

Second Date Wines (\$20 or Less!)



A fellow wine enthusiast posted the following question to a group of journalists on social media, "When wine consumers are determining quality in wine, what do you think they're looking for?"

I jokingly replied, "A second date..." or at least I thought it was a joke. It turns out that it struck a nerve. It turns out that it is far more complicated than just finding a decent bottle of wine at a good price - i.e. "value."

Most day-to-day wine consumers are influenced by several different factors. And some of those factors are even gender biased.

According to a 2010 study by Paul Rickett, a Sales & Marketing Strategy consultant based in Canada, the biggest influences in buying wine in retail shops, "are those that come from trusted people (i.e. store staff who have established an ongoing, successful recommendation history with a customer) or tangible signage/labelling." Mr. Rickett takes his observations one step further by extending "trust" to include crowd-sourcing through social media. For example, he states, "... if it's all about trust, then the expansion of one's circle of trusted friends via social media... [will become] an ever-growing and significant factor in wine buying as trusted individuals spread their experience over a widening network."

Some of the more interesting key findings that Mr. Rickett discovered are:

- Women are more likely than men to be influenced by Bottle Labels (animal labels sell wine)
- People over 40 years old rely more on Trusted Store Staff than those under 40
- Low quantity buyers are much more influenced by Bottle Labels than are higher quantity buyers
- The higher the price point a wine buyer shops at, the stronger the influence of external sources like press and bloggers becomes
- Social media users are more likely to be influenced by external sources like press and bloggers than those not using social media, however Trusted Staff are still the most important source of influence for this group

But back to my off the cuff remark. It turns out that most consumers purchase a bottle of wine to share with someone. So at some level, many of us have a smidge of our own ego wrapped up in the wine selection process. In other words, we want the person or people we plan on sharing the wine with to actually, well, like the wine we bought. And if the person you're sharing it with is actually a significant relationship, then the pressure to pick a "good" wine is significantly higher (although, I can tell you from experience, after being married for over 30 years, there is still a decent amount of pressure to "get it right"). Therefore, the idea of picking a wine good enough to "get a second date" (or third, fourth, and so on) is actually a legitimate factor.

In the end, when you do "get it right," there is something remarkably satisfying as being known as the person who picked the right wine.

In the hopes of being an aforementioned "trusted individual," I'd like to spread my experience over *this* network and tell you about a few wines that just might get you a second date.

From the tiny appellation of Saint-Bris in the far north-west corner of the Burgundy region of France, comes the **2013 Simonnet-Febvre Saint-Bris Sauvignon Blanc**. Yes, I said Sauvignon Blanc from Burgundy. This unique white wine is reminiscent of a cross between a Loire Valley Sancerre and a crisp Chablis, with scents of gooseberry and citrus on the nose and tangy flavors of green apple, nectarine and lemon-lime on the palate. It shows a ton of bright minerality, with hints of wet stone and white flowers on the crisp, refreshing, and delightful finish. **\$12**

The **2013 Quinta do Crasto Tinto Douro** from Portugal is a beautiful blend of Tinta Roriz (35%), Tinta Barroca (25%), Touriga Franca (25%) and Touriga Nacional (15%). It is charming and pleasing, with scents of intense black berry fruit and elegant floral notes on the nose. It is extremely well-balanced and well-structured on the palate, featuring flavors of blackberry, dark cherry and black plum fruit. The slightly dusty tannins are round and finely-textured, leading to an elegant and lingering finish. **\$15**

I have a soft spot for white Rhone wines because they always get me a second date with my wife. The **2013 Chateau de Nages Joseph Torres Blanc** from the Costieres de Nimes region of the Southern Rhone Valley is a blend of 80 percent Roussanne and 20 percent Viognier. Rich and giving in style, the wine features beautiful scents of apples, apricots and honeysuckle notes both on the nose and on the pallet. A full bodied white wine that is great for a couple who order different courses at dinner - it will pair beautifully with delicate fish or chicken dishes and still do well with red meat dishes. **\$20**

Set sail for a second date with the **2013 Sextant Cabernet Sauvignon** from Paso Robles, California. Named after the navigation tool used to cross the seas, this wine will keep you pointed in the right direction. Inviting aromas of crushed dark cherries, mocha, and cedar are complimented on the pallet with flavors dark chocolate, black berries, and sandalwood. This generous Paso Cab has silky tannins and offers the right amount of acidity to create a harmonious balance that tastes great on its own or with burgers and steaks. **\$20**