

Orange Is the New Pink

Copper-hued wines are this season's perfect pairing

BY JENNIFER BRADLEY FRANKLIN

IF IT'S TRUE that everything old is new again, orange wine is the shining example. Though the centuries-old practice of leaving the skins on white grapes (rather than black ones, as with red wines) during the vinification process was once common in Europe, it fell out of favor commercially. Fortunately for oenophiles, about 20 years ago winemakers in Italy's Friuli-Venezia Giulia region resurrected the method with stunning, flavorful results and colors ranging from pale to vibrant. Now, boutique producers around the globe are offering bottles with entirely unique flavors that are easy to drink on their own or pair with meals.

As a native of Friuli, Alice Fabi, creative director of **Bellina Alimentari** (Bellina-alimentari.com), an Italian eatery and market in Atlanta, is well acquainted with the orange wines making a splash worldwide. "You can expect the minerality and freshness of a white, but with the body and complexity of a red," she says, thanks to the flavors and structure imparted from the skins. At Bellina, Fabi offers at least four palate-pushing orange wines — some boasting a rich, almost sherrylike flavor — by the glass or by the bottle, with the option of pairing them with cheeses or any menu item.

While Italy is the heavyweight in the emerging orange-wine market, wineries from Oregon and California are also making their marks. At San Francisco's **Rich Table** (Richtablesf.com), Wine Director Dominique Henderson says one of her favorites is Minimus Wines SB1 from Oregon because it's textured, mineral and



smoky to match light starters such as oysters or heavier entrées including steak and gamier meats. "Orange wines have a number of qualities that work with food flavors rather than against them — the tannins, aromatics and ripeness offer a nice weight," she says.

Beverage Director June Rodil at **Jeffrey's** (Jeffreys-oftaustin.com) in Austin, Texas, says the Prince in His Caves by the Scholium Project, which is made with Sonoma-grown Sauvignon Blanc grapes, is one of her top picks to pair with the restaurant's French-American cuisine.

For flavor thrill-seekers, these tawny-hued wines are still rare enough that finding a great one feels like a successful treasure hunt. Since they're in a class all their own, Fabi advises, "Approach orange wines with an open mind and don't try to categorize them."