

WINE AND DINE

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Try Summer Wine Refreshment – New-Zealand Style

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Summer Refreshment – NZ Style

The weather in the Midwest is extreme – icy cold winters, fierce thunderstorms with heavy rains, hail, strong gusts of winds and hot, humid summers. There is nothing moderate about the storms we have recently experienced in Chicago, where hundreds of thousands of homes have lost electric power for days. Now we are heading into a heat wave. This calls for something very refreshing to drink and New Zealand may come to the rescue. New Zealand is famous for Sauvignon Blanc wine and more recently Pinot Noir. Let's take a closer look at their crisp white wines to offer us some relief from the hot summer days ahead.

New Zealand Wines

A close neighbor to Australia, New Zealand consists of two islands – the North Island and the South Island. These islands enjoy a moderate, maritime climate that provides the vineyards cool nights. This helps produce fruit that is naturally high in acidity, giving New Zealand white wines their characteristic “zing.” There are 10 major wine regions, including Auckland, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay and Martinborough on the North Island and Marlborough, Canterbury and Central Otago on the South Island. Of these, Marlborough is famous for Sauvignon Blancs, Hawkes Bay is known for Bordeaux Blends and Syrah and the Central Otago and Martinborough regions produce the best Pinot Noir in New Zealand.

New Zealand vintners are trendsetters in the wine world. They are leaders in utilizing metal screw-caps, which work well for white wines that are consumed young. They increasingly employ organic farming and sustainability techniques, which have broad appeal with today's consumers.

New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs

Marlborough, the home of New Zealand's best Sauvignon Blancs, is the country's largest wine producing region. Sauvignon Blanc is the most widely planted varietal in New Zealand and accounts for more than 80% of the country's wine exports. New Zealand's largest export markets are Australia and England, followed by the United States. “Kiwi” Sauvignon Blanc has universal appeal, as it is abundant, receives good ratings from the wine industry and is very reasonably priced.

New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc's flavor profile has evolved from pungent green pepper and tart grapefruit flavors to a less herbal-more citrusy style, with ripe notes of lime, grapefruit, green apple, melon and white pepper. The Kiwi's use of stainless steel vats helps create a refreshing style of wine with bright acidity levels and juicy, fresh fruit flavors. This makes these wines an ideal thirst-quenching patio wine to enjoy during the hot summer months.

Food & Wine Pairings

Sauvignon Blanc's racy acidity makes it an ideal sipping wine or a beverage to be enjoyed with food. Acidity in wine cleanses the palate between bites of food, and its mouth-watering nature has you anticipating the next sip or nibble.

Sauvignon Blancs work well with raw vegetables and dips or crisp, green leafy salads. Tomatoes, citrus and vinaigrette salad dressings used in Garden Salads, Greek Salads and Caesar Salads all pair well with this wine. Sauvignon Blancs also pair well with fish (Sole, Grouper and Sushi) and shellfish (Shrimp and Crab Salad). On the cheese side, Munster pairs nicely with this wine.

One of our most popular warm weather desserts is our tart and refreshing Key Lime Squares which compliment the citrus flavors in Sauvignon Blanc.

My Chef Catering's Key Lime Squares

Makes 30 Squares

Crust

2/3 Cup Butter – melted
1/2 Cup Sugar
2 1/2 Cups Graham Crackers – finely crushed

Filling

3 Cups Sugar
6 Each Eggs – large at room temperature
1 Tbsp Lime Zest
1 Cup Key Lime Juice – fresh squeezed or bottled – not regular limes
1 Cup Flour
Confectioners' sugar for dusting

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

To make the crust, stir sugar into melted butter. Add the crushed graham crackers and mix well until all crumbs are moistened. Spread evenly into a 9 x 13" pan and press onto bottom and slightly up the sides to form an even crust. Bake in the 350 degree oven for 5 – 6 minutes until edge is lightly browned. Cool on a rack before filling.

For the filling, whisk the eggs, then add sugar, lime zest, key lime juice, and flour. Pour over the cooled crust and bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until the filling is set. Let cool to room temperature, then refrigerate.

Cut into squares or triangles to desired size. These are rich and tart so a 2" x 2" square is a nice size. Dust with confectioners' sugar just before serving.

So, grab a glass from down-under to help quench your thirst with these vibrant, flavor-packed wines, at a price that is sure to put a smile on your face.

Bill's NZ Sauvignon Blanc Wine Picks (with suggested retail prices)	
Brancott Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough – 88 pts. Wine Spectator	\$10
Coopers Creek Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough – 90 pts. Wine Spectator	\$14
Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough – 89 pts. Wine Spectator	\$13
Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough – 92 pts. Wine Spectator	\$20
Tohu Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough – 89 pts. Wine Spectator	\$13
Babich Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough – 85 pts. Wine Spectator	\$12

Wine of the Month:

2010 Brancott Estate Sauvignon Blanc

Suggested Retail Price: \$10

Brancott Estate winery, in the famous Marlborough wine region of New Zealand, consistently delivers world class wines at unbeatable prices. The Wine Spectator rated three of their 2008 wines 92 pts. The Wine Spectator gave their 2010 Estate wine 88 pts., included it in their Best Value section and described this wine as “Spicy and pungent herbal, almost peppery, note gives way to crisp lemon, lime and white grapefruit flavors, with zingy acidity. Distinctive and very refreshing. Drink now. 90,000 cases imported.” Stay cool and enjoy this treat from down under.



Bill Garlough is the founder and owner of My Chef Catering in Naperville, the winner of the 2007 U.S. Chamber's National Small Business of the Year. Bill is a level 1 master sommelier and pairs food and wine for My Chef's customers. He can be contacted at www.mychef.com.