

[Summer's Hottest Wines: Tapping the Trends for Your Warm-Weather Pleasure](#)

Written by Nancy Rosetti Monday, 22 June 2009 10:56

Though wine-making has been around for thousands of years, it is still susceptible (much like fashion) to trends, often driven by marketing and buzz. Remember the movie *Sideways* and the mad rush to a quiet little varietal known as Pinot Noir?

To get a better sense of where people's palettes are lately, it was helpful to attend the International Wine & Spirits event at the National Restaurant Association show held in May. The show is considered to be the most comprehensive of its kind, and is open only to people in the trade. It showcases both existing and emerging wine labels and is a great place to get a sense of what's hot.

The most notable trend was a sizable showing of smaller importers and distributors, representing independent and family-owned vineyards from all parts of the world. Hot this summer are wines that speak to the place from which they came - their "*terroir*." This "sense of place" comes from wines that gain character more from their geographical region and less from manipulation during production.

Following this emphasis on *terroir*, look for a growing selection of organic and sustainably produced wines. The National Restaurant Association's "Third Annual Chef Survey: What's Hot in 2009" ranked organics as the number-three trend overall, and organic wine and organic coffee were among the top alcoholic- and non-alcoholic-beverage trends, respectively.

Though many people are tightening their belts in this dismal economy, wine consumption has actually increased. According to wine-industry statistics, last year the number of cases of wine consumed in America increased for the 14th consecutive year, while on-premise (restaurant) wine spending jumped 9.3 percent. That said, those who are considered "core wine drinkers" (people who drink wine at least once a week, according to the Wine Market Council) are "trading down" - drinking the same amount of wine but spending less per bottle. The great news is that expensive wine is out of vogue - a timely trend, as heat is an enemy of most high-end wines.

For your summer table (picnic, deck, or dining), here are some of my suggestions, representing one or more of the top trends and perfect for the season:

- **Domaine de Ballade is located in the heart of Gascony, France. The winery has been owned by the Morel Family since 1927, and the organic grapes are hand-picked. The *terroir* is typified by the light soils of the region. The oceanic climate allows the grapes to reach their full expression. This white wine is a blend of 70 percent Sauvignon Blanc and 30 percent Colombard. It is fresh, crisp, and citrusy, with just the right balance of acidity and minerality. And it retails for under \$12!**

- Heading east, to Austria, is the father/son Berger estate. They make at least a half-dozen tasty wines, but the popular favorite is their crown-capped Gruner Veltliner. Light, herbal, and refreshing, after a glass of this white you'll be glad it comes in a liter bottle. Perfect with asparagus in any form and grilled or smoked white fish. Stellar quality for the value price of \$13.
- Another great white in the same handy liter bottle (and retailing for just over \$15) is Gysler Sylvaner. Gysler Rheingau - from Rheinhessen, Germany - is a 20-year-old vineyard and a certified biodynamic producer. The wine is just off dry, with hints of stone fruit and minerals. It is refreshing and light and great as an aperitif. Try it with a salad and onion tart for a summer lunch.

But summer is not just for whites.

- On the 50-acre organic estate in the Pierres Dorees region of southern Beaujolais, Pascal Chatelous vinifies hand-harvested fruit in stainless-steel tanks. Domaine Pral Beaujolais is 98 percent Gamay, grown in France's Beaujolais region. It is light, lower in alcohol, and has a fruit-forward friendliness that makes it perfect to have on-hand at all times for your summer visitors (for under \$15).
- In the heart of the Loire Valley in France is the small vineyard of Chinon. Chinon dates back from the 12th and 13th centuries, and the Charles Joguet Chinon is a true expression of this *terroir*. It is a delightful red wine - made primarily from Cabernet Franc - that resembles Cabernet Sauvignon but is more aromatic, softer, and smoother. It's a remarkable value for under \$20. Enjoy with grilled meats or as a starter with chevre.

So for your next barbecue, bridal shower, or impromptu gathering, enjoy what's hot for summer despite the temperatures, and find the wines with a "sense of place" in your own home without breaking the bank.

Nancy Rosetti is co-owner of the Faithful Pilot Cafe & Spirits (FaithfulPilotCafe.com) and the online wine store RosettiWineShop.com.

The restaurant (117 North Cody Road in LeClaire) hosts regular wine events, including a four-course Spanish wine dinner (\$55 per person) on Thursday, June 25, and a summer wine tasting (\$10 per person) on Sunday, July 12. For reservations or more information, call (563)355-4139 or e-mail nancy@FaithfulPilotCafe.com.