

Two Seasons of Labor Day



School supplies? Check. New clothes? Check. New alarm time set? Check. All systems are 'go' for work/school reentry as you prepare to leave summer's orbital status and make your final approach back to reality after Labor Day.

Summer is winding to a close and the reentry into the first regular workweek requires a gentle approach. A glide-path back to reality that will result in a smooth landing requires the perfect Labor Day wine. The bottles themselves represent the florescent-orange glowing wands used by ground personnel at airports, guiding you to your appropriate gate of reality.

While my wife and I both agree that Labor Day is all about celebrating (or commiserating) the end of the summer holiday with friends and family, we have very different opinions about the wine (and reason) to do it with. Here are two of her favorite Labor Day wines and two of mine.

She Said (clinging to Summer):

Cindy likes wines that commemorate the final days of summertime. Since the temperature is still warm and the humidity has not quite receded into distant memory, she prefers to opt for dry to off-dry white wines that are versatile, tasty and seasonally appropriate. They pair well with everything you can throw on the grill. From fish to chicken, these wines heighten the flavors of seasonal cooking. Best of all, they give you one last sentimental toast to summer before being relegated back to the cellar for another year.

Pinot Grigio is the unsung hero of summer. The **2014 Forchir "Lamis" Pinot Grigio** from Italy is a backyard favorite around our house. This pretty straw-colored wine has a lovely floral nose that includes scents of apples and lemon rind. The crisp flavors of Granny Smith apples, pears and honeyed-citrus make this a wine to pair with either seafood salads or shellfish-based pasta. **\$15**

If you really want a wine to unwind with, open a bottle of **Bird Song Hill Riesling** from the Columbia Valley in Washington State. This lovely, off-dry Riesling has a refreshingly bright acidity that features scents of tangerine, peach and honeysuckle on the bouquet and lovely, mouth-tingling flavors of white peach, green melon and ripe nectarine notes that get a lift from the wonderful acidity and slightly-sweet notes of lemon-lime rind on the bright finish. Perfect on its own as an aperitif. **\$12**

He Said (slipping into Fall):

While, for me, Labor Day signals the start of fall, it does not necessarily signal the end of summer as much as it means a great excuse to have a party featuring a big chunk of grilled meat and the appropriate big red wine to compliment it. Think of it as a precursor to fall where wines like Zinfandel and Syrah are invited to a cool-weather audition.

Australia is still the king of big-bang-for-the-buck Shiraz. The **2013 D'Arenberg Footbolt Shiraz from the McLaren Vale region** is a Shiraz to take to a party... because it's sure to liven things up. It's a full-throttled, sumptuous offering from down under with a fragrant nose of raspberry, plum and chocolate covered blackberries. The palate features flavors of blackberries, dark plums, mocha, and black licorice on the powerful and rich finish. Grilled lamb chops please, hold the mint jelly. **\$15**

Joel Peterson has been making some of the best Zinfandel wine in California for a very long time. His **2012 Ravenswood Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi from California** is a truly reliable zinfandel that always delivers when I am in the mood for a mouth-filling, jammy wine. Scents of red cherry, black plum and bramble fill the glass while flavors of black raspberry, red cherries and cola coat the tongue. It has a delightful mouthfeel, thanks to great acidity and fine-grained tannins that keeps it all in balance. A perfect accompaniment with a rack of ribs. **\$15**