

Steaking A Claim for Grill Worthy Wines



With all three of our son's attending - or on their way to - college, getting them all together for dinner during the summer takes an act of congress – and we all know how hard that can be. But one of the surefire ways we can get them to come home, sit down and spend some a little quality time with us for a rare family meal is to prepare their favorite dinner: a grilled New York strip steak, cooked over real coals, and served with fresh corn on the cob. But as picky as our children are about their choice of grilled fare, so too is our choice of wine that we want to pair with these cherished meals together.

When it comes to grilling, I am a devoted carnivore, so the wines I tend to gravitate towards have a propensity to be a little more fruit-forward on the palate and driven by tannins that help cut through the fat of well-marbled meat. While these red wines may not have an impressive price tag, make no mistake; they'll hold up their end of the proverbial bargain with your favorite grilled fare.

If you're relatively new to wine, try starting off with a blend. For example, a domestic version of Bordeaux-style wines is known as a "Meritage" (rhymes with heritage) and is a combination of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot in varying percentages. A great example is the **2011 Lyeth Meritage**, a Bordeaux-style blend from Sonoma consisting of 35% Merlot, 32% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Cabernet Franc, 3% Malbec, and 2% Petit Verdot. It shines with aromas of black cherry, currants, and blueberry on the nose and flavors of blackberry, cassis, chocolate and spice flavors that would complement any steak with straight-forward seasonings. **\$15**

Merlot-based wines are often overlooked when it comes to finding grill-mates, but the **2010 Galil Mountain Winery Merlot** from the Galilee Hills in Israel is definitely worthy of keeping any steak – even a kosher steak - company. The nose features scents of dark cherry, vanilla and cocoa while the medium-bodied frame supports soft flavors of ripe plum, cherry jam and boysenberry. Hints of chocolate and pepper fill in the back of the palate on the smooth finish. This delightful wine could also do double duty and pair nicely with grilled tuna steaks for the fish-lover in your group. **\$16**

Of course, a traditional steak-and-wine pairing calls for a big Cabernet Sauvignon. Now, most oenophiles would immediately think California – and that's a good choice – but the **2013 Marchiori and Barraud Cabernet Sauvignon** from Argentina delivers a lot of oomph for the money. It is a big, spicy wine featuring flavors of blackberry, dark plum and ripe boysenberry built on a well-balanced frame. Earthy notes of black pepper shine on the stylish finish, where the firm tannins and crisp acidity form a solid backbone, providing great structure. Perfect with dry-rubbed steak. **\$17**

If you want to add a little heat to your steak, and I'm talking spice, not temperature, then a nice syrah-based wine would be a good choice. The **2012 3 Rings Shiraz** from the Barossa Valley in Australia is a stunning wine rich with flavors of ripe blackberry, black cherry, dark raspberry and Asian spices. Melted licorice meld with soft tannins and a touch of vanilla to provide a luscious, smooth finish. This fantastic bargain can hold its own against a pepper-crusting grilled steak or lamb chops (naturally). **\$18**