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ON WINE

### The Best Wines and Gear for Drinking Outside

*Uncorking in the open air shouldn't mean settling for lesser bottles or insects in your glass. Here's how to get maximum pleasure from imbibing en plein air.*

*By Lettie Teague, March 24, 2021*

**ONCE UPON A TIME**, in pre-pandemic days, drinking wine outside with friends was a choice and not a necessity. But like most oenophiles, I learned to adjust as the weeks of privation stretched into months. I drank wine on patios in the summer and next to heaters and firepits in the fall. In the winter I didn't drink wine outside at all. But now that spring has finally arrived, I'm looking forward to spending more time imbibing outdoors.

Of course, many wine professionals have been serving wine outside all year long—whether at tables beachside in Miami, on the sidewalks of New York or overlooking a vineyard in Napa. These pros know how to keep wine at the right temperature whether it's 8 or 80 degrees outside, which glasses to use and even how to keep flies from falling into them. When I reached out for advice, sommeliers and winemakers generously shared it along with a few favorite recollections of drinking wine outside themselves.

Vintner Beth Novak Milliken, president and CEO of Spottswoode Estate Vineyard & Winery in St. Helena, Calif., drinks wine outdoors nearly year round—a great benefit of living in northern California, she said. When she's drinking outside, at home or at the winery, she uses regular glasses, but anywhere else she opts for Govino glasses, a plastic kind that doesn't make wine taste like plastic as well.

***'A mountain hike with a bottle of Riesling is great, and you're not going to be impaired.'***

There was even a time when she skipped the glass altogether. A few years ago, Ms. Milliken went skiing with friends at Steamboat Springs, Colo., where she learned of a certain local tradition. She and her group took their bottle to the top of the slope and, following the local custom, buried it in the snow. At the end of the day they returned to the spot, and since they hadn't brought glassware, they drank from the bottle and skied down the slope afterward—a great experience, Ms. Milliken recalled.

Boulder-based restaurateur Bobby Stuckey does his fair share of skiing on Colorado's slopes, and running and biking, too. But when it comes to drinking wine outdoors, he's more likely to break out a bottle when he's hiking with his wife, Danette. "A mountain hike with a bottle of Riesling is great, and you're not going to be impaired," he said, noting the low alcohol of most Rieslings. Aldo Sohm, wine director of Le Bernardin in New York City and an avid cyclist who bikes 200 miles or more in a week when he's not working, is also a fan of light whites, especially after a grueling ride. "I like something that refreshes, like a Muscadet or Grüner Veltliner, the lighter, the better," he said.

In a climate like Miami's, you might think most people would opt for a cool glass of Riesling or Muscadet with dinner. Yet diners at Amara at Paraiso restaurant are more likely to choose a big Cabernet or even a high-alcohol Amarone, according to Amanda Fraga, director of beverage and social media for the Genuine Hospitality Group of restaurants (including Amara). "We're right on the water, and 70% of our seating is outdoors, and most people tend to drink reds," she said.

Ms. Fraga's biggest challenge is keeping wine cool, especially the big reds that can seem overly alcoholic when warm. "We serve our Ports at 55 degrees because we know the second it hits the table it's going to get warm," she said. It only takes a few minutes to warm up, and she'd always rather over- than under-chill reds.

Dimitris Zafeiropoulos, restaurant director of Estiatorio Milos Hudson Yards in New York City, cools the glasses, too; he keeps a large stash in the wine cellar. The biggest challenge for Mr. Zafeiropoulos: fruit flies and mosquitoes that cluster in the city in the warmer months. His solution? A cute paper cover that fits over the top of the glass.

Mr. Zafeiropoulos has stocked up on these for the coming season—an expense he never incurred in pre-Covid times, when Estiatorio Milos in Midtown had a scant six to 10 outdoor tables. This spring there will be 40 tables outside the restaurant.

There are a lot more outdoor tables at Herbsaint in New Orleans these days, too. "Prior to the pandemic no one wanted to eat outdoors," said Cary Palmer, director of food and beverage development for the Link Restaurant Group (which includes Herbsaint). But he expects the new al fresco habit to persist. Herbsaint patrons have also started drinking better wines outside. "Even if it's 80 degrees out, instead of a bottle of Provençal rosé, I'm selling a table a bottle of Dujac Musigny," he said, referring to Domaine Dujac Chambolle-Musigny, a much-sought-after Burgundy red from a top producer that sells for \$150 and up.

A wine of that quality on a restaurant patio sounds pretty good to me, as does a bottle of Riesling on a mountain hike or Muscadet post bike ride—or even during the bike ride itself, an indulgence that Mary Dewane, an owner of Benovia Winery in Sonoma, Calif., pursues when cycling with friends. I just can't wait to drink wine outside again.

## **WINE AL FRESCO / Gear on the go**

*Govino Go Anywhere White Wine Glass*

*This polymer glass doesn't impart that plastic taste to wine. As fan Beth Novak Milliken of Spottswoode Estate Vineyard & Winery noted, "They're reusable too." \$20 for a set of four, govino.com*

