

## FOOD & WINE

# 9 Summer-Ready Red Wines That Are Best Served Cold

Forget room temperature—here's the best way to serve these reds.

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Most people think that only certain red wines should be chilled, but I say chill all your reds. I don't find it easy to enjoy a rich, full-bodied red on a hot summer day. But with a nice chill on it—that's a game-changer. Kiss the idea of seasonal drinking goodbye.

If wine is being stored in a wine cellar, or a wine fridge, the red wine setting is typically around 56 or 57 degrees. If you were to take a bottle of red that's been sitting on your counter and is at room temperature (about 72 degrees), it takes around 20 to 25 minutes in the refrigerator to chill it down to that sweet spot of about 56 degrees.



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Try a side-by-side tasting to see the difference. Same wine, one chilled, one at room temperature. This, of course, depends entirely on the wine and its alcohol level, but you should notice that the slightly chilled red is fresher, a bit more cheerful, and easier to drink, whereas the room temperature red may reveal more alcohol upfront and come off a bit hotter, or spicier, on the palate.

The only rule with chilling red wine is not to go overboard. Popping your red in the fridge, or an ice bucket, and forgetting about it for an hour will chill it to the point that you'll actually lose aromas and flavors, and you'll have to wait for it to warm to enjoy it.

There is an exception to this rule: I like to keep a half-bottle (375ml) of red dessert wine in the fridge, like Anaba's Red Aero Port from Sonoma Mountain (\$36)—kirsch, blueberry compote, and crushed wild herbs. I'll pour a couple of ounces into a red wine glass and wash it down with some creamy Point Reyes Toma, and it makes for a great nightcap.

So, knowing that hot days are coming, enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you can still drink your favorite full-bodied reds. Here are my nine suggestions for summertime imbibing. Give them 20-30 minutes in the fridge, and then pop the cork and enjoy.



BOB MCCLENAHAN

## **1. 2017 Lydenhurst Cabernet Sauvignon (\$85)**

Delivering upfront aromas of wild strawberries, blackberry, graphite, and sweet tobacco. This wine is an architectural masterpiece, framed by firm French oak tannin, and supported by a nice backbone of acidity, keeping the wine fresh and energetic, finishing with sagebrush and dark salted chocolate.

## **2. 2017 The Setting Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley (\$85)**

The best place to enjoy this wine is from the intimate and beautiful tasting room at The Setting Inn, a special Napa Valley retreat a short bike-ride from Yountville with plenty of communal lounging, and first-rate, comfortable rooms. The brainchild of Jeff Cova and Noah McMahon, two Orange County residents who very wisely hired Jesse Katz of Aperture Cellars to make their wine (Katz made the world's most expensive bottle of wine). In the glass, this 2017 Cabernet shows everything Alexander Valley is capable of—deep layers of beautifully ripe and silken blackberry fruit, interwoven with graphite and cedar spices, heady perfumed notes and supported by fine-grained cedar tannins, with pops of tobacco, a dollop of blueberry jam, and a hint of mocha.

## **3. 2018 Abbots Passage Tri Point Fenaughty Vineyard El Dorado County (\$42)**

This is an unusual blend of 54% Viognier, a white grape variety, and 46% Syrah, a small-berried, deep flavored, spicy red grape from the Sierra Foothills. The result is wonderful: ripe and chewy red berry fruit and red floral notes are jazzed up by brown spices, black pepper, and a kind of dusty-tannic backbone on the finish. The wine is juicy and fresh with a noticeable floral lift from the Viognier.

#### **4. 2017 Flora Springs Trilogy Merlot Napa Valley (\$85)**

Such a glassful of pleasure, from beautiful spiced plum and elegant cedar-box aromas to the expansive and mouth-filling sweet fruit flavors of blackberry, fleshy ripe plum, tobacco leaf, and red currants. This is a Merlot that is lovely to drink now and has the structure to age nicely if you're patient.

#### **5. 2017 Orin Swift "Machete" Napa Valley Red Wine (\$55)**

A dangerously thrilling, glass-staining wine, with deep ruby and crimson hues. Chocolate-covered raspberries, and flinty graphite, clove, and cedar. Satiny waves of black cherry, boysenberry, and blueberry jam, wash over the palate and finely-grained sweet cedary tannins are slashed by crushed stone and steely minerality with a delightful salty dark chocolate finish.



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#### **6. 2017 Decoy Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$25)**

Bright and briary wild strawberry fruits, vanilla bean, and sweet oak spices. What a great Zin—a lot of energy and tension, not overbearing or heavy, and delivering tremendously juicy (and easy-drinking) ripe strawberry fruits, raspberry, and rhubarb pie.

## **7. 2016 Domaine Drouhin Pinot Noir Dundee Hills Oregon (\$45)**

Even though the 2017 release is out if you can nab the 2016 vintage online do it because it's a marvelous wine. Tasted at the winery during last year's International Pinot Noir Celebration, I haven't been able to stop thinking about it since: loads of dark berry fruit, terrific cedarwood, and clove, with refined black tea tannin, all rounded out by an abundance of dark-skinned blue fruit and just hinting at mocha.

## **8. 2017 Latta Latta GSM Columbia Valley Washington (\$35)**

A veteran of K Vintners and Charles Smith Wines, Andrew Latta has been making wine in Washington for 15 years. Latta wines are site-driven and mostly Rhône-style offerings. This 2017 GSM (a blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre) packs everything to love about Rhône wines into an unmistakable New World package, meaning ripe candied red berry fruit, cinnamon, vanilla bean, red licorice, red currants, and classic Rhône garrigue notes all supported by grippy, savory tannins, leading to a smoky, coffee bean finish.

## **9. 2017 Quinta do Vesuvio Vintage Port (\$95)**

Of all the wines on this list, this is one that will keep on giving because you only need one glass (at the end of a meal served alongside a cheese board). It was long before the Symington family—owners of port stalwarts Graham's, Dow's, Warre's, and

Cockburn's—realized that Quinta do Vesuvio, which was originally purchased for grapes, deserves its own status as a port house. The reason is plainly in the glass: aromas of violet blossoms, blueberry skin, blackberry compote. Rich and decadent layers of blueberry liqueur find a partner in soft and luscious velvety tannins and the finish is long, with great acidity and freshness. And it goes on, even after the glass is empty—take a whiff and you'll find sun-soaked sagebrush aromas, a rich slate-like, minerality, and then pour another glass to just swim in loads of blue macerated fruits and chocolate. Serve it slightly chilled, and pop in the fridge to be enjoyed for a week or more.

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