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# Some extraordinary white wines to see off summer



**Saint-Joseph Blanc, "Lieu Dit"**



**Mary Ross**

If you're anything like me, you've chilled, iced, slushied and spritzed plenty of white wines this summer.

But with several weeks (we hope) of hot weather left, the palate may tire of even your favorite styles.

So, for new flavors of refreshment, ask your merchant for these out of the ordinary white wines to see off summer. Because supply may be limited, information on local distribution is in parentheses:

Sicilia Grillo DOC "SurSur," Donnafungata (Sicily, Italy): Sunshine yellow with inviting aromas of peach flesh, lemon and fresh herbs. The texture of fruit nectar at entry, turning dry and zesty at mid-palate, with a long, satisfying finish. With my addition of lemon zest, flavors blossomed into a delicious Sangria. Serve as a pinot grigio alternative, well-chilled as an aperitif, with antipasti, light pasta, seafood and poultry. (About \$19. Distributed by Breakthru Beverage/Illinois, Cicero.)

Grillo (GREE-yoh) is a Sicilian grape, once central to Marsala production, but coming into its own as a vibrant bianco since the 1990s. The wines are a testament to the newly-modern Sicilian wine scene. There is none of the cooked

fruit flavor once associated with this region's searing heat; flavors are crystal clean, with no sugar or oak to hide faults.

Garnatxa Blanca, "Illusio Terra Alta," Celler Xavier Clua (Catalonia, Spain): Rich and elegant with an expansive palate of ripe pears accented with Mediterranean herbs, minerals and firm acidity. Aging on the lees adds volume and texture. Serve as a cocktail, complement to light meats and richer seafood, and a unique Chardonnay alternative. (About \$15. Distributed by H2Vino, Chicago.)

Garnacha (garr-NAH-cha) Blanca (regionally spelled Garnaxta) is a Spanish grape, sister of Garnacha Tinta -- Spain's top-plated red. Unique among wine grapes, Garnachas thrive in arid, windy conditions; no wonder they eventually took root in the rocky hills of the Rhone, swept by the fierce wind, Le Mistral.

Chenin Blanc, Bodegas Henri Lurton (Valle de Guadalupe, Mexico): Sunshine yellow with pretty aromas of flowers, fruit and a touch of honey. Dry, round and appley on the palate with firm acidity.

Serve with light dishes, especially seafood including pulpo alla griglia (grilled octopus), sushi and oysters.

(Currently exclusive to Frontera Grill and Lena Brava restaurants in Chicago. Distributed by Bodin Street, Chicago.)

Watch "Good Wine" for a look at the America's rising wine region: Baja, Mexico.

Chenin Blanc (SHEH-nin BLAHNCK) originated in France's Loire Valley, from which it charmed the world with off-dry, appley Vouvray. Like Riesling, Chenin blanc is unique for maintaining firm acidity throughout ripening; whether bone-dry or honey-sweet, Chenin blanc is above all refreshing. In the U.S., the grape is kept from extinction by few producers, notably Dry Creek Vineyards. The grape is known as Steen in South Africa. There it becomes slightly sweeter to balance the searing spice of African cuisine.

Condrieu "La Doriane," E. Guigal (Rhone Valley, France): A blonde bombshell, full-bodied and juicy, smelling of apricots and flowers, full-fleshed but elegant. With food, employ the guideline "more is more"; serve with rich foods, such as foie gras and black truffle omelet. (About \$120. Distributed by Heritage Wine Cellars, Niles.)

Viognier (VEE-own-YAY), once limited to France's infinitesimal Condrieu, is now a world-traveler with extensive plantings in the U.S. (it is Virginia's signature grape) and Australia. The grape requires long ripening and careful harvest to avoid an oily, perfumous and hot flavor.

Savatiano "Old Vines," Domaine Papagiannakos (Markopoulo, Greece): New World wines express their warm climate with ripe, juicy fruit. Many Old World wines express their soil with earthy or mineral aspects. This wine expresses the sea with distinct salinity accented with delicate stone fruit and black pepper. Serve for cocktails and to complement the Mediterranean cuisine, especially grilled seafood. (About \$18. Distributed by Winebow, Des Plaines.)

Savatiano, an ancient grape, known since Aristotle's time in Greece's ancient Attiki region, has newly been repurposed from Retsina production for fine white wine. Domaine Papagiannakos is a bridge between the ancient and modern worlds: a recent excavation for a new energy efficient winery unearthed a wine cellar built in the 5th century B.C.

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