

After a walk through Beaucastel's famous Châteauneuf-du-Pape vineyards, winemaker Marc Perrin (in brown shirt) and F&W's Ray Isle head to lunch at L'Oustalet, OPPOSITE.

success of its wines; in contrast, the southern Rhône Valley, home to Châteauneuf, feels like an extension of Provence, all sparkling light, picture-postcard villages and gentle hills. The place is charming, not harsh. If a local farmer from the Priorat were to wake up here, he'd think he'd gone to heaven. At least until he realized everyone was speaking French.

I spent the night at a bed-and-breakfast; the next morning, I drove to Château de Beaucastel, one of the greatest producers of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Marc Perrin, a lanky 41-year-old whose family owns Beaucastel, looked surprisingly relaxed—surprising since it was the middle of harvest and his wife had had a baby three weeks before. "I'm not getting much sleep," he admitted.

Beaucastel, unlike Palacios, is open to visitors by appointment, and the Perrins also own L'Oustalet, a tree-shaded restaurant with a great wine list in the nearby town of Gigondas. I had a superb alfresco lunch there with Perrin, but even so, the transcendent moment of this visit for me was back at the winery, tasting five vintages of Beaucastel's great Châteauneuf-du-Pape. We tasted the 2009, 2008, 2001, 2000 and 1990. All were remarkable, but the 1990 soared above the rest. It had a transparent, dark ruby hue, with a tremendously complex flavor that kept sounding different notes: truffle, sandalwood, black cherry, cured meat, a little bit of black olive.

"There have been vines growing here since Roman times," Perrin told me, "but my family purchased the estate in 1909. We've been organic since 1950, and working biodynamically since 1974, but we never claim it on the bottle. It's like something my uncle used to say: 'Some people go to church just to be seen at church, and others go simply because they believe.'"

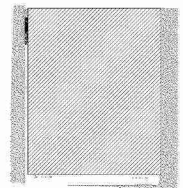
## MILE 676: ITALY >>

HEADING NORTH out of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, I skipped the rest of the Rhône—St-Joseph! Hermitage! Côte Rôtie! Oh well!—then stopped for croissants and coffee at a bar overlooking the Isère River in Grenoble. From there, the road curved up into the Alps, then down into Italy and to Piedmont.

I've always harbored a fantasy of moving to Piedmont, so it was extremely convenient to find that the 17th-century castle at the top of the hill in Castiglione Falletto, next door to the Vietti winery, was currently for sale, according to Vietti's [Luca Currado](#). And only \$2,500,000 for an entire castle! "But you have to maintain it," Currado added. This was a good point; for instance, one might have to repair scratches to the exterior walls caused by people (like me) who drive by without paying attention to how far their side mirrors stick out.

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PHOTOGRAPH: PREVIOUS PAGE: © MICK ROCK/CEPHAS STOCK (PRIORAT).  
FOOD STYLIST: SUSIE THEODOROU; PROP STYLIST: ALISTAIR TURNBULL





At Germany's Maximin Grünhaus, Dr. Carl von Schubert (LEFT) produces some of the world's greatest Rieslings. Pair one with Marcia Kiesel's crisp hens in a fragrant leek, morel and Riesling sauce, RIGHT.

Currado's family has grown Nebbiolo grapes in Piedmont since the 1600s; today, they own vineyards in all nine villages of the Barolo region. They also produce some of the region's most acclaimed wines, like the 2007 Vietti Barolo Rocche that I tasted with Currado over dinner in Alba that night, a polished, luscious red with tea leaf and dark cherry notes. Currado mentioned that when Alba was a Roman town, the emperor talked about "the fog grape" (*nebbia* is Italian for fog; hence, Nebbiolo). "In Tuscany, they have 'under the Tuscan sun,'" he said with a shrug. "In Piedmont, we have 'under Piedmontese fog.'"

"I'm still blown away by that castle being for sale," I said.

"You know, in old times, the owner of a castle had the right to spend the first night with the bride of anyone who got married in the village," Currado said thoughtfully. "I don't think that's the case anymore, though."

## MILE 1,191: GERMANY >>

SWITZERLAND IS LOVELY. Its mountains are scenic, its water is pure, and I have fond memories of falling asleep one time in a Swiss meadow and waking up surrounded by cows (different story). But when you're trying to drive swiftly from Italy to Germany, Switzerland is just a big, mountain-filled problem.

Nevertheless, nine hours after leaving Piedmont, I arrived at the gates of Maximin Grünhaus. One of Germany's greatest estates, it's in the Ruwer valley region (Germany's Mosel

wine region is made up of a trio of river valleys—the Mosel, the Saar and the Ruwer). Dr. Carl von Schubert's family has owned Grünhaus for five generations; originally it belonged to the Abbey of Saint Maximin, and there are written records of the property that date back over a thousand years.

