

'Tis the Season for Lighter Reds

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor
October 2017

Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$12 or less

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e've finally reached October! The real beginning of fall, and the time of year when everyone looks forward to fun autumn activities like watching the leaves turn bright colors, taking the kids to go hay riding at the harvest festival, and sipping pumpkin-spiced lattes.

But we all know we don't get to enjoy these things on a regular basis in South Florida. We're lucky if we can break out our scarves by January, and usually in October, we're still sitting in our shuttered living rooms surrounded by bottled water and batteries, watching the news for the next tropical storm update.

There is one seasonal treat and activity that doesn't depend on location, and we can enjoy it with those elsewhere who are basking in the crisp, cool air of an October evening: the return of enjoying red wine.

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Obviously, red wine is a libation you can indulge in year round, but there's usually a shift between the days of summer whites and rosés, and the time to start regularly drinking your favorite Cabernets again -- and I'm going to go ahead and say that October is the right time to fall back into red wines.

Here at Vino, we want to give you the chance to ease your way back into the bold Bordeaux, so we've put together a list of some lighter red wines to try as you get back into the seasonal swing of wine. Some of these varietals you know well, and others may be new to you, but all are autumn-approved.

We fall back into our reds with two different Pinot Noirs: one from California and one from France. I love the differences in the two, with both offering a base of traditional Pinot Noir cherry on the nose and palate. The **2015 Robert Mondavi Private Selection** from California has a hint of cherry vanilla sweetness and a solid length on the palate for an economical wine.

Meanwhile, the
Maison Nicolas

2015

from the Languedoc Roussillon area of France offers a much darker cherry and raspberry on the palate, with more earth flavor tones and a shorter, drier finish. Both wines go well with a light dessert, but the black cherry of the Maison Nicolas pairs better with chocolate.

Côtes du Rhône wines make delightful sipping reds. I enjoyed a pre-dinner glass of the **2015 Domaine de Clairfont**

, which proved to be a non-complicated, traditional Rhône-style red wine. Usually these wines are dominated by the Grenache varietal, blended with other grapes, such as Syrah or Mourvèdre, with subtle cherry and plum on the tongue. Open a bottle and let it breathe, as this wine needs some air to fully express itself.

Garnacha is one of my favorite red varietals, but it doesn't always get the attention it deserves. Garnacha is actually the Spanish word for French *Grenache*. The grapes are the same, despite differences in winemaking styles between the French and Spanish. It's likely that Garnacha originated in the hot, dry climates of Spain, where we have wines like the

2015 Borsao Garnacha

produced in a slightly heavier style than their French Grenache cousins. Borsao is a solid medium-bodied wine with slight spice and ripe raspberry flavor. Compare it to the

2015 Pallas Garnacha Old Vines

, which exhibits a slightly more tannic structure, better acidity, and a longer finish, making a more suitable food-pairing option.

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Down the coast a bit to Italy, we have a plethora of enjoyable light red wines. Chianti is always an area that comes to mind since the region's main grape, Sangiovese, is a popular lighter red. The **2015 Fattoria La Ripa Monna Lisa** is a solid choice for a straightforward Sangiovese, especially if you're looking to avoid tannins. This simple Chianti has low acidity and an airy cherry essence that lingers but doesn't carry a lot of weight.

Branch out from the comfort of Tuscany and venture down to Sicily for a Nero D'Avola delicacy. One of my favorite underappreciated wine varietals is this Sicilian specialty. Try the **2016 Caleo Nero D'Avola Terre Siciliane** for a unique wine experience. This varietal typically has soft tannins and a smooth finish. The right amount of fruit makes it perfect to pair with your favorite mild cheese plate or even a vegan lasagna dish.

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