



TED AXELROD

When **David Pasternack** opened Esca, his shrine to the bounty of the ocean, in 2000, few could have guessed that his menu of raw fish would cause a sensation. But sure enough, his delicate and nuanced crudo dishes, inspired by preparations he discovered on a trip along the Istrian coast, have wowed Esca diners and excited chefs across the country. Using a few select ingredients matched with flawless seafood, Pasternack captures the spirit of the Mediterranean.

 **Carl McCoy**, Pasternack's wine director at Esca, takes an imaginative approach to pairing wine with fish. He doesn't hesitate to point out that, despite the common assumption to the contrary, red wine often makes a fine match for fresh fish, as you'll see in one of his clever pairings for these crudo recipes.

# ART *of* RAW

THE PREPARATION OF RAW SEAFOOD KNOWN SIMPLY AS CRUDO IS A GROWING TREND THAT **DAVID PASTERNAK** SET IN MOTION STATESIDE 10 YEARS AGO. WITH ESSENTIALS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN KITCHEN AND PRISTINE INGREDIENTS FROM THE OCEAN, HIS CREATIONS FOR LA CUCINA TRULY TASTE OF THE SEA.

RECIPES BY DAVID PASTERNAK  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW McCAUL

## tartara di sgombro con caviale

MACKEREL TARTARE WITH CAVIAR

25 minutes | 4 servings

*Italy doesn't have many caviar producers, but Calvisius sustainably produces top-grade white sturgeon, ossetra and caviar de venise varieties in Calvisano, in Lombardy.*

- 2 pounds whole Boston or Spanish mackerel, scaled, cleaned, filleted, skinned and blood line removed, leaving you with 1 pound mackerel fillets**
- 4 tablespoons high-quality spicy Tuscan extra-virgin olive oil plus more for drizzling (see box, p.51), or high-quality extra-virgin olive oil of your choice**
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped chives**
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard**

**Fine sea salt**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

- 4 ounces white sturgeon caviar, preferably Calvisius (see note)**

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: 1 (2½- to 3-inch) ring mold, optional**

Using a sharp chefs knife, cut fish crosswise into ¼-inch slices, then gently cut slices into approximately ⅛- to ¼-inch pieces (do not chop fish, otherwise it will bruise and become mushy).

In a large bowl, gently but thoroughly mix together fish, oil, chives and mustard. Season with ½ teaspoon salt and generous pinch pepper; taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary.

In center of 1 serving plate, set ring mold, if using. Gently but firmly fill mold with ¼ of the fish mixture; top with ¼ of the caviar, then remove mold (alternatively, gently but firmly press mixture into a ½ cup measure, then invert onto serving plate; remove cup measure and top with caviar. Or, carefully mound fish in center of plates, then top with caviar). Repeat to make 4 servings. Drizzle with oil and serve immediately.

**NOTE:** *Calvisius Italian caviar can be purchased online at calvisiuscaviar.com; (855) 255-8474.*

## flake crudo con alga spaghetti

FLUKE CRUDO WITH HARICOT DE MER

15 minutes plus soaking | 4 servings

*Haricot de mer—a spaghetti-shaped seaweed harvested in Brittany—brings a touch of toothsome texture and a bit of vegetal flavor to this delicate crudo.*

- 1 (8- to 10-ounce) fluke fillet**
- ¼ (1.7-ounce) package haricot de mer seaweed (see note), rinsed in several changes of cold water, then soaked in cold water for 1 hour, then drained**
- 4½ teaspoons strained fresh lime juice plus more for extra scraps of fish**

**Fine sea salt**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**A high-quality herbaceous, grassy-style extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling (see box, p.51), or high-quality extra-virgin olive oil of your choice**

Using a knife with a thin sharp blade, begin cutting fish crosswise and on the diagonal into 12 pieces, each ¾- to 1-inch wide and 2½- to 3-inches long. As pieces of fish are cut, arrange on serving plates (any scraps of leftover fish can be seasoned as you do with the rest and served family-style).

Cut a few strands seaweed so that you have 12 (2- to 2½-inch) pieces for garnish; set aside. In a small bowl, toss remaining seaweed with 1½ teaspoons lime juice.

Drizzle each piece of fish with ¼ teaspoon of the remaining lime juice, then sprinkle with pinch salt and pepper. Garnish each piece of fish with 1 piece reserved seaweed. Divide seaweed salad among plates. Drizzle fish and seaweed salad with oil. Serve immediately.

