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Wine and Food's Living
Legends

Margrit Mondavi, Mike "Miljenko" Grgich,
Cecilia Chiang and Peter Mondavi Sr.

top10

Summer Sips

By Mark Goldberger

I don't know anyone who enjoys Amarone on a humid 95 degree day. Ultra-rich and heavy tannic reds can be delicious, for sure, but as the weather heats up this summer, you're probably more interested in a wine to quench your thirst than one to warm you up.

Summer wines should be crisp and refreshing; they should be zesty and mouthwatering, with tongue-tingling acidity. That's not to say that you have to limit yourself only to Sauvignon Blancs or the palest of rosés. In fact, if you're firing up the grill this summer, you'll probably want something juicy and berryful to play off the smoky char of your meat, fish or veggies du jour.

With all that in mind, here are my picks for wines to get you through the dog days of summer. Whether you're up in the mountains or supine on the beach, picnicking with your lover or simply lounging outside on the patio, these wines are sure to please.

1 '11 Juan Gil Dry Muscat ~ Jumilla, Spain: Possibly the greatest white wine bargain I've tasted this year, this is a dry, still Muscat that showcases all the floral and peachy goodness of the grape, but with a price tag that won't make you blanch. Try this with a fresh fruit and vegetable salad.

2 Riesling ~ I tried to narrow down my choices to just one selection, but there are so many delicious German and Alsatian and American Rieslings being made today, that it became a Sisyphean task to single one out for inclusion. Paul Grieco, founder of the "Summer of Riesling" movement would surely agree. Whether sweet, off-dry or dry, there's a Riesling out there that's right for you, and of course, perfect for summer fare. Best of all, hundreds of terrific Rieslings are available these days for less than \$20 per bottle.

3 2011 Matanzas Creek Sauvignon Blanc ~ Sonoma County: I love a juicy and tropical fruit-filled New Zealand Savvy as much as the next guy, but there's something sophisticated about the Matanzas Creek version that really turns my head. Perhaps it's the dollop of Semillon and Sauvignon Musqué (a different clone of Sauvignon Blanc) the winery blends in; this wine just sings. Try it with smoked sablefish or halibut oscar.

4 2011 Sada Vermentino ~ Bolgheri: This wine emanates from the Tuscan coast, and its personality is pure Italian: charming, sophisticated, and yet also laid back. If lemons grew in the ocean, this wine would be the result, beautifully held together by firm acidity and lovely structure. Coastal wine -> coastal food. Enjoy this with *frito misto*: literally "fried mix," a dish of calamari, scallops, clams and lemon all fried together, served with aioli for dipping.

5 2007 Francois Chidaine Montlouis Les Touffaux: I don't remember my first experience in Montlouis, as I was only 4 ½ years old, but photographic evidence suggests I enjoyed the area's wines even back then. Chenin Blanc from this appellation within the Loire Valley is not unlike Vouvray, in that it comes in many styles, from light and crisp to rich and sweet, and even sparkling. Look to the wines of Francois Chidaine to be your guide. And for something special, try his Les Touffaux bottling, which is highly structured, yet abounds with apple and peachy goodness. Try it with a Crispy Softshell Crab BLT.



6 '12 Kenzo Estate Yui Cabernet Franc Rosé ~ Napa Valley: This may well be the most expensive rosé I've ever tasted, but it is also, bar none—the best. If you're willing to splurge, pick up a \$40 half bottle of this miniscule production beauty from winemaker Heidi Barrett and Kenzo Tsujimoto, founder of video game giant CapCom. When it comes to summer, everyone should indulge in la vie en rose.

7 '11 Georges Duboeuf Morgon Côte du Py: In case you were unaware, there's a huge difference between Beaujolais Nouveau and "Cru Beaujolais." All you have to do is taste Duboeuf's Morgon to understand how much more serious Gamay Noir can be than the fruit-punch tasting "nouveau" released each November. But for some reason, Beaujolais still flies under-the-radar for so many wine drinkers. Take full advantage of this. The wines are extraordinary values when compared to those of other regions around France, and they are wonderful "Triple H" thirst-quenchers when slightly chilled. Try with game-bird pate and crusty bread.

8 '10 Robert Biale "Royal Punishers" Zinfandel Blend ~ Napa Valley: Discovered on a recent trip to Napa, this voluptuous red gem includes a healthy wallop of Petite Sirah, adding a slight peppery kick to the creamy dark berry fruit and velvety smooth tannins. Yum factor: 100%. This would shine with just about any meat on the grill.

9 '08 Piattelli Grand Reserve Malbec ~ Mendoza: Long one of my favorite under the radar Argentine producers, this micro-production Malbec is a big step up in quality from Piattelli's entry level version, for just a few dollars more per bottle. Well worth the \$25 you'll spend at retail, this wine over-delivers on its promise of dark fruit, spicy French oak, and a long, smooth finish. Pair with hoisin marinated skirt steak.

10 '10 Donelan Cuvee Christine Syrah ~ Sonoma County: The 2010 Donelan Cuvee Christine Syrah is a meal unto itself. Blueberries and black currants dance on the palate as aromas of woodsmoke, dried herbs and bacon fat leave you breathless. Even so, this wine retains enough natural acidity to make it a lovely pairing with food. Try it with a garlicky roast leg of lamb or savory braised Chinese eggplant with basil. ■