

A close-up photograph of a chef's hands, wearing a white uniform, holding several fresh mushrooms. The chef's hands are cupped together, and the mushrooms are a mix of brown and white varieties. The background is a soft-focus white fabric, likely the chef's apron or uniform.

The Paley's Place Cookbook

RECIPES AND STORIES
FROM THE
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Vitaly Paley and Kimberly Paley
with Robert Reynolds



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Photography by John Valls



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For Merle Clinton Brown





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Introduction



Close to Home: Cooking in the Pacific Northwest

by VITALY PALEY

The story of Paley's Place began in New York, where Kimberly and I met. She was a dancer who had come from California to study at the Martha Graham School. Born in Russia, I had come to New York as a teenager and now, in the eighties, was studying music at Juilliard. Like many of our friends, we subsidized our art by working in the food world, and we met when we were both managers for a dinner cruise company. One July Fourth—the 100th birthday of the Statue of Liberty—when our work was done for the night, we wound up making out in the shadows of the torch the old Dame held high. We remember fireworks

Looking back, we think we chose food over art, but perhaps it was fate, and food chose us. I went to the French Culinary Institute in New York, and together we moved to France to work and learn together at a Michelin-starred restaurant called Au Moulin de la Gorce, near Limoges. Back in New York, we worked with the best, including Tom Valenti at Alison on Dominick, David Bouley of Bouley, Michael Romano and Danny Meyer of Union Square Cafe, and David and Karen Waltuck of Chanterelle. Kimberly studied with Kevin Zraly at Window on the World, Andrea Immer, and master sommelier Roger Dagorn.

But it was in our tiny Bleecker Street apartment that our vision for the restaurant that would become Paley's Place began to shape itself. In the spirit of collaboration that we still share, we invited friends and family to dinners—and not just any dinners. On each occasion, we created experiences that reflected whatever inspired us about a particular menu. We wrote invitations, specifying a dress code for the evening—informal or jacket and tie. Kimberly's hospitality was unstinting, her eye for detail meticulous. She set the stage, making menus by hand and dressing the table with silverware arranged face down, as she learned to do in France and as she still does in the restaurant. If I plucked basil from clay pots on the fire escape, Kimberly described it on the menu as “local,” a nod to the lessons we learned in France and a sweet gesture toward our yet-unwritten future in Portland, in the cool, open West.

After one summer too many in hot, airless, underground restaurant kitchens (me) and coping with the behind-the-scenes madness of restaurant dining rooms (Kimberly), we sold our apartment on Bleecker Street, packed up, and left New York knowing two things: we wanted our own restaurant, and we wanted it to be in Oregon.

Oregon reminded us of France, where ingredients are stars. In New York's kitchens, I saw you could get anything at any time. I also noticed that not much came from close by. While Kimberly and I didn't necessarily want ours to be a French restaurant, we knew we wanted to sustain what we learned in France about being closer to the sources of food. In Portland, we see not only where food comes from, but who grows it. Here, our food is shaped by connections with people and the ingredients they bring to the restaurant's door—mushrooms, potatoes, truffles, chestnuts. A signature reference on our menu to “George's Gathered Greens” doesn't refer to the chef, but to the farmer, George Weppler.

In anticipation of moving to Oregon, we had already made connections with winemakers Ken Wright (then of Panther Creek and now of Ken Wright Cellars) and Russ Raney of Evesham Wood. Once here, we discovered food producers—like George Weppler and cheesemaker Pierre Kolish of Juniper Grove Farm in Redmond—who we feel are visionaries.

Over the years since we opened Paley's Place, we have come to feel that we have not just created a restaurant, but are participating in a bigger movement to establish the uniqueness of Oregon, a region that has figured out how to sustain the integrity of its agricultural traditions. Unlike France, Oregon doesn't have an *Appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC) system as a guarantee of superior quality. But Oregon's producers make a certain kind of promise among themselves: when they say the berries are good, they mean it.

