

The White Wines of Washington



Sometimes I forget things... like where I put my car keys, the name of that actor who starred in the movie I can never remember, and of course, that Washington State makes some pretty good wines, particularly summer-friendly white wines. Well, shame on me.

I just don't know why Washington State keeps falling through the proverbial cracks in my memory. After all, Washington's wine industry – second only to California in domestic production - has quite a bit in common with a more 'remembered' European counterpart; France.

For example, Washington State's wine country is situated on just about the same latitude as some of the famous French wine regions of Bordeaux and Burgundy. And, just like France, Washington State has been blessed with a plethora of prime wine grape growing areas, particularly in the valleys and on the hillsides on the east side of the Cascade Mountain range.

The majestic Cascade Mountains cut a north-to-south swath through the state, effectively dividing the state into two distinctive regions. The more mild and lush lands lay to the west of the range while the more arid fields, rich in volcanic-laden soils, is located on the eastern side. The arid climate on the latter, combined with the long daylight hours of the growing season and careful irrigation control, make the lands of eastern Washington State prime for white wine grapes. The cool autumn temperatures help the grapes reach full maturity, resulting in wines that possess intense aromatics, complex fruit flavors, and crisp acidity.

On hot summer days, I enjoy just a touch of sweetness in my white wine, therefore, I have a tendency to gravitate towards off-dry whites. The **2013 Covey Run Riesling**, from Columbia Valley has a lovely bouquet of jasmine, green apples, nectarines and honeysuckle. The abundant acidity keeps the fresh fruit flavors of white nectarine, apricot and ripe summer peaches refreshing and the sweetness in check all the way through the medium finish. **\$9**

Another phenomenal value in off-dry quenchers is the **2013 Charles Smith Kung Fu Girl Riesling**. It has a very pretty nose of orange blossoms and Lychee that compliments the additional flavors of peaches and nectarines. The subtly sweet underpinnings are built on a slightly mineral-laden body, but there is just enough acidity to keep it bright on the tongue. A great match for sushi. **\$11**

On the drier side, the **2013 Chateau Ste. Michelle Horse Haven Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc** from the Columbia Valley is a refreshing wine with loads of tangy grapefruit on the nose and palate. Additional flavors of tropical fruit and green melon slide in on the refreshing finish. **\$13**

If you're in the mood for something a little more traditional, try the **2013 Milbrandt Chardonnay Tradition** from the Columbia Valley AVA. This charming Chardonnay is smooth and polished, offering a savory nutmeg scented bouquet of pear and lemon. The luscious flavors of lemon zest, nectarines and ripe apples end with a rich, lemon-honeyed finish with great texture. **\$14**