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# SUMMER IS LEKKER

BY ALEXANDRA PASTRON

**SUMMER BRINGS MANY THINGS.** There's an air of excitement for new discoveries and, of course, warmer weather accompanied by longer days and balmy nights made for drinking. Some will call it rosé season, and we're not here to argue, particularly since this month we've got a couple pieces of pink-oriented news to share with you.

The first is the launch of Wine Awesomeness' first-ever rosé! Lekker Rosé was made in collaboration with our friend (and amazing winemaker) Nico Grobler! "Lekker," has several meanings. It is a common term for anything that is delicious or particularly luscious. In South Africa, it is most often used where Americans would say "cool," "great" or "awesome!" We've got tons more great info about this juice on pg. 17 for you to check out, but we will tell you right now: We are super duper excited about this wine. As our sommelier put it, "This is pure joy in a bottle." That's right, folks, we are now selling happiness in wine form.

We are also beyond-thrilled to announce that Victoria James (who you may remember as Wine Editor from past issues of thebacklabel) has released her first book, *Drink Pink: A Celebration of Rosé!* From how it's made to recipes on what to pair with it, this is your ultimate guide to one of the most misunderstood wines in the world. To make things even better, we've got a sneak peek for you on pg. 13!

But rosé isn't the only thing we're into this summer. We've recently uncovered two wines from the Italian region of Abruzzo that are made using a particularly awesome method. You can learn all about this "Airbnb of the wine industry" on pg. 5. Plus, both of these wines are made of native Italian grapes with a whole lotta history to them, which is something we can always get behind.

Or if you're not feeling like Italian, we've got wines from Australia, South Africa, Spain and good ol' California. The one thing they all have in common though is that they're perfect for ringing in the solstice with the mostess, be it on the beach, by the pool, on the porch or the roof of your apartment building.

Welcome to summer.



# THE AIRBNB OF THE WINE WORLD

BY LOGAN LEE

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**, the sharing economy is for real.

Airbnb is changing the way we travel. Uber is changing the way we get around cities. WeWork is changing the way we work.

These big time innovators are making the world we live in more efficient than ever and providing incredible and authentic experiences all over the world. Wine isn't typically included in the innovation conversation, but in a lot of ways wine is an early adopter of the sharing economy. While wineries can be owned by big business or multinational corporations, but for the most part wineries are a family affair with less than a half dozen stainless steel wine tanks in a glorified garage. And the soul of the wine business is with these smaller winemakers.

Wine tourism is definitely growing and we'd highly recommend a wine country vacation, but most enophiles never get a first hand experience of where the delectable juice hails from, so most consumers wouldn't be too familiar with the wine co-op!

Wine co-ops are common in every wine region. Most co-ops are groups of winemakers coming together to share the big time costs of making wine, and with their powers combined (use your inner Captain Planet voice) these groups can bring wine to market much more easily than on their own. Winemaking is serious business and the machinery to make wine isn't cheap. Sharing the costs is really driving innovation into the wine industry, which isn't exactly known for being on the cutting technological edge.

At WA, we're always hunting for winemakers that are making delicious vino and the stories behind the wine! Co-ops are making it easier than ever for winemakers to follow their passion and create delicious vino, plus actually build a sustainable business. We found one of the cooler co-ops, Citra Vini, earlier this year in the Italian wine region of Abruzzo! This famous co-op that started in 1973 with nine winemaker associations with a shared vision and goals. Ironically, wine isn't known for being on the tech forefront, but this co-op beat Airbnb to the sharing economy by about 35 years.

And over those 35 years this co-op of nine have built one helluva serious business, all while putting the Abruzzo region on the map. Consumers can find wines from Citra Vini on every major continent and in the top restaurants in NYC, Beverly Hills, Asia, Australia, all of Europe, Canada, Japan, Venezuela, Russia and China.

Not only is the co-op concept right up our alley, but we found two awesome Italian wines made at this Abruzzo co-op and you can find them in this month's box. Meet Niro d'Montepulciano on pg 7 and Niro Pecorino on pg. 15 (white wine not the cheese, but this white and the famous cheese work well together!) Happy drinking!

