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On the cover: Chicago Lantex Artist Mitoj Rosa rendered her signature inertia cards with ingredients that you'll find in the pages ahead. Learn more about her work at mitojrosa.com.

Here Comes the Sun(flower Oil)

By Joe Sevier Photo by Alexa Bendek & Hip Torres

Sunflower oil is one of the most prominent cooking oils used from Eastern Europe to Central Asia and parts of the Middle East, and it's finally making a comeback in its ancestral home—what we know of today as the Americas. Although after years of cultivation, it might not be the same sunflower oil the pre-Americans favored. “The oil we’re producing is a high-oleic variety and only about 10 to 12 years old,” says Dale Johnson of Century Sun Oil based in Wisconsin.

The high-oleic oil is packed with omega-9 fatty acids: high in heart-healthy unsaturated fats, low in saturated fats, and totally free of trans fats. It also boosts shelf life and yields a high smoking point (up to 450°F, depending on the level of refinement). It's much different from old sunflower seed varieties, which are categorized as mid-oleic or linoleic, with mid-oleic being the most highly produced variety worldwide and neither carrying the health caché that high oleic purports.

Yeah, but how do they taste? In addition to nutritional differences, sunflower oil can be purchased in a range of refinements. In large part, I found that you can judge a sunflower oil by its color. I tasted eight sunflower oils, produced in both the United States and Europe. The samples ranged from a very light and pale yellow (similar to any refined vegetable oil) to a dark, golden amber. From lightest to darkest, those oils included:

- Spectrum Culinary Organic Expeller Pressed Sunflower Oil (-44¢/oz.)
- La Tourangelle Organic High Oleic Sunflower Oil (-41¢/oz.)
- Century Sun Oil High Oleic Cold Pressed Sunflower Oil (-77¢/oz.)
- Chumak (In Ukrainian, ЧУМАК) Refined Sunflower Oil (-9¢/oz.)
- Golden Kings of Ukraine Raw-Pressed Sunflower Oil (-28¢/oz.)
- Driftless Organics High Oleic Cold Pressed Sunflower Oil (-75¢/oz.)
- Chumak Unrefined Sunflower Oil (-9¢/oz.)
- Golden Kings of Ukraine Cold-Pressed “Domestic Ukrainian” Sunflower Oil (-27¢/oz.)

The lightest of these, produced by American organic oil behemoth Spectrum Culinary, is also the most tepid in flavor and aroma. It has become one of the few oils Chef John Shields of Smyth in Chicago uses in his kitchen. Spectrum's flavor profile is totally neutral, even more so than grapeseed oil, which allows them to use it for everything from herb infusions to deep frying.

On the other end of the scale, Driftless Organics is a mainstay in the kitchen at Cellar Door Provisions, also in Chicago, where Chef Ethan Pikas uses it to make chile crunch and loves the flavor it lends to baked goods and all manner of salad dressings. “It has a deeply earthy, heady, floral quality with the roundness of a good quality olive oil but a bottom end that most olive oil lacks,” he says. Of the oils I tasted, it was certainly the most musky—and for that, the most distinct in personality. Pikas calls it the “taste of Midwestern summers,” and says he's had great success using it to bake carrot cakes and has infused it with fennel to emulsify into buttermilk sorbet.

Owner of Driftless Organics, Josh Engel, is also a big fan of using his sunflower oil to make baked goods—although he also points out its proven track record in salad dressings and (of all things) popcorn. “We're one of a select few producers making a single-source sunflower oil,” he says. In addition, Engel's oil is unfiltered. While a lot of commercially produced oils go through a process called RBD (refined, bleached, and deodorized), robbing the oil of some of its natural character, Engel's oil is allowed to settle after an expeller pressing. When settled, the oil is extracted from the top, leaving behind the pulp which has fully saturated the oil with its flavor.

