

Laurie Daniel on Wine

That's refreshing: affordable summer whites

AUGUST 10, 2017 ~ LAURIED

It seems even hotter than usual this summer at my house. When the heat is this oppressive, I cool down all my wines, even the reds. But I'm a lot more likely to opt for a nicely chilled white.

For maximum pleasure, summertime whites should be fresh and crisp, not heavy, oaky or alcoholic. They should pair well with lighter foods or function as a refreshing aperitif. I haven't included any sparkling wines here, but many of them certainly fit the bill. Nor did I mention rosés; if you want some recommendations, click [here](#).

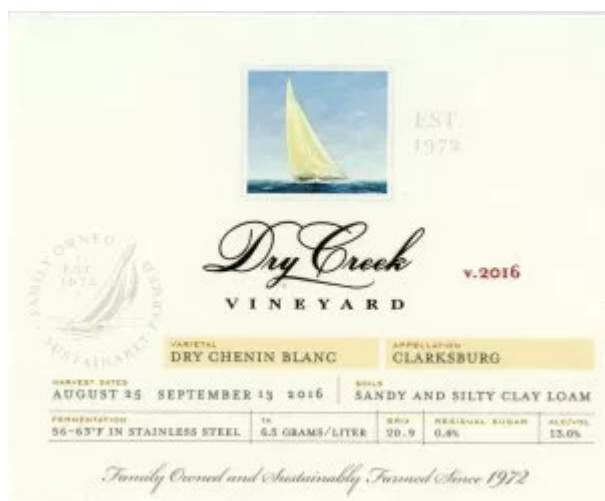
I was tempted to include some esoteric wines, like the lovely, brisk Ciù Ciù Pecorino from Le Marche, Italy, that I tasted recently. But such wines can be hard to find, depending on where you live. So I settled on a dozen whites costing \$20 or less that should be reasonably easy to buy.

New Zealand's punchy, fragrant sauvignon blancs have, for many wine drinkers, become the paradigm for the grape variety. The wines most often are from Marlborough, toward the northern end of the South Island. Two good and typical examples are the 2016 Esk Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$15) and the 2016 Whitehaven Sauvignon Blanc (\$20). Both display flavors of pink grapefruit and tomato stem; the Whitehaven adds a trace of sweetness to smooth out the finish. Another bottling I enjoyed was the 2015 Trinity Hill Sauvignon Blanc (\$17) from Hawkes Bay, on the North Island.



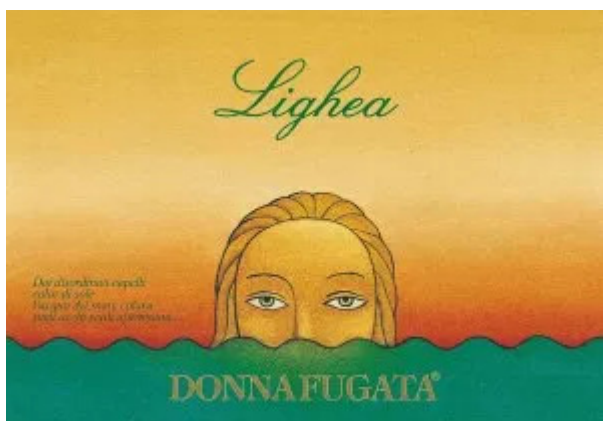
Albarino from Rias Baixas, in northwestern Spain, is a bit fleshier than sauvignon blanc, but it's still very refreshing. Its popularity appears to have driven up prices somewhat, but I've tried a couple recently that are excellent values. First, there's the 2016 Cameron Hughes Lot 547 Albarino (\$13); there's also a Lot 546 Albarino that's a couple bucks more. Then there's the 2015 Valmiñor Albarino (\$14), which is a little fleshier.

The 2016 J California Pinot Gris (\$18) is an exemplary version of this grape variety. It's fresh and floral, with citrus and white peach flavors and a persistent finish. A good example of the same grape, but from Italy, is the zippy 2016 Ecco Domani Pinot Grigio (\$12), with its citrus and green apple flavors. (Yes, it's everywhere, but that doesn't mean it isn't good.)



Every summer, I recommend the Dry Creek Dry Chenin Blanc (\$15 for the 2016). And why not? The wine, made from grapes grown in Clarksburg (a sweet spot in California for chenin blanc) is always fresh and delicious, with white stone fruit and candied lime flavors. And the price is right.

Riesling is an excellent wine for summer, and it's one of my favorites with a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich. Germany is a good source, of course, for reasonably priced rieslings, as are the Clare and Eden valleys of Australia, where the rieslings are bone dry. Washington's Columbia Valley is also a great spot for riesling, as demonstrated by the 2016 Nine Hats Riesling (\$14), which has a trace of sweetness that's balanced by racy acidity. Riesling also figures into the 2016 Amalaya Torrontes Riesling (\$12), an 85-15 blend from Salta, Argentina, that's crisp and floral with white fruit, jasmine and nice tension.



Donnafugata in Sicily produces several lovely, flavorful whites. My favorite is the 2016 Donnafugata Lighea (\$20), a dry zibibbo (muscat of Alexandria) that's pretty, fresh and floral.

Finally, for a white with just a bit more weight, there's the 2015 E. Guigal Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$14), a blend of viognier, marsanne and roussanne that's plump and racy, with creamy white fruit.

Share this:



Related

That's refreshing: Bargain white wines for summer

August 19, 2016

In "General wine"

In the pink for summer

June 20, 2017

In "General wine"

A trip around Italy, by way of its white wines

February 17, 2016

In "International"