



GREAT WINES

If you're looking for options beyond Chardonnay, here are some more white wines perfect for sipping alongside light summer menus.

Riesling. This is the most popular wine made in Germany, where it comes in many styles, most with hard-to-pronounce names. In the U.S., fortunately, you do not have to learn how to pronounce Spätlese or Trockenbeerenauslese to get a great bottle of wine. Riesling can be dry and off-dry, but, either way, it's a food-friendly wine that goes with a variety of dishes and cuisines. Many imported Rieslings have a very low level of alcohol (9 to 11 percent), making it an easy wine to drink, especially in the summer, when folks tend to "chug" cold drinks. Its floral, citrus, peach and mineral flavors have won Riesling many fans. World-class Riesling comes from California, Washington, New York's Finger Lakes region, Michigan, Australia and Canada. Riesling makes a great aperitif wine, on its own or with hors d'oeuvres, but it is also made in every style from bone-dry to very sweet, concentrated dessert wine.

Match dry Riesling with seafood in cream sauces or with savory dishes like quiche or schnitzel. Off-dry Riesling really works with salty foods, which become less salty with a bit of Riesling's sweetness. It's great with Tandoori chicken and cools off the heat from Vindaloo. The sweeter Rieslings go well with pork or duck, especially when these dishes are prepared with fruit.

Old World picks: St. Urbans-Hof Riesling Kabinett Piesporter Goldtröpfchen 2007 (Germany), St. Michael-Eppan Riesling Montiggl 2007 (Italy)

New World picks: Auto Moto Riesling 2007 (California), Dr. Konstantin Frank Riesling 2007 (New York), Forty-Five North Riesling 2007 (Michigan), Olsen Estates Riesling 2007 (Washington), Peter Lehmann Riesling 2008 (Australia), Robert Mondavi Riesling Private Selection 2008 (California)

Sauvignon Blanc. A white grape of the Bordeaux and Loire regions of France, Sauvignon Blanc has had great success in the New World. Sauv Blanc has become very popular in New Zealand. It's tart and tangy and zestier than Chardonnay. Sauvignon Blanc has grassy, herbaceous notes (think new-cut grass) and can even carry some vegetable characteristics (think asparagus). When the muskiness is overdone, Sauvignon Blanc gets a pungent flavor delicately described as "litterbox" or, more accurately, "cat pee." But a good Sauvignon Blanc is dry, crisp and refreshing. It pairs well with goat cheese and is a natural with oysters and other shellfish.

Sauv Blanc is popular in California, where it is sometimes called Fumé Blanc, thanks to a brilliant marketing strategy by Robert Mondavi. In the 1970s, when Sauvignon Blanc was not selling, Mondavi labeled it Fumé Blanc, a made-up name meant to bring to mind French Pouilly-Fumé. California Sauv Blanc, due to the warm-climate regions it is produced in, often has delicious tropical flavors of pineapple, melon, banana and guava.

In Bordeaux, where the grape originated, Sauvignon Blanc is blended with Semillon to soften and smooth out its acidity, and produces age-worthy wines. In the Loire, where it is called Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, the taste is dry and steely. Chile and New York's Long Island region are also producing top-quality Sauvignon Blanc.

Old World picks: Chateau La Louviere Blanc 2006 (France), **Domaine Thomas Sancerre La Crele 2007 (France)**, Regis Minet Pouilly Fumé Vieilles Vignes 2007 (France)

New World picks: Bonterra Sauvignon Blanc 2008 (California), B. R. Cohn Sauvignon Blanc 2007 (California), Chalk Hill Sauvignon Blanc 2007 (California), Macari Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc 2008 (New York), Mount Nelson Sauvignon Blanc 2008 (New Zealand), Waterbrook Sauvignon Blanc 2007 (Washington)

White blends. France's classic Rhone blends, which include Viognier, Marsanne, Roussanne and Grenache Blanc, in any combination, have taken a delicious hold in California.

Old World pick: Chateau de Saint Cosme Cotes du Rhone Blanc 2007 (France) New World picks: Derbyshire "Fifteen 10" 2006 (California), Kiamie Kuvée White Blend 2007 (California), Katin Grenache Blanc 2008 (California), Tablas Creek Cotes de Tablas Blanc 2007 (California), Treana White 2007 (California)

And, for marvelous and even more unusual whites, don't overlook Torrontes, Gruner Veltliner, African Chenin Blanc and Albariño.

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