My favorite oil was Golden Kings of Ukraine Cold-Pressed “Domestic Ukrainian,” sometimes labeled “Home Recipe.” The seeds are roasted before pressing, and the result is something like toasted sesame oil—probably not something that you'd

want to use in abundance, but a little bit could sure make the right dish pop. The aroma reminds me of walnuts that have toasted for just a second too long. It's distinct, slightly bitter, and just waiting for the right chef to figure out the best way to use it.

Another favorite, the aforementioned Century Sun, Johnson calls “minimally filtered, leaving in some sugars and waxes that will cause smoking at a lower temperature than totally refined oils,” such as Spectrum, La Tourangelle, and refined Chumak. The oil is quite pale and retains a delicate nuttiness that won't overpower whatever you're cooking, but will lend an extra layer of flavor, just like a good olive oil might. And while that smoking point may be lower than those lighter sunflower oils, it's still higher than comparable olive oils, so it's ready for sautéing, roasting, and light stir-frying.

The other oils each possessed their own signature qualities. La Tourangelle hits the tongue with no flavor, but fills the mouth with the aroma of papery almond skins, as if someone were cracking nuts right beside you. The raw iteration from Golden Kings of Ukraine and the unrefined Chumak smack of the ballpark and its musty, seedy aroma from cracking whole sunflower seeds in your mouth and spitting out the hull. And, finally, the refined Chumak, one of the most ubiquitous grocery brands across Eastern Europe, and which I used to fry breaded chicken cutlets in my unventilated, windowless New York City apartment. The resulting chicken tasted great—exceedingly crunchy, maybe slightly nutty from the oil, enhancing the caraway in the coating. But even more telling: While frying several batches of cutlets in that hovel of a kitchen, I didn't set off my smoke alarm. I didn't even detect a wisp of smoke in an apartment that could more often be mistaken for fully ablaze, just from barely warming up a cast iron pan. That's reason enough to consider getting back to your American roots.



"This dish started with the idea of congee, taking rice leftover from dinner and cooking it again in dashi. It's essentially overcooked rice. My mother would make chicken paprikash with a broth of stock and sour cream. The rice she served with it was always way overcooked, and my brothers and I would fight for the rice and broth." — Ryan Pfeiffer



Lobster congee, smoked chestnut consommé, trout roe, lime zest

Chef Ryan Pfeiffer of Blackbird | Chicago
Adapted by StarChef
Yield: 4 to 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

Poached Lobster:	3 tablespoons tomato paste	1 quart dry Sherry
1 lobster	5 sprigs thyme	4 sprigs thyme
Vinegar	1 bay leaf	1 bay leaf
Salt	2 cups dry Sherry	Salt
Butter	Salt	8 egg whites
Lemon juice	Sherry vinegar	
	Mirin	
Lobster Stock:		To Assemble and Serve:
Vegetable oil	Smoked Chestnut Consommé:	Basmati rice cooked in lobster stock
½ bulb fennel, coarsely chopped	1 pound chestnuts in husk	Sour cream
½ leek (white part only) coarsely chopped	½ bulb fennel, coarsely chopped	Lime zest
1 small sweet onion, coarsely chopped	½ leek (white part only), coarsely chopped	Salt
	1 cup sugar	Micro mustard flowers
		Smoked trout roe

METHOD

For the Poached Lobster:

In a large bowl of ice water, submerge lobster 30 minutes. Remove tail, claws, and knuckles from body; reserve carcass for stock. In a saucepan over medium heat, add a little vinegar and enough water to poach tail; season with salt. Poach tail 4 minutes, claws 3 minutes, and knuckles 1½ minutes; shock in an ice bath and cool. Remove meat from shells. In a sauté pan over medium-high heat, combine butter, lemon juice, and lobster meat. Season with salt. When hot, juicy, and flavorful, remove from pan, and chop meat into bite-size pieces. Cover and refrigerate.

