

thebacklabel®

A monthly wine journey curated for adventurous souls

WINE IS TRAVEL







WINE IS TRAVEL. TRAVEL IS WINE.

BY LOGAN LEE

ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING things about wine isn't the quirky tasting notes, the thousands of varieties, or even that a glass is super relaxing after a long work day. I think the coolest thing about wine is that it comes from a unique place. By a unique place, I mean a specific spot on your GPS and a taste that reflects those specific coordinates. Fancy somms call this "terroir," and we think it's pretty cool, like the environment is putting its fingerprint on each bottle. We always strive to find juice that has terroir. Think of it like finding that local restaurant when you travel versus hitting up Mickey D's or Burger King. You can get that same fast food anywhere in the world, so spring for the local stuff every chance you get!

Secondly, wine is from some seriously unique places and by this I mean some of the coolest places on the planet to vacation to and explore. Vineyards dot every continent except Antarctica (for obvious climate reasons) and are a part of the stunning landscapes in far off places like South Africa and are also tied to villages with centuries of history in places like Spain And France.

In this month's box, we celebrate that wine is travel and travel is wine. If you're sipping on these bottles at home, we hope you notice the care we took to find each one. But we also hope this month's magazine inspires you to go discover some amazing places via wine. Since each bottle comes from a unique place, these wines are vehicles to discover the local cultures and regions. So we picked out some of our favorite discoveries, restaurants, and sights close to where the wine is made.

For the recipe pairings, we teamed up with Tasting Table to find dishes with their own take on culture and place.

And we end the magazine with some seriously effective flight hacks from our friends at Dollar Flight Club, just in case you feel inspired.

Let's go!

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THIS MONTH'S RECIPES BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

TASTING TABLE

Tasting Table is the modern media brand for a new generation of food & drink enthusiasts.

We eat high and low to bring you discerning dining advice, recipes you can trust and news you can use from the world of food and drink. We're an opinionated gang of always curious, anchovy-loving, order-one-of-everything-for-the-table epicurean obsessives.

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THE SWEET VS. FRUITY DICHOTOMY

BY ANGELA ORTMAN & DUSTIN WILSON

DRY - no sugar in the wine.

OFF DRY - some sugar in the wine but can still be enjoyed with savory food.

This month's 2017 Maison Marcel Rosé is off-dry!

SWEET - significant sugar in the wine. pair it with dessert.

OF ALL THE BEAUTIFUL and eloquent words that encapsulate the world of wine, the one we all really want to use is: complicated.

The plethora of terms, regions, varietals, techniques (continue ad nauseam) can ignite the passion of any aspiring connoisseur. Conversely, they can instill a harrowing fear of the unknown in the heart of the Average Joe who's just looking to enjoy a glass of fermented grape juice.

One of the biggest challenges is expressing exactly what it is we like about our wines. Beyond the simplicity of "white vs. red," there are an endless amount of classifications and categories. It's one thing to read the back label of a bottle and decide whether the "stirring narrative" really moves us. But what about when we dine out? Having to describe wine (and our preferences) in public is no small task.

In all my experiences educating people about wine, serving it, studying it and drinking quite a bit of it, the most common snag I have come across is the sweet vs. fruit dichotomy.

I have been at many a table (as a sommelier and a diner) where guests request a "sweet" style of wine. All too often, the server or sommelier brings out a dessert white or a port. Ultimately, these wines are turned away for being too sweet.

After witnessing this time and time again, I came to realize that many wine drinkers confuse the words sweet and fruity. This is a mistake that makes sense, but a mistake nonetheless.

We naturally think of fruit as sweet. Therefore, a wine that exudes rich berry or tropical notes might be described as sweet. But for a wine to be sweet by professional standards, it must have residual sugars. Which means, sugar left intentionally in the juice during the winemaking process.

If what you prefer is a wine that has prominent and dominating fruit flavors but not that outward sugary sensation, you really want a wine that is fruit-forward.

Care to put your senses to the test? (Fair warning: I do not recommend performing this

exercise during your next fine dining experience.)

Use one hand to close your nose while using the other to take a healthy sip of wine. If you don't immediately get a sweet taste, your wine is likely a dry, fruit-forward wine. Sugar sensations are most often perceived at the front of the tongue while fruit notes are amplified by our sense of smell. Therefore, eliminating one should create a pronunciation of the other.

Let's break it down further with sweetened and unsweetened tea. It all tastes like tea, but we know whether we want those packets of sugar added. How about lemonade? One could make a batch of freshly squeezed lemonade, and depending on the amount of sugar added, the result could be tart or sweet. In either instance, the lemonade is still, in fact, fruity, due to the fact that its primary ingredient is a fruit and all.

A less sophisticated example: take a moment to think about wine coolers. I'd say the line is drawn here for most: you either love them or hate them. If you're a fan of a bottled Strawberry Daiquiri or Bahama Mama, you're probably a sweet wine drinker. If you wish you could water them down with some tonic, you likely enjoy a fruit-forward wine. This would also be the answer for those who hold a certain disdain for these syrupy concoctions.

