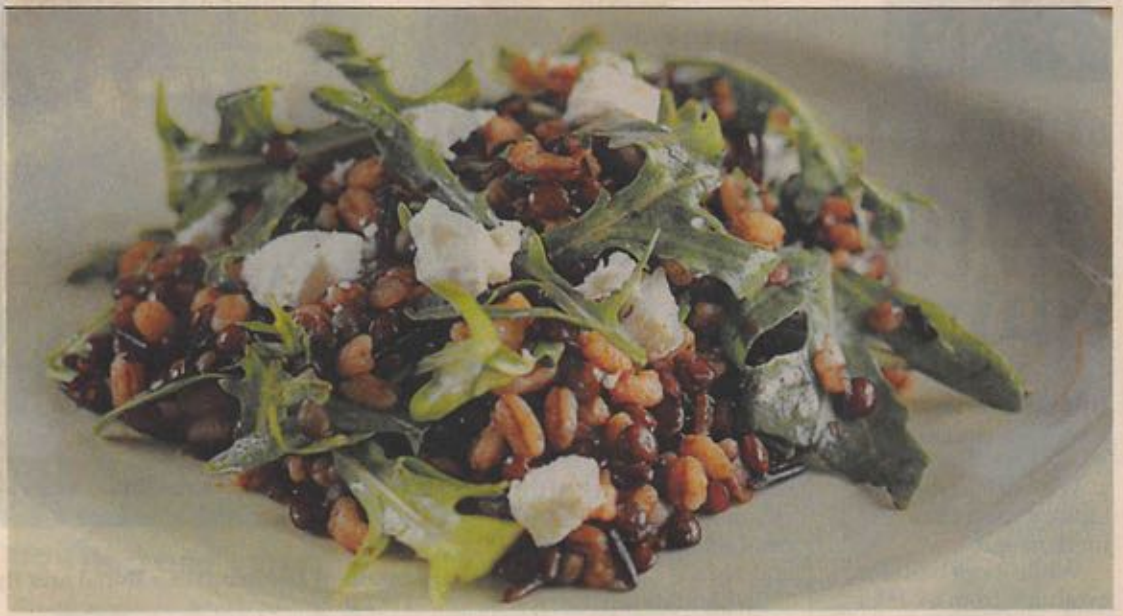

Craig Lee / Special to The Chronicle; styling by Lynne Char Bennett

Farro & Lentil Salad With Arugula & Feta

Serves 4 to 6 as a side dish

The grains and lentils can be made ahead for this easy dish, which is a good accompaniment for grilled meats, poultry and fish. The flavors are even better if you add some of the vinaigrette while the grains/lentils are still a little warm. For a twist, add preserved lemon, sun-dried tomato, chopped kalamata olives or freshly minced thyme.

½ cup wild rice

Kosher salt as needed

¾ cup farro (see Note)

¾ cup French green lentils (see Note)

¼ cup balsamic vinegar, or to taste

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil, or to taste

Freshly ground black pepper

½ medium-size red onion, finely chopped, about ½ cup

3 tablespoons capers

1½ to 2 ounces chopped baby arugula, about 2 cups

Lemon juice, as needed

3 to 4 ounces feta cheese, chopped or crumbled into small pieces

Chopped parsley to garnish

Instructions: Cook the wild rice at a hard simmer in plenty of well-salted water, stirring occasionally, until done but still toothsome, about 20-25 minutes; drain well. Cook the farro and lentils together in a separate pot in well-salted boiling water to cover until lentils are cooked through but not mushy and farro still has some chew, about 15-20 minutes; drain.

Meanwhile, make the vinaigrette: whisk together vinegar and olive oil with salt and pepper to taste.

In a large bowl, combine the cooked wild rice, farro and lentils; add onion, capers and the vinaigrette. Allow flavors to meld for at least 15 minutes. The salad can be made a day ahead up to this point. Bring to room temperature before continuing with the recipe.

Just before serving, fold in the arugula. Taste, then add more vinegar and oil as desired. Brighten with a squeeze of lemon juice, if needed. Fold in cheese and season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with parsley. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Note: Farro is an Italian grain, available at specialty grocers and many well-stocked supermarkets. French green lentils are often called Puy lentils.

Per serving: 343 calories, 13 g protein, 45 g carbohydrate, 13 g fat (3 g saturated), 13 mg cholesterol, 345 mg sodium, 6 g fiber.

Wine pairing: For everyday, try the 2009 Les Vignerons de Fontès Prieuré Saint-Hippolyte Languedoc Rosé ($10) or 2009 Charles & Charles Volume II Talcott Vineyard Columbia Valley Syrah Rosé ($11). Or splurge with a bubbly pink — a great wine for company.

XNiP code: F9YF

WINE

SPIRITS

Adding in a quinine bite

Lance Iversen

Todd Smith of Dalva mixes a Bonal and R

By Paul Clarke
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

With drinks, as with biology, most change is incremental.

While it can be a slow evolution from a vodka and soda to single malts and amari, sudden leaps of palate are possible. The recent premiere of two highly anticipated aperitif wines might give Bay Area drinkers just such a big step forward.

"People are always looking for complexity, whether it's on its own or in cocktails," says Todd Smith, a bartender at Dalva in San Francisco's Mission District.

Smith says more bartenders are satisfying this desire by dipping into the little-known well of French aperitif wines known as quinquinas and their Italian counterparts, chinati.

Quinquinas and chinati acquire their complexity from a blend of herbs and botanicals, making them similar to vermouth. While vermouth's subtle bitterness traditionally comes from wormwood, quinquinas and chinati

and when quinine was extracted and identified in the early 1800s, the substance was dispatched to mosquito-plagued European colonies in Africa and Asia.

To blunt its intense bitterness, quinine was mixed with wine and other flavorings. In 1846, while vying for a government reward for creating a palatable quinine-delivery vehicle, Parisian chemist Joseph Dubonnet introduced the first successful quinquina, flavored with chamomile, green coffee beans, cinnamon and more.

Medicinal roots

As with herbal drinks such as absinthe and Chartreuse, what began as medicinal soon became recreational. By the late 19th century, quinquinas including Dubonnet, St. Raphael, Bonal Gentiane-Quina and Kina Lillet were popular drinks in France, while in Italy the similarly popular chinati included Cocchi Aperitivo Americano and Cocchi Barolo Chinato, both

as a cocktail-shaker sidekick to gin or whiskey.

Dubonnet enjoyed an early 20th century heyday, accompanying gin in the Dubonnet Cocktail and rye whiskey in the Deshler, while Kina Lillet was found in the Corpse Reviver No. 2 and the gin and vodka-based Vesper, introduced as James Bond's favored bracer in "Casino Royale." (Lillet was reformulated in 1986; the quinine bitterness was eliminated and the cinchona-related "Kina" was dropped from the product's name.)

The recent cocktail revival gave quinquinas a bump in popularity. But that bump became a boom starting in April, when Minnesota-based Haus Alpenz began distributing two quinine-accented wines, Bonal Gentiane-Quina and Cocchi Aper-

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