

WINE AND DINE

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Get out the grill and spring wines

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With unseasonably warm weather, most of us have a case of spring fever. We start dragging out our backyard patio furniture, barbecue grills are cleaned, gas propane tanks refilled and we begin tidying up our backyards for another summer season. Our backyards offer a place for peaceful solitude and a gathering place to entertain family and friends. A good glass of wine often adds to these moments.

Spring (screwcap) wines

There is a joy in watching the grass turn green, the trees bud and spring flowers bloom, giving us a sense of new beginnings. Spring ushers in a number of new pink and white wines to savor. While there are many tasty white wine varietals to enjoy (Italian Pinot Grigio, German Riesling, Austrian Gruner Veltliner, Spanish Albarino, South African Chenin Blanc to name a few), there are two that shout "springtime!" -- Rosé and Sauvignon Blanc.

Rosé is best served young, making the newest vintage (2009) an ideal spring/summer pink wine. Quality Rosé is produced in the United States (California, Washington, Oregon), France, Spain, Portugal, Australia, Italy and South Africa.

Of these, France is the leading producer and offers a variety of styles. French Rosés from the Loire Valley tend to be light and somewhat fruitier while Rosés from Tavel (the Southern Rhone Valley region) tend to be more full bodied and drier. Tavel Rosés have a hint of spice due to the influence of the Syrah grape, commonly blended with Grenache and Cinsault.

When it comes to Rosés, the expression "Color does not lie" is a good rule of thumb, as the lighter the color, the lighter the style of Rosé. Rosé offers notes of strawberries and watermelon.

Sauvignon Blanc, enjoyed for its versatility, is refreshing (high levels of acidity), light (typically not aged in oak barrels) and intriguing on the palate. Major wine regions include France (Loire Valley), the United States (California, Washington, and Oregon), Chile, Australia, New Zealand and Italy.

Regardless of region, Sauvignon Blanc is universally refreshing (good acidity), grassy and citrusy with a combination of grapefruit, lemon, green apple, passion fruit, lime and kiwi notes. However, regions do impart distinct characteristics such as the classic chalky minerality of French Sauvignon Blanc (Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé).

New Zealand is known for its pronounced grapefruit aroma and flavor while California offers distinct lemon and herbal notes. California, Australia and some French Loire Valley winemakers are now using oak barrels, which allows for longer aging and adds roundness and complexity to these wines.

Food pairings

Both Rosé and Sauvignon Blanc are lighter in style, have good acidity and are generally lower in alcohol, making them food-friendly wines.

Noting the color of the wine, Rosé with lighter shades of pink are lighter and more fruity. These pair well with lighter dishes (goat cheese, salads and fish dishes). The deeper pink Rosés are bolder in style and can stand up to grilled meats and spicy dishes.

Sauvignon Blanc's light style and good acidity levels allows it to pair well with many dishes, including seafood and poultry. While it can work well with green salads, be careful that the salad dressing is not overly acidic. A balsamic



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vinaigrette or a dressing made with rice wine vinegar can tone down the acidity level of the dressing, for a more enjoyable pairing.

We live in an area of the country where we experience all four seasons. Trying new wines from different regions and the latest vintages is a great way to enhance our enjoyment of these seasons. So after you have finished your yard work and have the patio all set to go, sit back and sip one of these new springtime patio wines.



Bill's Wine Picks
(with suggested retails):

- Las Rocas Rosé (Spain): \$10
- Mulderbosch Rosé (South Africa): \$10
- Babich Sauvignon Blanc (New Zealand): \$11
- Chateau St. Michelle Horse Heaven Vineyard (Washington): \$13
- Benziger Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma, California): \$13
- Oyster Bay Sauvignon Blanc (New Zealand): \$14

Wine of the Month

Coopers Creek Sauvignon Blanc: \$14. The winemaker that makes Kim Crawford also consults on this New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. The Wine Spectator rated the 2008 vintage 91 pts. and stated that this wine is "appealing for its detail and finesse" and that it is "light and open-textured, playing its herb and lime character against green apple and pear fruit." Grapefruit notes are not as pronounced in this wine as are found in other New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs.

Bill Garlough is the founder and owner of My Chef Catering in Naperville, the winner of the U.S. Chamber's 2007 Small Business of the Year. Bill is a level 1 master sommelier and pairs wine and food for My Chef's customers. He can be contacted at www.mychef.com.



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