



Nino Baliashvili at Bina N37 in Tbilisi. **OPPOSITE:** The hill town of Sighnaghi in the heart of Kakheti, one of Georgia's most ancient and productive wine regions.

THE OLDEST NEWEST WINE REGION IN THE WORLD

IN GEORGIA, WINE HAS BEEN MADE FOR MORE THAN 8,000 YEARS—AND PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RAISING THEIR GLASSES AND TOASTING ONE ANOTHER OVER TABLES FILLED WITH EXTRAORDINARY FOOD FOR JUST AS LONG.

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THE WINE IN THE GLASS IN MY HAND

was as black as ink. It smelled of ripe plums, and it had been made by a 9-year-old boy.

I was sitting at a table at Bina N37, a restaurant in Georgia's capital city of Tbilisi located in a residential building (the name translates to "apartment number 37"). It's owned by Zura Natroshvili, a former doctor, and his wife, Nino Baliashvili, who still

is a doctor. Originally the apartment was going to be their family home, but after Natroshvili started making wine on the terrace outside, he decided, using logic that may be opaque to most people, that it made more sense to open a restaurant instead.

The terrace itself was originally supposed to have a pool for Natroshvili's son, Irakli. But once Natroshvili added a raised platform of sand and pebbles and buried 42 *qevri* on it—*qevri*, pronounced "kwev-ree," are the large, beeswax-lined earthenware jars used in traditional Georgian winemaking—the pool was a nonstarter.

"So I told Irakli, 'Listen, instead of a pool, you can make your own wine and sell it.' And he was like, 'OK, sounds good!' He'd saved up about 500 lari, so we bought a *qevri* and some Saperavi grapes with that, and a year later he made 1,200 lari selling his wine." Natroshvili told me all this over plates of *qartuli salata*, Georgia's omnipresent cucumber-and-tomato salad; *pkhali*, a pâté-like dish of finely chopped greens and ground walnuts; and bowls of spicy, garlicky, entirely addictive marinated cherries. They were the first few courses of a meal that was going to last well into the night. Irakli, sitting next to him, looked shy but proud.

Whether or not he knew it, Irakli was carrying on a winemaking tradition stretching back more than 8,000 years. Based on archaeological evidence, it's the oldest on earth. But it was nearly midnight. When you're 9, even if you're carrying a torch lit from a fire first kindled in the Neolithic era, that means it's well past bedtime.

TASTING TRADITIONALLY MADE WINE in Georgia—which means wine fermented and aged in *qevri* that have been buried in the earth, wine without industrial yeasts and without additives, wine as simple and mysterious as wine innately can be—is like taking a trip back through those eight millennia. Nestled between the Greater Caucasus and Lesser Caucasus mountains, Georgia forms a

Newly made qevri curing in the sun. Georgian wines are traditionally fermented and stored in the enormous clay vessels, which are buried up to their necks in the earth.



bridge between Asia and Europe. Over the centuries, invaders swept through it: Persian, Greek, Roman; Turks, Mongols, Russians. And through all that, Georgians have gone on making wine. (Cooking, too: Georgian cuisine balances Asian, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European traditions, and borrows, deliciously, from all of them.)

The day after my dinner at Bina N37, I headed north from Tbilisi to visit Iago, both the name of the winery and the man himself, Iago Bitarishvili. That's characteristic of wine culture here. Most Georgians drink truly local wine, meaning wine that you get from the guy down the road who you've been getting wine from since, well, whenever. (It's like recommendations for car mechanics used to be: "Transmission? Oh yeah, I know a guy. He's great.")

But about 15 years ago things started to change, and some of those down-the-road winemakers started bottling and selling their wine further afield, first in Tbilisi, and now throughout the world. Bitarishvili was in the vanguard of that revolution. Lean and bearded with penetrating green eyes, he tells me, "In 2003 I started to bottle and sell my wine. That's the only thing I do different from my father, from my grandfather." I ask him how long his family has made wine. He says he has no idea. But now he helps organize the yearly New Wine Festival held in Tbilisi. Another sign of changing times: In 2009, when he and his partners launched the event, they could only find 15 wineries to participate. In 2017, there were more than 400.

