

A brief guide to wines with Satya

Despite the somewhat archaic nature of Alberta liquor regulations, one can still find quite a number of good wines at reasonable prices. In this article, I will have to assume that you have a basic knowledge of wines, as space is rather limited.

A few basics, though. When I speak of Canadian and Australian wines as being Bordeaux or Burgundy type, I am referring to similarity between these wines and those bearing the names Bordeaux and Burgundy from the regions of France where they are produced.

I'd like to start with red wines, and examine the types of Canadian reds I have enjoyed. Andres Similkameen is in my view the best of the Canadians, fresh, lively and medium bodied, not unlike Beaujolais. It's from British Columbia, and is the only wine from that region which is naturally corked, rather than having a screw type cap. It is very dry, and much more complex than the usual watery syrup which passes for Canadian wine. The other potable Canadian red is a Manor St. David claret, pleasant enough, but not much else.

A really good buy these days is Australian red, most notably Lindeman's claret, which is a pretty close replica of Bordeaux. Cabernet Sauvignon from California is a very nice surprise. It lay down for a couple of years and you will have a truly great wine. Produced from the same grape that gives birth to the noble wines of Bordeaux, Cabernet at maturity is mellow and full bodied, with a wonderful bouquet. California tax laws make it convenient for vintners to bottle California wines upon production, and the stock we see in liquor stores is far better when allowed to age. Rethat

good wine does improve considerably in a bottle if properly cared for. The ideal conditions is a cool dark place, with a temperature ranging from 45-65 degrees Fahrenheit.

Pinot Noir is another notable Californian, spawned of the grape which gives us Burgundy, but it is extremely mediocre unless aged. Generally, stick to Cabernet Sauvignon for the special occasions and try a Gamay Beaujolais or a Zinfandel for the ordinary times. Gamay Beaujolais is from the Beaujolais grape, and does make an excellent table wine, not really requiring maturing, as it seldom improves after two or three years. Zinfandel is a light, zesty wine with a berry like bouquet.

There are no better wines for washing down big meals like hearty Italian reds. We find some of the better ones in Edmonton, like the fresh young Valpolicella, or a fine Chianti Classico. Watch for a black cockerel on the necks of the Chianti Classico, this is used to signify the better wines from one specific Chianti region in Italy. Generally, the Chianti in bottles is better than that in the straw flasks, and the thing to remember about Italian wines is the younger the better. Anything older than three years could be losing its freshness, anything over five is a risk.

All the wines mentioned so far have ranged from about two to three dollars a bottle, if you want French wines, you sometimes have to pay an astronomical figure. If, however, you learn to distinguish between the good and the mediocre, you get good wine for under six dollars. The wines of Bordeaux are divided into four main regions, Medoc, St. Emilion, Pomerol, and Graves. The best white Bordeaux comes from

Sauternes and Barsac, but more on that later.

Wines from Medoc are pretty well out considering the prices, stay away from the Medoc Cruse, et al, but if you can find a wine labelled Medoc for under four dollars do yourself a favor and buy it. In the red Bordeaux, watch for the years 1966 and 1970, they are the greatest vintages since the second world war. The 66's are just reaching maturity, and give great pleasures in wine drinking. The Southgate store carries the Chateau Cadillac 1966 for \$3.35, and this is one of the best buys on the market right now. The other stores carry the 1969 vintage, which pales by comparison. If you are a veteran oenophile, you will not want to miss the 1970 vintage of Chateau Margaux, available for under twenty dollars. Chateau Margaux is one of the two or three red wines in the world that are universally classified as the noblest of the noble. Others in this category include Chateau Lafite-Rothschild, Chateau Mouton-Rothschild and Chateau Latour in Medoc, the Haut-Brion from Graves. Margaux is every bit as good, if not better as Lafite-Rothschild. I only wish that I could afford a bottle, for by 1978 it will be a noble height in wine drinking. However, back down to earth. If you want to come close to the greatness of an excellent Medoc, without the price, try St. Emilion. The most reasonably priced of these are two grand cru Chateau growths, Payreau and Latour-du-pin-Figeac, both of which are extremely good now, and should reach full maturity around 1976 or 77. Stay from wines with the simple label St. Emilion, which are quite inferior to the grand cru, but sell for the

same price. Pomerol and Graves are too expensive for the average budget, ranging at about twelve dollars a bottle.

Ah, Burgundy! Oh pocketbook! Nevertheless, if you can afford it, Clos de Vougeot, Crmes-Chambertin and the like are available, and their excellence is unquestioned. A vin extraordinaire from Burgundy, Corbiers, is available at some of the stores for about two dollars, quality is quite good. Beaujolais, or southern Burgundy, is up in price, try Drouhin's Beaujolais Villages, or a Chateau de Bellevue, a grand cru, both of which run at about four dollars.

Other good wines for everyday drinking are the Spanish Rioja and the Portuguese Dao, and Chilean claret isn't too bad.

Now to the whites. Let's start with champagne. French champagne averages ten dollars a bottle, and if you are going to splurge, you might as well get a vintage champagne, which is better and lasts longer than the nonvintage type. Vintages in champagne are declared very occasionally, when a year's grape crop has been deemed so superior that only grapes from that year are used in the process. The two vintage champagnes available in Edmonton are the Charles Heidsieck 1969 and the Pol Roger 1966. Most vintage champagne tastes the same, the differences are very very slight. Among the Canadians, which are considerably lower in price, the best is Bright's President. Andres Richelieu is another good Canadian. And if you want sweet champagne type wines, try a bottle of Asti Spumante. The Martini and Rossi, not the Gancia. For some reason, the Gancia fails to match the Rossi's

excellence. Among the sweet Canadians try Andres Baby Champagne, Codorniu from Spain is also quite good.

As for other whites, most of the German wines sold in Alberta are very good, though the prices have gone up lately. Try the Liebfraumilch for a good German wine at a reasonable price. At the specialty stores, you can find Bernkasteler Doktor, perhaps the best German wine available. Its price escapes me, I believe it's about \$8.00. Generally, stick to village names like Piesporter, Wehlener, and Bernkasteler, and you can't go wrong. Among Italian whites, Orvieto deserves mention. A dry, light wine from Umbria, it often provides a moderately priced alternative to the Moselles and the Rhinewines, though very different in nature. The German Moselles, if you do a bit of judicious shopping, can indeed be excellent. Try a couple of the drier Canadian sparkling whites. They can be pleasant.

Among the French, the best buy is Les Clos, a grand cru from Chablis, considered by many to produce the world's finest white wines. And a grand cru Chablis is the best of them all. It's about six dollars. Try a chateau bottled Sauternes dessert wine like Filhot if you wish. It goes especially well with cake. The popular dry white with the simple appellation Graves is quite passable.

Among the rose, Faisca from Portugal is about the best. I find it better than the De Neuville from Anjou. I've tried to provide a bit more insight into the pleasurable world of wine with this article and if you do try any of the wines I've mentioned and enjoy them, I will have been well rewarded.

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