

Robb Report

15 Wines That Pair Perfectly With Your Next Backyard Barbecue

A guide to the varietals that you want with you by the grill.

BY [SARA L. SCHNEIDER](#) ON JUNE 29, 2020



When the mercury rises and the grill gets fired up, you may find yourself reaching for a cold beer. But this year, whether your specialty is a secret sauce for burgers, dry rub for ribs or sourcing some of the [best beef on the planet](#), punch up your barbecue with just the right bottle of wine. Across the range of fish, fowl, [steaks](#) or chops that might make an appearance over your fire, we have brilliant pairings covered with three families of wines.

Grenache and GSM blends (Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre) are stealth tools when it comes to backyard parties. Medium-bodied, juicy-fruited and often spicy, the wines pair beautifully with an enormous range of grill favorites, from chicken to salmon to pork (pass the ribs). When it comes to burgers, there's really no foil as good as the dark berry and pepper notes in a California Zinfandel. Just keep to lower-alcohol versions if your secret sauce is spicy: High alcohol levels and the heat of chiles (did someone say chipotle mayo?) have a way of egging each other on. And if you're grabbing your favorite cut of steak, there's no reason to stray from Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. The generally firm tannin structure of Cab is softened by generous marbling in a steak like a rib-eye. And the slightly more succulent textures of Merlot play well with leaner cuts like hangar or skirt steaks. (Find a way to put soy sauce in the marinade.) One last note about Merlot, though. Don't

underestimate it! This red loves wild salmon as well as beef and for your vegetarian friends, it's the perfect partner for Portobello steaks.



PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF BECKMEN

Beckmen Vineyards 2017 PMV Grenache Ballard Canyon

Well-known Santa Barbara producer Steve Beckmen was a pioneer of Rhône varieties on the Central Coast. This 2017 Grenache is a ripe beauty, opening with lifted florals over briary berry and licorice aromas spiked with cracked pepper. Plush cherry flavors are both intense and juicy, layered with savory herbal and earthy notes.

BUY NOW \$54



PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF CLOS SOLENE

Clos Solène 2017 Harmonie Paso Robles

This blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre from Clos Solène leads with an alluring split of earth and crushed rock against a foil of florals and aromas of cherries. An edge of salinity creates interest on a generously fruited palate layered with kirsch and licorice, with a bright finish that belies an alcohol level north of 15 percent.

BUY NOW \$88



PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF HICKINBOTHAM

Hickinbotham 2017 Elder Hill Clarendon Vineyard Grenache McLaren Vale

From the dual-continent winemaking team of Chris Carpenter (Cardinale, Lokoya, etc.) and Hickinbotham's Peter Fraser, this now-iconic Aussie Grenache is lively and beautifully textured, reflecting a cooler year. Anise, earth and cherry compote on the nose lead to juicy dark cherry and berry flavors with an edge of orange citrus.

BUY NOW \$75



Dutton Goldfield 2017 Dutton Ranch Morelli Lane Vineyard Zinfandel Russian River Valley

The 1.8-acre head-trained, dry-farmed block this vibrant Dutton Goldfield Zin comes from is all that's left of the vineyard the Morelli Family planted over 100 years ago. A pretty floral quality opens, floating over spicy blackberry and dark chocolate notes sprinkled with black pepper. Juicy mixed-berry flavors persist, backed by surprising, elegant tannins. If you're pouring this one, top your burgers with grilled onions.

BUY NOW \$50



PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHILES VALLEY

Frank Family Vineyards 2017 Reserve Zinfandel Chiles Valley

From the eastern side of Napa Valley, this Reserve from Frank Family walks on the bright, pretty side of the variety. Aromas of plum blossom and peppery blackberry give way to juicy mixed berry and red plum flavors with a hint of orange zest.

BUY NOW \$60



Seghesio Family Vineyards 2016 Home Ranch Zinfandel Alexander Valley

What better than a top wine from a multi-generational Zinfandel powerhouse of a family? Sourced from some of Seghesio's famously old Home Ranch plantings, this perennially delicious Zin unfolds in complex layers of dusty, briary blackberries, black raspberries, warm spice and black pepper playing out on an endless finish.