For the Lobster Stock:

In a large rondeau, heat oil and sweat fennel, leek, and onion. When vegetables are soft and translucent, add tomato paste and cook until color deepens. Add reserved lobster carcass and toast until a bright red. Add thyme and bay leaf and deglaze with Sherry; reduce by half. Add enough water to cover lobster, bring to boil, decrease heat, and simmer 1½ hours, until lobster flavor is concentrated. Remove from heat, season with salt, vinegar, and mirin. Strain through a chinois and chill.

For the Smoked Chestnut Consommé:

Prepare and heat a smoker. Clean chestnuts, reserving nuts and husks separately. Smoke chestnuts 1 hour. Repeat with husks and reserve separately. In a hot pot with oil, combine

fennel, leek, and smoked chestnuts. Sweat until all their water evaporates. Increase heat, add sugar, and stir until caramelized. Deglaze with Sherry. Add thyme and bay leaf and reduce by half. Add water to cover, bring to boil, decrease heat, and simmer 1 to 2 hours, until flavor is concentrated. Season with salt, remove from heat, and strain through a chinois. Cool to room temperature. In a Vitamix blender, finely chop husks. In a stand mixer fitted with a whisk, whip egg whites to soft peaks; fold in husks. Whisk husk mixture into chestnut broth; heat to a simmer. When a raft starts to form, break a small hole in the side of the raft to check for clarification. When the consommé underneath the raft appears to be clear, strain through a chinois lined with a coffee filter.

To Assemble and Serve:

In a small saucepot, warm some of the Smoked Chestnut Consommé. In separate small saucepot, heat some Lobster Stock and add some rice. Mix vigorously to achieve a hot, creamy rice porridge. Add pieces of Poached Lobster and heat through. Remove from heat, add a small amount of sour cream, and season with lime zest and salt. Transfer to a small bowl and garnish with mustard flowers and plenty of roe. Tableside, pour hot Smoked Chestnut Consommé around the congee.

Sherry vinegar provided by Foods from Spain
Mirin provided by Kikkoman
Micro mustard flowers provided by Fresh Origins



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THE NEW SNICKERDOODLE IN TOWN

BY HIP TORRES PHOTO BY ALEXA BENDER

When was the last time you squealed for joy after taking a bite out of a snickerdoodle? As a genre, the snickerdoodle is nothing but a sugar cookie thinly disguised with leavening, cinnamon, and a cutie-pie name. At Chicago's Fat Rice Bakery, Elaine Townsend drops kida that cookie has-been into the culinary present with a creamy, salty egg yolk custard filling. It's kind of a big deal.

Born in Los Angeles to a Filipino family, Townsend recently left Meadowood in Napa to take over the pastry program at Fat Rice, where she gets to incorporate Asian ingredients near and dear to her palate. The snickerdoodle transformation was inspired by dim sum-style, egg yolk-filled steam buns. "My philosophy is to make food that I want to eat," says Townsend.

To make the filling, she cures duck eggs in a sugar-salt mixture for 48 hours, bakes and grates them, and then blends the yolks with butter, powdered sugar, cornstarch, milk powder, salt, and coconut milk. She encases frozen scoops of the custard in cookie dough that's laced and coated with Caylon tea sugar. The tea imparts just the right amount of subtlety, according to Townsend, and it gives the cookie a beautiful vasckle. (Bah-bye cinnamon!)

Warmed up to order, the center oozes out after the first bite—after which you'll be hooked on the new snickerdoodle in town.





PHOTO: CAROLINE HATCHETT

Alexander Roman

As a child, Chicago native Alexander Roman spent time prepping tamales with his parents, both of whom hail from northern Mexico, and he realized early on that he wanted to work with his hands and to make food for a living.

