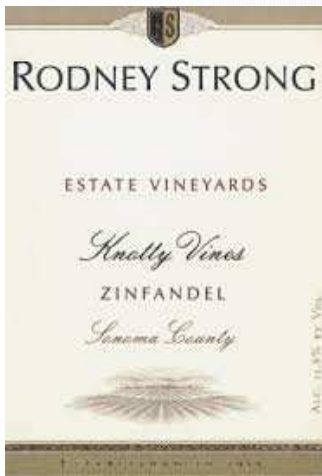


## Smokin' Hot Wines



This past May, my wife gave me a smoker for my birthday, and I have become obsessed with smoking just about everything from pork products to potatoes. I love the wonderful flavor and tenderness that smoking imparts to various foods. The challenge is finding a wine that can stand up to some of the potent flavors infused by the smoke. The good news is it's not that difficult to pair wine with smoked foods if you follow a few simple rules.

First, try to pair barbecued and smoked meats with wines that are more resilient or forward. Second, find wines that don't put a lot of emphasis on oak treatment – otherwise, you can end up with clash of smoke versus wood and it tends to over-exaggerate the smokey flavors in the food.

### Buttery-love Smoked Chicken

This poultry recipe has become my house-smoked specialty. Brined for two days and then injected with melted butter, this moistly-smoked bird literally melts in your mouth. But it needs a wine that can stand up to the smoke as well as all of that buttery-infused richness. The **2011 Plantagenet Omrah Un-Chardonnay** from Western Australia provides plenty of juicy peach, apricot and guava flavors on a medium-bodied frame. The zesty pop of lemon zest on the finish adds to the bright acidity and compliments the rich chicken. **\$14**

### Smoked Ribs - St. Louis Cut

One of my other "specialties" is my smoked ribs. I use the St. Louis cut because I find it has more meat on bigger bones and cooks more evenly in the smoker. The rub and the baste that you use will play a large part in the wine you choose to pair with it. I tend to add a little heat and sweet to my ribs, so a zinfandel, like the **2011 Rodney Strong "Knotty Vines" Zinfandel from Sonoma County**, California is just what the smoker ordered. A beautiful nose of ripe baked cherries and cloves is complemented by the blackberry, blueberry and cherry flavors in the mouth. Notes of red raspberries glide in on the finish where the remarkably smooth-but-firm tannins provide a lush, long finish that can hold up to the spicy ribs. **\$20**

### Smoked Brisket

I love smoking brisket, but because of its high external fat content, it has a tendency to absorb a lot of smoke, so you'll need a wine that can stand up to the multitude of flavors and textures in the meat. I like the **2011 Browne Family Vineyards Tribute Red Wine** from the Columbia Valley of Washington State. Made from a blend of Merlot, Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot and Syrah grapes, it features aromas of leather, cedar and tobacco on the nose and rich flavors of black cherry, plum, mocha and baking spices in the mouth. Lingering cherry cola notes are supported by dry tannins on the balanced finish. **\$30**

### Smoked Sausage

I haven't played around with smoking sausage at home yet, but the few that I've had at friends and fellow wine geek's homes definitely cry out for a glass of syrah to pair with the juicy, spicy links. The **2012 Nicolas Perrin Syrah** from the Rhone region of France is a rich and concentrated wine featuring blackberries, plums, and black cherries with subtle notes of lavender flowers, baking spice, and black pepper that permeates the palate from start to finish. **\$18**