In this book, as in our restaurant, we have tried to bring out the stories of the people who provide us with impeccable ingredients. Their stories reflect the way we strive to do business: their engagement matches ours, and therefore fosters respect each time we touch what they provide. In these pages you will get a glimpse of the growers, foragers, fishermen, and artisan producers who provide us with lamb, mushrooms, potatoes, greens, nuts, cheese, salmon, and more. Other stories in these pages are meant to shed light on some of the culinary techniques and influences, hospitable spirit, and threads of memory that tie our past experiences to our present.

Our approach to food and wine and the dining experience is deeply personal. The recipes and stories in this book reflect how and why we do what we do with these products in this place. In the end, it is all about relationships. It starts with Kimberly and me—our collaboration is an endless source of inspiration for both of us. Our relationships with our customers, our purveyors, and our staff are gifts. Without them, this story would be very different.

Cooking seasonally does not come naturally to most of us. We can buy anything at any time of year, and that path of lesser resistance is always easier to follow. The foods we buy have to be seasonal somewhere, right? But defrosted fish is not the same as fresh off the boat, and an out of season tomato or ear of corn can never compare to just picked. Let your senses guide you to what smells and feels real rather than what looks shiny and flawless. If you search out locally produced and grown goods whenever possible, chances are they will be

seasonal as well.

In the kitchen, trust your senses to help you take a dish to its logical conclusion rather than blindly following the recipe. Experience has taught me that achieving a perfect balance of flavors is a learned skill. Each dish can attain a “sweet spot,” however elusive it might be, and you learn where it is by tasting.

I am constantly reminded of my final exam in cooking school, where I had to reproduce several classic French recipes. I was a good student and I knew them all by heart, so making them was easy, I thought. When I presented the finished dishes to the panel of judges, I received a less-than-enthusiastic critique. I had followed the recipes exactly as I had been taught to do them. So what went wrong? One judge asked me if I’d tasted what I made. The answer and then it all made sense. I’ve never forgotten that lesson. I urge you to taste, taste, and taste what you’re cooking at every stage. Learning to follow flavors as they unfold will help you navigate through written instructions and will eventually educate your senses and produce impressive results.

Now for a few words about preparing the recipes in this book:

- Use kosher salt for general seasoning. Use a coarse sea salt of any kind (I prefer *fleur de sel*) for finishing a dish. Do not use generic table salt. It is full of iodine and added chemicals to mask its unpleasant flavor. When it comes to pepper, I only use black. It simply tastes better than white. Grind it fresh every time you use it. Be liberal with your seasoning when cooking, and you and your guests will appreciate the results.
- Use extra-virgin olive oil for vinaigrettes and to sauté vegetables. Use grapeseed or canola oils to cook meat, poultry, and seafood unless the recipe calls for something else.
- Use only unsalted butter, as it has the taste of cream. Salted butter is usually of lesser quality, and using it will prevent you from seasoning the dish correctly.

For me, cooking is about both soulful searching and rigorous technique. It is influenced by mood and memories, yet it also requires constant repetition and a tireless quest for both perfection and consistency alongside a readiness to adjust on the fly. Cooking is an art whose disciplined performance must retain what I like to call a fresh drop of blood—the ability to be new and exciting and to inspire every time you do it. May this book inspire you to cook with care and add to your joy in making food.





If It's Wine You Like, Drink It

by KIMBERLY PALEY

In the very beginning, I told Vitaly, “If I had my way, everything we do would be served with Bandol Rosé from Domaine Tempier.” I like to say I lost my virginity the first time I tasted rosé from Tempier—it was the beginning of my wine education.

