

# WINE News

Cool fun in the summertime.



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## Summer Sippers: Refreshments Are Served

By Keith Mabry

Last year's summer was a bit of a bust, to put it mildly. Every day it seemed like a new crisis was unfolding on top of another crisis. Between the pandemic, social justice movement, an unprecedented wildfire season here in California, and so much economic uncertainty, it seemed impossible to settle down and take a moment. Not to diminish any of these issues, because we are still living through them, but I feel like for the first time, in a long time, I can breathe slightly easier. Barbecues, parties, beach visits, hiking, picnics, reconnecting with friends, and

turning 50 (me, not the company) are all things I'll be relishing this summer season. I plan to bring lots of wine to all of those events, too. Luckily, we have assembled our buying team to narrow our focus and give you our top "Summer Sippers" for this year. I vote rosé and Sancerre usually, but I'll also be bringing some lighter-bodied reds for chilling and juicy full-bodied reds for those barbecues and parties. For any occasion, be it a gathering, a picnic, or the beach, we have something that will satisfy your summer sipping needs.

### 2019 Vincent Careme "Spring" Vouvray

(\$16.99) The name may say "Spring" but this 100% dry Chenin Blanc has summer flavors written all over it. Careme is one of the rising stars of Vouvray, and his all-organic practices produce of the best wines in the region. Beautiful apple, pear, lemon verbena, and quince make for a delightfully refreshing and versatile white guaranteed to perform at the pool or any garden party. Serve with a cold asparagus soup for a real statement!

91 W&S



### 2020 Cave de Tavel "Cuvée Royale" Tavel

Rosé (\$16.99) Tavel is the oldest and only exclusively rosé-producing region in France. And it's almost rosé-in-name-only when you see the depth of color here! This has a rich mouthfeel brimming with cherry, strawberry, and red plum flavors; and a savory side as well, with notes of crushed herbs and a minerality that separates it from the pack. This is a rosé that will carry you from summer through fall and beyond—if you can wait that long. Served chilled, but not too chilled, this has flavor for days! 90 WE, 90 WS



### Xavier Vignon "Arcane Le Fou" Vin de

France (\$24.99) I mentioned chillable reds, but sometimes you just want a bold and deeply satisfying red to go with that perfectly grilled steak (or cauliflower steak). Xavier Vignon makes some of our best Rhône wines and his Le Fou is a Châteauneuf in Vin de France clothing. Made primarily with declassified Châteauneuf fruit, because he blended in some fruit from nearby regions, this is a wine dressed to impress from the first sip on. You'd have to be a "Fou" not to bring this to your friends' backyard parties. 96 JD



# A Mixed Case of Sunshine

By Ryan Woodhouse

For the annual **Summer Sippers** edition this year I decided to present to you a mixed case of fun in the sun. Four bottles of crisp, fresh, delicious Sauv Blanc. Four bottles of dry, refreshing, and quaffable Grenache-based rosé. And four light, bright, layered expressions of California Gamay Noir. My hope is that this selection of wines will be 1) delicious; 2) versatile; and 3) affordable. So, you'll be ready for that impromptu backyard barbecue, picnic at the park, or maybe that long overdue big family get-together!

## Sauvignon Blanc

When it comes to summer sipping, few wines appeal to me more than a crisp, refreshing Sauvignon Blanc. This variety's bold vibrancy of flavor and bright, mouthwatering acidity is perfect for a hot day, as well as super versatile with food or as an aperitif. While often in the shadow of Chardonnay, for me Sauvignon Blanc is the perfect choice for a garden party, picnic, or any kind of alfresco dining. It also rarely breaks the bank. Here's a few I'll be slurping down this summer:

### 2019 Margerum "Patina" (Sybarite) Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara Sauvignon Blanc (\$14.95) Elsewhere \$20+.

Margerum's Sybarite label has long been a go-to for me when it comes to delicious Sauv Blanc that delivers time and time again. This year, because of the drop in demand due to COVID, we were offered this parcel of wine that would otherwise have gone to a high-end restaurant group. We took every last case and got a screaming deal, making this one of the biggest hits of the summer. Floral notes of orchard blossom and plumeria lead into freshly peeled citrus, ripe lemon, grapefruit, and feijoa (if you know, you know). The palate has enough textural presence and weight to balance the mouthwatering acidity, and the finish trails off slowly with repeating citrus tones laced with wet stone minerals.

93 VN, 92 WE



**2020 Le P'tit Paysan "Zabala Vineyard" Arroyo Seco Sauvignon Blanc (\$17.95)** A recent visit to Ian's Brand's winery in Monterey revealed more than a few gems. Ian is in top form right now, making stellar wines across the board with a seemingly ever-expanding range of varietals that will soon put his alma mater, Bonny Doon Vineyard, to shame. The P'tit Paysan "Zabala Vineyard" Sauv Blanc is the most recent wine from this Arroyo Seco site that has thoroughly impressed me. The extremely rocky, alluvial gravel, dry riverbed site produces wines with a distinctive stony minerality. This wine is a ringer for Sancerre. Some yellow stone fruit, lots of citrus, cut herbs, an assertive acid line, with wet stone and salted lime. So good.

