

# Summer Wines

**A**S WINTER FINALLY relinquishes its hold, it's time to focus on white, red, and rosé wines that are generally lighter in style than their winter counterparts.

Most people eat lighter fare in the warmer months and look for lighter wines to accompany such food. For those who love white wine, we're lucky to live at this time because very good white wine is available at reasonable prices. Until the last two decades or so, I found it relatively difficult to find a wide range of white wines at inexpensive prices as compared to reds. I think some of the thanks for this situation goes to New Zealand, which burst onto the world wine stage with the 1985 Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc. After awakening many palates to an alternative to Chardonnay, the varietal spread rapidly through New Zealand (especially in the Marlborough region) and due to the quality of the wine and its low price, wine drinkers throughout the world started drinking more Sauvignon Blanc. In turn, other wine growing regions of the world rapidly increased Sauvignon Blanc plantings and now we all benefit. My favorites include Cloudy Bay, Kim Crawford, and Bedford Road from New Zealand, and Sancerre from Roland Tissier, Lucien Crochet, François, and Pascal Cotat, as well as any Pouilly-Fumé by Didier Dagueneau from France (Loire).

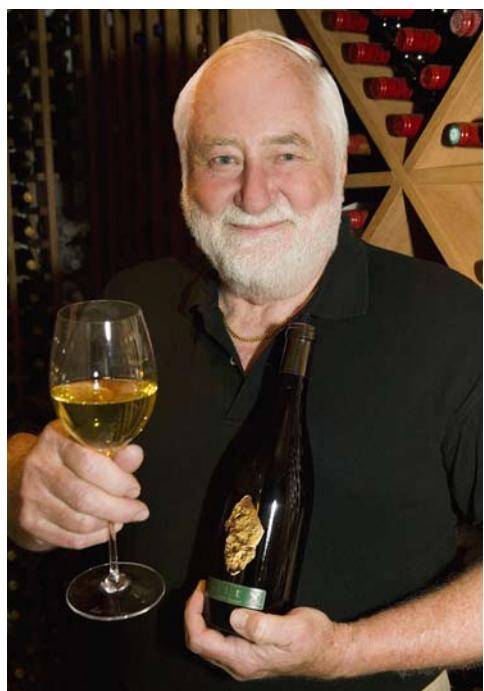
The United States produces many worthy Sauvignon Blancs but the greatest value I've come across recently is Block 13 from Gundlach Bundschu. Also from Sonoma County is a very good product from Hanna. By far the best I've ever had from the United States and one of my favorite white wines of all time is the Fumé Blanc Reserve from the ToKalon Vineyard produced by Robert Mondavi. Although relatively expensive for a U.S. Sauvignon Blanc (more than \$30), a Francophile, who has tasted all great white Bordeaux back to 1961, told me he thought this wine was under priced by 20 times and he could only think of one such wine better than this.

From the Loire Valley of France comes Savennières made from Chenin Blanc. My favorite producer is Baumard, especially the Papillon single vineyard wine. Other worthy whites include Grüner Veltliners from Austria (Hirtzberger or Brundlmayer), and Dry Rieslings from the Clare or Eden Valley in South Australia. From Spain, the Albariño grape reaches its height when produced by Pazo de Señorans, and Verdejo from Naiades is the ultimate expression I've found. These wines are dry, age well, and lend themselves to summer weather, lighter fish, softer cheeses, and crustaceans (except lobster). While they are not all inexpensive, it ranges from \$10 – \$50, with most under \$25.

PHOTO: KEVIN JUDD (SOURCE: MOËT HENNESSY USA COMMUNICATIONS)



*Cloudy Bay, so named by Captain Cook on his travels in 1770, is located in the Wairau Valley of the Marlborough region of New Zealand. Cloudy Bay's winery and vineyards, established in 1985, produce Sauvignon Blanc in the cool Maritime climate. Production methods are monitored by Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand. Pictured here is the Richmond Range.*



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I would be remiss if I did not mention the Sémillon grape. While the dominant grape in the famous white Bordeaux, it also reaches great and affordable heights in the Hunter Valley (Australia) from Tyrrell's (Vat 1), and from Mount Pleasant (Lovedale or Elizabeth), and will age effortlessly. From the United States, I like Kalin Cellars Sémillon best but a more available and affordable example is the excellent L'Ecole 41 from Washington. These are less dry than the earlier recommendations. All of these should be served chilled (50 degrees) and not cold in order to appreciate their nuances. For those who drink only Chardonnay, good values typically come from low price real estate regions of the United States, Chile, Australia, or France. The greatest

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I've seen recently were from Louis Latour: Le Chardonnay de Chardonnay (\$11) and the Grand Ardèche (\$7).

For those who like rosés, they are great in summer when they can be served chilled (45-50 degrees), enjoyed by themselves, or with casual foods. My favorite come from France (Chateau Aqueria from Tavel made from Grenache and Cinsaut) or Spain (Cameron Hughes, Lot 37 from Campo de Borja, made from Grenache).

Now, for all those who think that all wine should be red. Although many people think that "heavy" ponderous reds such as Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Nebbiolo are best enjoyed during cooler months, there are several reds that are very pleasurable during the warmer times. One of my favorites is Zinfandel. They are generally fruit forward, not too tannic or dry, and represent a nice transition beverage from whites to bigger reds. Zinfandels range widely from softer to bolder styles but generally are very food friendly for a wide range of cuisine. Similar to the Primitivo grape from Italy, Zinfandel (originally from Croatia) can be generally substituted for Sangiovese, Barbera, and Dolcetto with Italian food complements. My favorite producers are Ridge, Rosenblum, Ravenswood, and A. Rafanelli.

Barbera and Dolcetto are from Piemonte and are the everyday red Italian wines from that region. Higher in acidity than Zinfandel, they are best consumed with food, especially those high in acidity such as tomatoes and eggplant. These wines, especially Dolcetto and Zinfandel, drink best with a slight chill of 60 degrees. Elio Altare and Mauro Veglio are noted producers of both.

Perhaps the greatest region for high quality/great value propositions lies in the south of France. Many of the food-friendly varietals found in expensive Châteauneuf-du-Pape are found nearby and bottled as Côtes du Rhône. Outstanding examples include Chapoutier Belleruche and Perrin Reserve. Both cost less than \$10 and provide very good food-friendly pairings.

Finally, another great value and high quality grape is Malbec, most notably from Argentina. Although somewhat bigger than the reds referenced above, one still needs a perfect wine for a great steak or rack of lamb in the summer. Malbec pairs great with both and can be enjoyed by itself. A stunning value is the Luigi Bosca Reserve 2006 currently in the marketplace. Santé! ☺



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