Roman initially began his career as a savory cook. He followed his wife to New York City and cooked at Rising Stars alum Adam Schop's Nuela, where a pastry chef first turned him onto baking. Roman spent the next two years as a sous chef at Northern Spy, all the while baking loaves in his small city apartment. He and his wife decided to move back to Chicago, where he began baking fulltime. During his two years at Sandra Holl's Floriole, Roman was promoted to head baker and was later

hired for the same position at Rising Stars alums Art Jackson and Chelsea Jackson's Pleasant House Bread, known for its pioneering in-house milling program.

Today, Roman's bagels, dense loaves of rye, airy baguettes, and burnished miche accompany meals made by Rising Stars alum Lee Wolen at Boka Group's Somerset. His program puts an emphasis on locally grown, freshly milled flours, and as a founding member of Chicago's Artisan Grain Collaborative, Roman helps connect area bakers and restaurants to small Midwestern farmers. He also brings his Mexican heritage to the table with specialty breads and an unforgettable mole negro croissant.

SOMERSET

[@aworldwithoutfood / somersetchicago](#)

Favorite tool: Bench knife

Tool you wish you had: Modernist Bread

Favorite food resources: *Advanced Bread and Pastry* by Michel Suas, and Instagram

Most important baking rule: Awareness

Favorite off-the-beaten-path restaurant: Loba Pastry. Her cajeta candé are wonderful.

Favorite bread you've ever made: Still working on it.

Wheat variety you're most excited to work with: Rye

Place you most want to visit for culinary travel: Mexico, to visit all the wood-fired bakeries

Mole negro croissant

"Croissants and mole are both a labor of love, and not for the faint of heart. They take patience, failure, and determination. By no means am I the best at either, or even close to it, but I truly enjoy making them. I am currently in the determination phase—with a hint of failure—constantly trying to perfect the croissant and mole, respectively. I decided to try and see what a mole croissant would be like. This is my process."

Recipe on p. 60





PHOTO: ALEXA BENDER

[@misterbriantaylor / whinerbeer](#)

Favorite brewing resource: Milk the Funk

Most important brewing rule: Cleanliness

What you drink on your night off: Anything Allagash or Almanac

Favorite beer you've ever made: Le Tub

Where you most want to go for beer travel: Belgium. It's the birthplace of wild ales.

Style of beer you're working on next: Sourdough saison

Most over-rated beer trend: I got a negative review on Untapp'd for not having an IPA. So, IPAs.

Advice to your younger self: Be calm. It will happen eventually. I was so upset in the late 2000s because a bunch of breweries started popping up, and I was hoping to build my own place by then.

Brian Taylor

WHINER BEER COMPANY

In his senior year of college, Brian Taylor needed a part-time job. Enticed by the prospect of pay plus free beer, he joined the bottling line at Flying Dog Brewery in Boulder. Though Taylor enjoyed the job, it was Flying Dog brew master, Eric Warner, that pushed him to explore the science of beer making. It was only then that Taylor, who happened to be a biology major, was officially hooked.

Later, Warner also connected Taylor to the Siebel Institute in Chicago, where he received his formal education. From there, Taylor spent a few years as a lab technician at Boulevard Brewing in Kansas City, and another few at Goose Island Brewing, first as a sort of lab technician and cellar liaison, and then moving strictly to the cellar. Taylor experienced Goose as a free-for-all when it came to innovation and appreciated how the company provided its brewers plenty of opportunity to play with different styles. His own interest in barrel-aging began to crystalize.

Taylor then met Ria Neri, a Chicago beer influencer, who has developed some of the most highly regarded beer programs in the city. The two formed Whiner Beer Company in 2015. The South Side brewery was developed on a zero-waste sustainability model and focuses on barrel-aged French and Belgian-style beers, aka sours.



