

COCKTAIL CORNER: BARBECUE DELIGHTS

A spirited toast to all things alcoholic!

Time to fire up the coals (or gas up the grills). Barbecue season is here, along with a wealth of winning wine options to pair with your favorite foods.



I have to admit, I was a bit skeptical at first, but the 2012 Ruthven Napa Valley Chardonnay we tried from Andegavia Cask Wines, billed as “the first ever portable, eco-friendly luxury wine brand with online direct-to-consumer delivery” was excellent.

Other California varietals now available include a 2011 Ruthven Napa Valley Red Blend, a 2012 Merrill Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and a 2011 Nadalini Red Blend. According to the manufacturer, “the eco-friendly packaging ... also means that a larger share of production dollars goes toward the quality of the wine, rather than expensive glass bottles, so as a result, Andegavia’s wine casks are 30-40% less expensive than bottled wines of comparable quality.”



Here’s another summer tip: my friend Doris says she stocks up on cask wines for camping trips because of the lighter weight, and also says their seals keep the wine tasting fresh a bit longer than corks do.

Andegavia reps say, “the casks have a one month shelf life once opened (12 months unopened), so you can enjoy the wine long after your party or summer outing has ended. No more throwing away half-finished bottles of wine!” I’m not sure what this “half-finished bottle of wine is,” but for more information, visit andegavia.com.

Whether you’re celebrating a 4th of July BBQ, or simply grilling for family in your backyard, experts say wines that are high in natural acidity are a refreshing choice for barbecues as they can handle even the fattiest cuts of meat.

I’m a Rosé fan, especially this time of year. For a versatile wine for any course on your grill, try Mulderbosch Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé. Made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine is a bit bigger than your typical Rosé so it can stand up to heavier, meat-based dishes, yet still maintains the refreshing qualities that a Rosé should possess.

The Dragonette Cellars 2012 Rosé, Happy Canyon is another lovely and local selection for barbecue pairings like sausages and bratwurst, as is Beckmen’s 2013 PMV Grenache Rosé.

On the lighter side, grilled vegetables are great right, especially paired with Arnaldo Caprai Grecante, a crisp and flavorful wine that's full of minerality, with an exceptionally long finish.



The crisp acidity of **Longoria 2013 Pinot Grigio** from Santa Barbara County pairs really well with seafood, as well as chicken and other light meats.

For a steak and burger wine, you can't go wrong with an Italian blend like Tenuta Frescobaldi di Castiglioni, this bold Tuscan blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Sangiovese and Merlot goes beautifully with the simply prepared T-bone steak.

On the local front, one of my favorites is Margerum M5, a delicious Rhone blend that uses five grape varieties—Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Counoise and Cinsault—from vineyards in Santa Barbara County.

Now that you've got the wine covered (Ahem, priorities, folks!), don't forget some special seasonings. Did you know that right in our very own neighborhood lies 45 tons of 250 million year old pure Himalayan Crystal Salt, perfect for seasoning your BBQ celebration?

Check out SALT's selection of edibles, or better yet, serve up your summer seafoods and salads on a pretty pink salt platter. If you can part with it, it also makes a great host or hostess gift.

Happy barbecuing. Cheers!