Lee explains.

In the near-decade she spent grinding at Blue Hill at Stone Barns, Eleven Madison Park, Estela, and Battersby, she’d often come home after work and make Korean food for herself. This restorative ritual led to her cooking under chef Sohui Kim at Insa, a Korean barbecue restaurant in Brooklyn. Later on, she became a private chef, where she gained an intimate understanding of how her food could impact another person. Banchan by Sunny is the product of those experiences and a reflection of her approach to cooking—one where she wants to share with others the food that has given her so much joy and nourishment.

In the summer of 2021, after a fateful catch-up with chef Jeremiah Stone, she embarked on a six-month residency at Peoples, the wine shop and bar Stone owns with chef Fabián von Hauske Valtierra. Lee partnered with Daryl Nuhn, Peoples’ managing partner, to pair the fermented flavor and effervescence of her banchan with natural wine. “It’s a nice symbiotic relationship,” Lee says. “Wine is preservation of a food at its peak and tells you about its terroir. Kimchi is the same.”

It was the longest continuous pop-up Lee had ever done, and she loved every minute of it. Lee would walk around the bar, explaining how diners could build their own bites of ssâm (Korean lettuce wraps). She’d experiment with new recipes, based on memories from her childhood, and ask diners what they thought. She’d watch them relish the food that has always comforted her.

Now, Lee continues to pop up at restaurants around New York City, and she is working on turning Banchan by Sunny into a brick-and-mortar concept, finally melding the ambitious cooking that drives her with the food that sustains her and so many others.

“In every other instance of my cooking experience, it was always: I’m cooking what I really want to cook, or I’m doing my work, which I also love, but they were never the same thing. This was the first time that I ever cooked in a restaurant where I could be the fullest version of myself,” Lee says. “There is nothing I love more than cooking Korean food and sharing it with friends.”

PHOTOGRAPHY: HIROKO MASUI/KE/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

FOOD STYLING: CHELSEA ZIMMER; PROP STYLING: CHRISTINE KEELY



Gaji Namul (Gochujang-Marinated Eggplant)

TOTAL 25 MIN, PLUS 24 HR CHILLING
SERVES 8

Gaji namul, one of the most classic Korean banchan, consists of beautiful batons of steamed marinated Chinese eggplant. In her version of the dish, Lee starts by caramelizing the eggplant to impart deep, savory flavor. Serve this piquant, garlicky, and umami-forward banchan with a hot bowl of rice or as a side dish with roast chicken, grilled pork, or roast salmon.

- 2 lb. Chinese eggplant (unpeeled), halved lengthwise and cut into 1½-inch pieces (about 10 cups) (see Note)
- 3 Tbsp. canola oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 3 Tbsp. white vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. gochujang
- 2 Tbsp. fish sauce (such as Three Crabs)
- 2 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil (such as Kadoya)
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (about 2 tsp.)
- 1½ tsp. granulated sugar
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced (about ½ cup), plus more for garnish
- 2 Tbsp. sesame seeds, plus more for garnish

1. Stir together eggplant, canola oil, and salt in a large bowl.

2. Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high. Working in 2 batches, cook eggplant, stirring often, until browned and caramelized on all sides, 8 to 10 minutes per batch. Transfer eggplant to a plate, and let cool.

3. Whisk together vinegar, gochujang, fish sauce, sesame oil, honey, garlic, and sugar in large bowl. Fold in eggplant, scallions, and sesame seeds. Transfer to a 1- to 1½-quart airtight container, and refrigerate at least 1 day or up to 1 week before serving. Serve chilled or at room temperature. Garnish with additional scallions and sesame seeds. —SUNNY LEE

WINE Earthy, natural rosé: 2021 Ruth Lewandowski Rosé

NOTE Chinese eggplant have a long, narrow shape with skin that ranges in color from light to bright purple. The tender white flesh has few seeds and a mildly sweet taste. Find Chinese eggplant at most Asian grocery stores.

