

# Wine Spectator

A smiling man with short brown hair and a white t-shirt is holding a large yellow plastic crate filled with dark blue grapes. He is standing in a vineyard with rows of grapevines in the background. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The man is looking towards the camera with a friendly expression.

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MARCH 31, 2011

**JUSTIN SMITH  
OF SAXUM**



## Oil-Cured Tuna With Tempranillo

Chef Ken Oringer, Toro, Boston

Finding a representative dish from Boston chef Ken Oringer is not easy. He is chef-owner of six restaurants, ranging from a taqueria at Fenway Park to a blue-chip steak house.

This dish looks like bruschetta on the plate, but in fact derives from cultures celebrated at Toro, Oringer's tapas bar, and Uni, his sashimi bar. "It's Barcelona-style tapas—basically an escabeche—but instead of sardines or mackerel, I did tuna," Oringer explains.

The technique is adjusted too, with the aromatic oil and vinegar mixture poured over the fish to cook it through gently off-heat, giving it a luscious texture and deep flavors. And while the main event clearly comes from the sea, it also has a vegetal tang and the kind of mouth-watering nuances that make you reach for your glass.

The topping is variable, and for this recipe Oringer swapped his usual tomatoes for artichokes in the tapenade. "We've even done it with romesco," he notes. The stealth ingredient is sumac, which he calls "a more interesting sour element than vinegar."

Oringer backs into a wine match. "These aromatics would dominate a white," he says. "I'm going for [Spanish wine importer] Jorge Ordoñez—he's a buddy, and a Boston guy, and he finds that ripe red fruit for the American palate. This one is a lighter style, not heavy."

The texture and spice in the wine sync to the rich fish and earthy tapenade. And though it might not transport you to Barcelona, it perfectly reflects what American food is now, as Oringer describes his culinary culture: "Flavor, first and foremost. I stop at nothing to combine ingredients to create something greater than the sum of its parts."

—Owen Dugan



**CHEF'S PICK:** Viñas del Cenit Tempranillo Crianza Viño de la Tierra de Zamora Cenit 2005

**WINE SPECTATOR ALTERNATES:**

Bodegas LAN Rioja Culmen Reserva 2005 (90, \$60)

Bodegas Emilio Moro Ribera del Duero 2007 (90, \$24)

### TO MAKE THE TUNA:

2 pounds tuna belly, cut into 1/2-inch by 2-inch pieces

Salt and pepper

1 teaspoon coriander

1 teaspoon fennel seed

1 teaspoon chopped fresh garlic

1/4 teaspoon chile flakes

4 whole black peppercorns

10 Thumbelina carrots, each peeled and thinly sliced

1 rib celery, leaves reserved, peeled and thinly sliced

3 shallots, chopped

3 cups extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 cup Chardonnay vinegar

1/2 cup Sherry vinegar

1/4 cup sugar

1. Season the tuna like a steak to be grilled, and let it rest in the refrigerator for 1 to 4 hours.

2. To make a sachet, place coriander, fennel seed, garlic, chile flakes and peppercorns in a piece of cheesecloth and tie it closed.

3. In a glass casserole dish with high sides and a tight-fitting lid, place the tuna and the sliced vegetables.

4. In a saucepan, combine the olive oil, vinegars, sugar and the sachet. Bring to a rolling boil.

5. Pour the hot liquid over the tuna and vegetables, and evenly distribute. Cover. Let contents cool to room temperature before serving.

### TO MAKE THE TAPENADE:

14 ounces artichoke hearts, drained and roughly chopped

1 tablespoon capers, drained and chopped

2 shallots, chopped

1 garlic clove, minced

2 tablespoons fresh thyme, chopped

Sherry vinegar, to taste

Pinch of ground sumac

Extra-virgin olive oil

1. Mix all ingredients together, using enough oil to help them cohere.

**To serve:** Brush slices of ciabatta or any good white bread with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and toast in the oven until golden and crispy. Layer each toast slice with 1/8-inch tapenade, pieces of the tuna (broken up with a fork), and more tapenade. Sprinkle with lemon zest, celery leaves, sea salt and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil.

Serves 4.