In the early eighties, I was hired to teach jazz dance at a summer workshop in Montpellier, France. When the job ended, I used my paycheck to travel and stay in the south of France for the summer. One pivotal stop I made during my travels was in the small village of Bandol. It was there, in the nearby hilly vineyards, that I had my first *liason dangereuse* with Domaine Tempier. It was love at first sensation. My memory of the place is of heat, bramble, scrub, and thirsty olive trees. The rosé was at once fruity, yet dry. It was fresh and quenched my thirst. It tasted like summer. The blanc was unique and radiant. It was easy to drink and its golden yellow color reminded me of the most perfect sunflower. And before I ever took a sip of the red, the aromas of spice, eucalyptus, scrub brush, and dry leaves filled my nostrils. When I swirled it in my mouth, my gums buzzed from the inky tannins and the flavors exploded across my palate. It was an emotional experience that began my journey into the world of wine.

The second pivotal event in my wine education happened much later, in 1992, and also in France. Vitaly and I were doing a stage (apprenticeship) at a Michelin-starred restaurant near Limoges, in the geographic center of France. The ambience at the restaurant, housed in a château, involved fine china, sterling silver, tuxedo-clad servers, and serious work. One evening, diners at one table ordered a rare vintage of Château Margaux. Working with the sommelier, I was responsible for fetching wines from the wine cellar. Because the château dated from the fifteenth century, the cellar was cloaked in damp darkness, the wine organized in dusty rows. To find my way, I had to light a wine-cellar candle that seemed left over from medieval times. Returning upstairs with the precious bottle, I decanted the velvet red liquid into a gorgeous gooseneck crystal vessel. One person at the table was a fourteen-year-old boy, who swirled and smelled the wine before taking a tiny sip. When his father asked what it was, the lad nailed it as an old Bordeaux. I was dumbfounded, and felt at once how much I had to learn.

Upon my return to New York City, I continued to read and study, and to taste everything I could. I was privileged to learn from the likes of Master Sommelier Roger Dagorn, Kevin Zraly at Windows on the World, and Andrea Immer. These great educators, each with a

particular point of view, all led me to understand one thing of utmost importance: if you like the wine, drink it. Trust your senses.

When we moved to Portland, my wine education entered a whole new phase. We met the granddads of the Oregon wine industry—David Lett of Eyrie Vineyards, Dick Ponzi of Ponzi Vineyards, Dick Erath of Erath Vineyards, and David Adelsheim of Adelsheim Vineyards.

These were the visionaries who believed in what they saw in Oregon's soil and made prize-winning wines that attracted world attention from the grapes grown in it. We saw the spirit demonstrated by these men as uniquely Oregonian. It was a spirit we wanted to be part of. Our collaboration with these and other winemakers—including John Paul of Cameron Winery, Doug Tunnell of Brickhouse Vineyard, and Patti Green and Jim Anderson of Patricia Green Cellars—made us understand that if there is a movement to define the food and wine of this region, then it is clearest in the vineyard.

What has put this region on the map are the diverse grape-growing practices that have evolved through trial and error in this climate, with these soils, as well as an understanding by the winemakers of the importance of working with the rhythms of nature and their commitment to doing so. The sum of their experiences has given Oregon a true identity as a wine region. Though young, it undeniably equates with quality.

At our restaurant I am rigorous about having our staff taste everything. Every bottle the servers open, they test. I encourage them to have an opinion and learn to identify a flaw before the customer encounters it. Over time, they too sense what wines are lacking in some way because they have learned what they should be. You can read and talk all you want, but the magnificent thing about wine education is that in the end it's all about taste.

Vitaly and I don't always sit down together at the restaurant to devise wine and food pairings—we have developed over time an unspoken, shared understanding of how wine should be paired with food. There are, however, times we collaborate to tailor wines to specific dishes—when Vitaly is asked to do an event for a particular winery, for example. It's not out of the question for us to open our refrigerator at home and try everything we find in it—pickles, mustard, hot sauce—to see what works. "There are no rules" is our motto when we create dishes to accompany a given wine, although we work hard to maintain our point of view about food—driven by season and locale, supported by a similar attitude toward wine. When the results of our collaborations express themselves with a certain audacity, that is my reward for focusing on wine in a more creative way.

