



HERE COMES Summer

And the world wants refreshing white wines, right? **Anne Krebiehl MW** runs the rule over the 10 must-have blancos for when the heat is on

ALBARIÑO

Albariño is Spain's sleekest, most refreshing white – the vines love the granitic soils of Rías Baixas on Galicia's verdant Atlantic coast. The grapes have thick skins that protect them from the often damp climate, and it also is the skins' terpenes that give the wines their aromatic lift and structure. Before DNA profiling was possible, many thought that Albariño was a relative of Riesling, brought along by pilgrims travelling the Camino de Santiago. And you can't blame them: there clearly are many parallels, especially in the acidity and aroma departments. Some Albariños are very ageworthy but most of what you find in the UK is for zippy drinking with Spanish-style seafood.

VERSATILITY Albariño has the body and enough acid backbone to pair with monkfish and other meaty fish dishes. This provides a real counterpoint to the food, so think of textures as well as

flavours in your food. Lighter versions are fresh all-rounders.

DO SAY I wonder how that case of Pazo de Señoráns is getting on in my cellar?

DON'T SAY Isn't Spain all red wine?

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF Look for plump fruit amid all that acidity – this is Spain after all: cool but sunny. And don't be afraid of wines with some bottle age.

UPSIDE A sleek but smooth Spaniard with quietly confident sex appeal.

DOWNSIDE Some vintages can leave Albariño a bit weedy and dilute, so in those years ditch the new releases and go for an aged style instead.

FROM THE FLOOR Tim Luther, co-owner and wine buyer at Copita, says: 'Galicia is often called "Green Spain" – some of Spain's best beef comes from here. But the wines are on the green side too: razor-sharp acidity from the cool-climate conditions means aromatic, beautifully fresh wines which are highly drinkable. A gastronomic delight, wonderful with all kinds of seafood but especially shellfish.'

GREAT EXAMPLE Zarate Albariño 2015, Val do Salnés, Rías Baixas, Portugal. £11.50, Indigo Wine, 020 7733 8391

CHABLIS

Chablis is the epitome of dry, crisp, chalky, (mostly) unoaked Chardonnay. Even punters who confess to hating Chardonnay love it – don't let on! It has always had the perfect makings of an absolute classic: it's French, everyone can pronounce it, it is easily understood and it really does what it says on the tin. But *caveat emptor*: not all Chablis are created equal. Look out for quality producers who work carefully to give you some of that much talked about chalkiness from the Kimmeridgian limestone. If you have the patience, lay some bottles down – the challenging 2010 vintage made for some stellar Chablis with killer acidity and the 2014s will be similarly good in a few years' time.

ILLUSTRATION: JESSIE FORD

VERSATILITY Classics love other classics: the subtle mineral tones answer subtle flavours perfectly – slightly smoked white fish works a treat. People feel comfortable ordering Chablis, so put a premier or even grand cru on the list by the glass with some age and watch diners reassess their opinions of great Chardonnay.

DO SAY I can literally taste the limestone. Is this Vaucrains?

DON'T SAY I hate Chardonnay, can I have a glass of Chablis?

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF Watch out for vintage variation: cooler, so-called 'classic' years are often the best renditions.

UPSIDE As French as presidential love affairs, but far more enduring, interesting and invigorating.

DOWNSIDE A lot of Chablis just relies on the label rather than the wine to sell. Steer clear of bland indifference.

FROM THE FLOOR Xavier Rousset MS, owner of Blandford Comptoir, says: 'A glass of steely Chablis is a great pick-me-up and the best way to start an evening after a long day at work. It's clean, pure and fresh – what's not to like?'

GREAT EXAMPLE La Chablisienne, Vaillons 1er Cru 2011, Chablis, Burgundy, France. £11.50, Walker & Wodehouse, 020 7449 1665

CHENIN BLANC

A serious case of split-personality disorder, this variety offers a compelling range of styles and flavours. Its home is in the cool central bends of the languid Loire river: appellations like Vouvray and Montlouis-sur-Loire offer a serious hit of acidity in all sweetness levels – but look out for the dry wines with their lovely scent of quince. In Savennières, Chenin Blanc takes on a different, more forbidding, hard-core nature, but like all

Loire Chenins they sing with freshness. The grape's acidity is the very reason why it is so prized in sunny South Africa where it can make much richer styles, but look out for maverick winemaking that focuses on unfinned, unfiltered wines – some in amphorae.

