

Annual Pizza Wine Review



Where did the summer go? How did we get all the way through the heat and humidity of the August – which actually wasn't as torrid as usual this year - and slide so quickly into September and the hustle and bustle associated with deadlines at work and school bus schedules? I vaguely recall getting some relief from the summertime blues with the help of assorted crisp white wines and a few pinot noirs here and there. But now we're back into the thick of it, with rush-hour traffic and constant reminders of impending homework assignments (do teenagers ever remember to do anything on their own that does not involve their cell phones?).

So with demands on our time piling up like cars on the Beltway at rush hour, sometimes the best course of action one can take to regain some modicum of relief is to simply order a pizza and open a decent bottle of wine. That's where our annual pizza wine review comes to the proverbial rescue of harried households everywhere.

While my spouse and I do not always agree on the type of wine we like to kick back and relax with, we do agree on two simple rules; our "pizza wines" should be full of flavor and cost less than the pizza, generally under \$20. So, in an attempt to help reduce the stress of having to make one more decision at the end of a busy day, we offer our picks for the perfect wine to go with pizza.

She Said

This year, Cindy has been on a white pizza kick - usually with caramelized onions, so her choices center around a wine that will compliment the sweetness of the onions and balance the rich cheese flavors.

If you're in the mood for white pizza, the **2013 d'Arenberg Marsanne/Viognier "The Hermit Crab" from the McLaren Vale region of Australia** is a perfect match. Made from a blend of white Rhone varietals, it offers up pretty scents of melon, grapefruit and orange zest on the nose while lush flavors of peach, apricot and nectarine glide over a citrus-based frame. The noticeable acidity kept the wine in focus and accented the notes of lemon/ lime on the medium finish. **\$17**

Winemaker Adam Campbell joined forces with his parents, Elk Cove winery founders Pat and Joe Campbell, in 1995 and I am glad he did. His **2013 Elk Cove Pinot Gris** from Willamette Valley, Oregon is both refreshing and luscious at the same time. It features pretty scents of acacia and white peach on the nose and lovely flavors of apricot, peach and tropical fruit in the mouth. Spicy acidity buoy notes of crushed stone on the crisp finish. **\$17**

He Said

Who ever invented the "meat lover" pizza should be inducted into the pizza hall of fame. I generally use pizza as a pepperoni, sausage, ham and black olive delivery vehicle, so the wines I'm looking to match up have to hold up – to both the weight of the meat and spiciness of the sauce.

Spain continues to offer wine lovers some of the best values and the **2013 Finca Fabian Tempranillo** from Spain is an excellent example. Made from 100 percent Tempranillo – or as famed wine critic Jancis Robinson refers to it, "Spain's answer to Cabernet Sauvignon," this fun wine features hints of blackberries and raspberries on the nose and smooth, opulent flavors of blackberry, black cherry and roasted coffee in the mouth. Hints of earthy herbs are enhanced by mellow tannins that provide backbone to the medium-structured wine. **\$13**

You can't have a "pizza wine" article without including at least one Italian wine – and the **2013 Banfi Chianti Classico Riserva** from Tuscany is this year's winner. Made from 100 percent sangiovese, it offers us opulent aromas of fresh blackberry, with a hint of herbs on the bouquet. Ready-to-drink flavors of black cherry and red plum are lifted up with hints of mushroom and earth on the bright finish. It's an ideal pizza companion. **\$17**