Bitarishvili pours me an amber-orange glass of his 2016 Chinuri. The wine's aroma is lightly resinous; its flavor suggests apricots and dry herbs. The wine is complex, but the winemaking is deceptively simple: Fruit, pulp, seeds, and stems all go into the qvevri (a traditional Georgian winery looks like a room with circular holes in the floor, since the qvevri are buried up to their necks in the ground). The qvevri are sealed, the yeasts on the skins of the grapes do their work, and between three and six months later, the qvevri are opened. Skins, stems, and seeds are ladled out, and the wine is moved to another qvevri to age until it's ready. Bitarishvili says, "You also have to be skinny to make wine in Georgia because you have to climb into the qvevri to clean them out."

He adds: "I say to people, 'Don't say anything about our wine after one glass. Don't judge it after one glass.' If you take a wolf out of nature, it changes. Wine is the same."

LATER, I'M AT THE WINE BAR Vino Underground back in

OPPOSITE, TOP ROW FROM LEFT: Spread of preserved fruits; waiters ready for dinner service in Tbilisi; brandy and wine for sale. MIDDLE: A view of the Caucasus; Rkatsiteli wine; Iago Bitarishvili. BOTTOM: Qvevri at a winery; Georgian grape names; tomato salad.

Tbilisi, drinking a glass of the 2017 Kereselidze Wine Cellar Aleksandrouli-Mujuretuli. I'm thinking several things. First, that I like this intense, feral red very much. Second, I will never in my life know how to pronounce its name. And third, that the song playing on the speakers is by the Foo Fighters. Have you taken a Georgian wine out of nature if you're drinking it to "My Hero"? I don't know.

What I do know: It's impossible to extract Georgian wine from Georgia's history. At Papari Valley winery, owner Nukri Kurdadze tells me, "During the Soviet era, the qvevri tradition was almost extinguished." That is also true of many of the more than 400 local Georgian grape varieties. "But Georgian grapes survived because of Georgian farmers. We're rebellious." Over a glass of his amber 2016 Rkatsiteli, a powerfully tannic white with a tangerine-like scent, he adds, "The only word I can use to describe how I felt when the U.S.S.R. fell is happiness. I could not imagine this monster could collapse. I can survive any kind of hardship, but my only dream is that what happened here during the Soviet era never happens again for me or for my children."

Wine here feels woven into the fabric of life in a way that may once have been the case in Europe but isn't really anymore. There's wine everywhere: at every meal, in every home. Every village market, every gas station, every roadside stall selling random plastic buckets and boxes of Persil detergent also sells wine—usually in recycled plastic water bottles, label-less, made by this or that neighbor, as omnipresent as water and as necessary. At the Shavnabada Monastery outside Tbilisi, Brother Markus says, "Everything is special, but wine needs special care."

He's in his early thirties, with a lustrous black beard and a gentle manner. We're in the cellar at Shavnabada, a

FINDING GEORGIAN WINE

Georgian wines won't be on the shelves in your supermarket, but they're worth a search: Try using an app like Wine-Searcher. Here are five great ones to seek out.

2016 PAPARI VALLEY CHINURI RKATSITELI CUVÉE (\$25) Amber-colored and lightly tannic, this blend of two of Georgia's classic white grape varieties is toasty and savory.

2007 SHAVNABADA SAPERAVI (\$35) Eight years in qvevri buried in the ground at the Shavnabada monastery has given this powerful red layers of earthy complexity.

2016 OKRO'S WINES RKATSITELI (\$20) Orange-hued and with both tropical and tree-fruit notes, this traditionally made white comes from a small winery that also runs a very good restaurant in the hilltop town of Signaghi.

2014 ORGO RKATSITELI (\$20) Floral and apricot-y, this skin-fermented white comes from one of Georgia's top winemakers, Gogi Dakishvili.

2015 PHEASANT'S TEARS SAPERAVI (\$18) Inky-dark and plummy, this formidable red deserves some time in a decanter before pouring.





Georgian Orthodox monastery originally built in the 12th century and rebuilt in the 17th, shut down again in the Soviet era and reopened after that. Eleven monks live and work here. All around the stone building the boxwoods are in bloom, and the air is filled with their scent. Brother Markus' cell phone rings—the ring tone is the *brrring, brrring* of an old-fashioned rotary phone. He glances at it and puts it back in the pocket of his robe. As to why they started making wine again, he says, “Georgia is a country of hospitality. When someone comes to your home, you need to offer them bread and wine.”