VERSATILITY While you could easily make a case for classic Loire cuisine and talk about river fish with beurre blanc, play with Chenin's fruity acidity



and bounce its quince and apple flavours off light pork dishes or slightly sweeter pan-Asian cuisine.

DO SAY Perhaps I'll find those haunting guava notes?

DON'T SAY What was that thing about Steen again?

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF In French examples vintage variation plays a big role, whereas in South African Chenins you have to ensure there's enough acidity to balance the fruit.

UPSIDE A multi-faceted cross-over

artist with one constant: crisp acidity.

DOWNSIDE Chenin Blanc is neither well-known nor fashionable – the perfect wine to put your sales mettle to the test.

FROM THE FLOOR Charlie McSweeney-Atkins, manager at Blueprint Café, says: 'Chenin Blanc – crisp and easy drinking or murky and complicated: it's as diverse as you want it to be!'

GREAT EXAMPLE Bertrand & Lise Jousset, Premier Rendez-Vous 2012, Montlouis-sur-Loire, France. £15.50, Vine Trail, 0117 921 1770

GAVI

Yes, Italy has its fair share of neutral, insipid whites that seem to find favour in mass-market wine bars. But it is really only with food that Gavi comes into its own. Produced across 11 communes in Piedmont, including one from which it takes its name, Gavi is among the most refreshing, food-friendly Italian whites. Need a nifty, light-footed glass at lunchtime with whatever Mamma brings from the kitchen? Gavi is the answer. Look out for wines made from low yields so you get that tell-tale bitter almond flavour from the Cortese grape – and make sure you are on the latest vintage.

VERSATILITY While everybody loves the bold flavours of fresh Italian ingredients, there's also a lot of subtlety: risotto with saffron, spring nettle or asparagus; or risotto e bisi made with the freshest, sweetest baby peas. Pair them with a glass of Gavi and go straight to heaven.

DO SAY When made well, Cortese really is a versatile, food-friendly variety.

DON'T SAY All Italian whites taste exactly the same.

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF There are some pretty uninspiring Gavis out



there – I sometimes wonder if they are even made of Cortese or if someone has slipped in some soulless Trebbiano. Go for quality and low yields – look for depth and that magical savouriness.

UPSIDE Far more Alfa Romeo Spider than red Ferrari, this gets you where you want to go with real class.

DOWNSIDE Its charms may be lost on chain-smokers or those used to brash flavours. They should drink spirits instead.

FROM THE FLOOR Simone Bottaro, assistant head sommelier at Locanda Locatelli, says: 'Gavi is a very refreshing wine with great balance between fruitiness and crispness. I also like its floral aspect with apple and peach notes, and usually pair it with seafood – especially fried fish dishes. It's an elegant choice for lunch or dinner.'

GREAT EXAMPLE Ascheri Gavi 2015, Piedmont, Italy. £12.50, *Enotria&Coe*, 020 8961 5161

GRÜNER VELTLINER

This peppery Austrian original has long been known as a versatile food and quaffing wine – just look up some centuries-old Viennese drinking songs. While respectable Grüner is now also made in California and New Zealand, it is in Austria's continental climate that it makes the freshest wines, as well as rich, rounded styles. For best refreshment, look for unoaked examples from the Weinviertel – it's on the same latitude as Champagne, so acidity is a given. It's in this region that Grüner is called Pfefferl for its peppery, spicy, herbal notes. As refreshing as tipping your toes into an ice-cold, crystal-clear mountain stream.

VERSATILITY Crusty rye bread, gherkin and smoked sausage? Tick. Wiener

Schnitzel and potato salad? Tick. Fried chicken? Tick. Put it on the table and GrooVee will deal with it. Ideal to serve for a group eating disparate dishes.

DO SAY A cool Austrian – how refreshing!

DON'T SAY Germanic umlauts are everywhere these days.

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF Since the 1985 anti-freeze scandal, Austrian winemakers were forced to clean up their act. They have done so admirably: I doubt there's another country that makes so little dross. What comes over to the UK is reliably good and always squeaky clean.

UPSIDE A peppery, versatile continental type with down-to-earth charm.

DOWNSIDE In warmer vintages, that characteristic pepper note is hard to find. But there's plenty in the 2014 vintage.

FROM THE FLOOR Diana Rollan, assistant wine buyer at the Hakkasan Group, says: 'High-acid food like salads, soy- or ginger-based dishes, or fatty meats like duck or pork belly tend to match well with high-acid wines like Grüner, as it will cut sharp flavours and minimise any



fatty feeling in the mouth. The variety's refreshing, spicy and tangy character will stand out and challenge even difficult pairings like asparagus.'