## 2016 NIRO, MONTEPULCIANO D'ABRUZZO

100% Montepulciano



- Abruzzo, Italy
- Listening to a calming breeze whisper through the trees outside.
- The Butcher's Ragu
- Resonant Body - Maggie Rogers



- Crushed violets, bitter dark chocolate, a touch of coffee grounds and a sprinkling of wet earth.
- Medium body that has warmth when you take your first sip. Rhubarb compote and sun-ripened blackberries.
- This wine has a medium structure, which means it can handle an array of flavors, making this meaty, creamy ragu its perfect match.

While often confused with wines from the town of Montepulciano in Tuscany, the Montepulciano grape actually has nothing to do with the medieval citadel and is grown most happily further south in the Abruzzo region. Nestled between the Adriatic Sea and the Apennines Mountains, these vineyards produce an excellent representation of how versatile this grape can be. "Niro" actually means "black" in many Italian dialects, which is suitable for this wine's super noir color.

This wine is like a drinkable campfire with silky, smooth smoke. There's a warm and wet just-rained earthiness finished with charcoal notes. Dark fruit you found on the bushes that line horse stables and a medium body that will make you feel like your insides are made of wool.



### THE BUTCHER'S RAGU

PHOTO: FOOD52 / JAMES RANSOM

#### MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 small Spanish onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 celery stalks, peeled and chopped
- ½ bunch flat-leaf Italian parsley
- 2 sprigs rosemary, sage, thyme, or a combination
- 3 tbsps extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 to 4 ½ lbs mixed ground meat, such as 2 lbs beef, 1 lb pork, and 1 lb veal
- 1 tbsp Italian double concentrate tomato paste
- One 35-ounce can San Marzano tomatoes
- Salt and pepper

**CHOP** the garlic, onions, carrots, celery, herbs, and parsley finely in a food processor.

**SWEAT** the vegetables out over low heat in the olive oil with a pinch of salt in a large heavy-bottomed Dutch oven-type pan.

**LET** them sweat about 7 to 8 minutes, until the onions become translucent but are not taking on color. Add about ¾ cup water and the tablespoon of tomato concentrate and let cook down briskly until the liquid is almost completely evaporated.

**ADD** the ground meat, breaking it up continuously and moving it about so that no lumps or balls form and all the meat gets broken down into its individual strands. Once the meat is all broken down and just cooked, add the can of San Marzano tomatoes and cook, simmering gently, stirring occasionally on the lowest heat you can go. The longer and slower this cooks, the better the ragu. We're talking 3 or 4 hours. You will know it's done when all the fat has cooked out of the meat and floats lazily on top of the sauce, colored orange from the tomato. At this point, the ragu can be eaten immediately or refrigerated for 3 to 4 days or frozen for 3 to 4 months.

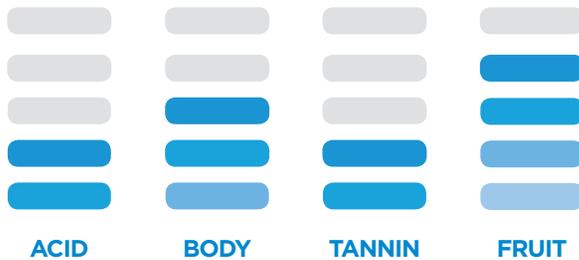
For more recipes that will inspire you to eat thoughtfully and live joyfully, visit [Food52.com](https://www.food52.com)!

## 2012 VALDEPALACIOS, CRIANZA, RIOJA

85% Tempranillo, 10% Grenache, 5% Mazuelo



- Rioja, Spain
- Escaping poolside conversation with relatives you're trying to avoid.
- Sticky Chipotle Ribs
- Dancing in the Moonlight - Toploader



- Maple syrup drizzled over raspberries, fresh ground nutmeg and crunchy brown grass.
- Zingy, bitter strawberry seeds, freshly crushed pink peppercorns and rose petals.
- This is a super bright red with a razor-like body that won't get stuck in your chipotle adobo sauce.

Wines from Rioja come in four traditional styles: Rioja, Crianza, Reserva and Gran Reserva. Crianza, like the one you have before you, is typically aged for a year in old oak barrels (meaning there isn't a super oaky flavor in the wine) and then for another year in the bottle. These are wines that are meant for everyday drinking - so get popping.

This wine is like lavender and thyme ground up and sprinkled over halved plums being seared on the grill. There are heaps of freshly, sun-ripened raspberries, wet earth and root notes, almost like running through a dewy field of long grass with the brightness of thousands of towering sunflowers in full bloom.



