

# *The Other Great Whites*

When the temperatures shift down, we find ways to warm up, and in the world of wine that means normally reaching to the hearty reds that pack a richer body, spices, and brooding texture. But what if you are a tried-and-true white wine lover who wants a fireside sipper, or are seeking to pair your winter dishes with something other than red wine. That's where the hunt for the Great Whites, aside from Chardonnay, begins and by the end of this article you may need a wine area for those prizes that you find.

## **Vermentino**

Vermentino is a widely-planted grape throughout the island of Sardinia, Italy, and it's used to make complex wines that show varied flavors, like pineapple, lemon and apple, with a floral nose and nice minerality. Like many Italian whites, Vermentino begs to be paired with white seafood or shellfish. Wines from the Vermentino di Gallura DOCG appellation require 95 percent or more of the grape in any wine claiming the name. This is a medium bodied wine that we love with chicken chili or stew.

## **Viognier**

Viognier is most often found in the Rhône Valley in France's south, but has started to become popular in other parts of the world, like the U.S. Viognier is a great white with a medium to rich body, depending on where it's made. The fuller styles from California or Washington are great winter warmers. This isn't a grape that is easily grown in a wide variety of environments so when you find one, grab it. Better bottlings of Viognier have great mouthfeel and are complex with mineral and apricot fruits lining the mouth. They are typically stainless steel fermented.

## **Pinot Gris**

While the Italian version, often labeled Pinot Grigio, is typically light, the French or U.S.-style Pinot Gris bottlings express a completely different side of this grape: fuller, rounder and more expressive of fruit. In Alsace your table wine with dishes such as a rib-sticking multi-meat stew, or a sauerkraut and sausage dish will be Pinot Gris, which usually has more viscosity than its Pinot Grigio siblings from Italy.

## **Gewürztraminer**

Gewürztraminer is grown all over the world, but France's Alsace region and Italy's Alto Adige both suit the grape. These flavor-packed wines offer floral aromas and just enough spice to make it a good match with food, particularly spicy Asian cuisine. These can be dry or sweet and are a nice alternative to other whites for winter and early spring.

## **Dessert anyone?**

There is great joy in uncorking a viscous white from the region of Sauternes (made from Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc) when the mood strikes on a cold winter night. These little bottles go a long way with desserts. Despite the misconception that dry = good, sweet = bad in wine, many of the world's best-tasting wines are in fact sweet, like Sauternes.