Danmuji (Golden Beet and Radish Pickle)

ACTIVE 15 MIN; TOTAL 2 HR 15 MIN, PLUS 4 DAYS PICKLING; SERVES 12

Danmuji, a sweet yellow radish pickle, is commonly served in Korean-Chinese cuisine. Lee’s homage to banchan forgoes the usual drying and fermentation steps to deliver a quick, turmeric-stained pickle with notes of ginger and black pepper.

- 1 lb. daikon, peeled, halved lengthwise, and cut into ¼-inch-thick slices (see Note)
- 1 lb. golden beets, peeled, halved lengthwise, and cut into ¼-inch-thick slices
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups white vinegar
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 1 Tbsp. black peppercorns
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 (2-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and cut into ½-inch-thick slices
- Toasted sesame oil and toasted sesame seeds, for garnish

1. Stir together daikon, beets, salt, and turmeric in a large bowl. Using gloved hands, rub turmeric and salt into radish and beets as thoroughly as possible. (The salt will draw out the vegetables’ moisture and will start to look paste-like.) Transfer radish and beets to a 2-quart heatproof, airtight container. Set aside.

2. Bring 2 cups water, white vinegar, sugar, peppercorns, garlic, and ginger to a boil in a medium saucepan over high, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves, about 1 minute. Remove from heat; carefully pour over radish and beet mixture, and stir until evenly combined. Let stand, uncovered, until cooled to room temperature, about 2 hours.

3. Cover container; let stand at room temperature for 3 days. Transfer to refrigerator for at least 1 day or up to 2 months before serving. Serve drizzled with toasted sesame oil and sprinkled with toasted sesame seeds. —SUNNY LEE

WINE Crisp, lightly tannic Sicilian white: 2021 Alessandro Viola Note di Bianco Grillo

NOTE Daikon, a large white radish with a mild peppery flavor, can be found at most Asian grocery stores.



F&WPRO

How to BYOB and Not Be a Jerk About It

Bringing your own wine or spirits to a restaurant is a gift, not a guarantee.

By Kiki Aranita

AT A RECENT DINNER at Stina in South Philadelphia, I was handed a splash of Domaine de la Petite Roche rosé. When the glass suddenly broke, an excellent server instantly replaced it—even though the restaurant hadn’t sold me the wine. Due to archaic liquor laws and prohibitively costly liquor licenses, Stina, like many Philadelphia restaurants, is BYOB.

There are a ton of perks to bring-your-own-bottle programs. Diners can purchase wine at retail price, and they have the flexibility to customize the beverage portion of their meal. But BYOB diners must remain mindful. Even if they’re providing the wine, the restaurant is still supplying glassware, people and equipment to clean that glassware, servers to open and serve the wine they are not charging for, and recycling services for all those empty bottles.

Here are some rules of thumb that ensure you bring-your-own with the utmost class.

1 CALL AHEAD

Not every restaurant, or even state, allows BYOB, so do your research. “Call ahead to ask if it’s OK to bring your own bottles,” says Terence Lewis, beverage director of Safran Turney Hospitality in Philadelphia. “The beverage manager would always like to know this is happening.”

2 SHARE WITH THE RESTAURANT, NOT WITH OTHER DINERS

If a guest has leftover wine, Lewis discourages them from offering the bottle to other tables. “Give it to the server, or ask if you may take it home,” he says. “If the bottle you are bringing is exceptionally rare, old, or otherwise special, offering the sommelier or beverage manager a half-glass of the wine is standard etiquette.”

3 TRY NOT TO LINGER

“Go find a stoop somewhere!” implores Bobby Saritsoglou, Stina’s chef-owner. Opening a bottle at the end of a meal will likely put the restaurant behind schedule, making it impossible to turn the table.

4 RESPECT THE CORKAGE FEE

Even if a restaurant has a liquor license, you still may be able to BYOB with an additional cost per bottle, aka a corkage fee. Corkage fees can range anywhere from \$10 to \$80, depending on the establishment. But no matter the price, bringing your own wine should be more about sharing a special bottle (something that’s old, rare, or has emotional value) than getting drunk, so avoid bringing more than one bottle per two people.

For more tips on being a five-star guest, hospitality industry news, and to sign up for the F&W Pro newsletter, visit foodandwine.com/fwpro.