**NOTE:** *Haricot de mer is sold as Sea Spaghetti; it can be mail ordered at brittanysalt.com; (866) 671-7451.*

## capesante crude con olio tangerino

DIVER SCALLOP CRUDO WITH TANGERINE OIL

45 minutes | Serves 4

*If you are unfamiliar with shucking diver scallops, you can ask your fishmonger to show you how, or to shuck the scallops for you. Just be sure to request to take home the shells. Have all your ingredients measured before putting crushed ice and shells on plates, so that the ice does not melt.*

**Ice cubes**

**Fine sea salt**

- 4 live diver scallops in the shell**
- 2 to 3 cups crushed ice for plates**
- Strained juice from 1 tangerine**
- 2 tablespoons tangerine extra-virgin olive oil (see note)**

**Flakey coarse sea salt**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**Whole pink peppercorns for garnish**

Fill a medium bowl with 6 or 7 ice cubes and cold water to come halfway up bowl; stir in 2 to 3 teaspoons fine sea salt.

Using a clam knife, carefully open and remove scallops from shells, taking care not to damage shells or meat. As you open shells, transfer scallops to bowl with ice water. Gently scrub and pat dry 4 best shells; set aside.

Transfer 1 scallop from water to a cutting board. Using a knife with a thin sharp blade, halve scallop horizontally; transfer pieces to a plate. Repeat with remaining scallops.

Arrange crushed ice on serving plates to make a bed for shells. Arrange 1 shell on each bed of ice.

In a large bowl, combine tangerine juice, oil and generous pinch salt and pepper; add scallops and gently toss to combine. Reserving marinade, arrange 2 pieces scallop in each shell; drizzle juices on top. Garnish with pink peppercorns and season with salt and pepper.

**NOTE:** *Tangerine extra-virgin olive oil can be purchased at specialty markets or mail ordered at amazon.com.*

### DAVID'S TIPS

*Trusting your fishmonger and buying the freshest seafood is imperative for crudo recipes. Tell them you are preparing raw fish. They can also cut and shuck the seafood for you.*

*Here are the olive oils that David uses for these recipes.*

**For Mackerel Tartare:**  
Capezzana, Tuscany.

**For Fluke:**  
Pianogrillo, Sicily.

**For Black Bass:**  
Frantoi Cutrera,  
"Primo," Sicily.

**For Razor Clams:**  
Al Frantoio Di Aldo  
Armato, Liguria.

**TARTARA DI  
SGOMBRO CON  
CAVIALE**

 **Nanfro, "Sammauro," Cerasuolo di Vittoria, Sicily, 2008.** *A novel wine pairing will add dimension and complexity. While red wine can be difficult to match with fish, in this case it's a match made in heaven. The light and silky body of this Sicilian red has baked berry and bright fruit that highlights the bite of chives and the oily richness of the mackerel, elevating the dish to new levels.*



**FLUKE CRUDO  
CON ALGA SPAGHETTI**

 **Bastianich "Adriatico,"  
Malvasia Istriana, Croatia,  
2009.** Croatia shares the Adriatic  
Sea with Italy, and this Croatian  
white wine begs to be paired with  
seafood. With a pleasing viscosity and  
violet and peach blossom on the nose,  
it finishes with a waxy weight that  
matches fluke's delicacy.



 **Bellavista, Gran Cuvée Rosé  
Brut, Franciacorta, 2003.** This  
stellar Franciacorta has a hint of  
sea brine on the nose, and a steely,  
mineral-rich palate that segues into baked  
bread and a hint of residual sugar. The  
brightness of its acidity braces the citrus  
notes of the dish and picks up the spicy  
pop of the pink peppercorns.

**CAPESANTE  
CRUDE CON OLIO  
TANGERINO**



**Tommasone "Terradei," Ischia, 2009.** A rare gem from the tiny island of Ischia comes from vineyards surrounded by the sea. It's sun-kissed and light, with a restrained palate up front that gives plenty of room to the subtle flavor of black sea bass, and finishes with a hint of citrus and sulfur to complement the crunch of sunflower seeds and pine nuts.