GREAT EXAMPLE Ebner-Ebenauer, Hermanschachern Grüner Veltliner 2014, Weinviertel, Austria. £15, *Roberson Wine*, 020 7381 7080

MUSCADET

Long overdue for a revival, this seafood classic now stands out for its unusual, often saline, savoury yeastiness. Recalling the freshness of Atlantic salt sprays, it is the simplest, most honest accompaniment to towering piles of crustaceans. Nothing winkles a whelk out of its shell more than a reviving sip of Muscadet (which is no relation to any of the Muscat grapes – it's made from Melon de Bourgogne). Look out for the words 'sur lie' on the label; this denotes prolonged lees contact and can only be applied to the more distinct, textured wines of sub-appellations such as Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine. The wine's always modest alcohol is an added lunchtime-friendly bonus.

VERSATILITY Did I mention whelks? And cockles, clams, oysters and iced platters of crustaceans? You've got the bibs and the lobster forks – what are you waiting for?

DO SAY I just love these yeast-generated umami notes on the finish.

DON'T SAY I'm sure my parents had this on their honeymoon in 1976. . .

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF Run-of-the-mill Muscadet can be downright thin and joyless. You need the extra texture and character from lees ageing. And there's no excuse for choosing a poor bottle – even the good stuff is excellent value.

UPSIDE It is a retro-styled underdog in

the process of reinventing itself.

DOWNSIDE A hand-sell that may take some persuasion and a reassuring manner.

FROM THE FLOOR Ronan Sayburn MS, head of wines at 67 Pall Mall, says: 'It's great to see Muscadet making such a comeback and old disused vineyards being given a second life. As the world moves away from oaky styles, high-acid fresh and briny wines such as these are making welcome return.'

GREAT EXAMPLE Château du Coing de St-Fiacre Muscadet-Sèvre-et-Maine sur Lie 2014, Loire, France. £8.25, Liberty Wines, 020 7720 5350

PICPOUL DE PINET

Picpoul is an old Occitan term that translates descriptively as 'lip-stinger'. Do we need to say anything more about its acidity? Grab a dozen oysters and a bottle of Picpoul and bliss out! Sultry southern French summers are cooled and soothed by this reliable, ultra-refreshing white. It's that subtle perfume of pine, fern and lime leaf that gets you every time. Picpoul de Pinet has another great advantage: it is utterly unpretentious and great value, and feels perfectly at home inside a cooling sleeve at your picnic or on a white table cloth at a Michelin-starred restaurant. Effortless grace, and so delicious.

VERSATILITY Traditionally eaten with oysters, this is a perfect summer by-the-glass white and a real value offer. A dry, summery all-rounder – even for sipping by itself with a few briny green olives.

DO SAY Make that a bottle – and should I go for rock or native oysters?

DON'T SAY Pitbull?

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF

Make sure you serve the latest vintage to get all of those zingy herbal notes.

UPSIDE A bracing southern French rogue ready to rock any party.

DOWNSIDE It just goes down far too easily – where's that bottle gone?

FROM THE FLOOR Charles Pashby-Taylor, head sommelier at Dabbous, says: 'Who doesn't like Picpoul? Its notes of



clean sea air and nice stony characters make it a great all-round white and, as the sun has just come out, I may be enjoying some myself!

GREAT EXAMPLE L'Ormarine, 'Duc de Morny' Picpoul de Pinet 2015, Languedoc, France. £6.50, Boutinot, 0161 908 1300

RIESLING

As the quintessential cool-climate grape, Riesling guarantees palate-tingling acidity no matter where it is from. Still, those fluted bottles seem to appeal to hardcore wine cognoscenti alone. About time that changed. Riesling's spiritual home is Germany, where it thrives in every

conceivable soil in scintillating shades of dry and off-dry. For brisk poise head to the clean-cut dry Rieslings of Austria, especially from Kremstal, Wachau and Kamptal. For more mellow soulfulness, head to warmer Alsace and splash on a grand cru. Riesling also likes to travel and does well abroad: just taste the zippy examples from Eden and Clare Valley in South Australia, Marlborough in New Zealand and west coast USA.

VERSATILITY Bone-dry Riesling is perfect with clean, contemporary cuisine. A wine with a few grams of flavour-enhancing residual sugar, even if it still tastes and finishes dry, will echo a sweet element in any dish perfectly: think savoury salads with pomegranate seeds and you get the idea.

DO SAY How will this compare to the Goldkapsel I had last night?

DON'T SAY Are you sure this isn't Liebfraumilch?