2015 CLOT D'ENCÍS, RED TERRA ALTA, SPAIN

59% Grenache, 30% Syrah, 11% Carignan

 A perfectly broken in flannel shirt from high school with black cherry jam stains and a subtle whiff of Abercrombie 'Woods' cologne

 Full-bodied, fruity and luscious that almost tricks your mouth that you're in Spain

MOOD: The town of Bot, Spain has a population of just under 800 people. Not even a one stoplight-sized kinda town, but home of some really great vino like this bottle. It's a two hour drive Southwest of Barcelona, which is perfect for a day trip to see all the Gaudí architecture and finish rambling around Las Ramblas. You can also sip on similar vino at Bar Müt in Barcelona sans road trip.



FRUIT



TANNIN



ACIDITY



BODY



Catalonia is a self-described rebel territory in Northeast Spain that has been in the news the last few years for trying to secede from Spain and form an independent country. The Catalans have their own flag and it is quite prominent hanging from homes as you sightsee around Barcelona, which is the hub of the region. This part of Spain makes some of the most interesting wine in the whole country but doesn't have the same recognition or marketing budget for the powerhouses like Rioja. This bottle comes from a town called Bot that is way off the beaten path with not even 800 residents.

The grapes are Grenache, Carignan, and Syrah. The Grenache and the Carignan are harvested by hand, and each varietal is processed and vinified separately, allowing the winemakers the ultimate flexibility to make the perfect blend of all three! The wine is jammy, woody, and lush and makes for a great travel planning buddy!

 Spanish reds make for awesome steak wines, but up your steak game with different spices like ancho Chile pepper or Hungarian hot paprika.



DUNGENESS CRAB GAZPACHO

YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

- 1 poblano chile
- 6 cups heirloom tomatoes
- 1 cup carrots, chopped
- 2 cups cucumbers, skinned and chopped
- 2 cups white onions, rinsed with hot water
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 raw fresno chile
- ¼ cup lime juice
- 1½ teaspoons sherry vinegar
- 4 cups Sacramento tomato juice
- ½ cup rustic style bread, torn
- ¼ cup sea salt, preferably Jacobsen
- 12 ounces Dungeness crab
- ⅓ cup cilantro, divided
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Additional cucumber and tomato to garnish, optional

1. Heat the oven to 400°F. Roast the poblano until the skin is blistered and the flesh is soft, about 30 minutes. Cool, peel and seed the chile.

2. Combine the tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, onions, garlic, fresno, poblano, lime juice, sherry vinegar, tomato juice, bread, salt and ⅓ cup cilantro in a food processor and purée until smooth. Chill the soup in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.

3. Place 2 ounces of crab into each of 6 bowls and evenly distribute the soup on top. Garnish with the remaining cilantro and olive oil (plus tomato and cucumber, if using) to serve.

2015 LA PERDRIX COSTIÈRES DE NÎMES ROUGE RHÔNE VALLEY, FRANCE

45% Grenache, 35% Syrah, and 20% Carignan



Soft and fleshy red and dark fruit like plums, black cherries, and black raspberries

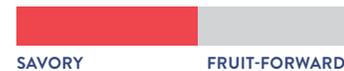


Balanced and plush with tannins that melt in your mouth and not in your hand

MOOD: Lyon is the seat of the Rhône Valley wine region and the town makes for the perfect base camp to tour this part of France. When you are not touring some of the world's best wineries, check out these two watering holes... La Cocotte-Minute and Look Bar.



FRUIT



TANNIN



ACIDITY



BODY



The Rhône Valley is one of the most storied wine regions in the world. It is beloved by American somms for its history, culture, and mostly because the winemakers here have a true sense of terroir — a fancy word for having a sense of place.

These winemakers started the trend that wine should be from a place and have learned the Rhône DNA stamp on the juice tastes pretty damn good. Grapes and winemaking styles are tied to the climate and environment, and the smartest winemakers play to the strengths of their land. The Rhône is never going to be a place for explosively jammy and big wines, but it is a place for the wine classics!

This Rhône blend is made of iconic French grapes i.e. Grenache, Carignan, and Syrah. In the glass you'll find dark fruit like plums and black cherry, and as you sip you'll enjoy a juicy, supple, and elegant wine just like the French. Oui, oui!



Some wines are meant for hearty dishes and this bottle can hang with some big pastas and steaks.



SAUSAGE-STUFFED RIGATONI

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

½ pound dried rigatoni (medium to small works the best)

¾ pound Italian sausage, uncased

1 large egg

Olive oil

1 cup minced onion

2 tablespoons thinly sliced garlic (from about 3 cloves)

20 cherry tomatoes, halved (approximately 2 cups)

2 tablespoons butter

Reserved pasta water

1 cup rapini, chopped fine

1 teaspoon chopped anchovy fillets

Parmesan or pecorino cheese, to garnish

Juice from 1 lemon

Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Blanch the rigatoni in salted boiling water until it still has a very firm bite, approximately 10 minutes. Remove to a parchment-lined tray greased with cooking spray and allow to cool. (Do not coat the pasta in oil.) Reserve 1 cup of the pasta cooking water.

2. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the Italian sausage until it becomes sticky. Add the egg and continue to beat until it's completely incorporated. Transfer the mixture into a piping bag or Ziploc with the corner cut off. Fill each of the rigatoni with the sausage mixture, making sure that the sausage extends past each end.

3. In a wide, shallow pot, heat a few tablespoons of olive oil and sweat the onions and garlic until the garlic smells sweet, approximately 4 to 6 minutes. Add the halved tomatoes to the pan and cook until most of the liquid is gone.

