

GRAIN

HOW GRAINS LIKE RYE BERRIES, AMARANTH,
QUINOA AND FARRO SAVED ONE CHEF'S LIFE.

BY SARAH DIGREGORIO FOOD PHOTOGRAPHS BY CON POULOS PORTRAIT BY PER-ANDERS JORGENSEN



Marco Canora says he discovered grains like rye “after 20 years of living on cigarettes, bread and sugar.”

T

here was a time when 80 percent of New York City chef Marco Canora's diet was made up of white bread—the really good crusty kind from Sullivan Street Bakery, but still. The rest of his sustenance came in the form of ice cream from his New York restaurant Hearth, plus cigarettes and liquor. “It was not pretty,” he says. “Twenty years of cigarettes, bread and sugar, and it’s freaking ugly, man.” (Canora swears like a sailor and did not say “freaking.”)

It's not that he didn't know better: He grew up eating the healthiest food imaginable. His mother moved to upstate New York from Tuscany when she was 18, and she brought the Tuscan cooking style with her. Canora's childhood was filled with wholesome and delicious dishes: spaghetti with fresh tomato sauce, string beans in good olive oil, zucchini frittatas, fried zucchini blossoms and all kinds of amazing salads made with ingredients from their huge garden. “My mom was way ahead of her time,” says Canora. “But I was like, ‘Why do my friends get all the good stuff?’ For afterschool snacks, I swear to God, we had a wicker basket full of nuts in the shells with a nutcracker. The joke among my friends was, ‘Hey, Marco, let’s go to your house for *nuts*.’”

Despite the good start, by the time he hit 40, his health issues were alarming: sleep apnea, prediabetes, high cholesterol, gout. The white-bread diet wasn't really working for him. So Canora switched to the dishes that he shares on the next few pages: nutty spelt pasta with chicken livers; incredible Parmesan broth with tiny grains of amaranth; chewy steel-cut oats with dried cherries. It's an approach he documents in his new cookbook, *A Good Food Day*.

His conversion to whole grains (or, as he calls them, “intact,” unprocessed grains) had a near-miraculous effect on his health. He slimmed down—in part because the fiber in whole grains helps you lose weight. His blood sugar levels steadied when he cut out refined white flour, which causes a roller coaster of spikes and drops. His gout went away.

Yet Canora is still the same guy who used to sneak chicken nuggets at his friends' houses. “Once in a while, I go out with my wife and have four glasses of wine, and I eat whatever I want and have an after-dinner drink and dessert,” he says. “I'm a hedonist at heart.”

Caraway Salmon with Rye Berry-and-Beet Salad

Active **40 min**
Total **1 hr 40 min**; Serves **4**

The aromatic, tangy flavor of rye berries goes nicely with the caraway in this Scandinavian-style dish. Plus, the berries are a good source of fiber. Wheat berries would also work well here.

SAUCE

½ cup full-fat plain Greek yogurt or sour cream

1 Tbsp. chopped dill

2 tsp. drained prepared horseradish

1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
Fine sea salt and pepper

SALAD

1 bunch beets (1½ lbs.)—scrubbed, greens trimmed and reserved, beets sliced ½ inch thick

5 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
Fine sea salt and pepper

1 cup rye berries

2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar

1 Tbsp. drained prepared horseradish

SALMON

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
Four 6-oz. skin-on wild salmon fillets
Fine sea salt

2 Tbsp. unsalted butter

1 tsp. caraway seeds

1. Make the sauce Combine all of the ingredients and mix well.

2. Make the salad Preheat the oven to 300°. On a rimmed baking sheet lined with aluminum foil, toss the sliced beets with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil; season with salt and pepper. Arrange the beets in a single layer and roast for about 1 hour,

flipping the slices halfway through, until the beets are tender. Chop the beets and transfer to a large bowl.

3. Meanwhile, bring a medium saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add the rye berries and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until al dente, about 1 hour.

4. Drain the rye berries and add them to the bowl with the beets. Add the vinegar, horseradish and the remaining 3 tablespoons of olive oil, season with salt and pepper and toss to coat evenly. Keep warm.