PHOTO: ALEXA BENDER

LE TUB. A BARREL-AGED FLAGSHIP

When it came time to open a brewery of his own, Brian Taylor knew exactly what he wanted to make—and what he didn't. That means that his Whiner Beer Company is an IPA-free zone, where barrels, a coolship, and wild yeast add character to his roster of refreshing beers. His flagship brew, Le Tub—with adorable art by co-owner Ria Neri—combines two brewing techniques in one can. It's a saison that's kettle soured and then blended with 10 percent Le Tub that has been barrel aged for four to six months. By keeping a tight production schedule and pulling 10 percent of each batch for aging, Taylor and his team are (just) keeping up with demand.

STYLE: SOUR SAISON

ABV: 6.4%

HOPS: AMARILLO

YEAST: SAISON

MALT: TWO-ROW, PILSEN, WHEAT, C20

FERMENTATION TEMPERATURE: MID-70°F

Let's Talk about Wine

By Bret Haier | Illustrations by Maryse Chevalere

A CHICAGO SOMM SAYS OLD SCHOOL WINE VERBIAGE HAS HAD A LONG ENOUGH RUN.



Chardonnay, Benedicte & Stephane Tissot, "Les Gravier," Arbois, Jura, France, 2015
Classic Chardonnay but with a feral edge, like a beautiful woman covered in tattoos and impeccably dressed.

Has anybody ever really tasted crushed rocks or velvet? The whole idea behind describing a wine is to give guests an image or an association with it—to get them interested. At the end of the day, though, there are no rules. Why can't the image be a song, a cultural reference, or a TV show? Anything that draws your attention, gives you a point of reference, or is just plain fun to read is fair game.

I would rather drink a glass of hair than read another boring description of cassis, cherry, and cigar. I mean, come on, those words have been used to describe thousands of wines and sometimes multiple wines on the same menu. Tasting notes from Ancient Egypt include "rich, aromatic, tart, green," etc.

A big problem with the public's perception of wine is that the gatekeepers—the somms, buyers, and critics—have made it too precious, too pedantic. The game is changing, though. On our menu at Publican Anker, we sell wines with references to Merle Haggard, Rose from "Golden Girls," and even Nickelback, and in stretching the way we describe wines, our staff gets to be creative, write differently, have fun, and get people engaged. Plus, my strange brain gets a chance to exercise.

If nothing else, I've had guests order an obscure wine on the description alone. Please talk about it, but at the end of the day, just drink the damn wine already.

Bret Haier is wine director at Chicago's Nico Osteria and Publican Anker. Maryse Chevalere is the James Beard Award-winning wine illustrator behind @freshcutgardenhose.



Melon de Bourgogne, Jo Landron, Amphibolite Nature, Muscadet, Loire Valley, France, 2016
From an iconoclast of Muscadet; punk rock acidity, saline minerality, and a touch of citrus. It tastes like being saved by Liam Neeson.

DO THE ZAREMBA

Illustrations by Becki Kozel

Bartenders, are you ready to bend, lift, stir, shake, and twist—and smile while doing it? If you're feeling tight, may we suggest taking a few minutes to complete a Zaremba pre-shift stretch session, designed by the one and only, break dancer turned beverage director Lee Zaremba. He's on the floor five nights a week and stays limber (and avoids injury) with these five simple moves.



Strengthen and soften your shoulders by gently pulling from just above your elbow while breathing deeply. You loosen those triceps, too.



With the range of motion needed to shake and reach, this stretch opens up your shoulders and back.



Twist to the left and breathe out. Take a long breath in and twist to the right. Do this a few times to loosen your hips and back. It will be much easier to grab that bottle of whiskey from the back bar.



Stretch your quads by lifting your leg and gently pulling back on the top of your foot. You'll feel it pull all the way to your hips.



By breathing deeply out and relaxing at your lower back, you'll be able to go a further bit closer to touching your toes. If your hamstrings are tight, your back gets tight, and then injuries come from the simplest of repetitive movements.



Shake!

Lee Zaremba is the Jersey-born beverage director of Boka Group's Bellemare and Somerset. He makes a tracksuit look fly and pours a mean Long Island iced tea variation named Phil Effing Collins.