## STICKY CHIPOTLE RIBS

PHOTO: FOOD52 / JAMES RANSOM

### MAKES 2 RACKS OF RIBS

- 2 racks of baby back ribs
- 1 chipotle (from adobo can)
- ½ cup adobo sauce
- ¼ cup honey
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ cup chicken broth (low sod.) or water
- Salt and pepper
- ½ cup brown sugar

**PREHEAT** oven to 225° F. Take ribs out of the fridge 30 minutes before cooking them to come to room temperature.

**MAKE** the Chipotle BBQ sauce. In a blender, puree the 1 chipotle with the adobo sauce. Transfer to a small sauce pan and turn heat up to medium. Add remaining ingredients: brown sugar, honey, apple cider vinegar, garlic powder, broth, salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer and taste. If too spicy, add more honey. If too sweet, add a dash more adobo sauce until it fits your taste. Let simmer for 15 minutes, until slightly thickened. Remove from heat.

**COAT** the ribs in salt and pepper and then slather with BBQ sauce. Place a wire rack over a baking sheet. Add about ½ inch of water to the bottom of the baking sheet. Place the ribs on top of the wire rack and cover with foil. Pop into the oven for 4 hours (at 225 ° F). After 4 hours, remove the foil and let cook until the ribs are falling apart, basting with BBQ sauce every 15 minutes for another hour. Right before you remove them, turn on the broiler for 3-4 minutes to give some extra crunch. Alternatively, throw on the grill/grillpan for 5-7 minutes.

**REMOVE** and let cool for 10 minutes covered in foil. Cut ribs into 2s or 3s and serve with extra BBQ sauce.

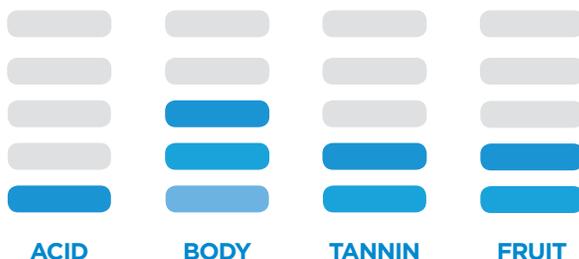
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## 2010 RECORD FAMILY WINES, MERLOT

100% Merlot



- Paso Robles, California
- Spending a day out on the farm eating heirloom tomatoes fresh off the vine.
- Herb and Mustard-Crusted Rack of Lamb
- Crash Into Me - Dave Matthews Band



- A salty brine hovering over hearty aromas of violets and firm red fruit.
- A pudgy, stewed cranberry pie with a crust of beef jerky and a plump body that caresses your mouth.
- This wine will happily play with anything Ron Swanson would put in his mustachioed mouth - an 8-rib lamb rack falls into this category.

Record Family Wines really is a family affair, owned and operated by Randy and Anne Record along with their two daughters - who are fifth generation California farmers! It's therefore no surprise that this central California vineyard produces some truly awesome grapes, which becomes truly awesome wine!

While at first this wine will hit you over the head with its meatiness, with time it grows and opens up to more delicate aromas, like floral, wet earth and flint. It smells like your fingers after you plucked rosebuds and used them to write on the cement as a kid. Plus, red apple skins, waxy melted crayons and the rind of a blood orange that has been laying in the sun on a terracotta tiled floor.



## HERB AND MUSTARD-CRUSTED RACK OF LAMB

PHOTO: FOOD52 / JAMES RANSOM

### MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- 1 cleaned 8-rib lamb rack (about 2 lbs)
- ¼ cup grainy Dijon mustard
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1 sprig each of rosemary, sage, and marjoram
- 3 sprigs thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp fennel pollen (optional)
- 1 tbsp cracked black pepper

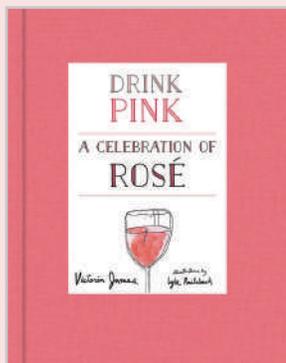
**PREHEAT** the oven to 450° F. Chop up the garlic and herbs in the food processor. When they are well chopped, add the mustard and purée until a smooth paste forms.