A 2004 Mtsvane, a white wine that spent 13 years sealed in qvevri, is the color of burnished wood and tastes of nuts and smoke. A 2007 Saperavi is darkly currant-y, dry, and tart. He comments as I drink it, “We don’t filter our red wine or use any additives—that’s not a respectful thing to do to wine. It’s the blood of Jesus Christ.”

Typically, as a professional, I spit wines that I taste. At the moment that seems wildly inappropriate. Besides, the Saperavi is gorgeous. I drink it. Brother Markus adds, “Our purpose as monks is to make people happy. It’s not to make money. We put our soul and our heart into our wine, and that’s why it’s different. God is always present in this process.”

When I ask him if he ever thinks about people thousands of miles away, in Denver or Chicago or Seattle, drinking his wine, he says, “There is a God, and God is everywhere in the world. We don’t have to see each other to have that connection, so the U.S. is not that far, really.”

SUPRA: THE WORD LITERALLY TRANSLATES as “tablecloth.” But, as I discover the next night at Pheasant’s Tears winery in the hilltop town of Signaghi, perched above the fertile Kakheti valley—what it really translates to is more like “massive, high-spirited feast involving endless plates

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of amazing food and enough wine to pickle an elephant.”

Pheasant’s Tears, founded in 2007 by an American expat and artist, John Wurdeman, and Gela Patalishvili, was one of the first Georgian wineries working in a traditional mode to send its wines to the U.S. (In many ways Wurdeman has functioned as an informal ambassador for Georgian wine as a whole.)

Supras are celebratory; they embody abundance and joy. They also require toasting—lots of it. As Natroshvili at Bina N37 had told me, “The first toast, at least in the west of the country, is always to God. In the east it’s to peace, since that part has always been at war. Then to people who passed on, to new life and to children, then to women, to love, friends, and on. At least 25. Usually more.” And with all those toasts, the food. At a supra, dishes arrive but are rarely removed when emptied. Soon the table lies under a sea of plates.

There are supras at weddings, supras at birthdays, supras at funerals, supras when your team wins or when your friends get together, supras because, what the hell, it’s Saturday. At Pheasant’s Tears that night the general reason was because Wurdeman was returning from a long trip, except his plane was delayed in Canada. His staff, who are all Georgian, decided to celebrate anyway.

Platters of foraged mushrooms with herbs; khachapuri, the buttery, cheese-filled flatbread; rolled thinly sliced eggplant with walnut sauce, or badrijani nigvzit; chakapuli, the country’s classic lamb stew with fresh tarragon; tender roast chicken in a dairy-based garlic sauce, or shkmeruli—that was just the start. And with all that, the raised glasses: *gaumarjos*, or “victory,” the equivalent of our “cheers;” *gagimarjos*, or “here’s to you;” *gadvimarjos*, or “here’s to everyone.” I lost track. But late in the evening, fueled by several rounds of chacha—the Georgian version of grappa—we even ended up raising a toast to Freddie Mercury. The staff had decided karaoke was in order, resulting in an entire table of Georgians belting out “Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you do the fandango?” in something vaguely approximating the key of A major. In Georgia as in life, you come to understand, some things are universal: wine, food, friends, the human need for connection, and even “Bohemian Rhapsody.”

THE GEORGIAN SUPRA

In Georgia, you never sit down to an empty table. Especially when entertaining guests, the tradition is to host a *supra*, a long dinner party where the dining table is covered with an assortment of colorful dishes to share before the meal starts. Vegetables dressed with walnut paste, fermented flower buds and chiles, sliced cheeses, and the country’s iconic cucumber-and-tomato salad are there to get the party going. They’re joined by bowls of steaming chakapuli stew with tarragon, stewed beans, roasted wild mushrooms, and

khachapuri—an irresistible cheese-filled bread. The idea is to wow your guests with abundance. To throw a supra yourself, start preparing a day or so ahead, making the sauces and condiments first. Then move on to stews and beans, doing the slow cooking ahead of time but adding the fresh herbs or walnuts just before serving. That leaves party day for the fresh vegetable dishes and decorating a stunning supra table. See p. 86 for the recipes to get you started.
—CARLA CAPALBO, author of *Tasting Georgia*

Khinkali (Meat-Filled Dumplings)

ACTIVE 1 HR; TOTAL 1 HR 10 MIN
SERVES 8

This homemade dough, which is the right strength to contain the juicy filling, comes together quickly and is easy to work with as long as there isn't too much flour on the work surface. The dough should grip the table in order to stretch properly and not spring back.