5. In a small saucepan of boiling water, blanch the beet greens for 2 minutes. Drain and cool under cold water; pat dry. Chop the greens and toss with the beets and rye berries.

6. Cook the salmon In a large cast-iron or nonstick skillet, heat the olive oil. Season the salmon fillets with salt and cook skin side down over moderately high heat until golden and crisp, about 4 minutes. Flip the fish and cook for 2 minutes. Add the butter and caraway seeds to the skillet and cook, basting with the caraway butter, until the salmon is just cooked through, about 1 minute longer.

7. Mound the rye berry salad on plates and spoon the dill sauce alongside. Top with the salmon, skin side up. Serve, passing the remaining dill sauce at the table.

MAKE AHEAD The dill sauce and cooked rye berries can be refrigerated separately overnight.

WINE Boldly fruity Sauvignon Blanc from California is superb with meatier fish like salmon. Try the 2013 Brander or the 2013 Groth.

RYE BERRIES



HERO INGREDIENT

The rye berries Canora serves with caraway salmon are a fantastic source of fiber.

*Plate by Felt+Fat;
napkin by Bella Notte.*

Ask anyone on the street what *whole* means, and they'll tell you **whole means whole**. Ask the FDA, though, and you'll hear this craziness: If a food contains all the parts of a whole grain (bran, germ and endosperm), it can be called whole grain even if that grain has been taken apart, **pulverized**, processed and put back together, destroying the healthy natural fats. I don't say 'whole grain' anymore because it's meaningless. I say **'intact.'** **Intact grain** means what you think it means: grains, the way they grew, not tampered with. No one has gotten their dirty paws on that word yet.

Creamy Steel-Cut Oats with Dried Cherries and Almonds

🕒 Total **30 min**; Serves **4 to 6**

Steel-cut oats are simply chopped whole oats; they're super-nutritious and have a great chew. Canora likes to simmer the oats in whole milk or cream and almond milk with sweet spices for a breakfast with staying power.

- ½ cup dried sour cherries**
- 1 cup whole milk or cream**
- 1 cup unsweetened, unflavored almond milk**
- 1 cup steel-cut oats**

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

1 tsp. ground ginger

¼ tsp. ground allspice

¼ tsp. kosher salt, plus more for seasoning

1 Tbsp. pure maple syrup, plus more for drizzling

¼ cup sliced almonds, plus more for topping

1. In a small bowl, cover the dried sour cherries with warm water and let stand until plumped and softened, about 15 minutes. Drain the cherries and discard the soaking water.

2. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan, combine the whole milk, almond milk and 1 cup of water and bring to a boil. Stir in the oats, cinnamon, ginger, allspice and the ¼ teaspoon of salt. Cover and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the oats are al dente and the porridge is creamy, 20 minutes.

3. Stir in the cherries, maple syrup and almonds and season with salt. Serve topped with more maple syrup and almonds.

MAKE AHEAD The porridge can be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Reheat gently with more milk or cream to loosen as necessary.

STEEL-CUT OATS

HERO INGREDIENT

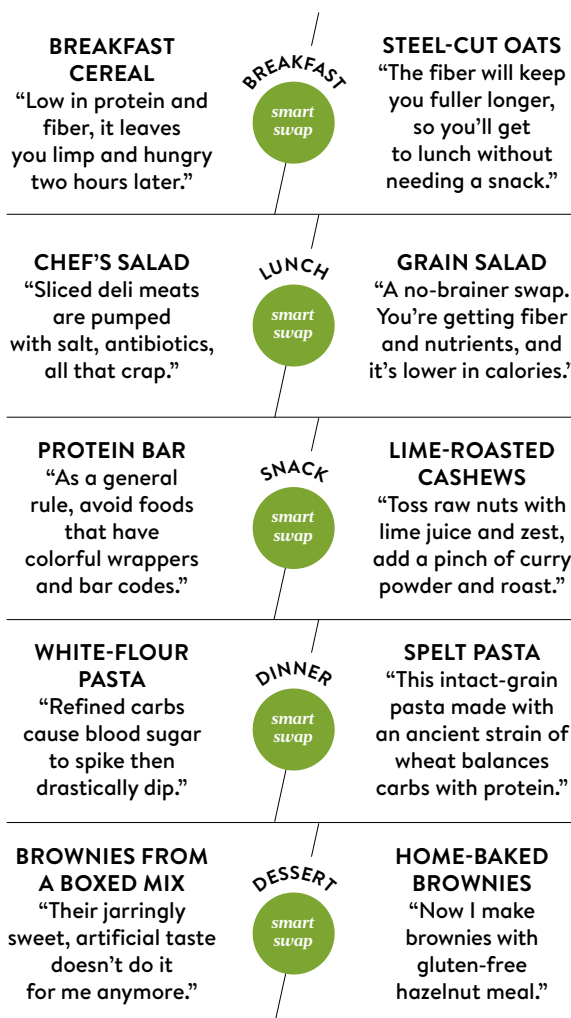
Steel-cut oats have not been overly “tampered with,” Canora says. He simmers them in milk for breakfast.

