

THE 12 TOOLS YOU NEED TO COOK LIKE A PRO P.116

# bon appétit

CAUTION - HOT

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## THE RESTAURANT ISSUE

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# 51

## DELICIOUS CHEF RECIPES

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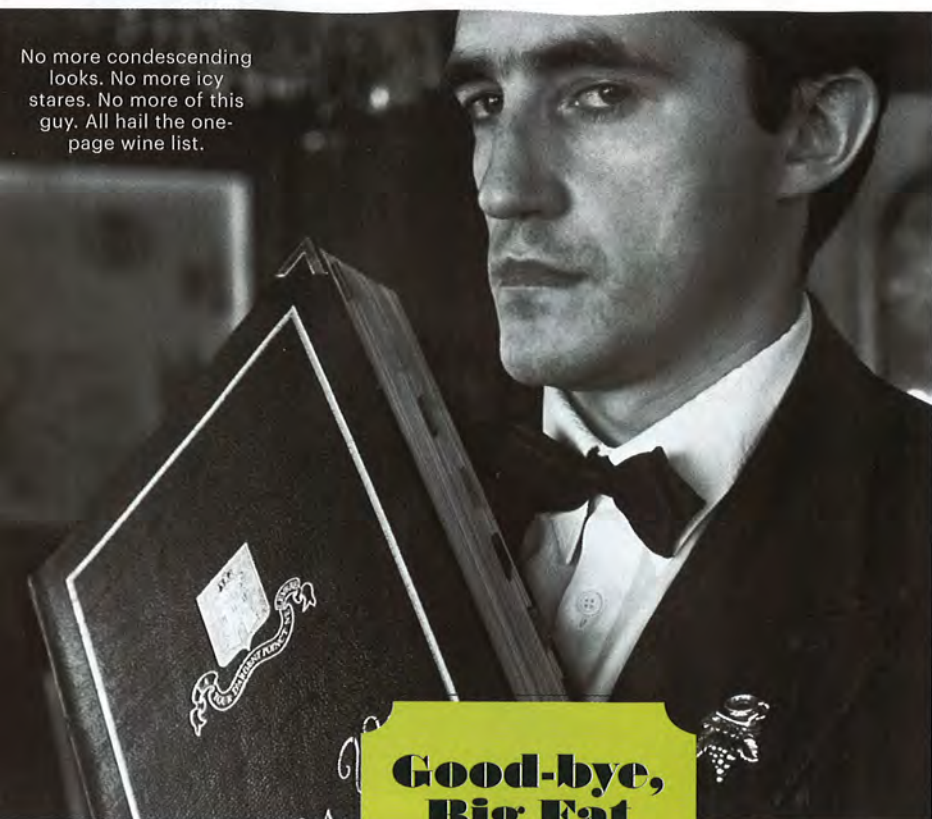


AND... THE MEAL WORTH FLYING HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD FOR P.86





No more condescending looks. No more icy stares. No more of this guy. All hail the one-page wine list.



## Good-bye, Big Fat Wine List

Those intimidating, leather-bound tomes are going the way of white tablecloths. **David Lynch** explains why we'll all drink better as a result

→ **SEE IF ANY OF THIS** sounds familiar: You're in a restaurant that takes wine very seriously, one where a thick, leather-bound, 25-page book arrives with great fanfare—and a thud—at the table. If you're in a group with no discernible host, who picks it up? Ideally there's a wine geek in the mix to take charge (which is fraught with its own perils, not least of which is having to listen to that person). Otherwise it's a game of hot potato—one that few diners want to play anymore.

That's tough for me to accept. I've spent the past decade working as a sommelier in restaurants with supersize wine lists (Babbo in New York City, 20 pages; and, more recently, Quince in San Francisco, 26 pages), but

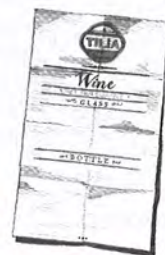
I've come to realize that my acquisitiveness appeals to only two types of customer: the aforementioned oenophile, a guy (it's usually a guy) who's just as likely to bring in his own bottle as he is to order something from me, or the fellow sommelier, also usually a male nerd, whose childhood affinity for, say, baseball cards morphed into a fascination with oxidized, skin-fermented white wines from Slovenia.

But when it comes to typical drinkers, I'm under pressure to edit things down. As one friend put it: "I don't come to your restaurant to read a book."

This sentiment may well be generated by the micro-regional (or micro-conceptual) nature of today's restaurants.

One of my first encounters with such a place was probably at Frasca Food and Wine in Boulder, Colorado, which is not an Italian restaurant but a *Friulian* one, with a wine list culled from appellations as close to the northeastern region as possible.

I learned the less-is-more, one-page approach to wine lists while writing my first for Quince's sister restaurant, Cotogna, when it opened last fall. It was all about being simple and concise: 50 wines, all Italian, each \$40 a bottle. Rather than just buy anything and everything I liked, which had been my MO for much of the previous decade, I had to make each choice count. I was curating rather than collecting. The result reads like a menu



Our favorite one-page wine lists:

**Girl & the Goat**  
Chicago

**Grüner Portland, OR**

**Pizzeria Locale**  
Boulder, CO

**The Grey Plume**  
Omaha

**Tilia Minneapolis**

rather than a list, which is the whole point; the idea that a great cellar must be a "deep" one is on the way out.

It's tough to downsize. Sommeliers don't really "do" concise. Much as I have come to love parsing the differences among Barolos (and acquiring as many vintages and producers as possible), it's my job to find a perfect, textbook Barolo for the person who's never tried one. Because on any given night, I deal with greater numbers of neophytes than of fellow connoisseurs, and finding wines for them is more difficult—and more satisfying—than jousting with an expert.

So is the short list a better way to go? If you trust the restaurant, yes. My idea of a great restaurant is one that, whatever its concept, conveys its sensibility through wine as well as food. While my cork-sniffing brethren and I may hate to admit it, an encyclopedic list doesn't really do that. It may be a book, but it doesn't tell a story.

*David Lynch is a James Beard Award-winning sommelier and the author of *Vino Italiano: The Regional Wines of Italy*.*