**2019 Quivira "Fig Tree Vineyard" Dry Creek Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$22.95) Elsewhere \$28.** A lot of attention to detail goes into this sub-\$25 Sauv Blanc, made from organically grown grapes. The vineyard is named for the 110-year old fig tree that sits amidst the vines. The soils here are very deep alluvial gravel, lots of rock, and very

little organic matter. The wine is a complex blend of Sauv Blanc Clone 1 and Sauvignon Blanc Musque Clone, plus 6% Sémillon. The juice is fermented in a mix of stainless-steel tank (50%) and almost entirely neutral oak and acacia wood barrels and puncheons. After fermentation the wine is aged on fine lees for seven months, no malo, no lees stirring. Wonderfully floral and expressive; a soft but energetic presence on the palate. Honeysuckle, smashed quince, lemon barley water, stony mineral. Lots going on here—top-notch stuff.

93 WS, 91 WE

**2020 Massican Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$28.95)** Dan Petroski, whose day job is crafting the iconic wines of Larkmead, also moonlights at his personal passion project, Massican. Focusing primarily on aromatic whites inspired by the wines of Friuli in Italy, his wines continue to be some of my most highly anticipated releases each year. I love the 2020 Sauv Blanc, again a very floral, lifted, aromatic style with a wonderful balance of textural richness and fine, crystalline acidity. The two vineyard sources are in very different parts of Napa Valley, one in Carneros and one in the high-elevation, Pope Valley sub-region, but they are woven together into such a seamless, intricate wine where every single element is synchronized perfectly with the next. Spring blossoms into summer meadows, golden autumnal orchard fruits, and baking spice. Preserved citrus, sea salt, and fennel. Caressing texture but cutting acidity. Great wine. 94 DC



## Grenache Rosé

Grenache has long been the backbone of many Provençal and Southern French rosés. No surprise then that it has become a favorite of US-based winemakers when it comes to making crisp, dry styles of rosé here in California. What I like about many Grenache-based rosé wines is that they're almost always purposefully grown for rosé, unlike many Pinot Noir-based versions that tend to be made in the *saignée* method, which can (emphasis on *can*) lead to less-inspiring, over-ripe wines that lack the vibrancy and piquancy of straight-to-press rosé wines. Here are some of my favorites we currently have in stock:

**2020 Fossil Point Edna Valley Grenache Rosé (\$12.95)** I have long been a huge fan of the Fossil Point Pinot Noir from Edna Valley. Many years ago it was one of my favorite staff picks on the



sales floor in Redwood City, and to this day it remains one of the finest values in Pinot Noir in the store. However, the real overachiever this year for me was this rocking little Grenache rosé, made entirely from direct-to-press juice from grapes that were grown and always destined for rosé. This crunchy, cranberry, spiced citrus peel, tart strawberry-driven wine is just delightful. Fermented in stainless steel and neutral oak (malo was blocked), this wine is wonderfully zesty and fresh. I loved it and bought some more bottles to have around the house. At this price it's very hard to beat.

#### 2019 Mathis Sonoma Valley Grenache

**Rosé (\$16.95)** I first tasted this delicious wine standing amid the vines with proprietor, grape grower, winemaker, and self-confessed Grenache fanatic, Peter Mathis. After a long and illustrious career at Ravenswood, Mathis bought his dream parcel of undeveloped vineyard land on south-facing hillsides above the town of Sonoma. This meticulously farmed vineyard produces some of the finest wines based on this grape in the state, bar none. The rosé is no different—expertly crafted, wonderfully pure, with vibrant, ripe raspberry fruit, Alpine strawberry, peach, and subtle amaretto notes. A huge staff favorite here.



#### 2019 Morgan Arroyo Seco Grenache Rosé

**(\$19.95)** Here's a wine for those who like their rosés very dry and racy. The elegant, light salmon color signals the crisp, fresh, flavors of grapefruit, golden raspberry and lime leaf, and aromas of dried flowers. Moreish acidity that leaves you salivating for another sip. Beautiful rosé in a restrained but characterful style that will please folks who typically drink Provençal rosé.

92 WE

#### 2020 Tablas Creek "Patelin de Tablas" Paso Robles Rhône Blend

**Rosé (\$19.95)** Consistently one of my favorite U.S. rosés year after year. There are few wineries in the country who take their rosé production more seriously than Tablas Creek. Grenache is 75% of the blend along with 19% Mourvèdre and 6% Counoise. Delicate, pure aromas and flavors of summer berries and cut hay lead the palate. But the most striking feature is the magical chalky minerality in this wine. The balance and poise is flawless and the finish lingers forever. You can't go wrong here. 93 WE, 91 VN



#### Gamay Noir

While, outside of Beaujolais, Gamay only makes up a small proportion of our sales, it's a grape that has been gaining traction for many years now. With the continued popularity of brighter, fresher, more translucent-in-the-glass red wines, Gamay is a great go-to as a food-friendly summer red that can oftentimes be enjoyed with a very slight chill. Whether you haven't experimented with domestic versions of this variety yet, or if you're already on board the Gamay express, here are a few of my current favorites:

**2019 B. Kosuge Carneros Gamay (\$19.95)** I recently tasted a thrilling lineup of wines from Byron Kosuge. This Gamay is from a tiny, half-acre parcel in Carneros. Fermented whole cluster, aged mostly in concrete egg, with minimal sulfur, this wine sounded way too cool for me—but I loved the purity of the wine, which displays carbonic, but is not dominated by it. Lovely juicy acidity that mingles with the spicy red fruits and freshly turned earth.