Bowls and board from March; spoon by Sweet Gum Co.; jars by Fort Standard.



FIVE FOOD SWAPS FOR A GOOD FOOD DAY

Canora on the substitutions that help him avoid everything from creeping weight gain to gout.



COVER RECIPE

Escarole Salad with Red Quinoa and Hazelnuts

🕒 Active 20 min; Total 40 min
 Serves 4 to 6

Canora loves quinoa, a high-protein seed, because it mimics the satisfying texture and starchiness of a grain.

- ¼ cup red quinoa, rinsed and drained
- ¼ cup plus 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. honey
- Fine sea salt and pepper
- 1 head of escarole, chopped into bite-size pieces
- 1 Granny Smith apple—halved, cored and thinly sliced on a mandoline
- ½ cup toasted hazelnuts, chopped

1. In a medium saucepan of boiling water, cook the quinoa just until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain well and spread out on a baking sheet to cool.

2. In a large bowl, whisk the olive oil with the vinegar and honey. Season with salt and pepper. Add the escarole, apple, hazelnuts and quinoa and toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Sweet Brown Rice Risotto with Kale and Cremini

Active 45 min; Total 1 hr 15 min
 Serves 6 to 8

“Despite its name, sweet brown rice isn’t sweet,” says Canora. Instead, this glutinous rice resembles whole-grain sushi rice; look for it at Asian markets and from Bob’s Red Mill.

- 1 quart mushroom broth
- 1 quart vegetable broth
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 10 oz. cremini mushrooms, thinly sliced
- Fine sea salt and pepper
- ¾ lb. Tuscan kale, stemmed, leaves chopped into ½-inch pieces

- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 yellow onion, minced
- 2 cups sweet brown rice
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 Tbsp. chopped thyme
- ⅓ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, plus more for serving

1. In a saucepan, mix the mushroom and vegetable broths and bring to a simmer; keep warm.

2. In a large enameled cast-iron casserole, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Add the mushrooms, season with salt and pepper and cook over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a bowl.

3. Add 1 tablespoon of the olive oil to the casserole. Add the kale and cook over moderate heat until wilted, 3 minutes. Add the kale to the mushrooms.

4. In the casserole, melt 1 tablespoon of the butter in the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the onion, season with salt and pepper and cook over moderate heat until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the rice and stir until coated with oil and lightly toasted, 2 minutes. Add the wine and cook, stirring, until evaporated. Add 2 cups of the hot broth, cover partially and cook, stirring occasionally, until most of the broth has been absorbed, 10 minutes. Repeat with another 2 cups of broth.

5. Add 3 cups of the broth, 1 cup at a time, and cook, stirring often, until it is mostly absorbed between additions, about 15 minutes total. Add the last cup of broth, the mushrooms, kale, thyme, ⅓ cup of cheese and the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter. Cook, stirring, until the risotto is creamy. Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle with oil and serve with cheese.

WINE Juicy Montepulciano d’Abruzzo is extremely versatile, as good with roast chicken as it is with this risotto. Try the 2013 Vigneti del Sole or the 2013 Quattro Mani.

