

FOOD & WINE

APRIL 2011

» SLEEP IN THE TREES p. 26

» FUNGUS FORAGING p. 30

» SEAWEED KITCHEN p. 32

CO

trendspotting

best

WILD Wild flavors—in foraged herbs, say, or *sauvage* Chardonnays fermented with airborne yeasts—are complex, powerful and thrillingly unpredictable. Here's a look at all the wild new possibilities: in the kitchen, in vineyards and even on fashion runways and in tree-house hotels.

By Christine Quinlan
Food Photographs by Kate Mathis

UP IN THE AIR

Bakers, brewers and winemakers are making use of spontaneous fermentation driven by wild, airborne yeasts.



BREAD
WILD KIND:
SOURDOUGH

Mark Stambler captures the wild yeasts of Los Angeles to make rustic, chewy loaves in his backyard oven. He sells his bread at the Cheese Store of Silver Lake.



BEER
WILD KIND:
LAMBIC

Sixpoint Craft Ales' "Mad Scientists" line will feature a lambic-like beer made with wild yeast from the brewery's Brooklyn rooftop.



WINE
WILD KIND:
NATURAL
BOTTLES

Relying on wild yeasts to ferment wine is slow and unpredictable, but Napa producer Franciscan credits the process for the complex flavors of its Cuvée Sauvage Chardonnay.

FENNEL HUNTING

Wild fennel grows like a weed in much of California. Pastry chef Bill Corbett uses it in a strawberry compote he spoons onto orange-scented pound cake (recipe, p. 34).

"Ants on My Plate," \$32; baileydoesntbark.com.





GOOD BUZZ

The lives and struggles of beekeepers are the focus of a blog and a documentary film.

FRUSTRATEDFARMGIRL.COM

A Bay Area mother blogs about her beekeeping hobby, telling how she captured a feral swarm and extracts honey from hives.

QUEEN OF THE SUN

This documentary examines the mystifying Colony Collapse Disorder, which causes bees to suddenly disappear from their hives.

RECIPE
FILE

Undomesticated Dessert Wild fennel makes pound cake almost adventurous.

Strawberry-and-Wild-Fennel Compote with Pound Cake

📄 PAGE 25

ACTIVE: 45 MIN; TOTAL: 3 HR

8 SERVINGS

Pastry chef Bill Corbett of Absinthe Brasserie & Bar in San Francisco harvests his own fennel pollen for this dessert by hanging wild fennel flowers upside down; as they dry, the pollen falls into a container below.

POUND CAKE

2 sticks unsalted butter, softened, plus more for the pan

All-purpose flour

½ teaspoon salt

½ vanilla bean, split and seeds scraped

Finely grated zest of 2 oranges

4 large egg yolks

3 large eggs

1¼ cups sugar

COMPOTE

2 small, young wild fennel bulbs (or 1 small cultivated fennel bulb)—halved, cored and diced

½ vanilla bean—split, seeds scraped and bean reserved

Salt

1 pound small strawberries, diced

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Wild fennel pollen, for sprinkling (see Note)

1. MAKE THE POUND CAKE Preheat the oven to 350°. Butter and flour a 9-by-4½-by-3-inch metal loaf pan. In the bowl of a standing electric mixer fitted with the paddle, beat the butter with 1¼ cups of flour and the salt, vanilla seeds and orange zest until creamy. Scrape the mixture into a bowl. Add the egg yolks, whole eggs and sugar to the mixer bowl and beat at medium-high speed with the whisk attachment until pale and thick, about 4 minutes. Stir half of the whipped eggs into the flour paste, then fold in the rest.

2. Scrape the batter into the loaf pan and bake in the center of the oven for 1½ hours, until the cake is risen and a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Let the pound cake cool in the pan for 30 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

3. MAKE THE COMPOTE In a 9-by-13-inch nonreactive baking dish, combine the fennel, vanilla bean, a pinch of salt and 2 tablespoons of water. Cover with foil and roast until the fennel is tender, 30 minutes. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, toss the strawberries with the sugar, lemon juice, vanilla seeds and a pinch of salt and let stand until juicy, 30 minutes.

4. Add the strawberries and their juices to the fennel, cover and roast for 30 minutes. Discard the vanilla bean and transfer the compote to a bowl. Slice the cake and set a slice on each plate. Top with the compote, sprinkle with fennel pollen and serve.

NOTE Wild fennel pollen is available online at chefshop.com. ●