**SMEAR** the paste over the exterior of the lamb and place on a roasting pan. Season liberally with sea salt and roast for 15 minutes at 450° F. Turn the oven down to 325° F and cook for 30 to 40 minutes more, or until a meat thermometer registers 130 to 140° for rare to medium-rare. Let the roast rest for 15 minutes before carving and serving.

# ROSÉ TODAY AND TOMORROW

BY VICTORIA JAMES

ILLUSTRATION LYLE RAILSBACK



*THE FOLLOWING IS an excerpt from Victoria James' new book, **Drink Pink: A Celebration of Rosé**, a guide to rosé's versatility and why you should drink it all year long!*

**NOT TOO LONG AGO**, a guest at the restaurant where I work as the sommelier was fervently flipping through the pages of the wine list. When I offered to assist him, he sighed in relief. A very thick French accent accompanied his words, "Last year I had the most amazing rosé here. I could not find it anywhere in Europe. It is from Clear Lake. Do you still have it?" He was referring to an Arnot Roberts Touriga Nacional Rosé from California that we luckily had a bottle or two of left. I couldn't believe this gentleman was so excited to taste an American rosé again. But then, again, why not? It was delicious.

Some argue that the rosé craze in the United States is just a phase. But many experts disagree. They see this not as a trend but rather as the introduction of a new style. Kermit Lynch, one of the top importers of French and Italian wine in the United States, adds, "I think now

rosé has its place, just like white and red and sparkling." Americans are slowly learning more about wine and gaining a deeper appreciation. Rosé is simply a result of this education.

In the early 2000s, rosé's popularity started to build. Resorts and beach destinations around the United States started stocking pink French wine. The Francofascination grew, and many places like André Balazs' Sunset Beach property on Shelter Island in New York starting sporting pétanque courts. Keen on living the authentic southern French lifestyle, rosé starting flowing endlessly. Celebrities like Drew Barrymore and Angelina Jolie along with Brad Pitt started making rosé.

Rosé was suddenly mainstream. Social media turned the pink beverage into a superstar. Instagram stars like Josh Ostrovsky ("The Fat Jew") claimed, "Rosé is like puppies, if you hate it you are an absolute monster." He went on to

collaborate on a product called "White Girl Rosé," a California Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel blend. Hundreds of thousands of bottles have been sold.

In France, clever collaborations also have taken place. Jeremy Seysses of the highly acclaimed Domaine Dujac and Aubert de Villaine of the outstanding Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, where some of the most expensive wines in the world are made, co-founded Domaine Triennes. Located in the Var, not too far from the Jolie-Pitt owned Château Miraval, Seysses and de Villaine started producing tasty rosés.

Sommeliers from all over the United States rushed to include the wine on their lists. In the summer of 2014, almost every restaurant I went to was pouring it by the glass.

Like the baguette or the beret, we have adopted rosé into American culture. The charming nature of the beverage is hard

to deny. As domestic and international examples have drastically improved in quality, it is no longer considered a guilty pleasure. Men have looked past the pink coloring and embraced "brosé" remarks. Rosé is exactly what the wine world needed, a unpretentious but delicious option.

So is the rosé trend fleeting or forever? Sommelier Rajat Parr assures us, "Oh no, rosé, it's here to stay."

## 2016 NIRO, PECORINO, TERRE DI CHIETI

100% Pecorino



Abruzzo, Italy



Eating handmade pasta out on the terrace on a balmy night.



Roasted Sweet Potato with Chickpeas, Goat Cheese and Coriander



The Scientist - Coldplay



The sticky honey bear you keep in the back of your cupboard. White gummy bears, matcha, canned pineapple.



Glossy, almost oily, texture, but with a nice rich body. Acidity with a tingling that'll give you goosebumps.



Anything particularly creamy - like goat cheese - is going to make your mouth super happy after a sip of this acid-kick of a wine.

Pecorino - more than just cheese! This white grape is native to Italy and is named after the sheep (“pecora” is the Italian word for “sheep”) that always try to eat them when they ripen at the start of the harvest season. Many of the vines in this region date back to the Roman Empire and this wine is a prime example of ancient winemaking traditions.

