

PAIRINGS

Indulge the palate

By Carey Sweet

“A jug of wine, a loaf of bread and thou” may have been heaven for poet Omar Khayyam, but at Signorello Estate in Napa, chef Michael Pryor prefers to feed us ratatouille tart with roasted lamb loin and polenta.

The tariff is pricey at \$175, but for nearly three hours, we sip, tour the vineyard, then retire to a salon where estate sommelier Ronald Plunkett explains wine nuances, the difference between Burgundy and Bordeaux glasses, why a winemaker would add Viognier to Syrah (for mouthfeel, aromatics and viscosity), and the importance of “volatizing the esters” (swirling the glass).

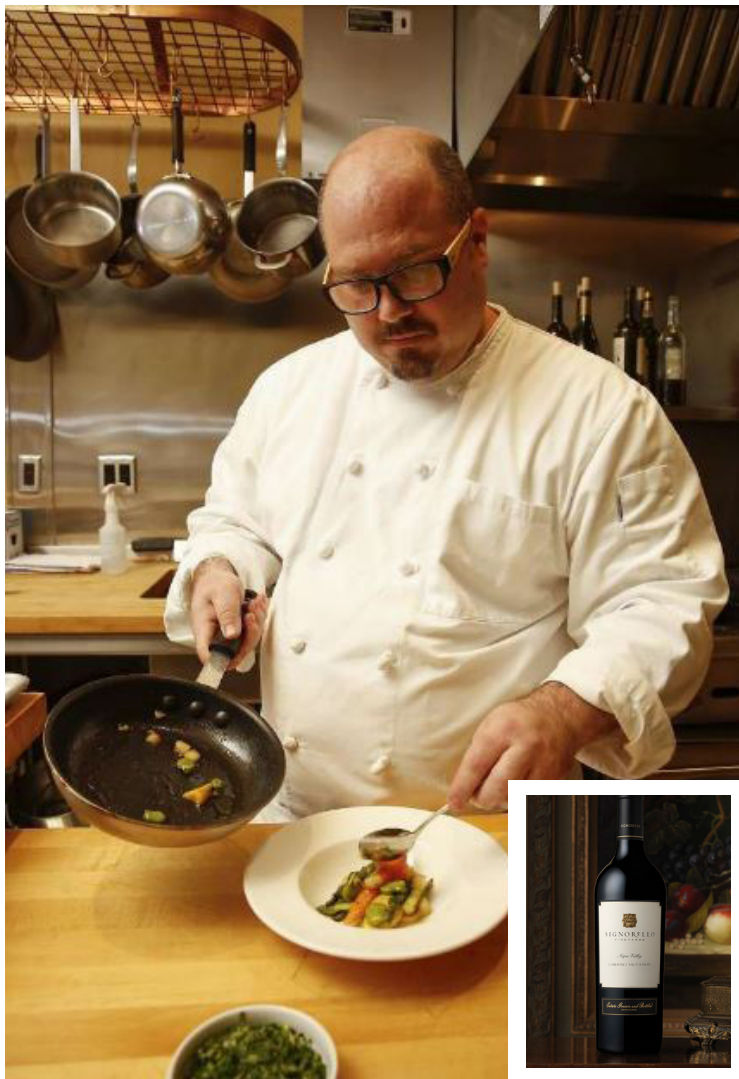
Pryor creates a five-course lunch to go with the wines and explains the logic behind the pairings. The 2013 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon demanded a dish that was bold and succulent, he said at a recent luncheon, but the wine’s blend of 14 percent Merlot and 4 percent

Cabernet Franc also called for earthiness.

So he came up with hand-made rosemary pappardelle, draped in sugo crafted by braising pork on the bone, then milling it with pancetta and porcini before adding a finishing flourish of Parmigiano-Reggiano. Rich meat and salty accents stood up to the wine’s dark berry and charcoal notes and opulent body, with a butteriness in the sauce to further soften the wine’s already silky tannins.

For other inspiration, the chef looks to the on-site garden, harvesting ingredients for creations such as pan-seared scallops with vegetable ragout, fennel broth and lemon gremolata; and grilled peaches with burrata, pickled radishes, basil and pine nuts.

*4500 Silverado Trail, Napa.
Noon Thursdays through
Mondays, March through
November: (707) 255-5990;
www.signorelloestate.com*



Craig Lee/Special to The Chronicle

Chef Michael Pryor prepares the repast for the wine-pairing tasting.