QUINOA



HERO INGREDIENT

Quinoa is a protein-rich seed. Canora tosses it into a crunchy escarole-apple salad.

Plate and pitcher by Hasami Porcelain from Tortoise General Store; flatware from TableArt.



HERO INGREDIENT

The whole-wheat flour in fig-and-rosemary focaccia is nutty and nourishing (p. 80).

WHOLE WHEAT

FARRO



HERO INGREDIENT

Farro is lower in gluten than other forms of wheat. Canora cooks it risotto-style with short ribs (p. 102).

Bowl by Royal Copenhagen; glasses by Fferrone Design; board from CB2.

MARCO'S RULES FOR GOOD EATING

1 DEPRIVATION ISN'T A LONG-TERM SOLUTION.

Satisfaction is. On a good food day, eating is a source of pleasure.

2 IGNORE HEALTH BUZZWORDS ON PROCESSED-FOOD PACKAGES.

Let the ingredient list guide you.

3 A TWINGE OF HUNGER ISN'T THE END OF THE WORLD.

Recognizing real hunger is a key part of learning to feed yourself well.

4 DIVERSIFY.

Choose foods with a wide range of flavors, colors and textures.

5 SAY "TO HELL WITH IT" EVERY NOW AND THEN.

It will increase your chances of sticking to good eating habits.

Fig-and-Rosemary Focaccia with Pecorino

 PAGE 78

Active **25 min**; Total **4 hr 20 min**
Serves **8**

Canora makes this focaccia with whole-wheat flour. He prefers freshly milled, small-batch versions like those from Cayuga Pure Organics (cporganics.com).

- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for greasing**
- 1½ cups warm water**
- 2½ tsp. active dry yeast**
- 1½ tsp. sugar**
- 3¾ cups whole-wheat flour**
- 2 Tbsp. chopped rosemary**
- Fine sea salt**
- 12 plump dried Black Mission figs (5 oz.)**
- Boiling water**
- Black pepper**
- ½ cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano cheese**

- 1.** Grease the bottom of a large bowl with olive oil. Pour the warm water into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. Evenly sprinkle the yeast and sugar over the water. Mix at low speed until combined, 30 seconds. Add the flour, rosemary, ½ cup of the olive oil and 4 teaspoons of salt and mix at medium speed until a dough forms, about 5 minutes; it will be a little sticky. Form the dough into a ball and transfer to the greased bowl. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and let stand at room temperature until it doubles in bulk, about 2 hours.
- 2.** Punch the dough down in the bowl and form it into a loose ball. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand at room temperature for 1 hour.
- 3.** Meanwhile, in a small, heat-proof bowl, cover the figs with boiling water. Let stand until softened, 1 hour. Drain the figs and slice them ¼ inch thick.

4. Lightly grease a 9-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheet. Transfer the dough to the prepared pan and, using your fingertips, press it out to fill the pan. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature for 30 minutes.

5. Preheat the oven to 375°. Arrange the fig slices all over the dough; gently press them in. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle the cheese over the top. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, rotating the pan halfway through, until golden and firm. Let cool slightly on a rack. Drizzle with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil and serve warm or at room temperature.

Amaranth in Brodo with Egg and Spinach

Active **20 min**; Total **4 hr**
Serves **4 to 6**

Canora is so obsessed with broth's curative powers that he's opened a takeout broth dispensary called Brodo. This is his take on his mother's pastina in brodo. Here, tiny whole-grain amaranth stands in for pastina, the smallest shape of pasta. The broth takes time, but it simmers mostly unattended. The rich, deep flavor is fantastic with the nutty pop of the amaranth.

- 8 whole chicken legs (4½ lbs.)**
- 1 lb. beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch pieces**
- 2 turkey wings**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- 4 celery ribs, chopped**
- 2 carrots, chopped**
- One 12-oz. can whole tomatoes**
- 1 tsp. black peppercorns**
- 12 parsley sprigs, plus 1 Tbsp. chopped parsley**
- ½ cup amaranth**

- 4 cups baby spinach (4 oz.)**
- 3 large eggs**
- 2 Tbsp. freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus more for garnish**
- Pinch of grated nutmeg**
- Fine sea salt and pepper**

1. In a large pot, combine the chicken, beef and turkey. Fill the pot with 4½ quarts of water and bring to a boil. Cover partially and simmer over moderate heat, skimming off the fat and foam that rise to the surface, until the broth looks clear, about 30 minutes. Add the onion, celery, carrots, tomatoes, peppercorns and parsley sprigs. Simmer until the broth is very flavorful and reduced to 5 cups, about 2½ hours. Strain the broth through a sieve; discard the solids.