4. Add the stuffed rigatoni, butter and reserved pasta water. Gently shake the pan and cover with a lid, lowering the heat until the water is just simmering. After 2 minutes, remove the lid and continue to cook until most of the water is gone.

5. Add the rapini, anchovies and a little Parmesan to the pot. Test one of the rigatoni to make sure the sausage is cooked through. Season with lemon juice, salt and pepper.

6. Divide the pasta onto 4 plates, garnish with more Parmesan and olive oil, and serve.

2017 BALANCE SHIRAZ

WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

100% Shiraz



Stemmy black cherries mashed up in a Dr. Pepper can



Jammy, juicy, and easy drinking adult cola with a touch of baking spices

MOOD: The Butcher Man is located in the cool kid's neighborhood, Green Point, in Cape Town, South Africa. South Africans call BBQ a braai and these guys really know how to grill up some meat. Go here. Order anything grilled AKA on the braai and pair it up with some Shiraz!

FRUIT



TANNIN



ACIDITY



BODY

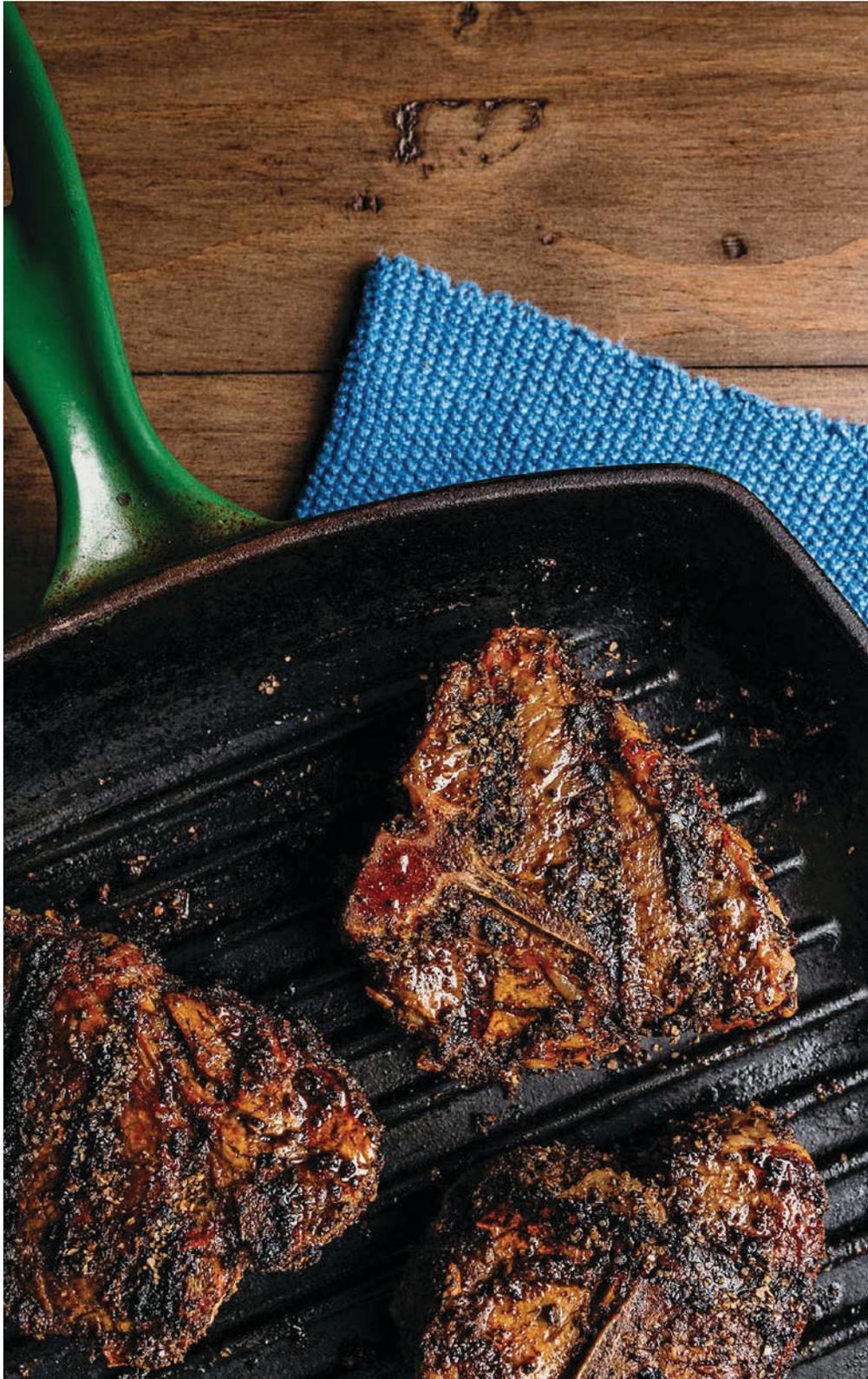


Shiraz has about as bad of a rap as millennials living in their parents' basement. That negative reputation is tied to the 1990s (South Africa started making wine in the 1500s!) when South Africa was known for only producing bulk wine with little soul or inspiration. South African winemaker Nico Grobler likes to say, "South Africa is one of the oldest winemaking soils, but South Africans are just figuring out what to do with it."

