



Winter Whites

By Louise Jordan DWS

As the harsh winter wind and snow comes barreling in, people tend to reach only for powerful and robust red wines to keep them warm, but they are overlooking how wonderful whites can be in the colder months. From aromatic, spicy white wines such as Gewürztraminer to round and supple Marsanne/Roussane blends to rich and full-bodied Chardonnays, whites offer a diverse and complex range of wines that pair perfectly with winter's heartier fare.

Three representatives from different sectors of the wine business – a retailer, restaurateur and educator – weigh in on why whites should have your attention this winter.

Selling Wonderful Whites

Scott Pactor, owner of Appellation NYC, believes that people should always have variety in their wine choices. “People don’t stop drinking red wine in the summer; why should they cross whites off their lists in the winter?” Pactor has three favorite whites that he is recommending to his clientele. All of them come with this advice: “Don’t serve these wines too cold, the aromatics will not be as expressive. These are whites that tend to act more like reds and should be served closer to 60°F.”

His first choice is the Kalin Cellars, Sémillon, Livermore Valley, CA, 1997 which retails for \$29.99. Pactor says, “This is a beautiful wine for winter. It has notes of apricot, golden raisins and an oxidized pine note. It is super complex and very aromatic.” He chooses to pair this with creamy to medium hard cheeses.

The second wine that fits the winter bill is the Qupé, Marsanne, Santa Ynez Valley, CA, 2006 (87% Marsanne, 13% Roussane), which retails for \$21.99. Pactor says this wine is “filled with rich notes

of peach, minerality and a nice nutty quality. It is full-bodied, but not overly alcoholic making it perfect for weightier winter fare such as butternut squash based dishes.”

Pactor’s final selection, the Vina Tondonia, Lopez de Herdia, Rioja, 1981, is quite the special treat. He says, “This wine is simply wonderful, super complex with notes of white truffle and honey with great acidity and a finish that just keeps going and going. Even though the price tag at \$86.99 is a bit hefty, to get a wine with this much age and complexity for under \$100 is a steal.” He recommends serving this wine alongside garlic roasted chicken with crispy skin.



of Wine Educators says, “For its flavor, age ability and price point, white Bordeaux are the perfect winter whites.” He highlights the appellations of Pessac-Léognan and Graves as offering as much body and flavor as some red wines. He recommends Château Carbonnieux and Château Rochemorin from the former appellation and Château Bel Air and Clos Floridène for the latter.

O’Connor says, “As the food served during winter tends to be richer, the wines



must be able to complement those fuller flavors,” O’Connor adds. “Aged white Bordeaux is perfect for this task as they have a magical age ability, around 10 – 15 years in a great vintage.” He adds that these wines can solve the problem of what to order at a restaurant when some people order fish, and others meat, say-

Winning Whites by the Glass

Jonathan Cohen, one of the owners of 8th Street Winecellar NYC, changes the white wines he offers by the glass according to the season saying, “In the summer we go for the grapefruit cleansing acidity style of white wine, but in the winter we want wines that are fuller, creamier in the mouth and that can bring some weight to the table.”

One of the wines he has recently added to the list is the Montinore Estate, Gewurztraminer, Willamette Valley, OR, 2006 (around \$13 retail). Cohen describes this wine as “very aromatic with notes of lychee, honeydew melon and pear with a richness on the palate that is balanced out with cleansing acidity. It would pair nicely with our small plates of creamy cheeses and figs.”

Another white that brings richness to the table is the Yalumba, Viognier, South Australia, 2006 (around \$10 retail). “This wine has a freshness and minerality that a lot of Viogniers lack,” says Cohen. “It has delicious notes of apricot and honeysuckle with a rich, full body.” He would pair this wine with their rich Winter Pot Pie, which is made with mushrooms, squash, parsley and seasoned with lemon and thyme.

A White Wine Education

Robin Kelley O’Connor, trade liaison and long-time educator for the Bordeaux Wine Bureau and former president of the Society



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5 Quick Tips for Finding the Right Winter White

1. Look for aromatic whites that shouldn’t be chilled too much.
2. Select aged whites that have developed more complexity and depth.
3. Whites that have been aged in oak will be richer and fuller in body.
4. Wines with higher levels of alcohol, as long as they are well balanced, can be consumed as an alternative to a spirit.
5. Finally, whites with higher levels of residual sugar that are viscous and delicious, make excellent aperitifs.

ing, “These wines will absolutely stand up to the meat courses.”

While many people think of pairing Sauternes with desserts, cheeses and foie gras, O’Connor mentions that, “these wines make absolutely brilliant aperitifs with their balance of sweetness and cleansing acidity – they really jump start your palate and get your gastronomic juices going.” He recommends Castelnau de Suduiraut, the 2nd label of Château Suduiraut, and Château Coutet. O’Connor adds that if you prefer slightly less sweet, more zippy wines full of fresh acidity, Barsacs are also a great winter wine choice, recommending Château Bastor-Lamontagne and Château Nairac.

So during this cold weather season, when you see your customers start to reach for that robust red, think about the range of whites that can also satisfy their craving for a full-bodied, rich and complex wine. As Pactor so succinctly puts it, “Why would you want to cut whites out of your repertoire in the winter? Who wants a monopalate?” ■