

# Lighten up!

## Drink white wine for spring

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THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

Spring is here, wine lovers... Time to lighten up, move out of your "Chardonnay Comfort Zone" and discover some less familiar white wines that pair perfectly with the light, fresh flavors of spring.

### Riesling

A popular German varietal, Riesling deserves to be more widely known for its lively acidity and ability to pair easily with food. It prefers cooler growing conditions and can be finished dry or sweet.

Riesling is the perfect choice to serve with your Easter ham. A dry Riesling makes the best pairing, especially when the ham is topped with a honey or apricot glaze. This varietal's fruity aromas and flavors, such as green apple, peach and apricot, complement the glaze, while its dryness and acidity balance the sweetness.

Other serving suggestions for Riesling: Enjoy this varietal with a dish as simple as a leftover Easter ham sandwich with spicy mustard, or as elaborate as roast pork and pineapple chutney, stir-fried snow peas with spicy shrimp or roasted red pepper aioli on soft-shell crab.

### Pinot Grigio (also called Pinot Gris)

This popular varietal makes a light-bodied, refreshing wine with brisk acidity. Pinot Grigio is fruity, lower in alcohol and pairs equally well with delicate seafood (such as grouper, flounder, or orange roughy) and fuller, spicier dishes. A tart lemon/lime citrus flavor is more typical of the Italian Pinot Grigio, while the French and



American versions called Pinot Gris (the same grape variety) taste of exotic melon and peach. Wines produced from this varietal are versatile and well-priced, making them a great alternative to Chardonnay.

Other Serving Suggestions for Pinot Grigio/Gris: Pair this wine with prosciutto and melon, smoked salmon, chicken salad tossed with chopped hazelnuts, mushroom and scallop risotto or fettuccini Alfredo with shrimp and peas.

### Grüner Veltliner

Veltliner is the most widely planted grape variety in Austria, accounting for 37 percent of the country's total vineyard area. This little known varietal can have pleasant citrus and grapefruit aromas, with a signature characteristic: hints of freshly ground white pepper. Veltliner can also offer aromas of green beans, asparagus or lentils: a pleasant vegetable smell that's not herbaceous or grassy.

Grüner Veltliner offers the perfect complement to asparagus, one of the most difficult vegetables to pair with wine. It's a classic combination, like foie gras

and sauterne. Veltliner also pairs well with spring peas and lentil dishes, which bring out this varietal's fruitiness, minerality and white pepper spice.

Other Serving Suggestions for Grüner Veltliner: This intensely flavored white wine can be enjoyed on its own as a cocktail. It will also stand up to spicy foods, including Asian cuisines, Mexican dishes and strong crusted cheeses—often better than big red wines.

### Sauvignon Blanc

This wine is fruity and fresh with citrus flavors and often strong hints of grapefruit. Sometimes called Fumé Blanc or Pouilly Fumé, it works well with fresh seasonal produce. Sauvignon Blancs are usually crisp and can have noticeable acidity and a grassy aroma and flavor.

For a surprising treat, trade in the traditional Pinot Noir with your spring lamb for a fruity Sauvignon Blanc. Its herbaceous character also makes Sauvignon Blanc a good match with dill.

Other Serving Suggestions for Sauvignon Blanc: Pair this wine with steamed asparagus and shaved parmesan cheese, a goat cheese and herb salad, chilled fruit soups or fresh fish with a squeeze of lemon and a sprig of dill.

### Viognier

This classic white grape variety from the Northern Rhone region of France can be bottled as a straight varietal or blended. It is one of the few white grape varieties that can be combined with red grapes. Viognier is most commonly mixed with Syrah to make the classic Côte Rotie of the Southern Rhone.

Viognier is usually deep straw yellow-gold in color with a fragrant fruit-floral bouquet. The dominant tastes resemble peaches, apricots, honeysuckle and mangoes. Viognier is also often associated with higher levels of alcohol and has substantial mouth feel. Viognier can be enjoyed alone or with

many different types of food. For spring, try it with pasta primavera, carrot soup or dishes flavored with fresh ginger, mustard or dill.

Other Serving Suggestions for Viognier: Spicy Chinese or Thai cuisine, Mexican dishes, strong flavored fish dishes, pork and chicken.

A few foods that Viognier does NOT pair well with: Cheddar cheese, peanuts, raw oysters, mint.

Some general tips on serving and storing white wine

- Chill Out – White wines taste best when chilled but not too cold, 45-55 degrees F. You can put a bottle in the refrigerator for a few hours, or fill a bucket with a mixture of half ice and half cold water and immerse the bottle for around 20 minutes.

- Lighten Up - White wines are great in the spring, but if you prefer reds, drink what you like with the foods you like.

- Drink up- Most white wines drink better young. They are lighter, fruitier and generally don't improve with age like their more tannic and complex red counterparts. Whites should be consumed within 2-3 years of bottling.

When you're choosing wines to pair with your favorite seasonal dishes this spring, lighten up! Give those taste-buds a nudge, try something new and experience the crisp, fruity flavors and endless variety in the wonderful world of white wine.

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