

Tonight's Theme – Spring into Summer

Our theme reflects a selection of wines we can enjoy when the weather is warmer, is lighter at night, and we have summery meals & BBQs. Do you live in Glass, Marc? Warm weather – you must be having a laugh! Well, for the one day a year we see the sun here's 10 great wines.

We have a mixture of price points, so you can have a treat once in a while but also enjoy less costly bottles. We've gone for grape varieties other than chardonnay and claret because we did these two wines groups in the last tasting. We also chose some varieties you may not have tried.

Like the wine you tasted tonight? If they came from The Wine Society and you don't want to sign up for a membership then speak to Tom or Marc and they'll add you to their next order. Other than that all the wines are available locally as indicated.

The Wines

1. Gratien & Meyer Cremant de Loire Rose Brut (£12, Tesco, Huntly & Inverurie)

The nose on this wine is delicate strawberries and a lovely lightness. This comes from the Loire valley in France, so it isn't champagne but made using the same methods. Refreshing and clean, with a hint of chalkiness – well, that's what Tesco say! It's strawberry sorbet in a glass at a really keen price.

Food friends: Shellfish and fish, rollmop herring, seafood sticks, wild strawberries in Tom's garden.

2. Botham Balfour English Rose (£12, Tesco, Huntly)

What, you say, English Rose??? Made by Sir Ian Botham??? Yes, indeed. This soft, pale pink wine with golden tints releases fragrances of citrus fruit and orchard flowers. On the palate, the immediate effect is elegant and open, developing subtle aromas with a limey edge before a buxom finish.

Food friends: Sea fish, partridge, BBQ chicken, Chicken Kebab from Elim's Kebab Shop in Huntly.

3. Le Rocher de Saint Victor Picpoul de Pinet (£6.99, Lidl, Inverurie)

This is a really good example of French Picpoul, and is a real crowd pleaser for a BBQ. It has quite a salty note to it, and sometimes can be 'heavy stuff' but this is light & refreshing. People who don't like white wine will probably go for this. It's cheap enough to be good party wine.

Food friends: Brie, chicken & leek pie, McDonald's Filet-o-Fish, sea fish more generally.

4. Morrison's 'The Best' Grenache Blanc (£8, Morrisons, Inverurie)

Morrisons have a really good own brand selection of wine, and this is another one. They change their range quite often, so buy this while you can. Grenache blanc is the grape, albeit you'll drink its red cousin more often – Grenache (a component in much of red Rioja). This wine is made in partnership with Riebeek Valley Wine Co from a vineyard of bush vines in the Swartland region of South Africa. White blends from SA are good value for money.

Food friends: Vegetarian food, roast chicken, turkey or pork, bacon butty, I feel like Chicken tonight.

**5. Pouilly Fume, Domaine Seguin
(£15.50, The Wine Society)**

Back to the Loire for this pretty little thing: more steely edged than a sharp plough blade, gun flinty sauvignon blanc from a wine maker who really has this nailed. The appellation is over the other side of the valley from Sancerre, and in both places the soil is clay and flint, and it really reflects in the taste profile. This much money spent on wine from Pouilly Fume gets you class wine for the money.

Food friends: Soft cheeses, sea food, fish, trout, Lancashire cheese, salmon, Dufftown fish 'n' chips.

**6. Pouilly-Fuisse, 2019
(£14.99, Lidl, Inverurie)**

Well, we didn't say chardonnay but Marc sneaked this one in! Pouilly-Fuissé is the star commune in Burgundy's southern outpost of the Mâconnais, producing bodybuilder Chardonnay like this one, seasoned by oak ageing. This has the girth & guts to stand up to more robust food flavours, and at this price it'll get you some Burgundian white wine with big boots.

Food friends: BBQ foods, slow cooked chicken, salmon, Huntly's "Super Wok" prawn crackers.

**7. Freeman's Bay Gisborne Pinot Gris
(£6.99, Aldi, Inverurie)**

This is a grape most associated with Italy (where it is called Pinot Grigio) and the Alsace in France. Marc reckons the Alsations overdo it a bit at times – their wines become a bit too "oily" for his liking. This one is different – lighter touch with some lovely aromas of honeysuckle and melon. Yellow pears and a hint of spice. This originates from New Zealand.

Food friends: Spicy dishes, Thai food, sea food, Manchego cheese, Café India's Tamarind Special

**8. Niedermenniger Riesling Kabinett, von Kesselstatt, 2019
(£11.95, The Wine Society)**

Remember Blue Nun? Well, sometimes you just want something with less alcohol but more body and a bit sweet. This is where Riesling batters down your cellar door! The Germans have a system to classify the sweetness of their Rieslings, and this one in a dry, rich form. It's steel-snap trap, racy and citrusy wine, with just a touch of sweetness to knock the edges off. A super match for spicy grub.

