

might not believe it, but I like a good hot dog. Currently the Black Angus hot dogs that you can find at Whole Foods are on top of my preferred hot dog list.

[Note: George and Johanne laughed as they discussed the variables that make a good hot dog a great hot dog, including the amount of hot dog relative to the size of the bun, and whether sauerkraut and relishes add or detract from experiencing the hot dog itself.]

ML: *We have spoken about items that you have in the refrigerator and on your pantry shelves, however we have not spoken about the contents of that oak cask and large bottle you have on the counter by your stove. Tell me about that.*

Oh, that is the wine vinegar we make ourselves. We have maintained that for approximately ten years. Periodically we add to it the remains from good quality wine (both red and white) that we have drunk. And, periodically we draw vinegar from the cask and keep it bottled. It takes about two weeks for the wine to become vinegar. The secret of making good wine vinegar is to use good wine, keep it at moderate room temperature and allow air access to the liquid.

As you might be aware, wine needs what is called a “mother-of-vinegar” starter culture to do this transformation. The source of this

vinegar’s “mother” was Patricia Wells. [Note: This is a particularly fine pedigree for the vinegar to have. Wells is an esteemed restaurant critic, cookbook author, and chef based in Paris.]

Our preference is to use our own wine vinegar, although we use Regina red wine vinegar when our own is unavailable. This is commonly available in supermarkets. The reason why we like this particular brand is that like our other food choices, it is exactly what it claims to be, without additives or other ingredients. It is not apparent until you start to read the labels of wine vinegars, but many of them are actually not grape wine vinegars and originate with other fruits.

ML: *Are the ingredients in your Provence kitchen very different than those you have here?*

Actually, they are quiet similar. In Provence, however, we cook differently than we do here. This is not so much because of ingredients being different, rather it is because our lifestyle there is so different. Our life here in Rhode Island is much more work intensive and our hours at the restaurant are long. We often return from the restaurant in the early hours of the morning and only then begin to prepare our own dinner. What we often make is what we call “Midnight Spaghetti.” As we describe

in our cookbook, *On Top of Spaghetti*, these preparations are composed of a simple sauce that is prepared in the time that it takes for a pot of water to boil and the pasta to cook.

When my time interviewing George and Johanne finished, I was sorry to get up from the table. It had been such fun to experience their enthusiasm, and such a privilege to listen to their culinary wisdom. I found the essence of their culinary souls to be a combination of kindness, graciousness and sharing. They possess a genuine integrity—for purity of ingredients and respect for seasonality of produce—of sheer joy in the adventure that experiencing food offers, and of the creativity that food provides as an artistic medium.

George and Johanne were kind enough to share one of their favorite “Midnight Spaghetti” recipes with Edible Rhody. It is so fast, simple and satisfying that you won’t want to wait until midnight to try it! It comes from their latest cookbook, On Top of Spaghetti. □



RECIPE

VINTNER’S SPAGHETTI

From *On Top of Spaghetti* (William Morrow 2006)

This recipe qualifies as “midnight spaghetti.” There are very few components, the ingredients are staples in our kitchen, and the dish is assembled in just minutes. Perfect for satisfying late-night hunger or to enjoy any other time. We like the interplay of sweet onions used here to offset the acid in the wine. The garlic adds pungency and the hot pepper adds a little zip.

2 plump garlic cloves, peeled and finely minced
1 ½ cups finely diced onions
6 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp crushed red pepper flakes

½ cup dry red wine
1 pound dried spaghetti
Parmigiano-Reggiano for serving (optional)

Bring a large pot of water to a boil.

Combine the garlic, onions, olive oil, and red pepper flakes in a large straight-sided sauté pan. Cook over high heat, stirring frequently, until the garlic becomes golden and the onions have started to brown, about 5 minutes. Add the wine and continue to cook over brisk heat, allowing the wine to boil until it is almost completely reduced and you are left with a glossy purple glaze on the onions. Remove from the heat.

Stir a generous amount of salt into the boiling water and drop in the spaghetti. Cook at a full rolling boil, stirring frequently, until the pasta is al dente, 4 to 6 minutes. Transfer ½ cup of the pasta cooking water to the sauté pan set over a medium flame. Drain the spaghetti, transfer to the sauté pan, increase the heat, and cook, stirring and tossing the pasta until most of the water is absorbed. Serve immediately.

Pass the Parmigiano-Reggiano, if desired.

Serves 6 to 8 as a first course and 4 to 6 as a main course