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF

If you are uncertain about dryness, just take a peep at the alcohol level. Everything at 11% or above will taste dry so you can choose with confidence.

UPSIDE A Teutonic thriller, direct and uncompromising – even when it's from Eden, Wachau or Washington.

DOWNSIDE Riesling is like Marmite – you either love it or hate it – there's rarely anything in between. It will never be everybody's darling, but that's because it's special.

FROM THE FLOOR Sunaina Sethi, wine buyer at JKS Restaurants, says: 'High-acid, zippy Rieslings are wonderful for any time of the day. It's exactly what you want as an aperitif or at the start of a meal – to wake up your palate and get you ready for whatever is to follow. The wonderful aromatics are a great match with Indian cuisine, and even dry Rieslings can

complement a meal with an array of spices and flavours.'

GREAT EXAMPLE Salomon-Undhof Alma Riesling 2014, Kremstal, Austria. £15.50, *Lea & Sandeman, 020 7244 0522*

SAUVIGNON BLANC

With its overt grass and passion fruit notes, Sauvignon Blanc has become the go-to wine of the masses. Snobs may turn their nose up, but in the real world this variety means business. Sauvignon Blanc's abiding predominance has been dubbed 'Sauvalanche', but it has won over many new wine converts. There is more to it than up-front aroma and freshness, though biochemists love to geek out over its thiols (they are responsible for the aromas). In its guise of restrained Sancerre it has cut the mustard for a long time, as has its flintier Loire neighbour Pouilly-Fumé. It is also the first New World classic varietal, with a firm home in Marlborough, New Zealand, and it enjoys cool ocean breezes from Chile all the way to South Africa.

VERSATILITY Very fragrant New World-style Sauvignon Blanc is one of the few wines to really sing with Thai chilli and lemongrass flavours. For Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, try dishes you'd serve with Chablis (see before).

DO SAY How does this compare to the ripe tropical fruit notes of the Wairau Valley?

DON'T SAY Please don't tell me this smells of gooseberries – when was the last time you had gooseberries?

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF

Make sure that the aromatic intensity on the nose matches the depth of the palate. Some Sauvignon Blancs are

sadly all mouth and no trousers.

UPSIDE A ubiquitous crowd-pleaser with its tell-tale fragrance and rip-roaring acidity.

DOWNSIDE Sauvignon Blanc has become a victim of its own success, which means that there are many sub-standard bottles riding the coattails.

FROM THE FLOOR Ernesto Piloto, sommelier at Bibendum Restaurant, says: 'For high-acid, dry refreshment, I look no further than Sauvignon Blanc. Whether



it's simple fish and chips or a more refined Dover sole à la Grenobloise, Sauvignon Blanc will create the magic.'

GREAT EXAMPLE

Te Whare Ra Sauvignon Blanc 2015, Marlborough, New Zealand (£15.50, Hallowed Ground, 07799 414 374)

VINHO VERDE

The slight spritz on opening signals the freshness of Portugal's zippiest, lightest wine. The ozone scent of citrus and

seaside carries all the wanderlust of this ancient seafaring nation... sounds of Fado appear in the distance... you can see how easily this breezy, slender white from Minho casts its devilish spell. Made from indigenous grapes that thrive on the granitic soils of the Atlantic coast, Vinho Verde is always fresh and light-bodied, especially when based on Loureiro and Arinto. When made from Alvarinho (the same grape as Spain's Albariño) it carries a little more weight. The fact that it is often just 11% alcohol makes it all the more attractive.

VERSATILITY Vinho Verde's very lightness lends itself to lunchtime: a glass to put a zip in your day without taking a toll on your head. Make a virtue of this and put it alongside plates of sardines or anchovies.

DO SAY Wow, I can really taste the Loureiro in here.

DON'T SAY Is this stuff re-fermenting in the bottle?

HOW TO GET THE GOOD STUFF Some Vinhos Verdes can be a bit anaemic: look for those that have lightness *and* depth.

UPSIDE It's the translucent chiffon dress of the wine world: barely there but totally effective nonetheless.

DOWNSIDE You may have to give guests a little chemistry lesson and explain residual carbon dioxide.

FROM THE FLOOR Ollie McSwiney, GM of Noble Rot Wine Bar, says: 'It's an ideal first glass to spark up the palate and enliven the nervous system – perfect, too, with Whitstable native oysters.'

GREAT EXAMPLE Anselmo Mendes, Muros Antigos Loureiro 2015, Vinho Verde, Portugal. £9.30, *Clark Foyster, 020 8819 1458*

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