

{ WOMAN ON WINE }

Old World whites for summer

AH, THE JOYS OF SUMMER! Grilling in the evening, tucking into dishes built with the season's produce and spending time at Tahoe — it doesn't get much better.

And what goes with summer fare? Certainly not the big cabs and Barolos of winter. Dry rosé, sauvignon blanc, chenin blanc, chardonnay and riesling come to mind — especially wines from Old World regions like France, Germany, Italy, Greece and Spain.

Here are a few to try this summer. Prices are approximate and might vary by vendor.

2008 GREEK WINE CELLARS SANTORINI ASSYRTIKO

This wine is food-friendly and light. It's perfect for summer and a great value. It tastes more expensive than it does.

Price: \$13

Alcohol: 12 percent

Tasting notes: Citrusy and flinty on the nose, with hints of white flowers, peaches and lime. Citrusy minerality on the palate — it's acidic without being too tart. Nicely balanced.

2008 GRECO DI TUFO DEI FEUDI DI SAN GREGORIO

Greco di Tufo comes from Campania in southern Italy; Naples is its capital. It's an elegant dry wine, nearly as dry as a sauvignon blanc but without as much acidity. Be careful with pairing — many dishes will overwhelm this juice.

Price: \$23

Alcohol: 13 percent

Tasting notes: Nose is very delicate, with notes of pear and lime. On the palate, mineral notes shine through. It's dry and soft, with low acidity and a medium finish. Light-bodied, elegant, restrained.

2009 CLOS SAINT MICHEL CHATEAUNEUF DU PAPE BLANC

You don't see many white Chateauneuf du Pape wines — most are the red variety made with syrah, grenache, mourvèdre and a host of other varietals. The Clos Saint Michel has 30 percent grenache blanc, 30 percent clairette, 20 percent rousanne and 20 percent bourbolenc. Fat and rich. Pair with antipasti like marinated olives and mushrooms.

Price: \$28

Alcohol: 14 percent

Tasting notes: Restrained, elegant nose, with notes of aromatic honeysuckle and peach. On the palate, it's rich and round but still balanced. Texture is luscious, with just enough acidity to give the wine structure.

2009 CHATEAU LA LOUVIÈRE BLANC PESSAC-LEOGNAN

White Bordeaux is a blend of sauvignon blanc and semillon from the famed Bordeaux region of France. This one contains 85 percent sauvignon blanc and 15 percent semillon; it received 93 points from Wine Enthusiast.

Price: \$35

Alcohol: 13 percent

Tasting notes: Lime and green apple on the nose, with herbal notes on the palate, where crisp minerality and acidity balance mouthfeel and richness.

2009 DR. HEIDEMANN'S BERNKASTEL SPÄTLESE

Riesling is a fantastic sipping wine because of its low alcohol content — 7.5 percent vs. other wines here up to

14 percent — and that means you can drink it all night. Its crisp acidity cuts through the residual sugar, leaving balanced, delicious juice.

Price: \$25

Alcohol: 7.5 percent

Tasting notes: Beautiful apricot, peaches and honeysuckle on the nose. On the palate, off-dry, with bracing acidity. Well-balanced, complex, with a lengthy finish.

2009 VERDICCHIO DEI CASTELLI DI JESI

What caught my attention most about this bottle, aside from the wine's food friendliness, was the detail from Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus" on the label. Verdicchio comes from the Marche, Italy, on the Adriatic Coast.

Price: \$14

Alcohol: 12 percent

Tasting notes: On the nose, there are mineral aromas of white peach, lemon and apple. On the palate, refreshing, round and light-bodied. A great choice to pair with prosciutto and melon.

2010 DOMAINE CHATELAIN PETIT CHABLIS

This wine comes from a small family producer in France. I love Chablis paired with mignonette-spiked oysters on the half shell or with cold cracked Dungeness crab splashed with fresh lemon juice.

Price: \$19

Alcohol: 12.5 percent

Tasting notes: Flinty, with apricots, lemon and pear on the nose. On the palate, medium-bodied, with bright fruit flavors, flinty acidity and a lengthy finish. Balanced.

2010 VAL DO SOSEGO RIAS BAIXAS ALBARIÑO

Albariño is a thick-skinned grape with low yield, and it's a great value. This Spanish wine is light and refreshing but not super complex — great to sip on the patio. Wine & Spirits gave it 91 points.

Price: \$15

Alcohol: 12.5 percent


Tasting notes: Citrusy nose, with hints of lime, lemon and tangerine peel. Bright and acidic on the palate, with a medium finish. Light and fresh.

2010 VIGNES DE PRECHEURS TAVEL

This Tavel is a classic-style French dry rosé with bright fruit flavors. I love rosé because it's extremely food-friendly and refreshing on a hot day. This varietal blend features grenache, cinsault, syrah and mourvèdre. Pair with grilled salmon, tuna tartare and summer salad.

Price: \$17

Alcohol: 13.5 percent

Tasting notes: Pretty pink color, with aromas of strawberry, orange and cherry. Crisp and acidic. Bright fruit flavors and minerality on the palate. 

GRILLED CORN *and* BUTTER LEAF SALAD *with* CUMIN VINAIGRETTE

Pair with 2010 Vignes de Precheurs Tavel



SPICED PECANS

- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne
- ½ cup pecans (about 2 ounces)

Preheat the oven to 250 F. Preheat the grill to medium heat. Clean and season grill.

In a small bowl, combine the oil,

sugar, salt, cumin, and cayenne. Toss the pecans with the mixture and pour onto a cookie sheet. Bake until slightly dry, about 30 minutes.

GRILLED CORN

- 3 ears of corn, husks removed and cleaned
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Brush the ears of corn lightly with oil and place on the preheated grill. Grill until the corn is lightly browned,

turning as it cooks so the entire ear gets color, about 6 to 8 minutes. Remove the corn from the grill and cool.

Once the corn is cooled, carefully remove the kernels by first slicing the cooked cob in half. Place the flat end down on the cutting board or in a shallow bowl, then cut down in a sawing motion between the kernels and the ear, holding it at the top with your free hand so that the cob doesn't slip.

CUMIN VINAIGRETTE

- 3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped shallots (from about 5 or 6 medium cloves)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- ¼ cup olive oil

In a small bowl, combine the vinegar, cumin, sugar, shallots, salt and pepper. In a slow stream, add the oil, whisking continually as you pour. Taste and adjust seasoning; reserve.

SALAD

- 2 heads butter leaf lettuce, washed, dried and torn into pieces
- ½ cup finely sliced red onion, soaked in ice water (from about a quarter of a medium onion)
- ½ cup finely chopped red bell pepper (from about half of a medium pepper)

Place the lettuce, red onion and bell pepper in a large bowl. Add the prepared corn and toss with ¼ cup of the vinaigrette. Adjust seasoning with salt, freshly ground pepper and additional vinaigrette, as desired. Add the spiced pecans to serve.

SERVES 8 