This bottle of Shiraz aka Syrah is a prime example of South African wine finding its soul and place in the global wine scene. It's an excellent BBQ wine or a braai as they say in the Western Cape of South Africa. The juice is big, jammy, and bold and feels like Dr. Pepper got into the wine business.



Throw a BBQ this fall but skip the burgers and grill some bigger pieces of meat like racks of lamb. Your local butcher can show you all kinds of ways to prepare these chops, racks, ribs, and more.



CHIPOTLE LAMB LOIN CHOPS

YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

FOR THE RUB:

¼ cup (24 g) chipotle chile powder

¼ cup (60 ml) vegetable oil

3 dried chipotle chiles, seeds and stems removed

1 dried ancho chile, seeds and stems removed

6 garlic cloves, peeled

½ cup (80 g) salt

2 tablespoons dried Mexican oregano

FOR THE LAMB CHOPS:

4 pounds (1.8 kg) bone-in loin lamb chops

2 tablespoons olive oil

1. To make the chipotle powder: Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Fry the chipotle and ancho chiles in batches, turning them as they puff up, about 10 seconds on each side. Drain on paper towels and let cool; the chiles should be crisp and dry once cooled. Grind into a powder in a spice grinder or, in a pinch, a food processor.

2. Put the chipotle powder, the garlic, salt and oregano in a food processor, and grind into a coarse rub. If the rub looks wet, dry it in a 150°F (65°C) oven for an hour or so. Let cool. The rub will keep in an airtight container in the pantry for up to 3 months.

3. Make the lamb chops: Rub the lamb chops all over with the oil. Then dust the chops with the rub, brushing off any seasoning that doesn't stick.

4. Heat a charcoal grill (or a cast-iron grill pan) to high heat. Grill the lamb chops for about 3 minutes on each side for medium rare and let rest for 5 minutes before serving.

2016 SENSATION CÔTES DU RHÔNE RHÔNE VALLEY, FRANCE

50% Grenache, 25% Syrah, 20% Carignan, 5% Cinsault

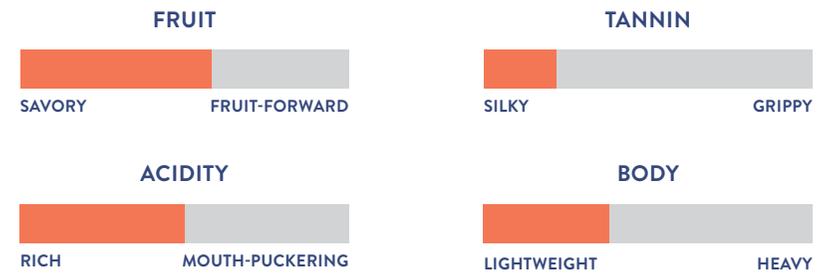


Olives and black cherries accidentally got mixed together in a serving dish



A compelling mix of fruit and savory flavors with a long mouth-watering finish

MOOD: Reading the Lonely Planet guide to backpacking through France as you plan a European vacation, while listening to the new Phoenix album, Ti Amo.



Pascal Maillet went to college to study Computer Science, but almost overnight he made a huge life course change. In 1993, Maillet and his wife, with little to zero wine experience, purchased an estate. Much to his family and friends' surprise, the couple has built a substantial wine business since the 1990s. Their vineyards are farmed sustainably and all the grapes are harvested by hand.

All you need to know when you see "Côtes du Rhône" is the wine is a blend of classic Rhône varietals that only come from vineyards in a very specific, legally designated portion of the Rhône Valley. So this bottle has a very specific sense of place! The juice is the right combo of fruity (not sweet) and savory. The fruitiness comes from Grenache, which is known for notes of cola and dark cherries, and Syrah is known for being olive-y and a little salty! Together they make the juice sing!



An AOC or Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée is just a fancy french phrase meaning the grapes in the wine come from a legally designated place.





GREEK STUFFED PEPPERS AND TOMATOES (GEMISTA)

YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

3 large ripe hothouse or beefsteak tomatoes

3 large green bell peppers

1½ cups extra-virgin olive oil, divided

2 medium white onions, small dice (4 cups)

½ cup uncooked white rice

1 tablespoon dried oregano

1 tablespoon ground black pepper

2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided

¼ cup finely chopped dill, plus extra for topping

¼ cup finely chopped mint leaves, plus extra for topping

2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley leaves, plus extra for topping

4 medium potatoes, cut into wedges

2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

1. Preheat the oven to 370°.

2. Use a knife to cut the top quarter off the tomatoes. Working over a bowl, gently use a spoon and a knife to remove the middle parts of the tomatoes, reserving any juice, seeds and flesh.

3. Use a knife to cut out the stems of the bell peppers and discard any seeds. Reserve the hollowed peppers and tomatoes on a plate, and set aside.

4. In a large sauté pan, heat ½ cup of olive oil over medium heat and add the onions. Sauté for a few minutes until the onions start to soften, and then slowly add the rice to the pan. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring frequently.

5. Add the reserved tomato cores (including any juice) to the pan, using your spoon or spatula to break up any larger pieces as they cook. Add the oregano, pepper and 1½ teaspoons of the salt, and raise the heat to bring to a boil. Once boiling, lower the heat and simmer until the rice is almost fully cooked. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the dill, mint and parsley, mixing well to ensure the herbs are incorporated throughout.

