



The Wines of SUMMER

by *Alex Eberspacher*
photo right, by *Judy Eberspacher*



Almost overnight, the weather turned seasonable. In the Ontario vineyard, where a month ago the grape vines appeared winter-killed, the newly emerging sprouts are now suddenly out of control, and are growing faster than the weeds. Indeed the time has come for us to take a fresh look at some of the lighter wines of summer. A fruity white wine, a charming Rosé, or a bubbly, perhaps, and even some of the lighter red wines will offer a welcome change from the heavy reds of winter. Like all other

foods, and wine is food, we are ready to refresh our palate, if for no other reason than to celebrate the fact that we have once more survived a Canadian winter.

Red wines do not need to be relegated back into the cellar; the lighter ones are still appropriate as sipping wines and as companions to lighter summer foods. Instead of a heavy and aged Cabernet Sauvignon or Shiraz, try a nice Bardolino or Valpolicella from Italy, or perhaps a fruity Cabernet Franc from Canada. I recommend one of

the most delicious summer red wines - the VQA Cabernet Franc from *Pelee Island Winery* on Lake Erie. I have yet to find a better wine of this variety.

White wines have their place on the table all year long, but they move to the forefront in the summer. Chardonnay of course has always been a favourite wine in Canada. This logic has always escaped me, except that the industry told us that it was THE wine to drink. Now Chardonnay is on the decline worldwide and while

many wineries are ripping out their Chardonnay vineyards to replace them with Pinot Grigio (the same as the French Pinot Gris), I am not sure if that is the right thing to do. There is no doubt that Pinot Grigio wines are great, but as with Chardonnay, there are now many very ordinary and unmemorable Pinot Grigios available.

A much better choice would be a good Canadian or German Riesling, either dry or slightly sweet as a summer wine, or better still, take a look at a

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Muscat Ottonel. A great buy at under \$10.00 is the Muscat Ottonel from *NAVIP* in Serbia. Wonderfully fruity and not overly dry, such a wine not only goes well with light dishes, but it's absolutely delightful to sip. Another great wine is the Vinho Verde from Portugal. Vinho Verde is shipped to Canada by several producers. Slightly fruity, it is a great companion to shellfish, or simply for sipping.

Rosé wines are not a blend between red and white; they are created by using red grapes but vinified similar to white wines. Most delightful as summer wines, they come in a wide range of sweetness. Unlike the Rosé wines from years ago, few are overly sweet; even *Mateus* from Portugal in that funny shaped bottle has become a much more serious and drier wine. A completely dry Rosé is nothing special. A Rosé should be slightly off-dry to bring out the fruit, so make sure more than with other wines to pay attention to the sugar code at the LCBO store. A 1 or a 2 would be perfectly refreshing to drink on its own or with food. If I may suggest a wine here, look for the *Santa Alicia* Cabernet Sauvignon/ Shiraz Rosé from Chile.

Sparkling wines need

no introduction as summer wines. They are simply great all year round. Be it a simple sparkling wine or a high-priced Champagne, they are naturally refreshing and go well with all types of food. Perhaps it is the *Prosecco* from Italy that is in vogue right now. Reasonably priced, slightly fruity and almost dry, they are not quite as bubbly as Champagne but so pleasant to drink that I suspect that they will be overtaking most other sparkling wines soon. Watch out Italy – I have tasted the only Canadian Prosecco-type wine, the *Konzelmann* Fresco-Secco from Niagara-on-the-Lake, and it is as good as the best from Italy. Luckily for the Italians, it is only available at the winery.

Finally, take a look at some of the **fruit-flavoured wines** such as the Sangria. Starting off as a simple white or red wine, fruit juices and at times some herbs are added to flavour the wines. *Gallo* of California produces the immensely popular Boone's Sangria, a fruit-flavoured wine with a low 7.5% alcohol content. A serious wine? No, absolutely not, but very refreshing and pleasant to drink. Let's keep all the serious stuff in the cellar until later on in the fall. GL

Serving Recommendations for Summer Wines:

- Red - refrigerate for 20 minutes before serving.
- White - take out of the fridge 20 minutes before serving.
- Rosé - refrigerate until ready to serve.
- Sparkling and Prosecco - serve cold, best kept on ice.
- Fruit-flavoured - serve like a summer red wine, cool but not cold.

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