

(Entertaining)

Sauvignon Blanc Is The Real Hero Wine For Summer

by **ABBY STERN**
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No way, rosé.



Look, we get it. Summer has been synonymous with “Rosé all day” for the past couple of years. But when it comes to wines that hit when it’s warm, you shouldn’t sleep on Sauvignon Blanc. Though it’s been around for centuries, Sauvignon Blanc is trending — and its popularity seems to be rooted in true star power. In 2022, U.S. sales grew by 24% according to Bev Alc Insights and so far in 2024, it’s the only varietal that has grown in value and sales.

Sauvignon Blanc is a high-acid, aromatic, dry white wine produced from the green-skinned grape of the same name. Craig McAllister, head winemaker at La Crema Winery in Sonoma, California explains that “Sauvignon Blanc originated in the Loire Valley of France and has since spread all over the world. Today you can find large amounts of it grown in New Zealand, South Africa, and Chile. It also grows beautifully here in Sonoma.” (Australia is also a popular region for producing Sauvignon Blanc.)

Though it’s grown and produced worldwide, there are vast differences in taste. “The flavor profiles vary from region to region,” he shares. For him, this is part of the wine’s appeal. “It is elegant and bright but comes in so many different styles. Sauvignon Blancs from Sonoma County see a lot of beautiful California sunshine, so it is known for notes of stone fruit, and even some tropical notes like mango and guava. I’m from New Zealand, where the cool climate produces Sauvignon Blanc which is more citrus-forward and displays some herbaceous notes.”

Glenn Goodall, senior winemaker at Xanadu Wines explains that the Margaret River wine region in Australia yields an aromatic, high-acid, dry white wine that tends to lead with citrus notes, green apple, and peach. “I want to emphasize how much Sauvignon Blanc really reflects its growing conditions,” Goodall says. “It is a grape that thrives in cool climates but also needs sunshine to flourish, making it a bit of a ‘Goldilocks’ variety.”

While ideal for the warm-weather months, McAllister doesn’t want Sauvignon Blanc to be pigeon-holed as a wine for one season. “It has enough structure to stand up to being enjoyed year-round,” he shares, adding that it pairs very well with a variety of foods thanks to its acid and citrus notes. He suggests serving it with grilled fish or seafood but, “[it] also brings brightness to herby roast chicken.”

Goodall adds tomato-based foods are another good pairing, “as the natural acidity of each component balances the other.” He also says if serving Sauvignon Blanc with a charcuterie board, grab goat, gouda, and gruyere “as the wine’s citrus notes contrast the richness of the cheese while accentuating its nutty and herbal flavors.”

Another important difference between Sauvignon Blanc and other wines that Goodall wants to drive home is not to save it. Drink it “while it’s young and fresh.” Otherwise, you might wince when you sip it. “Though there are some exceptions,” he says, “it will often develop peas and asparagus notes with age — save the space in your cellar for something else.”

Sauvignon Blanc Rules Of Thumb

In regards to selecting a great bottle of Sauvignon Blanc, Goodall admits “It can be pretty tricky to gauge the quality of wine just by looking at the bottle.” But he does have a few tricks up his sleeve to share. The first thing to look at on the label is the alcohol content. “I always suggest opting for something lower in alcohol. High alcohol content in Sauvignon Blanc can often overpower the primary characteristics that people seek in this variety,” he explains.

Goodall also encourages people to embrace their experimental side and give different Sauvignon Blanc styles and blends a chance like Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon. This blend “is common in the white wines from Bordeaux, France,” he says, noting the Semillon “adds a richer and fuller texture,” to the wine people already know and love.

McAllister directs customers to pay attention to the regions of Sauvignon Blanc they already enjoy and try a new bottle from the same area. For drinkers completely new to this varietal he provides a helpful guide of flavors the wine most likely has based on the region the wine is produced. “If you enjoy tropical and stone fruit flavors in wine, look for Sauvignon Blanc from California. If you prefer a delicate wine with crisp minerality, Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire may call to you. If you enjoy peppery notes and ripping acidity, reach for New Zealand,” he shares.

According to Goodall, another positive aspect of sipping Sauvignon Blanc is it can be savored or slurped without worrying it will break the bank. When comparing bottles of Sauvignon Blanc at the store, a higher price point isn’t indicative of a higher quality wine. This varietal “isn’t typically an expensive wine,” he says. He hopes the affordability will inspire consumers to embark on a Sauvignon Blanc adventure and “explore various bottles and styles from around the world.”

Accendo Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Napa, 2021

\$82

This Napa Valley-based wine is truly an aromatic journey, featuring notes of jasmine, honeysuckle, guava, green apple, white nectarine, and kiwi.

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