

Get Over Your Fear of Chilling Red Wine

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Source: Vendors

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Last weekend the temperature on my back deck was 95 degrees, steaks were on the grill, and I craved a thirst-quenching drink that wasn't that summer cliché, rosé. With charred meat, beer is not the answer, nor is a frozen margarita or tart white. Sticky summer weather is what the world's light reds, best served chilled (sometimes even ice cold), are made for.

The French call them *vins de soif* (wines for thirst) or *glou-glou* (glug-glug, in English). They're wines so gulpable that one bottle will probably not be enough of their fresh, vivid fruit flavors. To judge by wine bar offerings and by-the-glass lists, these lively easy drinkers have soared in popularity.

Unpretentious and relatively inexpensive, they've become a summer essential, the wine version of designer flip-flops. They're produced just about everywhere—even California, where big, sun-kissed, concentrated reds are the norm. Some winemakers are deliberately creating

wines for chilling. New California superstar-to-be Laura Brennan Bissell, who makes wine under the Inconnu brand, for example, describes her Lalalu cabernet franc as a California *vin de soif*.

Increasingly these wines, like Santa Julia Malbec-Bonarda from Argentina, even include the directions “bebase frio” (drink chilled) on the label, so you know you won’t look like an ignorant klutz if you plop in an ice cube.



A tub of grapes from the Beaujolais area of France.

Photographer: Michael Boys/Corbis/VCG/Corbis Documentary

Not just any red qualifies for chilling. Let big-deal cabernets hibernate until fall. Low temperatures highlight their tannins and higher alcohol and make the wines taste metallic, while oaky ones seem dry and astringent. What you want are light, fruity examples with low alcohol, soft tannins, and high acidity. Time in the fridge dials up the acidity, so the wines taste juicier and even more refreshing.

What to look for? The gateway chillable reds are Beaujolais, made from the gamay grape, but there are plenty of other, less well-known varieties, such as frappato, grignolino, cinsault, schiava, trollinger, pelaverga, mencia, dolcetto, zweigelt, grenache, pineau d’aunis, bonarda, and lambrusco. Many of these are from cooler regions such as Northern Italy and the Loire Valley. And some of the wines made from them are produced by carbonic maceration, in which whole bunches of grapes are fermented in a sealed vat with carbon dioxide. That gives them a particularly lively character that chilling points up.

Don't assume red wine over ice has to be served on its own in a glass. Recently, on a trip to California, I asked Massimo di Costanzo, who makes stunning, powerful cabernets, how he got into wine. He waxed poetic about peeling and slicing peaches to go in the pitchers of cold red wine his grandparents drank in Positano in summer. That's a common hot-weather beverage in rural Italy.



Sangria isn't the only way to serve wine chilled.

Photographer: Michael Piazza/Photolibrary RM

In Spain, just about everyone has a personal recipe for sangria, the summer deck drink that first came to popularity in America with the 1964 World's Fair. Sales of bottled red versions have been reviving over the past several years as premium versions have made their debuts. For example, Begonia Sangria Tinta (1 liter, \$10), a 6 percent alcohol mix of monastrell and bobal grapes blended with sugar cane, spices, herbs, Azahar flowers, and the essence of Valencia oranges. It's the only nonpasteurized sangria in the U.S., made completely with Spanish ingredients. Serve ice cold.

How to chill red wine? Put the bottle in the fridge for 45 minutes to an hour before serving, or plunge into an ice bucket filled with a mix of ice and water for 15 minutes. If desperate, just throw in a few ice cubes and swirl—but take them out before they start diluting the wine.

Eight Reds Built to Chill



Source: Vendors

2016 Santa Julia Tintillo Malbec-Bonarda Argentina (\$13)

This blend of equal parts bonarda and malbec from Argentina's Uco Valley is made by carbonic maceration and loaded with juicy, spicy red fruit flavors and snappy acidity.

2016 Pierre-Marie Chermette Beaujolais (\$14)

Basic Beaujolais such as this one, from a superb producer, is the definition of thirst-quenching. Made partially with carbonic maceration, it's lip-smacking and brims with lush, bright fruit.

Cleto Chiarli Vecchia Modena Premium Lambrusco di Sorbara (\$16)

Once thought of as sweet fizzy plonk, lambrusco, made from the grape of the same name, can also be dry and crisp—and delicious when ice cold. This one is lightly sparkling, with tastes of crushed strawberry and a hint of spice, and has only 11.5 percent alcohol.

2017 Marcel Lapierre Raisins Gaulois Vin de France (\$16)

This cheerful gamay is the entry-level bottling from one of Beaujolais's most famous natural winemakers. Lively and spicy-fruity, it's a toss-back wine with sophistication. In France it's available as a bag-in-box wine.



Source: Vendors

2016 Tendu Red Wine (\$20)

Steve Matthiasson's crowd-pleasing, wallet-friendly California blend of three Italian red varieties is sold in 1-liter bottles with a crown cap, like beer. It's tart and fresh, with cherryish flavors.

2016 Valle dell' Acate Il Frappato Vittoria (\$20)

Frappato is a native Sicilian variety, and this tangy, vibrant example from a well-known producer is aged in stainless steel tanks to retain the grape's savory juiciness and rose petal and berry aromas.

2015 Heitz Cellars Grignolino (\$22)

Known for long-lived cabernets, Napa's historic Heitz Cellars has been making zippy, strawberry-scented pale reds from grignolino since the winery's founding in 1961. The grape is native to Italy's Piemonte. This vintage brims with bright cranberry-cherry-orange peel flavors.

2017 Broc Cellars Valdiguié (\$26)

The winery cellar of this new wave California producer, which buys grapes, is a warehouse in Berkeley. People used to refer to valdiguié as Napa gamay, but it's really an obscure variety from southwest France. Its raspberry-strawberry flavors will remind you of Beaujolais.