DOUGH

- 2 cups all-purpose flour (about 8½ oz.), plus more for work surface
- ½ tsp. fine sea salt
- ½ cup water
- 1 large egg, beaten
- Olive oil, for greasing

MEAT FILLING

- 4 oz. 80% lean ground beef
- 4 oz. ground pork
- ¾ cup water
- ⅓ cup finely chopped yellow onion
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tsp. fine sea salt
- ¼ tsp. dried kondari (summer savory) or mild thyme
- ¼ tsp. coriander seeds, crushed
- ¼ tsp. caraway seeds, finely chopped
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more for serving
- ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper, or to taste
- ⅛ tsp. ground cumin
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS

- 2 fresh bay leaves

1. Make the dough: Stir together flour and salt in a medium bowl. Make a well in center of dry ingredients, and add ½ cup water and egg. Stir with a wooden spoon until a shaggy dough forms. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface, and knead until smooth and elastic, 4 to 5 minutes. Place dough in a lightly oiled bowl, and cover loosely with plastic wrap. Set aside.

2. Make the meat filling: Using a fork or your hands, stir together all meat filling ingredients in a large bowl until ground meat is completely broken up and mixture is well blended.

3. Divide dough into thirds. Shape 1 dough portion into a ball, and roll out to about ¼-inch thickness on a lightly floured work surface. (Keep the remaining dough portions covered with plastic wrap while you work.) Using a 2½-inch round cutter, cut

out 8 dough circles, rerolling dough scraps as necessary.

4. Roll each dough circle into a larger 4-inch circle. Place about 1 tablespoonful (about ½ ounce) meat filling in center of each dough circle, and pleat dough edge, gathering top like a pouch to enclose filling. When you have pleated all the way around, pinch top edges together firmly, and give the dough a little twist to make a stem and to make sure the khinkali is well sealed. (If you don't want the stems, lightly press the twisted stem down into the dumpling with your finger.) Place finished dumplings on a piece of lightly floured parchment paper; cover loosely with plastic wrap, and repeat process with remaining dough portions and filling.

5. Bring a large pot of salted water and bay leaves to a boil over high. Carefully add half of dumplings to water, and stir gently with a wooden spoon (without piercing dumplings) to make sure they don't stick to bottom of pot. Boil until dough is tender and meat is cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove khinkali with a spider, and drain on paper towels. Repeat with remaining half of dumplings. Sprinkle khinkali with black pepper, and serve hot.

NOTE Khinkali are designed to be eaten by hand. Hold each dumpling by its stem (like an open umbrella) and take a small bite from the side of the cushiony top, sucking out the hot broth before digging into the filling. Discard the stem.



Pkhali (Vegetable Pâté with Walnut Paste)

ACTIVE 50 MIN; TOTAL 1 HR 10 MIN
SERVES 6

Dried marigold (calendula) petals give a mild, floral, tea-like flavor to this cold vegetable pâté. Find them at herbaffair.com.

- 21 oz. fresh spinach, coarsely chopped (from 3 [9-oz.] pkg.)
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup Walnut Paste (recipe p. 88)
- 1 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- ½ tsp. ground dried marigold petals
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. pomegranate arils

1. Combine spinach and ½ cup water in a large Dutch oven. Cover and cook over medium, turning spinach occasionally with tongs, until wilted, 9 to 10 minutes. Drain spinach in a colander set over a bowl, and let stand, stirring occasionally, until cool enough to handle, about 20 minutes. Working in small batches, squeeze spinach with your hands to remove excess liquid until spinach is barely moist. Reserve 1 tablespoon liquid. Finely chop spinach.

2. Stir together walnuts, vinegar, cilantro, parsley, and ground marigold until blended. If sauce is very thick, stir in reserved liquid.

