



Baking with wine

Eat local

(Jun 7, 2007)

"Your kitchen pantry should replace your medicine cabinet in your home," says Mark Walpole. This 30-year veteran of the kitchen and internationally recognized Chef de Cuisine has given a whole new twist to healthy eating.

As a chef, he learned how to stretch his kitchen budget and exercise his creativity by making use of everything from chicken bones to vegetable peels. When he learned there were antioxidants in grapes, he found a way to turn grape skins -- normally discarded by the Niagara wine industry -- into a unique food product.

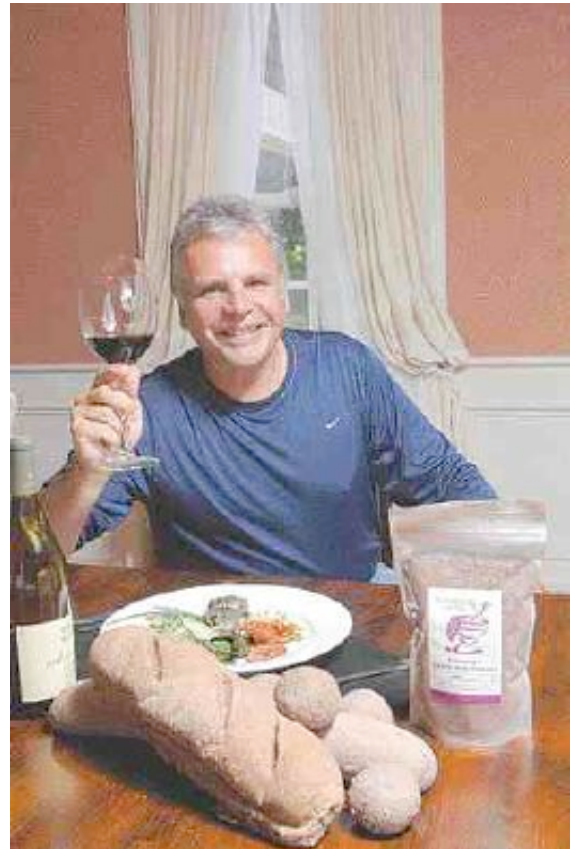
With help from the University of Waterloo's Innovation Centre, and the Guelph Food Technology Centre, he learned how to dry and pulverize the skins into a fine powder, while preserving the omega 3s and 6s, vitamin A, calcium, potassium, iron, fibre and antioxidants.

Walpole now cooks only for select parties, or people who book his private, 12-seat dining room in the village of Jordan, on the Niagara Peninsula. Experimenting with his four wine powders (Cabernet, Chardonnay, Icewine and Late Harvest) keeps him in the fringes of the industry -- a place he finds very comfortable after years of hard work, hard travel and little time at home.

Relying on feedback from other creative food professionals, he rhymes off some of the innovative dishes that he and his contemporaries have created. A specialty bakery in Niagara Falls adds wine powder to their sourdough bread. Treadwell Farm to Table Cuisine in St. Catharines serves Cabernet gnocchi. Fettuccine, duck pastrame, sesame crackers, chocolate truffles, mustards, sauces -- all have been enhanced by experimenting with Walpole's wine powder. You will even find a Cabernet bread at select Sobeys stores, sold under their Compliments label.

On top of its nutritional value, this ingredient is also fun. "I've even done coloured sushi rice. It turns the outside of the rice purple, but not the inside," Walpole beams. "When you slice through it, it looks stunning."

Novelty is great, but how does it taste? The flavour is reminiscent of wine, he instructs, with some of the tannins associated with mature wines. The aroma, though, is not as sharp, since it lacks the acid that develops during fermentation. It goes great with cheese, sprinkled, say, on a grilled Stilton sandwich, or incorporated into pizza crust.



Ron Albertson, the Hamilton Spectator

Mark Walpole uses grape skin powder to flavour breads, pastas, rice and other foods.

Walpole is negotiating a September Sip and A Slice charity fundraiser with Roberto's Pizza in St. Catharines. To dispel the myth that fine dining establishments have a monopoly on wine pairings, they will tailor pizzas, made with Cabernet or Chardonnay crusts, to match different wines. A nutritious novelty food for Everyman? Sounds like love at first bite.

To learn more about Walpole's innovative wine powder, or find a retail outlet in your area, visit www.viniferaforlife.com, or call Vinifera for Life at 905-562-4339 (toll free: 866-788-6147)

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