Food friends: Fish curry, Vietnamese food, gammon, BBQ pork chop, Pot Noodle King Chow Mein

**9. Fleurie Vieilles Vignes, Maison de la Madrière, Stéphane Aviron 2020
(£11.95, The Wine Society)**

And before the mystery wine a red. Marc and Tom both liked this Fleurie from Beaujolais. The grape here is Gamay, and it has real fruit character, a lovely example of what can be done in the better communes of Beaujolais. This is real summer quaffing wine, and we even managed to ween Tom off his Claret-fest with this one! Drink it slightly cool, straight out the bottle (no decanting). Tasty!

Food friends: Roe deer cutlets, rabbit, pheasant, sausages on the BBQ, charcuterie, Peperami.

**10. Samos Anthemis 2015
(£9.95, The Wine Society)**

Goodness me: who'd have thought it, a sweet wine from the Aegean Sea. As sweet as Nana Mouskouri! Well, it's not literally "from the sea" – it'd be a salty devil if it were! The Greeks on Pythagoras's birthplace really know how to make primo "krasi" – a really lovely wine made from the muscat grape. Honey and caramelised oranges, sweet enough but not tablet!

Food friends: Most desserts, especially Crème brûlée, and a cheeky Bakewell Tart! Custard tarts.

Tom and Marc's quick wine tips.

Where we buy. We use all sorts of merchants but these three are good;

- **The Wine Society (www.thewinesociety.com); Tel: 01438 741177**

This co-operative organisation is owned by its members. Lifetime membership costs a one-off £40 but you get £20 of this refunded off your first order. An amazing selection of wines and really helpful staff make it the best wine retailer in the UK. Their own brand Society and Exhibition label wines are brilliant value. Delivery is free if you order more than £75 of wine or 12 bottles. Smaller orders cost £5 delivery. This is not a subscription-based wine business, so you won't be lumbered with a case of wine arriving each month!

- **Waitrose Cellar (www.waitrosecellar.com); Tel. 0800 1888881**

A fair selection of wines but be careful about prices as they can be a little on the high side. Wait for their twice yearly "25% off everything" sales (they happen around April and June each year), or other offers (they always have some kind of offer). They also have a good selection of port, sherry and other spirits. Delivery is £5.95, free over £150.

- **Marks and Spencer (www.marksandspencer.com); Tel. 0333 0148423**

Surprisingly good for wine, and quite an array of different grape varieties. Fairly keen on price, albeit in their 1/3 off sales you can pick up silly bargains. Their website has a much better selection than local stores. Delivery is £4.99, or free over £100.

We can share thoughts about others - Laithwaites, Majestic, Spey Larder, ASDA, Sainsbury, Lidl, Gordon & MacPhail, Spey Larder, Amazon, Cru London, Berry Bros. and Rudd, A & B Vintners, Millesima, Aldi, Tanners, Farr Vintners, Nickolls and Perks, Morrisons, Naked Wines, Seckford, Virgin Wines, Wood Winters, etc. Delivery can be expensive for smaller merchants, so be careful.

Decant red wine: Bring any red wine out of the bottle for half an hour or more before drinking. No need for a decanter, any wide bottomed glass jug will do. In general terms you don't need to decant white wine or pinot noir. Marc buys his decanters from charity shops for about a fiver.

Wine glasses: A larger red wine glass (cheap from Tesco) gets the juice opened up. A larger glass often makes poorer quality wine taste better. Also, if you serve too much white wine in one go it can heat up and taste less appealing so use a smaller glass & more frequent pours.

Faulty wine: If your red wine smells of wet cardboard, looks cloudy or seems 'soupy' then it's corked. Don't drink it. Pour what you didn't drink back into the bottle and put the cork back in. Take it back to the shop for refund or exchange.

Chill it, don't kill it! People tend to drink white wine quite cold – my fridge is too cold at 6deg. c.. Cold white wine tastes bland, but chilling cheap white wine makes it more drinkable. Take white wine out of the fridge for 20 minutes before serving. Serve white wine between 8-10 deg. c., red wine 16-20 deg. c.

Storing wine. Don't store wine in a warm place, keep it horizontal and away from vibrations. Dark, dry and a consistent temperature between 8-12 deg. c is perfect. Be careful about garages: around here the temperature is too cold in winter and bottles can spoil or break. Wine freezes at -4 Deg. c. Don't store wine too long in a fridge – it dries the cork and lets air seep in which spoils the wine.

Keeping opened wine fresh. If you have an opened bottle of wine (red or white) and want to drink it the next day then stopper it (not cork) and put it in the fridge. We keep an empty half bottle so less than half bottles can be stored with less air. When you want to drink it bring the wine out the fridge to warm up. Air is the enemy of wine: it makes it oxidise (go off). Drink wine up within two days, port and sherry within a few weeks. Madeira is indestructible, so can be open for years!