

## THE WINE GUY

# Enjoy summer's finale with refreshing wines

Schools are starting up again, but there is plenty of warm weather left to enjoy refreshing white wines, easy-drinking rosés and fruit-filled reds at picnics, barbecues or for just sipping on the patio.

I've written many articles during the past several months recommending wines perfect for this time of year.

But the samples keep showing up at my doorstep, and I have tasted a bevy of wines recently that would be perfect to drink into fall.

Although many of the wines are from familiar grapes such as syrah/shiraz and chardonnay, many are from less-familiar varieties or unexpected combinations of varieties. And they all are reasonably priced (\$20 or less).

● **Australia.** This country continues to be a source of fresh, approachable, attractively priced wines. Among the reds, you can't go wrong with shiraz. The 2005 Alice White South Eastern Australia Cabernet-Shiraz (\$7) and 2005 Angove's Red Belly Black (\$12) embody that definition, as do the 2004 Grant Burge Barossa (\$15) and 2004 Houghton Western Australia (\$15), although the latter two have more character and spice.

The white wines also follow the script. I enjoyed the pineapple fruit of the 2005 Wolf Blass Yellow Label Chardonnay (\$12). And Portugal's best-known white grape added intriguing tropical aromatics and flavors to the 2005 Houghton Chardonnay/Verdelho (\$15).

● **France.** I wrote a column in April about Cotes du Rhone as an affordable source of hardy red wines and aromatic white wines. But the region's rosés also deserve attention.

To my palate, rosé is the quintessential summer wine. It's fresh and fruity like a



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the region is on a comeback, and if, like me, you have sort of forgotten about Chianti in recent years, Cantine Leonardo da Vinci is a good starting point for initiating a reacquaintance. Try the 2004 Chianti (\$12) and 2003 Chianti Classico (\$17) for fruit-filled wines that emphasize sangiovese, the best grape in the region.

Italy is a treasure trove of indigenous varieties that find their way into myriad blends. I came across an excellent example of this in two wines from Sicily. From Ajello, the 2003 Furat Rosso (\$20) combines nero d'avola, syrah, merlot and cabernet sauvignon, while the 2003 Ajello Majus Bianco (\$9) is made from grillo and cataratto.

● **New Zealand.** I have written before that New Zealand has developed a unique style of sauvignon blanc that emphasizes the grape's bright citrus and gooseberry fruit. These qualities show well in the 2004 Redcliff Marlborough (\$11) and the Thornbury Marlborough (\$18).

● **South America.** When I first became interested in wine in the 1970s, Chile was one of my "go to" sources for affordable, quality wine. After a while, though, it seemed the country lost its middle ground: The choice was cheap, uninteresting wine or overpriced designer labels.

That has changed as quality at all levels has improved. I was particularly intrigued by a 2003 Baron Phillippe de Rothschild Escudo Rojo (\$15), especially at the price. Argentina also has been making a world-