**DUO DI BRANZINO CRUDO**

## duo di branzino crudo

BLACK BASS CRUDO  
WITH SUNFLOWER SEEDS AND WITH PINE NUTS  
30 minutes | 4 servings

*Cold-pressed sunflower oil is an exciting ingredient, with a light acidity and delicate notes of sunflower seeds. In this dish, Pasternack uses it as a contrast, as well as a complement, to the olive oil and pine nuts.*

- 2** teaspoons pine nuts
- 2** teaspoons roasted or raw unsalted sunflower seeds
- ¾ to 1** pound skinless black sea bass fillets
- 4** teaspoons strained fresh lemon juice  
plus more for leftover scraps of fish

**Sicilian type fine or coarse sea salt from Trapani (see note)**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**A high-quality, fruity Sicilian extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling (see box, p.51), or high-quality extra-virgin olive oil of your choice**

**Kocbek cold-pressed sunflower oil for drizzling (see note)**

Put pine nuts in a small skillet; put sunflower seeds in a second small skillet. Place each skillet over low heat and toast nuts and seeds, occasionally moving skillets back and forth over flame, until fragrant and golden, 8 to 12 minutes (nuts will take a little longer than seeds). Remove skillets from heat; keeping nuts and seeds separate, transfer to a plate.

Using a knife with a thin sharp blade, cut tip ends from fillets, then cut fillets crosswise into 16 crudo slices, each about 1 inch wide and 2 to 2½ inches long. As pieces of fish are cut, arrange on serving

plates (any scraps of leftover fish can be seasoned as you do with the rest and served family-style).

Drizzle each piece of fish with ¼ teaspoon lemon juice, then sprinkle with pinch of salt and pepper. For each serving, top 2 slices of fish with 2 or 3 pine nuts and 2 slices of fish with 3 or 4 sunflower seeds. Drizzle pine nut-topped fish with olive oil. Drizzle sunflower-topped fish with sunflower oil. Serve immediately.

**NOTE:** Kocbek cold-pressed sunflower oil can be purchased by mail order from Slovenian Premium Wines, (845) 528-4330. Salt from Trapani can be mail ordered at [saltworks.us.com](http://saltworks.us.com) or [gustiamo.com](http://gustiamo.com).

## cannolicchi agli agrumi

RAZOR CLAM CRUDO WITH CITRUS AND CHILE  
40 minutes | 4 servings

*If you are unfamiliar with shucking razor clams, you can ask your fishmonger to show you how or to shuck the clams for you. Just be sure to request to take home the clam juices and shells. Have all your ingredients measured before putting crushed ice and shells on plates, so that the ice does not melt.*

### Ice cubes

#### Fine sea salt

- 2** pounds fresh razor clams in the shell
- 3** tablespoons high-quality fruity, green Ligurian extra-virgin olive oil plus more for drizzling (see box, p.51), or high-quality extra-virgin olive oil of your choice
- 1** tablespoon strained fresh lemon juice
- 1** tablespoon strained fresh lime juice
- 1** scallion, thinly sliced diagonally
- 1** teaspoon thinly sliced mint leaves
- ½** teaspoon minced fresh chile, such as serrano or jalapeño

#### Freshly ground black pepper

- 2** to **3** cups crushed ice for plates

#### SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: a coffee filter or cheese cloth

Fill a medium bowl with 6 or 7 ice cubes and cold water to come halfway up bowl; stir in 2 to 3 teaspoons fine sea salt.

Using a clam knife and taking care not to damage shells or meat, carefully open and remove clams from shells, transferring clams to prepared ice water and reserving clam juices in a separate bowl as you go. Gently scrub and pat dry 6 best shells. Separate shells to make 12 half shells; set half shells aside (reserve remaining shells in case of breakage).

Into a large clean bowl, strain clam juices through a coffee filter or a fine-mesh sieve lined with cheese cloth.

Using a slotted spoon, transfer clams from ice water to a cutting board. With a sharp chefs knife, cut clams crosswise into ¼-inch pieces, transferring cut pieces to a large, clean, dry bowl as you go.

To bowl with clam pieces, add 1 tablespoon strained clam juices; toss to combine, then add oil, lemon juice, lime juice, scallion, mint, chile and pinch salt and pepper. Adjust seasoning, if necessary.

Arrange crushed ice on serving plates to make a bed for reserved shells. Arrange 3 half shells on each bed of ice. Fill shells with clam mixture. Serve immediately. □



**CANNOLICCHI AGLI AGRUMI**

**Marisa Cuomo, "Fiorduva," Costa d'Amalfi, 2008.** It's no surprise that coastal wine pairs so well with seafood. This white wine has a Chardonnay-like nose, while the medium body, with spicy notes of fennel and bell peppers, resonates with the chile and lime of the crudo marinade. — Ian Wolff