#### 2019 Adroit San Benito County Gamay (\$24.95)

A powerful and complex rendition of Gamay here. Loaded with floral tones, sappy red berries, dried herbs, and other savory forest floor notes. The up-front fruit, medium body, and good concentration on the palate lead to a largely savory, umami-laden finish. A very intriguing wine that will keep you engaged sip after sip. 94 WE

#### 2017 Lieu Dit Santa Maria Valley Gamay

**(\$29.95)** Another Gamay that wonderfully expresses the soft, elegant fruit the grape is known for, but also captures some savory, soil-driven nuances that make it a cut above most in terms of depth and complexity. Sourced from Bien Nacido Vineyard, spontaneously fermented and aged in all neutral oak, this wine is brimming with dark cherry, mulberry, and mulling spice. Aromas of crushed rose petal, fresh mulch, leather, and tea leaf. So much more than just simple fruit, as Matt Kettmann for *Wine Enthusiast* wrote in his 96-point review, it's "a unique and compelling wine." 96 WE

#### 2020 Jolie-Laide "Barsotti Vineyard" El Dorado County Gamay

**(\$29.95)** The Barsotti vineyard is probably the most renowned planting of this grape in California. The list of folks bottling designates of this vineyard is a who's-who of modern California winemaking. Planted in decomposed granite soils at a 3,000-foot elevation, this site produces concentrated fruit with a bit more structure than your typical Cru Beaujolais. That said, Scott Schultz's light touch in the cellar has produced a profoundly aromatic and lifted rendition of Barsotti that is simply enchanting from start to finish. Hibiscus flowers, Turkish delight, ripe raspberry, clove, plus some fleshier cherry fruit with air. Bouncy and energetic on the palate with dusty tannin and crushed rock minerals.





“The winemakers boots” in the vineyard in spring make for a refreshing wine next summer. (Photo: Jules Taylor Wines)

## A “Goldilocks Vintage” for New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc

By Thomas Smith

With bright, tropical flavors and a crisp bite, New Zealand’s signature varietal — Sauvignon Blanc — is a thirst-quenching wine to beat the summer heat. The 2020s have finally landed at K&L and the wines are showing the strength of the vintage. Across the South Island, warm summer temperatures brought ripeness to the grapes in a slow and steady fashion with cool nights helping to retain acidity. Producers were blessed with ample time to pinpoint their harvest at the right moment. The result is excellent quality across the board, as winemakers were able to craft their wines exactly the way they wished in a variety of styles that are all utterly delicious.

Te Whare Ra is my absolute favorite Sauvignon Blanc producer. This husband-and-wife team based out of Renwick owns a historic vineyard with some of the oldest vines in Marlborough and craft their Alsatian-influenced wines with a light touch. The **2020 TWR (Te Whare Ra) Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough (\$19.99)** shows off their style in spades. With Granny Smith apple, finger lime, and a creamy texture that plays against its tightly wound acidity, this is exceptionally crafted with detail and elegance.

An effortlessly delicious wine. **94 SK, 93 JS, 92 RP**

Over the last year, the biggest story in New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc isn’t from Marlborough, but from the neighboring wine region of Nelson, where a

similar climate and soils make a great destination for value Sauvignon Blanc. The **2020 Middle-Earth Sauvignon Blanc Nelson (\$12.99)** is our best-selling Sauvignon Blanc, and it’s easy to see why. With citrusy lemon sorbet, lime, and passion fruit flavors, this is an incredible value that you’ll find selling at other retailers for \$19 or more. **94 SK, 91 BC**

Finally, one of my favorite discoveries of late is the **2020 Jules Taylor Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough (\$14.99)**. Born and raised in Marlborough, Jules Taylor is as local as you can get. After studying enology and spending time making wines in Italy, Taylor returned home, where she served at the helm of Kim Crawford for over a decade. She founded her eponymous boutique label in 2001 to focus on crafting higher-quality wines and hasn’t looked back since. This wine is all about a harmonious expression of grapefruit, passionfruit, and lime flavors, balanced with a streak of acidity and a gorgeous, lingering finish. With both power and balance, this is an incredibly tasty wine that’s one of the best on our shelves. **94 SK, 93 BC**



Key NZ: **BC** Bob Campbell **SK** Sam Kim Wine Orbit **JS** James Suckling

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