At the restaurant, we have put together a wine list that reflects Oregon, Washington, and France because they are close to home and to our hearts. The wine suggestions in this book are those that at one time or another found their way onto our list. I encourage you to taste and drink wines from all over the world. If a wine from anywhere on earth makes you pause, gasp, or laugh—and you like it—drink it and take note. Follow no rules; obey no guidelines. This practice will keep you, as it does me, in a constant state of hunger.





Chapter 1

Appetizers

Roman-Style Chopped Chicken Liver

Stuffed Eggs

Crispy Oysters with Massaman Curry Bisque and Minted Cucumber Salad

Vegetable-Stuffed Morels, Green Garlic Confit, and Parmesan Cream

Minute-Cured King Salmon, Salade Russe, and Caviar Crème Fraîche

Mushroom Omelet Soufflé

Grilled Flatbreads

Tapenade

Fava Bean Puree

Grilled Goat Cheese Wrapped in Chestnut Leaves

Grilled Figs Wrapped in Prosciutto

Walla Walla Onion Tart with Fresh Goat Cheese and Summer Herb Pesto

Curried Squash and Goat Cheese Fritters with Green Goddess Dipping Sauce

Speaking in Tongues

Crisp Pan-Fried Lamb's Tongue with Spicy Saffron Aioli

Escargots Bordelaise with Roast Marrow Bones



Roman-Style Chopped Chicken Liver

Makes 1½ cups

My mother and I left Russia in 1976, when I was 12, setting out through Eastern Europe by train and by bus, feeling like gypsies and happy to be free at last. Eventually we got to Rome, home to centuries-old Jewish traditions and, in the 1970s, the Italian version of Ellis Island.

The food there made my head spin—I tasted my very first bite of pizza, my first gelato. The smell of coffee would reel me into a café from a block away. My mother got creative with what little means we had and made sure we ate well, in a way that would pay huge dividends in my adult life. She reinvented her cooking, incorporating the brave new flavors of our temporary home. And as the foods around me evolved, my palate evolved with them. Noodles bored me before, but when made with lots of garlic, olive oil, and cheese, they sparked my interest. Before Rome, I could hardly swallow chopped liver, but when my mother infused it with the flavors of anchovies, sage, and capers, I found it irresistible.

This recipe, then, is like an heirloom, a blend of my family traditions with the flavors of Rome. When I want an authentic Jewish touch, I serve this chopped liver with matzo. When I want to recall Rome, I slather it on [Grilled Flatbreads](#). While a great appetizer, it is equally good spread on rye bread as a sandwich, which I garnish with sliced red onion and pickles.

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ pound chicken livers, lobes halved

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 large shallot, finely minced

3 cloves garlic, finely minced

2 anchovy fillets, drained and chopped

5 large fresh sage leaves, finely chopped

2 tablespoons drained capers

¼ cup cream sherry

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons brandy

1 hard-boiled egg, peeled and coarsely grated on the largest holes of a box grater

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat until it shimmers. Add the livers, season with salt and pepper, and sear until lightly colored on the bottom, about 1 minute.

Turn the livers over. Add the shallot, garlic, anchovies, sage, and capers. Cook, stirring,

until the shallots have softened (it's fine if they take on a little color), about 3 minutes. Pour in the sherry and balsamic vinegar, decrease heat to medium-low, and simmer for about 1 minute. Transfer the liver mixture to the work bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade. Add the brandy and pulse a few times until coarsely chopped.

Transfer the chopped liver to a small bowl, fold in the egg, and season with salt and pepper. Allow to come to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate until completely cold. Chopped liver can be made up to a day in advance.

Stuffed Eggs

Serves 4 to 6

My contribution to the culinary world's vast repertoire of deviled eggs includes this Mediterranean filling of tuna, anchovies, and capers. The addition of mustard and paprika grounds the egg in tradition.