2. In a large saucepan, bring the strained broth to a boil. Add the amaranth, cover and cook over moderately low heat until the amaranth is tender, about 30 minutes. Stir in the spinach.

3. In a small bowl, beat the eggs with the cheese, chopped parsley, nutmeg and ½ teaspoon each of salt and pepper. Remove the saucepan from the heat and drizzle in the eggs. Cover the soup and let stand, without stirring, for 8 minutes. Gently stir the eggs to break them into strands. Season the soup with salt and pepper and serve garnished with cheese.

NOTE For a less expensive version, use 5 pounds of chicken backs and 1 pound of beef shin.

MAKE AHEAD The broth can be refrigerated for 3 days or frozen for up to 1 month.

WINE This soup has enough richness to pair with a full-bodied white Burgundy, like the 2013 J.M. Boillot Bourgogne Blanc or the 2012 Vincent Girardin Mâcon-Fuissé.

continued on p. 100

SPELT

HERO INGREDIENT

Spelt pasta is a stealth source of protein. Canora serves it with chicken livers (p. 100).

Bowl by Humble Ceramics; glass by Fferrone Design; pot holder from March.

Quinoa Balls with Cauliflower and Cheese

Active **25 min**; Total **1 hr 30 min plus overnight soaking**; Makes **26 quinoa balls**

Quinoa mixes with grated cauliflower, salty halloumi cheese and chickpea flour to become crisp, fluffy little balls that the Hemsleys serve as an hors d'oeuvre or with tomato sauce as a main course. Soaking the quinoa overnight before cooking makes it more digestible.

2/3 cup quinoa (4½ oz.)

1 large egg, beaten

8 oz. cauliflower florets, grated on the medium holes of a box grater (1½ cups)

6 oz. halloumi cheese, grated (1½ cups)

2 scallions, thinly sliced

3 Tbsp. chickpea or buckwheat flour

1 garlic clove, minced

½ tsp. sea salt

¼ tsp. pepper

Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg (optional)

½ tsp. baking soda

1½ tsp. fresh lemon juice

1. In a medium bowl, cover the quinoa with 2 inches of water and soak overnight. Drain well.
2. In a medium saucepan of boiling water, cook the quinoa until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain well, then return the quinoa to the hot saucepan. Cover and let stand for 10 minutes. Fluff the quinoa and scrape out onto a baking sheet to cool slightly.
3. Preheat the oven to 375°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a large bowl, combine the egg, cauliflower, cheese, scallions, chickpea flour, garlic, salt, pepper, nutmeg and quinoa; mix well. In a small bowl, mix the baking soda with the lemon juice and stir into the quinoa mixture. Scoop out 2 tablespoons of the mixture and press together to form a ball. Arrange on the prepared baking sheet. Repeat to make 26 balls.
4. Bake the balls for about 30 minutes, until golden and firm. Serve hot.

MAKE AHEAD The unbaked quinoa balls can be refrigerated for 3 hours; cover loosely with plastic wrap.

WINE These crispy, cheesy appetizers go spectacularly well with sparkling wine. Try the NV Lucien Albrecht Crémant d'Alsace Brut or the 2010 Domaine Carneros Estate Brut Cuvée.



Spelt Rigatoni with Chicken Livers, Leeks and Sage

📄 PAGE 81

🕒 Total **40 min**; Serves **4 to 6**

Canora likes pasta made from spelt, an ancient strain of wheat, but any good-quality whole-wheat rigatoni will work. Just check the ingredient list to make sure it's whole grain and doesn't contain sugar, colorings or other additives. Canora also recommends buying livers from pastured chickens because they're more nutritious than those from factory-farmed birds.

