

# clover food lab



Whenever I'm making pasta, tacos, soup, or sandwiches for friends, they're usually surprised by a little something extra. A little ZING.

"Why does my food never taste like this?" a few of them have said.

More often than not, the secret ingredient is **acidity** — whether from lemon juice, hot sauce, vinegar, soy sauce, or pickled veggie brine. This acidity affinity is in my DNA - I grew up eating my dad's Iranian food, and if you've never had it, well, that is a cuisine that LOVES tart flavors. We even use dried limes to flavor our soup! Growing up, no meal would be complete without a squeeze of lemon, a splash of red wine vinegar, or a [scoopful of this](#).

When I started working at Clover, I would assist Rolando with his Soup 101 class. Whether he was making African Peanut Soup or French Onion Soup, he'd always shake a few glugs of red or white wine **vinegar** into the pot, right at the end of the cooking process, along with a pinch of **sugar** and a hefty pinch of **salt**. When the vinegar entered the mix, you could actually sense the soup come alive.

And when I'm at an NYC bodega, you can bet that I'm asking for my hero to be garnished with a shake of oil and vinegar.

Imagine your meal as a landscape. Vinegar (or more generally, acidity) brings it from a dull hillside to a spiky and interesting mountain. Acidity - whether or not you even taste it in the final product - helps accentuate and amplify whatever flavors have already been developed.

I recommend you keep a few bottles of good vinegar in your cupboard (or some good citrus on your countertop).

But even grocery-store vinegar is OK. Here are a few that I like to keep on hand, along with some quick recipe ideas for each.

And if you're looking to hear about how vinegar is made, stop by CloverROW, 330 Foley Street in Somerville, this Saturday. Rodrigo from [American Vinegar Works](#) will be in the house talking about how he's brought back a vinegar-making technique from the 1800s. The event is free and open to all!

## RICE WINE VINEGAR

Great shaken over rice. I also use it to make salad dressings. Delicate with a hint of sweetness. Pick one up at the grocery store, or browse some great options at Maruichi Market in Brookline.

In the summer I make an extremely delicious Clover salad which has just 5 ingredients: several ears of freshly shucked corn, a good shake of rice wine vinegar, a drizzle of olive oil, sliced green onions, & salt.

## RED OR WHITE WINE VINEGAR

Both of these are good all-purpose vinegars for seasoning a soup, making a vinaigrette, or making refrigerator pickles. Try drizzling white wine vinegar over a handful of chopped white onion with a pinch of salt for a mellowed-out topping for chili or tacos.

## SOMETHING SPECIAL

It's fun to have a vinegar that's blatantly NOT "all-purpose" in your pantry/fridge. I peeked into my pantry and found:

- ***Aged Balsamic Vinegar of Modena***  
Syrupy sweet without being cloying. For an appetizer, I pour a small bowl of balsamic and pair it with chunks of Parmigiano Reggiano.
- ***Black Walnut Bay Sauce*** from Keepwell Vinegar in PA - substitute it for both the vinegar and the anchovies in a Caesar Salad vinaigrette.
- ***American Vinegar Works Beer Malt Vinegar***  
Perfect alongside any kind of British-inspired meal, like fish & chips (or even better: fried/battered oyster mushrooms & chips).