This wine makes you want to dance in a sun soaked room, with the windows open and the warm breeze pouring in. A salad of yellow apples and juicy, slightly bruised golden pears drizzled with honey. There's a crisp nose, with notes of cool morning sunshine. Yellow plums, sun dried apricots, white clean chalk and green tomatoes all swimming in a briny sea.



ROASTED SWEET POTATO WITH CHICKPEAS, GOAT CHEESE, AND CORIANDER

PHOTO: FOOD52 / BOBBI LIN

### MAKES 4 HALVES

- 2 large sweet potatoes
- 2 tbsps olive oil
- 100 grams chickpeas
- 200 grams goat cheese
- Lemon juice, to taste
- 1 handful fresh coriander

**PREHEAT** oven to 400° F. Cut the sweet potatoes in half lengthwise. Brush the top and skins with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Place the sweet potatoes cut side-down on a baking tray with parchment paper. Roast for 45 minutes, or until completely cooked through.

**TAKE** the sweet potatoes out of the oven. Turn them over and use a fork to make little insertions in their soft flesh. Season with salt and pepper.

**DIVIDE** the chickpeas and goat cheese over the four halves and place them back into the oven for about 10 minutes, or until the goat cheese has melted.

**TAKE** the sweet potatoes out of the oven, drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil, some lemon juice to taste, and add the coriander. Serve and enjoy!

For more recipes that will inspire you to eat thoughtfully and live joyfully, visit [Food52.com](https://www.food52.com)!

## 2017 LEKKER, ROSÉ

52% Grenache, 48% Merlot



- Western Cape, South Africa
- Jumping into the ocean for the first time this summer.
- Watermelon, Arugula and Pickled Onion Summer Salad
- All My Friends - LCD Soundsystem



- Tangy guava and grilled hibiscus-coated watermelon. Stemmy green tart strawberries and cold steel.
- An acid that acts like a bee sting to the back of your tongue, causing your mouth to pucker.
- This wine will pair with anything that screams "SUMMER!" What says it better than a watermelon salad?

Lekker Rosé was handcrafted by winemaker Nico Grobler, of Eikendal Vineyards & La Brune Wines, in collaboration with Wine Awesomeness - and we're super excited about it! It's the first 2017 rosé on the market, making it the freshest, most easy-drinking wine you could possibly get your hands on.

This wine is pure energy, like shooting stars drenched in lemon juice. This is the kind of wine that stains your summer memories. The kind of wine you will cling to the memory of when you're trudging through the snow come winter. Once in your glass, you will find a nose of fresh Herbes de Provence, watermelon and orange zest. Electrified pink lemonade, red pepper flakes and grapefruit rinds.



### WATERMELON, ARUGULA, AND PICKLED ONION SUMMER SALAD

PHOTO: FOOD52 / BOBBI LIN

#### MAKES 8 SERVINGS

##### SALAD AND VINAIGRETTE

- 1 small to medium seedless watermelon
- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 4 cups arugula
- ½ cup crumbled goat or feta cheese

##### PICKLED ONIONS

- ½ cup thinly-sliced red onion
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp whole black peppercorns

**CUBE** the watermelon into bite-sized pieces. Set aside.

**SLICE** the onion thinly, to prepare pickled onions, using mandoline for even cuts if you have one available.

**COMBINE** the remaining pickling ingredients in a small saucepan and bring to rapid boil, then remove from the heat. Place the sliced onions in heat-proof jar and pour the liquid over to evenly coat. The onions should soften within 15 minutes, depending on thickness.

**COMBINE** the red wine vinegar, lemon juice, and salt in a small bowl. Slowly whisk in the olive oil until incorporated.

**DRESS** the arugula lightly to taste and toss in a mixing bowl, then place it in a serving dish. Top it with the cubed watermelon, crumbled cheese, and pickled onions. Finish with any remaining vinaigrette, if desired.

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## 2014 PAXTON, PINOT GRIS

100% Pinot Gris



- McLaren Vale, Australia
- Climbing mammoth rock formations that have angrily jutted out of the earth.
- Scallop Crudo with Coconut Milk and Lime
- Kids With Guns - Gorillaz



- Fleshy golden apples with white flowers. Fresh tangerine juice drizzled over a jar of lemon curd.
- Round and creamy, earth that is dry, dusty and fresh.
- This wine's mild essence needs flavors it can dance to without being outshone - delicate coconut and lime the perfect partners.