3. Stir together chopped spinach and walnut sauce until thoroughly blended. Season with salt and pepper. Shape mixture into 6 (1¾-ounce) balls, and decorate each with about ½ teaspoon pomegranate arils. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

Mtsvadi (Grilled Pork Skewers with Pomegranate and Onions)

ACTIVE 25 MIN; TOTAL 4 HR 55 MIN
SERVES 4

In Georgia, meat for skewers is cut into irregular chunks with the fatty, marbled pieces left intact. The result is sizzling, juicy meat with crispy, chewy bits.

- 2 lb. boneless pork shoulder, cut into 1½-inch chunks
- 2 medium red onions (1 grated on a box grater and 1 thinly sliced into rings), divided
- 2½ cups red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste

- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- ½ cup pomegranate arils
- Spicy Red Bell Pepper Jam (recipe p. 88)
- Sour Plum Sauce (recipe p. 88)

1. Stir together pork, grated red onion, red wine vinegar, salt, and pepper in large bowl until combined. Cover and refrigerate at least 4 hours or up to overnight.



FROM TOP: Pkhali, a cold vegetable pâté; skewers of mtsvadi grilling over grape vines. OPPOSITE: Pleating the dough for khinkali, Georgian soup dumplings.

2. Thread pork chunks onto metal skewers; discard marinade. Let pork stand at room temperature 30 minutes.

3. Preheat grill to high (450°F to 550°F). Place pork skewers on oiled grates; grill, covered, turning occasionally, until lightly charred on all sides, 12 to 15 minutes. (Alternatively, broil skewers on high with oven rack 5 inches from heat, turning occasionally, until lightly charred on all sides, 12 to 15 minutes.)

4. Remove pork from skewers, and transfer to a large bowl. With your hands, squeeze pomegranate arils over pork. Add onion slices, and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with bell pepper jam and plum sauce.

Soko (Herbed Forest Mushrooms)

TOTAL 25 MIN; SERVES 4

Foraged wild mushrooms often appear on the supra table. This simple recipe showcases the earthy flavor of oyster mushrooms, enlivened with herbs and chile.

- 1 lb. fresh oyster mushrooms or other mushrooms
- 3 Tbsp. cold-pressed sunflower oil or extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 spring onions or scallions, cut into 4-inch pieces
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 (1-inch) piece medium-hot jalapeño or serrano chile, seeded
- 4 fresh sage leaves, torn in half
- 4 fresh mint leaves
- 2 tarragon sprigs
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- Crushed red pepper

1. Clean mushrooms by wiping caps and stems with a moist paper towel to remove any dirt. Cut mushrooms into large chunks. (Do not remove tender stems.) Set mushrooms aside.

2. Pour sunflower oil into a skillet large enough to fit all the mushrooms. Heat oil over high until shimmering. Add spring onions, and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned and slightly tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Add mushrooms; cook, stirring occasionally, until they begin to soften and release their liquid, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, chile, sage, mint, and tarragon. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until mushrooms are lightly browned, 2 to 3 minutes.

3. Spoon mushroom mixture onto a serving plate, and sprinkle lightly with crushed red pepper before serving.



Nigvziani Badrijani (Eggplant Rolls with Walnut Filling)

ACTIVE 1 HR; TOTAL 1 HR 30 MIN
SERVES 10

Serve these two-bite rolls as a snack with drinks. They are the perfect make-ahead party dish, as they are assembled and served at room temperature.

- 1 lb. small eggplants (about 3 eggplants), stemmed and cut lengthwise into ½-inch-thick slices
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- Grapeseed oil or other neutral oil, for frying
- Walnut Paste (recipe follows)
- 2 to 3 Tbsp. water
- 3 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh basil
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped jalapeño
- ¼ cup pomegranate arils

1. Place eggplant slices in a large bowl; sprinkle with salt, tossing to coat both sides. Let stand, uncovered, until moisture forms on eggplant and water collects in bottom of bowl, about 30 minutes.
2. Rinse eggplant slices well under cold running water. Squeeze each slice between paper towels to remove excess water, and pat dry with paper towels.
3. Pour oil into a large, high-sided skillet to a depth of ½ inch. Heat over medium-high to 340°F. Working in batches, use a spider to drop eggplant slices into oil. Fry until golden, about 3 minutes per side. Remove from oil, and drain on a paper towel-lined baking sheet. Pat tops of eggplant slices with paper towels to remove excess oil.
4. Stir together walnut paste and 2 tablespoons water in a large bowl, adding more water, 1 teaspoon at a time, if necessary, until mixture is spreadable. Add basil and jalapeño; stir to combine.
5. Spread about 2 tablespoons walnut mixture on one end of each eggplant slice, and roll up. Arrange rolls, seam side down, on a serving platter. Spread tops with any remaining walnut mixture, and sprinkle evenly with pomegranate arils.

