

SUMMER REFRESHERS

CAN IT REALLY BE TIME FOR WARM-WEATHER WINE?

BY BEN MADESKA

don't want to jinx it, but it's starting to sorta kinda maybe feel like summer out there. That means it's time to start putting away those big, hearty reds—whether into your cellar or into yourself—and turn your attention toward the lighter side of wine. From the zip of New Zealand to the decadence of California, there's a world of tasty, refreshing wines out there to pair with your favorite summer fare and quench your thirst while idling away a lazy afternoon.



Kim Crawford New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc
Marlborough, New Zealand 2007
Kim Crawford has been a staple of the international wine scene for years, racking up awards and acclaim, and his 2007 vintage once again shows why. This wine is juicy and tart with ripe grapefruit and a distinct grassy, herbal character. There's a strong core of minerality here and a tangy, lingering finish of lemongrass. It's bright, fruity and intense without the mouth-searing acidity often found in other Kiwi Sauvignon Blancs. It's awesome with seared scallops and fresh greens. Available at the Gourmet Grape (3530 N. Halsted, 773-388-0942); \$19.



Gazela Vinho Verde
Douro Valley, Portugal 2007
I have friends in the wine industry who have been predicting, "Portuguese wines will be the next big thing!" for five years now. Well, Portuguese wines (other than Port) remain kind of an insider secret, but wines like this are slowly gaining a devoted following. *Vinho verde* means "green wine" and refers to the young, almost under-ripe quality of the wine: light, crisp and refreshing, if not particularly complex. With flavors of green apple and citrus, and featuring a slight effervescence, this crisp, dry wine goes down like a glass of lemonade after a few hours of yardwork. Available at Fine Wine Brokers (4621 N. Lincoln, 773-989-8166); \$6.95.



J Pinot Gris
Russian River Valley, California 2006
Those familiar with J's popular selection of sparkling wines won't be surprised to hear that their still wines are simply fantastic. The 2006 Pinot Gris out of the Russian River Valley features a heady nose of flowers, tropical fruit, ginger and a touch of buttercream. It's rich and seductive on the palate, with a juicy acidity and a long, spicy finish that I was still tasting minutes later. Unmistakably Californian, this is a wine to savor and enjoy. It goes great with a sunny patio and a deck chair. Available at Binny's Beverage Depot (1132 S. Jefferson, 312-768-4400); \$17.99.



Domaine du Tariquet Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay
Cotes de Gascogne, France 2006
Internationally renowned winemaker Yves Grassa of Domaine du Tariquet built this winery's reputation by breaking the rules (the decidedly *French* rules), as the first in his region to plant varietals like Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, and by making—at the time—unorthodox blends, such as this Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay. This has a subtle and evocative perfume of flowers and crushed chalk. It's very pure and clean tasting, elegant and refreshing with hints of flavors that you can never quite pin down (apple? vanilla? guava?). It's beautiful paired with chilled crab or a delicate poached trout. Available at Lush Wine and Spirits (2232 W. Roscoe, 773-281-8888); \$10.