6. Toss the potato wedges with the remaining ½ teaspoon of salt.

7. Spoon the rice mixture into the hollowed peppers and tomatoes; there should be enough rice to fill each of them to the top. Arrange the peppers, tomatoes and potatoes in a baking pan, using the potatoes to help the tomatoes and peppers stand upright. Pour the remaining 1 cup of olive oil over the peppers, tomatoes and potatoes. Cover the pan with foil and bake for 2 hours.

8. Top with grated Parmesan cheese and the reserved herbs. Serve hot.

WINE ALL THE TIME: VACATION EDITION

WINE IS BASICALLY OUR SPIRIT ANIMAL here at Wine Awesomeness. It guides us and is especially insightful when it comes to planning a vacation. If you're in a vacation destination rut, we highly recommend summoning your inner wine spirit.

You see, the way we look at it, vacations are better if you're doing the things you enjoy. New stuff is fun, of course, but there's nothing wrong in exploring the new in the things you already love (read: wine). So we've put together a quick list of inspiration with a bit of old and new.

Bordeaux, France

Italy and France are the top players (in production and in drinking), so either country is a great option for a wine-fueled adventure, and you can't go wrong with a trip to the famed Bordeaux. The region is largely known for its reds, which are typically blends of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot — now the most widely grown wine grapes across the world. A trip to Bordeaux would be a great dose of wine history, plus it has a whole museum dedicated to wine.

Douro Valley, Portugal

Portugal may not top your list for a wine adventure, but the Douro Valley is one of the oldest wine regions in the world, so the

history and the landscape will not let you down. Hills, rivers, and terraced vineyards dot the beautiful Douro Valley. Yes, you'll want to check out Port wine while you're here, but the Douro Valley has much more to offer than the strong and sweet stuff.

Schloss Vollrads Winery, Germany

If Bordeaux and the Douro just aren't doing it for the history buff in your group, Schloss Vollrads Winery is one of the oldest (if not, the oldest) wineries in the world. The winery (which solely grows and produces Riesling grapes) traces its history back to documentation of a wine trade in 1211. Great for a Riesling terroir exploration as the winery's line of Rieslings range from sweet ice wine to dry sparkling.

D'Arenberg McLaren Vale, Australia

For those of you who like a dose of old world meets new world, just Google this winery and check out the Rubik's Cube-like entrance. And then book your flight, of course. Most Australian wine is coming out of the South Australia wine region, but the region is vast and diverse, and this winery's lineup is no different.

Canary Islands

We all know Spain is a big producer of wine, but did you know they're even producing

wine on their islands off the northwestern coast of Africa? The vineyards are quite the site as the vines grow from pits dug into the black volcanic gravel. Historically, the islands have produced sweet dessert-style wines, but with more than 10 wine appellations to their name, the islands are producing a range of wines, and a lot of dry wines.

French Polynesia

Yep, grapes growing on these islands too, well, one island at least. Vin de Tahiti is produced on Tahiti island, but you'll want to head to the island of Rangiroa if you want to see the vines, which is a relatively dry island compared to the rest of the humidity in the South Pacific. The vines grow in fields of crushed coral and other natural compost (like seaweed), and trees protect the grapes from salty ocean mists.

Telemark, Norway

Not quite Paradise here as the Lerkekåsa Vineyard is the northernmost commercial vineyard in the world, located in Telemark, Norway. They've been growing grapes since 2008! You can even book a stay right at the vineyard.

Tuscany, Italy

Tuscany just might be the whole package. Food, wine, and Renaissance art equal an

immersive cultural experience. Need we say more?

California

Keeping it closer to home? That's cool too! The US wine industry is vast and varied itself! Based on Yelp reviews, Americans' favorite vineyard is Vincent Arroyo Winery in Calistoga in Napa Valley.

We're still exploring the wine world just like you so feel free to share some of your favorite wine vacations with us on social!

WA Team @wineawesomeness



2017 MAISON MARCEL ROSÉ PROVENCE, FRANCE

55% Black Muscat, 30% Grenache, 10% White Muscat, 5% Merlot



Exotic Jolly Rancher flavors like white peach, lychee, and elderflower



Bright and refreshing with a slight touch of sweetness that sips easy like a day at the beach

MOOD: The South of France is an iconic setting for glamour, fashion, and living the good life. This bottle is inspired by everything symbolized by the French Riviera. To soak in this glamour without breaking the bank, check out some of the cooler Airbnbs in the center of Nice, France close by the restaurant Kiosque TinTin. This spot makes a South of France signature salad with chunks of tuna, tomatoes, olives, eggs, anchovies, and greens.



This wine is inspired by a gentleman named Marcel, who fell in love in the South of France. Marcel's initial overtures were unrequited, but Marcel wasn't one to give up without truly going for it. So he did what most Frenchmen would do and he concocted an amazing rosé to woo this amazing woman.

Crafted with love in Aix-en-Provence, Maison Marcel is a unique take on French rosé. When Grenache and Merlot flirt with the fruit-forward Black Muscat, sweet magic happens. Lychee, peach, and rose notes add a special touch to this magnificent mélange. A blend Provence had never seen before and that embodies the ultimate South of France's lifestyle.