Nigvzis Sakmazi (Walnut Paste)

TOTAL 10 MIN; MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

This garlicky, herb-packed, pesto-like seasoning paste is used to flavor a wide variety of Georgian dishes. It is traditionally ground in a mortar and pestle, but this quick version uses a food processor. Find blue fenugreek, a mild form of the herb, at bazaarspices.com.

- 1½ cups walnut halves (about 5 oz.)
- ¼ cup water
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh mint
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. finely chopped fresh dill
- 1 tsp. finely chopped jalapeño
- ½ tsp. coriander seeds, crushed
- ¼ tsp. ground blue fenugreek

Process all ingredients in a food processor until mixture forms a coarse paste, 15 to 20 seconds, stopping to scrape down sides as needed. Transfer paste to a bowl; press plastic wrap directly onto surface, cover bowl tightly with a second piece of plastic wrap, and refrigerate up to 2 weeks.

NOTE The finished recipe is great for later uses: It keeps tightly wrapped with plastic wrap in the refrigerator up to 2 weeks, or you can freeze small batches, wrapped in aluminum foil, for quick use at a later date. Use it to make salad dressings (thin it with water or olive oil), dips for crudités (stir it into yogurt or sour cream), or tossed with hot noodles as a pesto alternative.

Red Ajika (Spicy Bell Pepper Jam)

ACTIVE 35 MIN; TOTAL 1 HR 30 MIN
MAKES 1 QT.

This super-concentrated condiment gets its bright red color from beets and balanced sweet heat from fresh chiles.

- 1 cup plus 2 Tbsp. grapeseed or other neutral oil, divided
- 21 oz. red bell peppers, roughly chopped
- 1 lb. carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 lb. beets, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 to 3 red Fresno chiles, stemmed and thinly sliced
- ½ cup tomato paste
- 3 large garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. ground blue fenugreek
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- ¾ tsp. coriander seeds, crushed

1. Heat 1 cup oil in a large saucepan over low. Add bell peppers, carrots, beets, and two-thirds of the sliced chiles. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables begin to steam, about 15 minutes. Increase heat to medium, and cook, covered, 30 minutes. Taste vegetable mixture to see if it is spicy enough; if necessary, add remaining one-third sliced chiles. Cover and cook until vegetables are very soft and starting to fall apart, about 45 minutes. Remove from heat.

2. Stir in tomato paste, garlic, fenugreek, salt, and coriander. Let cool 15 minutes. Transfer mixture to a food processor, and process until smooth, about 1 minute.

3. Spoon pureed mixture into a quart-size sterile glass jar with lid. Top with remaining 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil to prevent oxidation. Let cool to room temperature. Attach lid, and refrigerate up to 2 weeks.

Tkemali (Sour Plum Sauce)

TOTAL 30 MIN; MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

The classic version of this aromatic, sour sauce is made with small, green, unripe plums. Other plums may be used (as long as they are not overripe); their skins will give the sauce its signature tanginess.

- 21 oz. unripe red plums (about 5 plums)
- 1 cup water
- ¾ tsp. coriander seeds
- ¼ tsp. fennel seeds
- ½ tsp. plus a pinch of kosher salt, divided
- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 red Fresno chile, chopped (optional)
- ¾ cup finely chopped mixed fresh herbs, like mint, cilantro, and dill

1. Combine whole plums and 1 cup water in a large saucepan. Cover and cook over medium until plums are soft, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat, and let cool 15 minutes. Remove and discard pits from plums. Place cooked plums in a food processor, and process until smooth. Transfer to a medium bowl.

2. Using a mortar and pestle, crush coriander seeds and fennel seeds with a pinch of salt. Add garlic, remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and, if desired, chopped chile; crush into seed mixture.

3. Add garlic mixture and fresh herbs to plum puree, and stir until well combined. Sauce may be stored in an airtight container in refrigerator up to 3 days.