BUY NOW \$60



PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF CANVASBACK

Canvasback 2017 Grand Passage Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain

This is the new top-tier release from Duckhorn's Washington state Canvasback project and it's a beauty. Deep and layered, concentrated and complex, it opens with an aromatic mix of black fruit, espresso, tobacco leaf, spice and earth, followed by plush but pure dark berry, cherry and plum flavors that unfold over an impressive tannin structure.

BUY NOW \$84



PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHAPPELLET

Chappellet Mountain Estates 2017 Hideaway Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley

This complex, opulent wine from Chappellet comes from high on Prichard Hill. A dark, savory nose of crushed rock, flint, toasted spice and dark chocolate-coated blackberries is followed by an intense palate marked by hints of salinity and intense, briary blackberry and plum fruit.

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PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHATEAU LASSEGUE

Château Lassègue 2016 Saint-Émilion Grand Cru

From the father-son team of Pierre and Nicolas Seillan, the 2016 vintage of Lassègue's flagship (60 percent Merlot, 33 percent Cabernet Franc and 7 percent Cabernet Sauvignon) is a study in the balance between generosity and terroir. An alluring nose of violet, dark cherry, cassis and flint aromas underpinned with slate and earth is followed by a juicy and succulent palate. Beautiful dark-berry fruit flavors are delivered with dense, supple tannins that build to a minerally finish.

BUY NOW \$58



PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF HERRERA

Herrera 2016 Selección Rebecca Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley

Named for their daughter, this handsome Cab from Rolando and Lorena Herrera, proprietors of Mi Sueño, shows the cooler-climate influence of the Coombsville appellation in southern Napa Valley. A slightly brooding and earthy nose is balanced by lovely floral aromas, along with plenty of oak spice, vanilla and cassis. Juicy berry flavors follow, layered with dark chocolate and a sage-like quality, beautiful acidity and an impressive tannin structure.

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PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF LOCANDA

Locanda 2017 Beckstoffer Georges III Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley

From one of Andy Beckstoffer's core Heritage Vineyards, this complex beauty from Locanda has the stuff it takes to age—maybe this one's for a Father's Day barbecue to come. But if you do pop the cork this year, you'll meet that irresistible duo of crushed rock and violets on the nose, mingling with warm spice, dark chocolate and crackly dried herbs. Blackberry, plum and cassis flavors are backed by firm tannins on a palate that's dense but fresh and elegant at the same time.

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PHOTO : COURTESY OF LONG SHADOWS VINTNERS COLLECTION

Pirouette 2016 Red from the Long Shadows Vintners Collection Columbia Valley

Long Shadows Vintners Collection is the best place possible to find wines from the world's top winemakers outside their home bases. The company's partners include John Duval (think Penfolds' Grange), Michel Rolland (hard to know what reference to use, among dozens available), and Napa's own Randy Dunn (of Caymus fame, as well as his own label), all working with Long Shadows' talent on the ground, Gilles Nicault. The consultant behind Pirouette is Philippe Melka, and the wine is a stellar Bordeaux blend, leading with Cabernet Sauvignon but including the other four varieties as well. Not afraid to show a savory side, the nose offers an earthy, minerally character, with resinous herbs, anise, and cassis. The palate is generous with its gamut of ripe fruit—cherry and mixed berry—mocha, and oak spice.

BUY NOW: \$70



Long Shadows Vintners Collection 2017 Feather Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley

Feather is a partnership between Washington state's Long Shadows and Napa Valley icon Randy Dunn and the 2017 is an eloquent reflection of his structured style. An earthy nose is layered with spice, tobacco and espresso, but offers up floral scents that often balance those dark notes. Savory, resinous herbs lace through dark plum and berry fruit, with firm but polished tannins adding gravitas.

BUY NOW \$70



PHOTO : PHOTO: COURTESY OF MAYACAMAS

Mayacamas Vineyards 2016 Merlot Mt. Veeder, Napa Valley

The muscly mountain tannins in this Mayacamas Merlot have been rounded and tamed by 30 months in neutral oak. Somewhat gravelly and brooding aromas are lifted by lovely floral notes and unsweetened chocolate. Juicy dark cherry, berry and plum flavors are alive with vibrant tension and layered with savory spices against a tannin structure that promises a long life ahead.

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