Drink rosé the very French way by pouring it over ice and adding grapefruit peel. They call it La Piscine aka The Pool!



FRITTO MISTO WITH CALABRIAN CHILE AIOLI

YIELD: SERVES 6 TO 8

FOR THE CALABRIAN CHILE AIOLI:

- 2 egg yolks
- 2½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons Calabrian chile paste, divided
- 1½ teaspoons sherry vinegar
- 2½ teaspoons distilled white vinegar
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¾ cup canola oil

FOR THE FRITTO MISTO:

- Peanut or canola oil for frying
- 2½ cups rice flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1¼ cups dry white wine
- 1¼ cups water
- ½ pound calamari, cleaned and cut into rings
- ½ pound shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 bunch broccolini, separated into florets
- 1 fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- 1 small delicata squash, seeded and thinly sliced
- 1 Meyer lemon, thinly sliced, plus additional wedges for serving

1. Make the aioli: In a food processor, blend together the egg yolks, Dijon mustard, 1 teaspoon of the Calabrian chile paste, vinegars and salt. With the machine running, slowly drizzle in the oils until a thick mayonnaise forms. Transfer to a bowl and stir in the reserved Calabrian chile paste.

2. Make the fritto misto: Pour enough oil into a 6-quart pan to reach a depth of at least 2 inches. Heat the oil to 375°.

3. In a large bowl, whisk together the rice flour, baking powder and salt. Add the white wine and water, and stir until a smooth batter forms. Add more rice flour or water if necessary until you achieve a thin pancake batter-like consistency.

4. One at a time, dip the seafood and vegetables into the batter and tap off any excess against the side of the bowl, so only a thin layer remains. Fry in batches for 2 to 4 minutes until crisp and lightly golden. Drain on a towel-lined plate and season with salt. Serve with the Calabrian chile aioli.

2018 BALANCE CHENIN BLANC

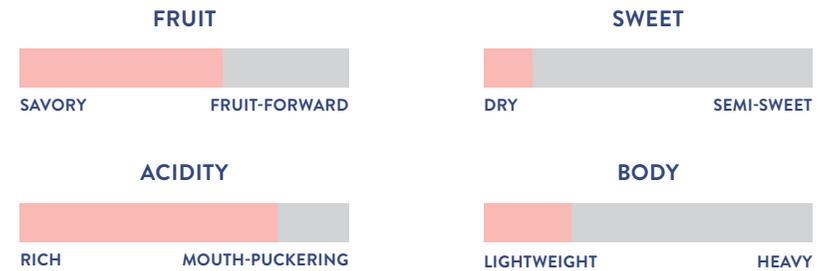
WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

100% Chenin Blanc

 Starburst created a new flavor with passion fruit, guava, and hints of citrus all together

 Tropical fruit is perfectly balanced with bright acidity that makes you salivate for more

MOOD: Maybe the most beautiful drive in the world is just outside Cape Town, South Africa and it is called Chapman's Peak. Find this bottle and enjoy a glass (passengers only) during sunset on one of the several roadside picnic spots! This sunset is literally like watching a giant fireball fall off the side of planet Earth.



When most wine people think of wine from South Africa they immediately think of Shiraz, bulk wine labels, and overly jammy fruit bombs of wine. But the South Africa wine scene started to change in the early 2000s and now these producers in the Western Cape of South Africa are making world-class vino. Our team had the chance to visit a handful of the winemakers earlier this year. The head winemaker for the Balance wine brand is Ben Snyman. He guided us through his vineyards in January and chatted about these big changes in South African wine and explained why "Chenin Blanc is the most diverse grape" and his favorite.

Moving away from bulk wine toward estate-driven, single varietal offerings is what Balance is all about. Chenin Blanc has such a rich history in South Africa and finally, the best versions of their wine are making it to the US. The Balance Chenin Blanc is tropical and vibrant kinda like a limited edition Starburst inspired by the Caribbean passion fruit, guava, and star fruit! The sugar was just replaced with booze making these extra special Starbursts.

 Chenin Blanc is a diverse grape and can pair well with savory and sweet so be sure to save some of this wine to have with your dessert.



OYSTER PO'BOYS

YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

FOR THE COLESLAW:

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup mayonnaise

1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

6 cups bagged carrot and cabbage mixture

FOR THE OYSTERS:

36 large oysters (about seven 6-ounce jars)

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup yellow cornmeal

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup unbleached all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon sea salt, plus more for sprinkling

1 teaspoon granulated garlic

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 teaspoon paprika

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon granulated onion

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground white pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried mustard

2 eggs, beaten

Vegetable oil, for frying

TO ASSEMBLE:

6 French bread or bolillo sandwich rolls

Mayonnaise

Ketchup

1. Whisk together the mayonnaise, vinegar, and lemon juice in a large bowl. Add the carrot and cabbage law mix and toss to combine. Cover and refrigerate.

2. Line a plate with paper towels, rinse the oysters, and let them drain on the lined plate.

3. Mix the cornmeal, flour, salt, granulated garlic, oregano, basil, paprika, thyme, granulated onion, white pepper, and dried mustard in a large bowl. Whisk the eggs in a medium bowl. Transfer the oysters to the egg mixture to coat, letting the excess drip off, then coat them one at a time in the dry mixture. Set aside.

