

A Sip of Faith: Adventurous White Wines

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Are you bored with the same white wines? Sure the “House Chardonnay”, or “House Pinot Grigio” at your favorite restaurant is drinkable (and at times decent enough), but wouldn’t you like to go rogue and try something a bit more interesting? I understand. Before I began to study wine seriously, I found myself drinking those that were safe choices: flavorful and affordable. I knew what I liked. And now? Thanks to years of studying, tasting, and learning from my colleagues in wine writing and those in the industry, I’ve expanded my palate preferences. I’m thrilled to share my research (difficult job, isn’t it?) with you.



The discovery of a good
wine is increasingly better
for mankind than the
discovery of a new star

Leonardo da Vinci

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I’ve found six white wines (most sent to me as *samples*) that may help you climb out of that comfort zone. I’ve chosen each for its palate profile, ability to pair with a variety of foods we love, and affordability. Hopefully, you’ll find these wines at your local wine shop or in a nearby restaurant. If not, ask for a wine from the same variety and similar price.

Bourgogne Aligoté Giraudon 2014 (*sample*) – And you thought the French region of Burgundy only produced Chardonnay. Mais non! **Aligoté** is Burgundy’s “other white grape” and one that you’ll love. Not exactly widespread in terms of growth or availability, the grape is often enjoyed as a simple aperitif or as a base for Kir. I loved the light aromas of pear, stone fruit, lychee, fleshy peach, and yellow flowers on the Bourgogne Aligoté Giraudon. On the palate, lime, lemon, bright citrus and a touch of minerality held court and its long, creamy finish was delightful. This 100% Aligoté boasted lip smacking acidity, an element that makes it a brilliant complement to roasted vegetables, a fresh, crisp garden salad, seared fish with a buttery sauce, or warm mushroom quiche. Cost is \$15.



Bodegas La Caña Albariño 2014 (*sample*) – Now is your chance to try **Albariño**, a beautiful wine from the Rias Baixas region of Spain. Often termed “The Pure White Wine” for its palate profile and ability to prompt thoughts of sunny days and breezy evenings by the sea, this is the go-to choice for pairing with crab, oysters, mussels, and grilled octopus. This Albariño, from Bodegas La Caña, located in the Valley of the Salnes close to the Atlantic Ocean, showed intense aromas of lemon and lime. Rich, ripe flavors of peach and tropical fruit were broad, expansive, creamy...and had enough weight to pair with not only seafood, but your favorite chicken and pork dishes. Cost is \$18.



Contadi Castaldi Franciacorta Brut (*sample*) – You’ve tasted Prosecco and most likely, Asti, two sparkling wines from Italy. There are many delicious examples of each, but once you’ve tasted bubbles from Franciacorta, located in eastern Lombardy, you may have a new favorite. Unlike Prosecco and Asti, both of which are produced using the Charmat method, winemakers produce Franciacorta using *méthode champenoise*, the same technique utilized by those in Champagne. The bonus? This mouthwatering sparkling wine is a fraction of the price of a bottle of Champagne. Contadi Castaldi Franciacorta Brut is a blend of predominantly Chardonnay and a touch of Pinot Nero and Pinot Bianco. I loved the bubbles that danced in my glass as well as aromas of lemon and almond. With a creamy, gentle mouthfeel and soft notes of fruit and smoke, the long finish was just what I needed with my...popcorn! Cost is around \$24.



Kvaszinger Estate Furmint 2013 – I was thrilled to taste **Furmint**, the white grape that is indigenous to Hungary's Tokaj region, at a trade tasting a few weeks ago in Chicago. If you've never had the opportunity to try this wine, you must. Bracing acidity and distinct minerality are a few of many characteristics of Furmint. The elegant white wines I enjoyed that afternoon boasted intense aromatics, a fresh and crisp palate profile, and a snappy, lingering finish. All were outstanding, but one which will open the gate to your new love for Furmint, is the Kvaszinger Estate Furmint 2013. Dry and fruit forward, this is a lovely food wine that can be paired with your favorite herb roasted chicken, grilled seafood, or salad with sprinkles of goat cheese atop just-picked-from-the-garden vegetables. Cost is \$22.



Sur Sur Grillo 2015 Donnafugata Sicilia DOC (*sample*) – This classic white wine from Sicily should always be ready to share with your friends and family. Native to the island of Sicily, **Grillo** is becoming more popular, thanks to more wineries producing wines of high quality. Donnafugata is one of the best. The Sur Sur Grillo 2015 presented mesmerizing aromas of creamy pear, apricot, and a touch of salinity that wafted gently from my glass. Mouthwatering acidity on the palate led to full bodied flavors of white peach, grapefruit, melon, straw, and herbs. The lingering finish on this balanced wine was refreshing and luscious. The Sur Sur Grillo 2015 will be a lovely complement to a fresh crab salad, light pasta dish, antipasti platter, or anything you tuck in your picnic basket. Cost is \$20.



Teliani Valley Tsinandali 2013 (sample) – I was fortunate to attend a mind-blowing Master Seminar in Chicago to learn about wines from Georgia (the country, not the state...). The wines, both white and red, not only reflected the ancient land, but traditional winemaking techniques. Hipsters and Millennials are jumping on the [Georgia wine](#) train (I've already chosen my seat) and taking some serious sips...you should, too. One of the dry whites I found, has characteristics that are delicious and not much off the mark of the American palate. Teliani Valley Tsinandali is from 80% Rkatsitel and 20% Mtsvane grapes and fermented in stainless steel to retain its fresh, fruit fruity characteristics. I discovered green apple, plenty of spice, and toast on both the nose and palate. Its mineral-like finish was snappy, spicy, and refreshing. A cheese plate was my pairing, but you'll enjoy this wine on its own, with grilled fish, or salads. Cost is about \$11.



Cheers to a new wine adventure! ~ Cindy