1 lb. spelt rigatoni

3 Tbsp. unsalted butter

1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

3 scallions, thinly sliced

2 leeks, white and light green parts only, thinly sliced

1 large shallot, thinly sliced

Fine sea salt and pepper

2 Tbsp. chopped sage

1 lb. chicken livers—trimmed, patted dry and cut into ½-inch pieces

¼ cup dry white wine

1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Lemon wedges, for serving

1. In a large pot of salted boiling water, cook the rigatoni until al dente, about 8 minutes. Drain, reserving ½ cup of the pasta water.

2. Meanwhile, in a large, deep skillet, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in the olive oil. Add the scallions, leeks and shallot and season with salt and pepper. Cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 8 minutes. Stir in the sage.

3. Increase the heat to high. Season the livers with salt and pepper and add them to the skillet. Cook, stirring occasionally, until golden all over, about 2 minutes. Add the wine and cook until evaporated, 1 minute.

4. Add the pasta, ¼ cup of the reserved pasta water, ½ cup of the cheese and the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter to the livers and season with salt and pepper. Remove the skillet from the heat and toss the pasta. Add the remaining pasta water if necessary. Transfer the pasta to plates, top with the remaining ½ cup of cheese and serve with lemon wedges.

WINE Earthy chicken livers are fantastic with a mineral, fruit-forward red wine like Nerello Mascalese from Sicily's Mount Etna. Try the 2012 Tenuta di Fessina Erse Etna Rosso or the 2012 Di Giovanna.

continued on p. 102

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Short Rib Farrotto with Carrots and Parsnips

📖 PAGE 79

Active **1 hr**; Total **1 hr 30 min**; Serves **6**

Farro is a chewy, earthy emmer wheat that's grown in Tuscany, where Canora's mother is from. For this dish, choose whole or unpearled farro, which is the most intact form of the grain, including the nutritious bran and germ. Cooked risotto-style, with hot broth added gradually, farro releases its starch to create a creamy dish.

- 1 quart low-sodium beef broth**
- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 lbs. well-trimmed boneless grass-fed beef short ribs, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- Fine sea salt and pepper**
- 2 thyme sprigs, plus 1 Tbsp. finely chopped thyme**
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed**
- 8 cipollini onions (¾ lb.), peeled and quartered**
- 1 large carrot, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1 large parsnip, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1½ cups (9 oz.) unpearled farro**

- 1 cup dry red wine**
- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter**
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, plus more for serving**

- 1.** In a medium saucepan, combine the beef broth with ½ cup of water and bring to a simmer over high heat. Remove from the heat, cover and keep warm.
- 2.** In a large enameled cast-iron casserole, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Season the short ribs with salt and pepper. Add half of the short ribs to the casserole, spreading the pieces out, and cook over moderately high heat, turning occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the browned meat to a plate. Repeat with the remaining short ribs.
- 3.** Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the casserole. Add the thyme sprigs, garlic, onions, carrot and parsnip and season with salt and pepper. Cook over moderate heat, stirring, until the vegetables are lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in the farro and the browned short ribs. Add the wine and cook until evaporated, stirring and scraping the bottom of the casserole, about 2 minutes. Add 1 cup of the warm

broth, cover partially and cook over moderately low heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Repeat this process twice, adding 1 cup of warm broth each time and cooking for about 15 minutes between additions, stirring occasionally.

- 4.** Increase the heat to high. Add the remaining 1 cup of warm broth, ½ cup at a time and stirring constantly, allowing it to be absorbed before adding more. Cook the farrotto until creamy and the farro is al dente, about 5 minutes longer. Remove the casserole from the heat and discard the thyme sprigs. Stir in the butter, chopped thyme and the ¼ cup of grated Parmigiano. Season the farrotto with salt and pepper and serve hot, passing additional Parmigiano at the table.

MAKE AHEAD The farrotto can be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Gently reheat, adding broth or water as necessary.

WINE Tuscan Chianti Classico is peppery and herbal, but also bold and cherry-rich. It's superb with this short rib dish. Try the 2012 Castellare di Castellina or the 2011 Fontodi.

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