

# WINE AND DINE

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## Cellaring is a Good Idea for Some Wines

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Last month's column discussed that now is a perfect time to either add to an existing wine collection or start one. The combination of worldwide over-production and a global recession has created a tremendous opportunity to buy wine. The Wine Spectator recently reported that the \$15 value wine segment is the hottest price point in the wine industry.

Today I will recommend an assortment of great value wines to consider buying – wines that will provide a well-rounded starter collection. We will also offer food pairings with each varietal. Have fun experimenting and collecting wines that suit your palate and budget.

### White Wines To Cellar

While whites are best consumed in 2–3 years, it is still desirable to have a small selection on hand for everyday entertaining. New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs, South African Chenin Blancs, Loire Valley Sancerres, Alsatian

Gewürztraminers, Spanish Albarinos, Italian Pinot Grigios, Rhone Viognier Blends and Chilean Sauvignon Blancs are popular white wines ready to drink now.

The following white wines are must haves in your cellar:

**Rieslings:** These wines have the longest aging potential, with quality German Rieslings cellaring for 20+ years. Most Rieslings can cellar for 4-5 years without an issue. These wines pair well with food and are refreshing to sip. Rieslings are a great companion with spicy Asian or Cajun cuisine. Favorites include:

- Röss Kabinett German Riesling \$15
- Trimbach Alsatian Riesling \$18
- Ch. Ste. Michelle Eroica Washington Riesling \$22
- Weinbach Alsatian Riesling \$23

**Chardonnay:** While this varietal suffers from ABC (Anything But Chardonnay), it is a very popular wine, can cellar for 4-5 years and is not highly acidic like Rieslings. They offer versatility with your collection. California Chardonnays are either aged in oak barrels for depth and complexity or stainless steel vats, which allow the varietal's true character to emerge. In France, Chardonnay is the primary grape for Chablis and Champagne. Chardonnay pairs well with dishes containing butter, cheese and seafood. Favorites include:

- Foxglove Central Coast California Chardonnay \$13
- William Fevre French Chablis \$19
- Rombauer Carneros California Chardonnay \$30
- Grgich Hills Napa Chardonnay \$35
- Moët & Chandon Imperial French Champagne \$39

## Red Wines To Cellar

Red wine has longer term aging potential and can add depth and complexity when properly cellared. The key to aging is the presence of tannins, with higher levels offering better cellaring potential. More tannic red wine may need at least 5 years of aging to allow the tannins to soften, allowing the wine to come into balance. Examples of big tannic wines for cellaring include French Bordeaux, Italian Barolo and Spanish Rioja.

Red wines with lower tannin levels that allow for immediate enjoyment include Italian Barbera, California Merlot, Chilean Carmenere, Spanish Grenache and French Beaujolais.

The following are must haves in your cellar:

**Zinfandels, Shiraz and Syrah:** These wines are very similar in nature, so you may choose the one that best connects with your palate. They tend to be fruit driven, offer some peppery spice and soft tannins. They are good to keep on hand as their jammy fruit is a good counter to spicy food and BBQ. They can cellar from 5-10 years. Favorites include:

- 7 Deadly Zins from California \$15
- Tait "The Ball Buster" Australian Shiraz \$18
- Thorn-Clarke Shotfire Ridge Australian Shiraz \$18
- Earthquake Lodi, California Zinfandel \$24
- Orin Swift Saldo California Zinfandel \$26

**Pinot Noir and Malbec:** These wines are similar, in that they are medium bodied, have low tannin levels and are very versatile. Both are great cocktail party wines and can be enjoyed with a wide variety of hors d'oeuvres. Pinot Noir is a finicky grape and takes skill to produce a quality wine. However, when done well, it is an outstanding wine. There are two distinct styles in the U.S. - California produces a more fruit forward version and Oregon produces a style that is similar to a French Burgandy, with less fruit and more earthiness. Malbec is Argentina's claim to fame in the red wine world. Food pairings for these wines include salmon, tuna, chicken, lamb and cheese. Favorites include:

- A To Z Oregon Pinot Noir \$18
- Sean Minor Carneros, California Pinot Noir \$14
- Terrazas Argentinean Reserva Malbec \$15
- LeClerc Bourgogne (French Burgandy) \$24
- Domaine Carneros California Pinot Noir \$30

**California and Bordeaux Cabs and Cab Blends:** These wines are a must for any wine cellar. Most have long term aging potential of 5-10 years, with powerhouse Cabs and Bordeaux able to cellar for 20+ years. Cabs are the quintessential pairing with grilled steak and lamb, making this a favorite at steakhouse restaurants and backyard BBQ's. Favorites include:

- Rodney Strong Sonoma Cab \$14
- Pillar Box Red Australian Shiraz-Cab \$12
- Les Gravieres St. Emilion, Bordeaux Merlot Blend \$22
- Raymond Reserve Napa Cab \$27
- Frank Family Vineyards Napa Cab \$40

Whether you're just starting out collecting some wines or adding to your collection, you will find that this is a great time to stock up, to share with family and friends. They'll be glad you did.

**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](http://www.mychef.com).**