4. Line another plate with paper towels and set aside. Heat the oil in a large cast-iron skillet or heavy-bottomed frying pan over high heat until very hot. (Sprinkle a little of the dry spice mix in the oil and if it sizzles, the oil is ready.) Working in batches so as not to overcrowd the skillet, fry the oysters about 2 minutes on each side, until golden brown. Remove the oysters to the lined plate. While still hot, sprinkle them with salt.

5. Preheat the oven to 375°F.

6. Slice open the rolls and warm them in the oven for 3 minutes. Spread both sides of the bread with mayonnaise and ketchup. Place 6 oysters on the bottom of each sandwich and top with coleslaw. Top the sandwiches and serve immediately!

2017 CONDE DE ALICANTE SELECCIÓN, BLANCO ALICANTE, SPAIN

50% Merseguera 50% Macabeo

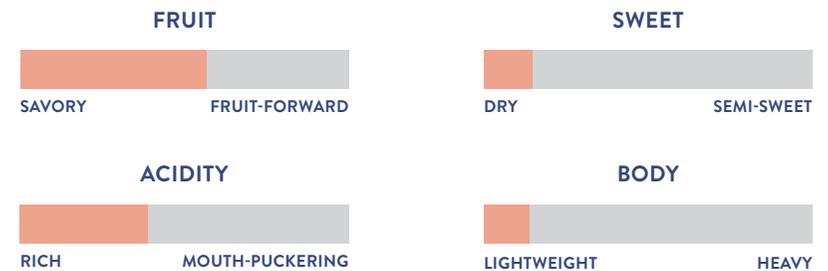


Darwin crossed the DNA of daisies and lilies while on a tropical vacation



Fresh, crisp, and elegant flowers that come in liquid form

MOOD: Alicante is the wine region and the name of the town in this area of Spain. Alicante's "old town" neighborhood is called Barrio de la Santa Cruz. It has narrow streets, colored houses, and a very fun nightlife scene. You'll find yourself sipping different bottles of this local white wine late into the night.



This is the white wine you'll find when you ramble the tiny streets of Alicante. The grapes are indigenous to Spain, and none of us have heard of them or can really pronounce them well (check out pronunciation guide in the back of the book!). Meet your new favorite varietals Merseguera and Macabeo. Twinsies?!? Maybe. While sipping on this wine at home or in Alicante, you'll catch yourself thinking "I need to get more of this one!"

As you pour your first glass you'll notice aromatic flowers flowing from the wine and the subtle tropical fruits like mango, papaya, and pomegranate come through on the palate. Most importantly, the sipping is easy like a Spanish afternoon siesta!



When thinking about wine remember the best bottles come from a place, and if the locals are drinking it then it is probably some very enjoyable vino.





SHEEP CHEESE TOAST WITH PEACHES & JALAPEÑO

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

2 peaches, pitted and sliced into
crescent moons

1 jalapeño, sliced with a mandoline
into thin rings

½ cup basil leaves, torn into halves

Maldon sea salt, to taste

Extra-virgin olive oil, to taste

White wine vinegar (such as Katz
Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc),
to taste

Four ¾-inch slices of country
bread, toasted

2 large garlic cloves, peeled

1 cup fresh sheep's cheese,
brought to room temperature

Red chile flakes, for garnish

1. In a small bowl, combine the peaches, jalapeño, basil and a pinch of sea salt. Add a drizzle of both olive oil and vinegar; taste and add more as desired.

2. Take a raw, peeled garlic clove and rub the toast edge to edge on one side, as if you're "painting" it on. Drizzle the same side with olive oil, and let sit for a minute.

3. Spread the sheep's cheese across the toast, and season with sea salt and a pinch of chile flakes.

4. Top the toast with the peach mixture and serve.

As we've discovered this month... wine is travel and a perfect reason to discover cool places all across the world. But flights can be outrageously expensive, and it's difficult to explore new spots if we can't get there affordably! So we sat down with our pals at Dollar Flight Club to get some of their best hacks to find cheap tix! We're talking Miami to Mallorca, Spain for \$201 roundtrip CHEAP. Or San Francisco to Auckland, New Zealand for \$366 roundtrip CHEAP!

Here are the hacks directly from their team!

1. Be flexible with airports

Checking out all airports close to where you live, as well as to your destination, is the key to finding the cheapest flights. Imagine you could save \$1,000 by flying out of an airport that's a three-hour drive away. Wouldn't that be worth it?

Remember, budget airlines in Europe and Asia are extremely cheap. You can fly roundtrip from most cities for less than \$90 within those regions.

2. Be flexible with travel dates

This can be tough if you have limited time off from work. However, try to plan far in advance. Sometimes you can save \$300-\$500 if you leave on a Thursday as opposed to a Friday, for example. Rather than picking your dates first, try and see when it's cheapest to travel and work backwards.

In addition, booking last minute almost never works out. In our opinion, never wait until the last minute unless you have to. When you see a great fare 2-3 months in advance for domestic flights and 3-8 months in advance for international flights BOOK NOW!

Overall, Friday and Sunday are usually the most expensive days to travel. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday are the absolute cheapest.

