

“Refined, elegant pinot noir at a can't miss price!”

I was considered an experiment in the fall of 1991 when I entered the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park. Prior to my acceptance, the CIA only took students that had a minimum of three years of experience. Of course, I had six years of restaurant experience when I enrolled at age 17, but I'm pretty sure they didn't consider spinning pizza dough as valuable time spent in a kitchen. When accepted, I was one of the first beneficiaries of a newly launched, experimental program that called for admitting students that were not already entrenched in the industry. Now, they take anyone that can pay the astronomical tuition...but that's a story for another day.

The average age of the other students in my class was 27. My roommate was 31. It was a fairly intimidating atmosphere. The instructors added to the stress; most took special pleasure in tormenting their only student not old enough to vote. They definitely weren't in favor of the idea of enrolling kids right out of high school and absolutely did not appreciate my finely tuned skills in paper plate marketing.



Mmm, no comment.

Chef Howard "Corky" Clark was the Old Salty Dog that told us on our first day that the best any student could do in his class was a "C" us were above average!! One of his to make Salmon Consommé for all in mind, that in the 20 years since this another salmon consommé, I have

Fish Kitchen instructor. He was an first day that the best any student because there was no way that any of personal torture projects for me was the students to eat for dinner. Keep incident, not only have I never made never heard of anyone else making

one either. Even if I had made it perfectly, it would still be the most disgusting version of a fish soup. I learned later that you never use salmon bones in a stock because they are much too oily. I'm still not sure what Corky was trying to teach us with this lesson. Anyway, halfway through the preparation of my soup, I realized that something had clearly gone wrong. My raft (a solidified blob of protein that attracts more solids and clarifies the soup) did not rise to the top as Corky claimed it would. Worse, it burned on the bottom of the pot. I changed pots right away but the damage was already done. (2 classes later I learned that Corky was famous for turning up the gas under student's pots to see if they were paying attention).

I formed a new raft and continued to clarify this soup.

Around an hour later, Corky came over to taste the soup. He said he had tasted better dishwater. I said "*Chef, are you sure you can clarify a salmon stock?*" He bounced the spoon off my head and yelled, spit flying, "**YOU CAN'T CLARIFY MUD! Now dump it in the sink with the rest of the dishwater and tell everyone that there will be no soup tonight because you can't cook.**"



Chef "Corky" Clark

(BACK)

Naturally, after that incident, anything related to salmon left a bad taste in my mouth. One might say something like dishwater. To make matters worse, we were forced to eat salmon 3 times a week in The Great Hall because it was a cheap fish. When I graduated, I swore that I would never eat salmon again.

Learning how to pair wine with food was also part of the CIA curriculum. Their basic philosophy was that salmon was best with richer white wine but if a guest wanted to drink red, it should never be powerful, structured red like Cabernet or Bordeaux. Red wine for fish needed to be something fresh and vibrant, like Pinot Noir. I was taking their word for it because I sat out all the salmon/wine tastings. Thanks Corky!

Over the last few years, at the persistent urging of Melissa, my doctor, and Shaunn at Yumi, I have rediscovered how wonderful salmon can be. I've also thought a lot of about pairing wine with this fish and have come to the conclusion that American Pinot Noir may not always be the best pairing with salmon. Well, I should say, most American Pinot Noir. You see, the CIA advice wasn't off base; high-toned, elegant, really fresh Pinot is perfect with salmon. The problem is that most American Pinots (and French too!) aren't made in that style anymore. No critic lays out mid-90s scores for a light colored, aromatic red wine, even if the wine is absolutely delicious. If you are in the business of selling wine, most wineries need those scores to move wine through the system. This was certainly not the case in 1991; most Pinot was like it had been for generations; light in color, aromatically very fine with vibrant, berry fruit and a finish that was crisp and clean. Perfect for salmon. These days, that style of Pinot is hard to find. When I do find one, I go all in.

The Coleman Cherry Cove Pinot Noir is a wine that kills the wine myth that the darker and more viscous a wine is, the better it is. Coleman Pinot is all about aromatics, silky fruit and incredible food friendliness. We'll be drinking this wine all spring and summer long with roasted salmon, poultry and vegetarian dishes, particularly anything with an earthy whole grain like farro or quinoa. It's perfect with a slight chill but be sure to drink it in a big glass as oxygen is this wine's friend. Don't miss this refined, elegant Pinot Noir at a price that you can drink everyday.

Note: I'm glad Coleman was bold enough to put a screwcap on this wine. While I know it's not always the most popular concept in the wine community, many people including myself, believe that a screwcap makes for a better product as it secures the integrity and purity of the wine.