I'm often asked if there is a trick to peeling eggs. There isn't. I will share a few tips, though: Avoid using very fresh eggs. As eggs age, air fills the space between the outer shell and the inner membrane. The longer eggs sit, the more air gets in and the easier the eggs are to peel when cooked. It is that simple. Also, the night before cooking the eggs, rest them on their sides. This will help center the yolks.

6 large eggs

1/3 cup good-quality tuna packed in olive oil, well drained

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh Italian parsley

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

2 anchovy fillets, drained

1 tablespoon drained capers, plus caper juice

2 tablespoons [Aioli](#)

Freshly ground black pepper

Paprika, for garnish

Arrange the eggs in a pot just big enough to contain them in a single layer. Add enough cold water to cover the eggs by 1 inch. Bring to a boil over high heat and cook for exactly 7 minutes. Transfer the eggs to a small bowl and cool them under cold running water.

When the eggs are cool, peel them and halve them lengthwise. Carefully scoop out the yolks and transfer to the work bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade; reserve the whites.

To prepare the filling, add the tuna, garlic, parsley, mustard, anchovies, capers, and aioli to the yolks. Puree until smooth, scraping down the sides of the work bowl with a spatula as necessary. If needed, thin the mixture with a little caper juice. Once mixed to a smooth puree, season with pepper.

You can cook the eggs and prepare the yolk mixture up to 2 hours ahead of serving. Store them separately in covered containers in the refrigerator, and assemble right before you're ready to serve.

When ready to serve, transfer the filling to a pastry bag fitted with a large star tip. Pipe the

egg yolk mixture into the whites. Sprinkle the tops with paprika and serve. Or, drop a spoonful of yolk mixture into each egg white half, then sprinkle with paprika.

Crispy Oysters with Massaman Curry Bisque and Minted Cucumber Salad

Serves 4 to 6

Martha Hubbard, our former sous-chef, spent several years living and working in Thailand where she learned to make this sweet curry paste.

You can find kaffir lime leaves, mirin (Japanese rice wine), and lemongrass at Asian grocery stores. If you have your fishmonger shuck the oysters, ask to save the shells as well as the oyster liquor because you're going to use both. The recipe for Massaman curry makes more than is called for in this dish. The leftover curry, covered tightly and refrigerated, will keep for a week or so.

24 large oysters

1 English cucumber, peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch dice

1/4 cup loosely packed fresh mint leaves, coarsely chopped

1/4 cup mirin

1/4 cup rice vinegar

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 cup crème fraîche or coconut milk

1/4 cup [Massaman Curry Paste](#)

Juice of 1/2 lime

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon cayenne pepper

Rock salt, for serving

Canola or grapeseed oil, for pan-frying

Scrub the oysters under cold running water to clean them. Set a strainer over a small bowl. Shuck the oysters over the strainer, letting the oyster liquor drain into the bowl. Save the bottom oyster shells for serving and discard the top shells. Refrigerate the oysters and oyster liquor until ready to use.

To prepare the cucumber salad, combine the cucumber, mint, mirin, and rice vinegar in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper, stir, and set aside.

To prepare the curry bisque, in a small saucepan, combine the oyster liquor, crème fraîche, curry paste, and lime juice. Cook over low heat until the flavors come together and the bisque thickens slightly, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside and keep warm.

To prepare the oysters, sift the flour with cayenne into a small bowl. Line a plate with paper towels and have ready.

In a large skillet, heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Lightly dredge 6 of the oysters in the seasoned flour. Shake off excess flour, then carefully drop them into the skillet. Cook until they are crispy and golden brown all over, about 1 minute per side. Drain on the towel-lined plate and season with salt. To retain crispness, fry and serve the oysters in batches, adding and heating fresh oil as needed.

Make a generous bed of rock salt on a large serving platter or several smaller plates. Arrange the reserved oyster shells on the bed of salt. Place a spoonful of cucumber salad in each shell and top with a hot cooked oyster. Pour a generous spoonful of heated curry bisque over each oyster and serve.



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