

RS Recommends: The Best Red Wines to Pair With Every Meal

All the best red wines that can now be ordered up online

NISHKA DHAWAN

Whether you're sitting at dinner about to eat a bite of your perfectly seared steak or you're winding down for the evening after an incredibly long day, a glass of red wine is always necessary. Although, with dozens of different types of red wines, including red blends, the choice for the right bottle can feel a bit daunting — especially if you're in one of those wine stores that sort red wine rack after rack based on region.

“Keep in mind what your preferences are in style of wine,” says Erin Swain, a Hampton-based Sommelier and wine educator. “Ask yourself: light, medium, or full body? Thin-skinned grapes make lighter styles of wine, so if you love Pinot Noir, try other thin-skinned varieties such as Nebbiolo (Barolo and Barbaresco).” Swain adds that fans of big bold flavors should try a California Cabernet, or my personal favorite, a Bordeaux blend.

Below, we've listed everything you need to know about the best red wines, including our expert's favorite bottle. From a crisp Cabernet to a flavor-rich Merlot, here are the best red wines to pair with your meal, or enjoy by themselves.

What Are the Different Types Of Red Wine?

Wine is usually named after the grape used or the region it was made in. To make it easier, we've gone ahead and listed each varietal and which red blends they're most common in — and what meals they'd pair best with. “Pro tip: ‘What grows together, goes together!’” says Swain. If you're ever in doubt, choose a wine from a country that's similar to the cuisine you're cooking for dinner.

Cabernet Sauvignon: This is the most common and most planted grape in the world. You've got Cabernet from California and even French Cabernet. This type of wine is usually full-bodied with strong tannins (naturally occurring polyphenol that adds bitterness and complexity of flavor to the wine). When you drink a Cab you might taste cherries, a hint of tobacco and even vanilla. It's best paired with any type of dark meat (think steak or lamb). You can even find Cabernet Sauvignon in red blends such as Bourdeaux — wine produced in the Bourdeaux region of France.



Pinot Noir: More light-bodied and with a lower content of tannins, Pinot Noir is another incredibly popular red varietal and the most common tasting notes include berries. It pairs well with fish like salmon and even meat like roasted chicken.

Merlot: More medium-bodied and made from grapes that grow in both warm and cool climates, this type of red varietal is incredibly smooth, and depending on the region, can have a low or high amount of tannin (usually Merlot grown in cold climates have higher tannins and a more full-bodied flavor). You can also find Merlot in a Bordeaux red blend. Since it's so versatile, it pairs well with most food, especially poultry and even vegetable dishes and pasta.

Syrah/Shiraz: This varietal has two names, depending on where you're from. In Europe, it's known as Syrah whereas, in Australia, it's referred to as Shiraz. It's very full-bodied and has tasting notes like blackberry and plum. Since it's got such a bold flavor it's best accompanied by meat, creamy cheeses, and in my opinion, Indian food. Swain also suggests that this type of wine makes a great pairing for your summer BBQ.

Malbec: Usually made in Argentina, this full-bodied red is packed with fruity flavors and pairs well with barbecue, red meat and even blue cheese. You can find French Malbec as well although the taste is usually tarter and more acidic.

Zinfandel: This light to medium-bodied red is full of flavor notes like jam and berries, especially strawberries. It's got low tannins too and generally has a smoky finish. You can also pair it with a wide variety of food including pizzas, pasta, meat, and even your favorite sandwiches like grilled cheese (my favorite combination).

Sangiovese: Extremely popular in Italy and now also grown in California, this dry red varietal is medium-bodied with a high tannin content. Its flavor is a combination of cherries, and figs with a hint of tobacco. Because of its peculiar flavor, it pairs well with Italian foods like pizzas and pasta. It's also the most common red varietal used in Chianti blends.

Nebbiolo: A favorite of our expert, wine from this type of grape has a lot of depth. On the nose, you'll get notes of "violets, leather, tobacco, tar, rose petals along with aromas of sultry red cherry and raspberry." This type of wine is grown all over today, in regions of California, Mexico, Australia, and of course, Italy. Swain suggests trying wine from different regions to find one that resonates with you, as the soil and terrain in each area affect the final product.



The Best Red Wines to Shop Right Now

Whereas you once needed to go to a fancy wine shop to find decent red wine, a number of companies are now offering their bottles for sale online. Here are some of our favorite red wines to buy online right now.

6. Amon Ra Shiraz Barossa Valley

BEST SHIRAZ



Shiraz from the Barossa Valley is some of the most full-bodied, flavorful red wine you can find. This Australian Shiraz is bold on the palate with notes of licorice, black raspberries, creme de cassis and subtle hints of wood, leather, and cigars. It's got a long finish with medium tannins and acidity and is easily the most well-balanced wine on our list. Pair it with beef, game meat or poultry for the best flavor.

Amon Ra Shiraz Barossa Valley