

Spring Drink Advice and Recipes

Written by Story by Nichole Brophy and Melissa Larsen / Photographed by Cassandra Tomei

Wednesday, 31 March 2010 11:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 11:10

Drinks are the centerpiece of just about any celebration - revelers toast with Champagne on New Year's Eve and rarely is a summer barbecue complete without a brew in hand. To help in choosing which wines to chill and cocktails to mix up for your spring soirees, AFM asked a few of our favorite beverage experts for their delicious input.

Eliot Wexler

Owner of NOCA

"There is so much great juice out there that I try to find wines that tell a story or that speak specifically of the place from which they came. Smaller producers doing things soulfully really resonate for me."



Cantonese Peach

How do you choose a spring wine?

"Fresh and bright, perhaps with floral accents—just like spring itself."

Best wine to bring to a barbecue?

"It really depends on the style of barbecue but ripe and spicy zinfandel or syrah will pair well with most southern-style sauces. I also love some big ole ripe Cali pinot noir with pig, as well."

Favorite sparkling wine/Champagne?

"If you are buying, then Krug Rosé every time. If not, then the Henri Billiot Grand Cru Brut Rosé NV from Ambonnay. It is an incredible pinot noir-based rosé from a tiny estate in the Montagne de Reims."

Favorite bottle under \$20?

"You could ask me this 20 times and get 20 different answers. Right now I am loving the Cuatro Pasos Mencía from Bierzo, Spain. Smoky blackberries and silky tannins; it should be about \$14 retail."

Favorite bottle more than \$20?

"Again, I have hundreds of answers for this, but right at this moment I will pick Produttori del Barbaresco Rabaja 2004. Produttori was the world's first wine co-op and their single vineyard wines are without a doubt the best values for world-class nebbiolo (\$65 retail). Some other favorites are Peay Scallop Shelf, Hirsch San Andreas, Gemstone 10, EFESTE 'Big Papa' and Karl Lawrence Cabernet."

Cantonese Peach Recipe

1 oz. Fresh yellow peach puree

1 1/2 oz. Canton Ginger Liqueur

2 oz. Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs Champagne

Rim martini glass with gingersnap crumbs. Shake peach puree with ginger liqueur and ice until well chilled. Strain into rimmed glass and top off with Schramsberg.

Robert Morris

Co-owner of Cork Restaurant

"Spring means warmer temperatures so choose wines that are served chilled, such as white or rosé, and that are crisp, clean and refreshing on the palate."



Best wine to bring to a barbecue?

"Take a dry rosé to a barbecue or something fun and funky like viognier. I would steer clear of red wine. Spice and tannins don't go well together. But, for me, I would probably drink a margarita."

Best wine to bring to a formal dinner?

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"A nice pinot noir; it is a light-bodied red that most people like. [Opt for] something that retails for about \$50."

Favorite sparkling wine/Champagne?

"Gruet Blanc de Noirs. It is from Albuquerque and is made from pinot noir and pinot meunier grapes. It retails for \$10."

What wine do you use to win over non-drinkers?

"New Age Malvasia/Sauvignon Blanc blend from Argentina. It is a refreshing white with a tinge of sweetness and effervescence. America loves sugar. Usually people who don't like wine are used to drinking sweet beverages like soda, so if you can get them to like a sweeter wine, it is a good segue into the world of wine."

Grapefruit-Basil Martini Recipe

2 oz. Stellar Citrus Gin

2 Basil leaves

1/2 oz. Simple syrup

2 oz. Ruby Red Grapefruit Juice (use Ocean Spray or a similar variety that is in the non-refrigerated juice aisle—not fresh refrigerated juice)

Muddle one basil leaf and simple syrup. Add ice, gin and grapefruit juice. Shake well and strain into martini glass. Garnish with remaining basil leaf.

Kate Portanova

Owner of Arcadia Fine Wine

"Don't be afraid to ask questions about the wine you are interested in trying. After all, wine is meant to enjoy so drink whatever brings a smile to your face."

How do you choose a spring wine?

"Climate and environment are key. Arizona can have large temperature fluctuations so one day a crisp white is called for and the next a barbera is [called for]. Follow your senses and mood. A tried-and-true spring standby is always a great, vibrant rosé. We suggest the 2008 Bieler."

Best wine to bring to a barbecue?

"In the past, rosé has been a no-brainer favorite at Arcadia Fine Wine, but 2010 is all about 'Grill & Grenache.' Bring along Outpost Grenache to be the hit of the party."

Best wine to bring to a formal dinner?

"Try testing the waters with Bisol Jeio Prosecco from Italy. They make a traditional Brut that is simply delish, as well as a to-die-for rosé of Prosecco."

Favorite bottle under \$20?

"The 2006 Dows Vale do Bomfim from Portugal. It's a red blend of several indigenous grapes. Don't worry about pronouncing it—just drink it."

Favorite bottle more than \$20?

"For an obscure, hard-to-find white spring treat, try the 2007 Domaine de Gerbeaux Pouilly-Fuisse. A classic white Burgundy."

What wine do you use to win over non-drinkers?

"For a white wine hater, Salviano Orvieto Classico. For red, [try] the GR-174 Red Wine from Priorat, Spain."

Eric Spragett

Cellar master and sommelier at Different Pointe of View

"Because spring is mild, pick wines that are not too heavy or too light."



What's your rule of thumb when it comes to choosing a wine?

"No such thing. Da Wine Guy says, 'Eat what you fancy and drink what you like.' Be sure to diversify as much as possible."

Best wine to bring to a barbecue?

"Fruity yet spicy is the key to barbecue. I recommend Australian shiraz or California zinfandel."

Favorite sparkling wine/Champagne?

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"Roederer Estate Brut from Anderson Valley in Mendocino."

Favorite bottle under \$20?

"Picket Fence Pinot Noir from the Sonoma Coast."

Favorite bottle more than \$20?

"Merry Edwards Sauvignon Blanc from the Russian River Valley."

What wine do you use to win over non-drinkers?

"Something light and fruity [like] riesling for white and Beaujolais for red."

Spring Scent Recipe

2 oz. Bombay Sapphire Gin

3/4 oz. Champagne

1/2 oz. Green curacao

1/4 oz. Mango juice

Sliver of fresh mango to rest on the glass rim

Shake the gin and curacao in a mixer with ice. Strain the drink into a tulip glass. Add Champagne. Stir in the mango juice. Garnish the rim with the fresh mango sliver.