3. Use Google, Momondo, and Skiplagged to search and book

We recommend visiting at least 3 websites when you're looking to find the absolute cheapest flight. These are our favorites and

always bring back the cheapest fares. They also allow you to put into play the tips listed above. Try to go through these sites in this order:

Google Flights

Always start with Google Flights. It's the best search engine in the business for a few reasons. Mainly, it has a killer calendar view for easy browsing.

Pull up the handy calendar tool to find the best travel dates for your route, by locating the dates with the lowest fares. Make sure you browse the calendar view up to 9 months ahead so you know the cheapest time frame to travel and then narrow down on the dates you want.

Keep a tab on the price you found.

Momondo

Head over to Momondo, re-enter your itinerary that you found in Google Flights and hit search. You can also double check them on Priceline to confirm you have the cheapest deal.

Momondo almost always brings back the absolute cheapest fares, even cheaper than in Google Flights 95% of the time.

Keep a tab on the price you found.

Skiplagged

Lastly, head to Skiplagged and enter in those dates to be sure you have the absolute cheapest fare.

Once you've gone through these steps and you've found a fare within the price ranges we outlined above, go ahead and book!

Skiplagged is so good they actually got sued by United Airlines a few years ago for saving people too much money on airfare by finding a loophole in the booking system. Good news for us, they won the lawsuit and they're still up and running.

4. A few Bonus Tips & Tricks

Try clearing cookies after each search or search in "incognito mode," which may bring back a slightly cheaper ticket.

Adding stopovers in other cities can save you

hundreds of dollars and give you the opportunity to see another city by actually paying less!

It's always smart to understand airline partners and class upgrade opportunities that offer the most value. Use your miles to book one way flights to upgrade your cabin to Business or First.

Check in on deal message boards like Secret Flying or Travel Pirate who often post deals they hear about.

We hope you can save some bucks and use the difference to explore some of the coolest wine spots on the planet! To stay in the loop on a lot of these hacks and deals sign up for the Dollar Flight Club newsletter.

GLOSSARY

ACIDITY

Gives wine a bright, crisp, tart taste and is essential in keeping a wine balanced — acidity balances out sweetness. You can gauge how acidic a wine is by taking note of how much you salivate after your first sip of wine. More saliva = more acid.

BODY

Describes how heavy wine feels on the palate. When determining body, picture the difference between how skim milk feels in your mouth versus how heavy cream feels. If a wine feels like skim milk, it has a lighter body. If it feels more like heavy cream, it has a full body. Acidity, sweetness, tannin and alcohol all affect the body of a wine.

DRY

A “dry wine” is one that does not have a sweet taste. However, even if a wine is technically dry, it can still have a considerable amount of residual sugar that’s concealed by a higher acidity. Example: unsweetened is technically “dry.”

FRUITY

Commonly confused with sweetness (because we affiliate fruit with sweetness), “fruity” describes the presence of fruit flavors in wine. To better understand fruitiness in wine, imagine unsweetened iced tea with lemon squeezed in it. The tea has a fruitiness from the lemon but is still dry because it’s unsweetened.

SWEETNESS

A wine’s sweetness is measured by the amount of naturally occurring sugar — Residual Sugar (RS) — that’s left in the wine at the end of the fermentation process. This sweetness is ranked from bone dry (Brut Nature) to very sweet (doux) and can usually be detected by a slight tingling sensation on the tip of the tongue.

TANNIN

The astringent or “grippy,” almost drying, feeling a red wine leaves in your mouth. A wine’s tannin level is determined by how long the pressed juice sits with the grape seeds and stems, which is where tannins are naturally found. Example: think about how your mouth feels after drinking unsweetened black tea — also high in tannin.

VARIETAL PRONUNCIATION

Black Muscat [blak MUHS-kat]

Carignan [kah-reen-YAHN]

Chenin Blanc [SHEN-in BLAHNK]

Cinsault [SAN-soh]

Grenache [gruh-NAHSH]

Macabeo [mah-kah-BEH-oh]

Merlot [mer-LOH]

Merseguera [Mher-say-gay-rah]

Shiraz [SHEER-ahs]

Syrah [sih-RAH]

White Muscat [w’ait MUHS-kat]

THANKS FOR BEING A MEMBER! DID YOU KNOW...

THE WINE

We’re constantly tracking down, taste-testing and selecting authentic bottles from winemakers around the world — wines that are new to us and hopefully new to you, too. We curate authentic wines rather than bulk blending so that you can truly experience the diverse world of wine.



ADD YOUR FAVORITES

Discovered something you love in your box? Browse our wine shop and stock up on your favorites. Members get exclusive discounts on the wine shop (up to 25% off!) AND free shipping (when you select “No-Rush” shipping at checkout). Hurry! They go fast.



MEMBERSHIP FLEXIBILITY

More in the mood for only red (or white) wine this month? Switch the type of wine you want to receive. Swimming in wine right now and need a break? Log in to manage your membership to fit your wine needs. P.S. We’re now offering 6 packs of all white or all red!



PERKS PERKS PERKS. ALL ABOUT PERKS.

Free shipping, exclusive member discounts on wine, the discovery experience... could there be more? Yes! Get excited and read on.

Refer friends for more wine!

Just share your referral code — which can be found on your account dashboard online — and when your friend signs up, you get \$25 in your account! It’s as simple as that.

Keep an eye out for a new member perk each month!

Don't forget to check us out on social and share your monthly wine experience!





WINE AWESOMENESS