



# Salut!

MICA (P) 028/08/2007

## A French Wine for Any Occasion

LIM HWEE PENG recommends French wines to suit the needs of new age consumers.

I had an unusual encounter at one of my corporate wine workshops recently: a participant approached me with a candid request, "Would you recommend a French wine for my irritating mother-in-law's birthday?" Whether it was the birthday, the in-law or French wine that was frustrating him, the peculiar episode does highlight a dilemma in purchasing wine for special occasions.

Many wine lovers are aware that managing such a situation can be stressful as many factors need to be considered. What is the person's favourite wine style? Does he prefer red or white wines? What sort of food does she always enjoys wine with? Is he a wine collector? and most importantly, how much to spend?

As a result, a pleasurable chore became a complicated task. Nevertheless, I would like to offer some suggestions in dealing with such predicament.

### The Special Occasions

Finding the right choice of wines can put a personal stamp on an occasion leaving an indelible impression, especially when it is a special affair. For example, commemorating an anniversary or birthday calls for an iconic or renowned wine from the birth year or year of anniversary. Consider Bordeaux reds, the most celebrated French wine, from the momentous '61, '66, '82, '89, '90, 2000 and 2005 vintages, or some of the hidden treasures from the pre-war years to ensure an unforgettable celebration.



Serving wines from a specific French wine region or vintage can also imbue the gathering with a festive theme. Opt for a clean, pure Alsace white for a fun weekend outing, bring out a delicate and beautiful Burgundy blanc and rouge from the fabulous 2002 vintage for an exclusive ladies event, or cases of elegant, aristocratic '82 Bordeaux reds to suit a gathering of corporate bigwigs.

### Wedding Celebration

Increasingly, wines are being served in wedding celebrations these days – a welcome change from the old practices of offering cognac and brandy. Celebrative drinks such as Champagne is unanimously the resounding drink of choice for such auspicious occasions, simply because it is always well-received at receptions, while the multitude of tiny bubbles rising in the Champagne flutes are excellent for toasting.

In picking the mix of red and white wines for the celebratory meal, be it lunch or dinner, consider the guests' profile and the food served. Choose wines such as clean and fresh Chablis, or dry, pure Alsace Riesling to go with appetizers, especially when fresh seafood is in the menu. Forget not the excitingly fresh and mineral Sancerre for fish dishes, or gamely introduce robust Rhone reds for meat dishes. For adventurous guests, reserve those lesser known but equally exhilarating French wines from Roussillon (South of France) or Cote de Castillon (Bordeaux) to intrigue their palate.





### Dinner Party

When attending an exclusive get-together, it is wise to check the host's wine preference, and other pertinent information such as his favourite wine style and the dishes that will be served. By doing so, the wines brought to the party will not end up sitting solo on the side-table.

Alternatively, offer wine as a gift to the host. Dust away that cellar-aged bottle for an unforgettable contribution to the party, or seek out an unusual wine or underrated vino that will be a special treat for everyone.

### Does Size Matter?

In wine, size does matter as it could elevate the mood and ambience of an occasion. Consider large format wines such as a Magnum (1.5 litres) or a Jeroboam (3 litres) as those giant bottles can be visually dramatic. For example a magnum bottle of Claret or Burgundy could turn an important gathering into a superb outing.

### French Wines, Romantic Wines?

Some researchers have discovered that if an individual consumes two glasses of French wine, members of the opposite sex will appear more attractive by approximately 25%! Combining love

and wine can indeed be exciting, or at least excitingly blind!

So if you want to impress someone on a special date, put aside your plans to buy that seductive bit of lingerie. All you have to do is ensure that the object of your desire drinks a little more French wine.

What to choose for that special someone? French dessert wines such as *Alsace Vendange Tardive* (late-harvest), or a botrytis Sauternes from Bordeaux make excellent matches for those lovey-dovey settings.

However, if the name of the game is to make the object-of-desire weak in the knees, nothing comes close to a wine that offers a rosy hue and nuance - Rosé Champagne. Though Rosé wines are generally not recognised as the preferred drinks among lovers, no man or woman will ever turn down a pink bubbly.

Nevertheless, it must be warned that in such endeavours, the best wines can certainly provoke the necessary desire. Enjoying it in excess, however, takes away the performance.

*Mr Lim Hwee Peng is an award-winning wine journalist and an established wine educator. He conducts wine workshops with trade boards, corporate and consumer groups under his wine consultancy firm WineCraft Marketing & Services. To find out more about him and his services, please visit [www.winecraftmktg.com](http://www.winecraftmktg.com)*

