



What About The Other Stuff?

OTHER WINES TO KEEP ON HAND AT HOME

by Charles M. Bear Dalton



So what about the other stuff? The last two weeks I wrote about the QOH wines (everyday wines generally less than \$15 per bottle) and the Weekend Wines (once or twice a week wines priced between \$15 and \$40 or so per bottle.) By "other stuff", am I referring to the special occasion wines? No, not so much. "The other stuff" refers more to the sorts of wines that are good to have around that were not included in the other two categories: Cooking Wines, Aperitif Wines, Sipping Wines, Sangria, and Dessert Wines. I gave you a couple of shopping lists last week and I'll do so again this week.

COOKING WINES are more important than most people think and they are definitely wines you want to have on hand. You don't want to be in the middle of making something and realize you are out of an ingredient you need. In general I use two white cooking wines - Vinho Verde and White Port - and two red cooking wines - Gallo Hearty Burgundy and Red Port. I also keep three types of Sherry - Fino, Oloroso, and Brown (or Pedro Ximenez) as well as both sweet and dry Marsala. Chances are, if a recipe calls for wine, one of these will suffice.

- Osborne Fino Sherry NV (\$9.74)
- Osborne Medium Amontillado Sherry NV (\$9.74)
- Savory & James Cream Sherry (\$10.39)
- Lustau Rare Pedro Ximenez Sherry (\$24.69)
- Gallo Fairbanks White Port (\$7.99 PER MAGNUM)
- Gallo Fairbanks Port (\$7.99 PER MAGNUM)
- Sonalto Vinho Verde NV (\$5.99)
- Gallo Twin Valley Hearty Burgundy NV (\$6.29 per Magnum)
- Colombo Marsala Dry NV (\$8.99)
- Colombo Marsala Sweet NV (\$8.99)

(For Bear's Cooking with Wine, go to <http://web.specsonline.com/pdf/thinkingaboutcooking.pdf>)

APERITIF WINES are those before-dinner sips or in-lieu-of-a-cocktail sips that "cut the dust" or "take the edge off." Two in particular come to mind. White-Port-and-Lime and Various Kirs Royale. The first is simply White Port served on the rocks in a hi-ball glass with the juice of half a lime. It is refreshing and delicious with a flavor and balance not unlike a Margarita. A classic Kir is tart white wine (traditionally Aligoté from Burgundy) mixed with some Cassis (made from Burgundy's other fruit - currants). A Kir Royale replaces the white wine with sparkling wine. The Cassis might also be replaced by Chambord, Mure (a blackberry cordial), or Violet Liqueur (for a Kir Violette) as well as a number of other possible enhancements. When I am traveling in Europe, I often order a Kir Royale before dinner. At home, I tend to drink my Kirs Royale with either Mure or Violet. As the base sparkling wine, I usually use my Go-To QOH bubbly Varichon & Clerc or, if I know I'll be making a bunch of them, the more economical Alan Christopher.

- Dows White Port (\$13.16)
- Alan Christopher French Sparkling NV (\$7.99)
- Varichon & Clerc Blanc De Blancs Brut Sparkling NV (\$11.39)

Stuff to make Kirs Royale

- Domaine de Sathenay Creme De Mure (\$29.99)
- Rothman & Winter Creme de Violette Liqueur (\$20.49)
- Drillaud French Liqueur Creme de Violette (\$20.89)

SIPPING WINES for me are Port, Sherry, and Madeira. Both the Missis and I sometimes enjoy a sip of something sweet and warming after dinner. For us, that sip is more often than not a Colheita Port from either Kopke or Messias, or it might be a sip of Bual or Malmsey Madeira, or a rich Oloroso or Cream Sherry. The nice thing about all these sweet fortified (20% alcohol) wines is that they are all aged for many years in wooden casks or barrels and so are oxidized when you buy them. Which means that they are really stable and can be kept for months after they are initially opened. If you have three or four on hand and open at any given time, you can sip on whichever you fancy without worrying at all about waste or spoilage. That long aging leads to nutty richness and concentration to go with an amazing range of dried fruit and floral notes as well as notes of molasses and honey. Served cellar temperature (55°F), I can think of no better - or more civilized - way to end a meal.

As a bit of a bonus, both Oloroso Sherry and Bual Madeira are great as a sip to go with the rich, creamy, warming soups that are so good this time of year. Since November, I have made several pots of hearty bean soup, creamy vegetable soup, and hearty mushroom soup. All of them are better with a small glass of sherry.

- Lustau Solero East India Sherry (\$22.99)
- Blandy's Madeira Bual 5 year (\$21.99)
- Blandy's 10 Year Malmsey NV (\$38.22)
- Porto Kopke Colheita 1990 (\$27.29)
- Messias Porto Colheita 1985 (\$35.99)
- Smith Woodhouse Colheita Port 1986 (\$42.63)

SANGRIA? Yes, Sangria. Now don't be snobby. Sometimes Sangria is just the ticket. While it is just now a bit too chilly to even contemplate Sangria, summer will come and that refreshing, fruity red will once again be appropriate. You could make your own but with these four are so good and so cheap, why would you? Here are my picks. Have a Sangria tasting. Come on. It'll be fun.

- Carlo Rossi Sangria (\$11.59 for a 4-liter jug)
- Livingston Cellars Sangria (\$5.89 per Magnum)
- Santos Sangria NV (\$10.92 per Magnum)
- Cruz Garcia Real Sangria Red NV (\$9.99 per Magnum)

DESSERT WINES are a bit out of fashion these days but that just makes it more fun to serve them. Just remember that the wine must be sweeter than the dessert or it should be served after the dessert. (OK, chocolate desserts can be the exception but not always.) And finishing the meal with a glass of sweet wine seems so very civilized. While the sky can be the only limit on some Sauternes and Ice Wines prices, there are more everyday choices available at much more reasonable prices. Instead of Sauternes, try a Loupiac or St. Croix du Mont. And don't forget the Muscats. Muscat Beaumes de Venise can be both luscious and balanced in the same glass and Black Muscat may be the best wine ever for fruity chocolate desserts. Unless you are having more than 6-8 people for dinner, you won't need more than a half bottle. Here are a few of my picks, all in half bottles (375ml).

- Segur Du Cros Loupiac 2006 (\$8.29 per 375ml)
- Ch. Loupiac Gaudiet Loupiac 2003 (\$12.37 per 375ml)
- Ch. La Rame Reserve Sainte Croix Du Mont 2005 (\$23.99 per 375ml)
- Haut Charmes Sauternes 2007 (\$14.99 per 375ml - This is a "Whisper Wine" so ask the staff where it comes from; the answer will astound you)
- Quady Elysium Black Muscat 2008 (\$16.90 per 375ml)
- Domaine Bernardins Muscat Beaumes de Venise 2008 (\$17.88 per 375ml)

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