

THE WINE GUY

Whites, reds from California make perfect fare for warm-weather sipping

It is almost a cliché by now, but it seems that, as the weather warms, our tastes begin to shift to cool whites and bright reds.

My last column offered recommendations on wines from various parts of the world for your warm-weather sipping pleasure.

This column reviews options from California producers. As with the previous column, all wines cost \$20 or less, thus meant for more casual or everyday drinking.

These wines are reliable and immediately enjoyable, with bright fruit flavors. They are good wines for tonight's dinner or Sunday's picnic. Most also would be ideal for a backyard barbecue or on a restaurant patio.

WHITE WINES

The so-called "aromatic" whites are absolutely perfect for this time of year. They are great as aperitifs or with food. They are especially good with Asian food, but would work well with Spanish/Mexican foods and salads, too. The recommendations below should get you started.

Riesling. Fragrant, flowery aromas and fresh fruit (green apple, pear and occasionally peach, apricot, pineapple) flavors are delivered with bracing



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some weight and a sense of exotic opulence.

- 2005 Kenwood Sonoma County (\$11)
- 2004 Chateau St. Jean Sonoma County (\$15)
- 2004 Handley Anderson Valley (\$16)

Pinot Grigio. Refreshing aromatics and flavors carried in an easy-going frame have become so popular that pinot grigio is poised to become the sec-

ond-largest-selling white wine in the country. The grape is also known as pinot gris, but most California producers have adopted the more lyrical Italian name.

- 2005 Pepl California (\$11)
- 2003 Blackstone Monterey (\$12)
- 2005 Montevina Terra d'Oro Santa Barbara County (\$18)

Sauvignon Blanc. Green fruits and a pleasing herbaceousness combine with a zesty palate to make one of the most food-friendly wines around.

- 2005 Kenwood Sonoma County (\$13)
- 2004 Quivira Fig Territory Vineyard (\$16)

• 2005 Hanna Russian River Valley Slosser Road (\$17)

Other. Dry Creek Vineyard makes its 2005 Dry Chenin Blanc Clarksburg (\$12) in the style of the bracing wines from Savenieres, rather than the

fruity, slightly sweet Vouvray. Floral, fruity, spritzy, a little spicy and a lot delightful: That is the typical moscato, and the 2005 Martin & Weyrich Moscato Allegro (\$12) fits the bill.

Chardonnay. Despite the growing interest in other varieties, chardonnay still is the queen of white wines. Even at lower prices, the buttery richness cut with citrus or tropical fruit continues to be a crowd pleaser.

- 2004 Covey Run Columbia Valley (\$9)
- 2005 Meridian Santa Barbara (\$10)
- 2004 Kendall-Jackson

Vintner's Reserve (\$19)

- 2004 Buena Vista (\$19)
- 2004 Kendall-Jackson Grand Reserve (\$22)
- 2004 Beautiful Napa Valley (\$20)

RED WINES

For my palate, the big fruit reds are

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this time of year. Pair any

grilled or barbecued meat — burgers, chicken, sausage, even steak — with the hints of fresh berry mixed with spicy notes delivered by these wines and you have the building blocks of culinary majesty.

Zinfandel. Bright fruit and untamed flavor make the quintessential wine to pair with barbecued and grilled foods, not to mention pizza and pasta.

- 2003 Cellar No. 8 California (\$10)
- 2003 Dry Creek Vineyard Heritage (\$15)
- 2003 St. Francis Old Vines (\$18)

France, they should start. This grape's a natural!

- 2002 Bonterra Organic Mendocino (\$15)
- 2003 Camelot California Shiraz (\$8)
- 2003 Duck Pond Columbia Valley (\$12)
- 2004 Rosenblum Abba Vineyard (\$18)

Petite Sirah. This 125-year old offspring of syrah has gained favor in California, where it makes rustic wines of dark color, intense, peppery flavor and substantial tannins.

- 2004 Concannon Limited Release (\$14)
- 2004 Rosenblum Heritage Clones (\$20)
- Other. The 2004 Quivira Steelhead Red Dry Creek Valley

Coho salmon habit Creek, which runs estate.

Cabernet Sauvignon

donnay is queen of cabernet sauvignon the reds. It seems the of its berry/cu and firm structure with consumers.

- 2003 Blackstone Selection (\$16)
- 2002 Bonterra Mendocino (\$15)
- 2003 Kendall-Jackson's Reserve (\$18)
- 2003 Sebastiano County (\$17)
- 2003 St. Francis Sauvignon (\$20)
- 2003 Two Towers (\$10)