This Pinot Gris hails from family-owned vineyards in Southern Australia, and - in region where red wines are more dominant - is a real stand-out. The label's founder, David Paxton, is a viticulturalist by trade (think: grape vine scientist) and for three decades has taken very precious care of his land, committing to environmentally friendly biodynamic farming methods that rely on promoting healthy and happy soil, rather than synthetic pesticides.

A glass of this wine is like drinking the essence of a canary; bright, bubbly and fresh, clean laundry warm from being dried in the sun. Caramel covered lemon drops. Acidity that is shy and falls behind, hesitantly peaking its head out on the finish. Grilled lemon rinds, dotted with sea salt and nutmeg.



## SCALLOP CRUDO WITH COCONUT MILK AND LIME

PHOTO: FOOD52 / JAMES RANSOM

### MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- 1 can coconut milk
- 1 tsp fish sauce
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 tbsps mirin
- 1 lb of the freshest sea scallops available
- 1 small red radish
- A handful of cilantro leaves
- Maldon salt (or another flaky sea salt)
- A few drops of chili oil
- An extra lime, to be zested for garnish

**SET** a large pan over medium heat, and add the coconut milk. Simmer the coconut milk until it reduces to approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  its original volume, stirring occasionally. When the coconut milk is sufficiently reduced, it will be noticeably thicker than it was when you first added it to the pan. Transfer the reduced coconut milk to a mixing bowl, and place the bowl in the refrigerator to cool.

**ADD** the fish sauce, soy sauce, lime juice, and mirin when the coconut milk is chilled. Whisk to combine.

**REMOVE** and discard the abductor muscle from each scallop (the small, rectangular side muscle). Rinse the scallops under cold water to remove any sand or grit, then pat them dry. Slice each scallop into thin round slivers, and place the scallop slivers into the coconut milk mixture. Let the scallops marinate in the refrigerator for at least 15 minutes, and up to an hour.

**SLICE** the radish into very thin rounds using a mandolin or sharp knife. Roughly chop the cilantro leaves. To serve this dish, arrange the slivers of scallops onto a flat plate. Use a slotted spoon to plate the scallops, allowing most of the coconut marinade to drain off through the slotted spoon before bringing the scallops to the plate. There should only be a thin coating of marinade with the scallops on the plate. Nestle the radish rounds in with the scallop slivers, and sprinkle a little Maldon salt on top of the dish, crushing it with your fingers as you sprinkle it. Sprinkle chopped cilantro over the dish. Drip a few small drops of chili oil over the plate. Using a fine microplane, garnish with lime zest. Serve and enjoy.

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# DIY: CONFETTI

BY WA CREW

**THE ONSET OF SUMMER** is always a cause for celebration, and in the Italian region of Abruzzo, celebrations almost always come with confetti. Not of the colorful paper variety you may be imagining, but a much more sugary kind. Since Roman antiquity, Italians have coated sweets in colorful hard-shell candy. Sometimes the center is candied fruits but these days it's most often almonds. The vibrant colors of the candies hold significance, such as white for weddings and red for graduations. Once colored, the confetti are often arranged to form the petals of a flower, and then bunched together to make a confetti bouquet. Other times, it's just eaten by the handful out of a bowl. No matter how you decide to do it, or how you're ringing in the summer's festivities, confetti is always a great way to go.

- 2 cups whole raw almonds
- 1 cup confectioners sugar
- Egg whites from 1 large egg
- 1 tsp cream of tartar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Food coloring

**PREHEAT** the oven to 350° F.

**BLANCH** the almonds. Bring a pot of water to a boil, then add the raw almonds and allow to sit for no more than 60 seconds.

**DRAIN** the almonds and rinse in cold water. Dry with with a paper towel.

**PEEL** the skin off the almonds and set aside until fully dry.

**SPREAD** out dried, blanched almonds in a single layer on a baking sheet.

**TOAST** in the oven for 5 minutes, then remove and set aside.

**LINE** a separate baking sheet with parchment paper.

**BEAT** together egg whites, confectioners sugar, cream of tartar and vanilla extract in a medium bowl.

**SEPARATE** into batches and add food coloring to your preference.

**DUNK** the almonds into the candy, making sure they are fully covered. Remove and transfer to the lined baking sheet. Allow to cool and harden over night.



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