



Memorial Day 2009

Nowadays, most Americans celebrate Memorial Day as the official kick-off of Barbeque Season. Get ready to warm up the coals, slather on the sauce, and pull the cork.

Burgers rock with rosé, but if you're grilling chicken, pork or beef, remember to match the wine with the sauce on the meat, rather than the meat itself, since it will be the dominant flavor component. The smoky-sweet stuff we slather on grilled protein is far from wimpy, so your drink shouldn't be either. Choose something that sings with fruit, with plenty of pepper and spice — without overwhelming oak and tannin to cloud flavor — to stand up to all the brawn. Mmmm ... zesty zinfandel. Or smooth syrah/shiraz. If you're feeling exotic, pop open a smoky Spanish Rioja or garnacha. For those wanting to stay closer to their comfort zone, medium- to full-bodied merlots also complement BBQ fare, especially brats and other delicious, fat-full sausages.

Quick tips for the summer barbeque scene:

- 1) To avoid drinking warm reds that might not be so tasty, chill them in the fridge for 30 minutes to an hour before opening (sure, why not?). The tannins might taste astringent at first but don't judge until you try it with food.
- 2) Keep it cold, use a nifty Wine Chill bottle cooler that fits around the bottle — tried and tested reliable.
- 3) If you don't want to risk glassware breakage, use plastic cups, but shun Styrofoam, it leeches a chemical flavor into the juice.

So wherever you celebrate the holiday, be it in mild weather or hot, start summer the right way — with great wine and grill.

Viña Borgia 2007 Garnacha

\$ 7.49

Campo de Borja, Spain

One of the best vintages in years in Spain's Campo de Borja wine region was 2007, so you owe it to yourself to pick up a few of these. At less than \$10, why not? It has a cherry red color with touches of garnet and an elegant, deep ruby background. In the nose, we perceive its great intensity where fruity and varietal tones are combined perfectly with vanilla and smooth oak tannins. Intense in the mouth, fleshy and well-structured with an ample and pleasing aftertaste.

Alexander Valley Vineyards 'Sin Zin' 2007

\$20.49

Alexander Valley, California

This, the 30th, vintage of Sin Zin offers generous aromas of black cherries, blueberries, vanilla and spice. The juicy fruit is apparent right at the front end. The hefty flavors of cherries and plums carry this wine right through the mid-palate and into a lengthy finish with a touch of spicy oak.