The Ruwer is known for delicate, precise Rieslings, which is especially true in the 2010 vintage. The 2010 Maximin Grünhaus Abtsberg Kabinett I tasted that evening (along with 15 other wines) was a sublime German Riesling—fragrant and polished, its sweetness and acidity in perfect balance. It was unexpectedly good with the wild boar stew that von Schubert served to me and the 25 wine salespeople from New Jersey who happened to arrive via minibus exactly when I did. (I suppose, from their point of view, I was the interloper.)

"I used to shoot about three boar per year in the vineyards," von Schubert said as we ate. "Now it's about 60. Perhaps it has to do with global warming."

"They destroy the vines?" I asked.

"They love the sweetest grapes. But if they penetrate the vineyard, they have to risk ending their lives as salami."

## MILE 1,707: AUSTRIA >>

THIS WAS MY FIFTH and final day. When I pulled up at Nikolaihof, in Austria's Wachau region, I'd driven more than 1,700 miles and spent nearly 35 hours behind the wheel.

PHOTOGRAPH: JIM MCMANUS (VON SCHUBERT)

6. Transfer the scallops to plates and arrange the cauliflower and snow peas around them. Drizzle the curry vinaigrette all around, garnish with cilantro sprigs and serve.  
**WINE** Vibrant, citrusy Riesling from New Zealand: 2010 Huia Dry Riesling.

## Okra Gumbo with Blue Crabs and Shrimp

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**ACTIVE: 35 MIN; TOTAL 1 HR 15 MIN**  
**8 SERVINGS**

In this recipe from *The Dooky Chase Cookbook*, chef Leah Chase uses okra (and lots of it) to thicken the dish.

- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 3 pounds okra, thinly sliced crosswise
- 4 live blue crabs
- 1½ cups finely chopped onion
- ½ cup finely chopped green bell pepper
- ½ cup finely chopped celery
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1½ quarts water
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- Kosher salt
- 1 pound medium shrimp, shelled and deveined
- Steamed white rice, for serving

1. Heat the oil in a large pot. Add the okra and cook over low heat, stirring, until softened, 20 minutes. Add the crabs, onion, bell pepper and celery, cover and cook, stirring to prevent the okra from sticking to the bottom of the pot, until the vegetables are tender and the crabs are partially cooked, 15 minutes.
2. Stir in the tomato paste, water, garlic, red pepper, paprika, cayenne, thyme and bay leaves; season with salt. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to moderate and simmer until the crabs are bright red, 10 minutes. Stir in the shrimp and cook until pink, 10 minutes.
3. Transfer the crabs to a work surface and pull off the triangular shell on the underside of each one. Using a sharp knife, cut each crab in half and transfer to bowls. Ladle the gumbo into the bowls and serve with rice.

**BEER** Clean, mellow pale ale: Geary's. ●



## Braised Pork Chops with Cipollini and Olives

**ACTIVE: 45 MIN; TOTAL: 2 HR 15 MIN**  
**4 SERVINGS**

"When I think of Piedmont, I think of rustic wild boar dishes," Marcia says about the inspiration behind these slow-cooked pork shoulder chops, which she pairs with the region's robust Nebbiolos. Vietti's aromatic 2008 Perbacco Nebbiolo is great with the dish; though the label doesn't mention it, all the wine's grapes come from famed Barolo vineyards.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Four ¾-pound pork shoulder blade chops, each 1¼ inches thick
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 ounces Black Forest bacon—sliced ½ inch thick, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 5 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 rosemary sprigs
- 4 whole cloves
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon dry red wine
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1 pound unpeeled baby cipollini onions
- ⅔ cup assorted olives, including Niçoise olives, rinsed
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley

1. Preheat the oven to 325°. In a skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil. Season the pork with salt and pepper and add 2 chops to the skillet. Cook over moderately high heat, turning once, until browned, 6 minutes total. Transfer to a roasting pan and repeat with 1 more tablespoon of oil and the remaining 2 chops.
2. Add the bacon and the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil to the skillet; cook over moderate heat until the bacon is lightly browned. Add the chopped onion and garlic, cover and cook over low heat, stirring, until softened. Add the rosemary and cloves and cook for 1 minute. Add ½ cup of the wine and boil for 1 minute. Add the stock and bring to a boil.

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GUMBO RECIPE FROM THE DOOKY CHASE COOKBOOK BY LEAH CHASE. COPYRIGHT LEAH CHASE. USED BY PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER, PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.