



Ordering a white but tired of picking sauvignon blanc? Adam Lechmere gives you the white grapes you need to know about for the year to come

The *wine* column

'I love white wine. I also love foreplay but eventually I want to move on,' wrote the novelist-turned-oenophile Jay McInerney. Like all the best epigrams, it's both true and absurd. You could swap the words 'sauvignon blanc' for 'white wine', for example, and still be spot on but it's preposterous to condemn sauvignon blanc (and chardonnay, for that matter) as also-rans.

Some of the finest whites in Bordeaux are made with sauvignon blanc grapes. It dominates the world of white wine world because it is reliable, age-worthy and variable.

Marlborough in New Zealand produces sauvignons of gooseberry intensity and river-stone minerality, while in Sancerre the fruit aromas are more reined in, the acids zippier. It's crazy to suggest there is any limit to the wonders of this grape. And yet, aren't we missing something?

'We're seeing people getting tired of sauvignon blanc,' Ana Sapungiu, the head of the Oddbins buying team tells me. What else are they buying? 'Pecorino, fiano, grillo, vinho verde' – anything but sauvignon it seems.

The joy of modern wine is that there is an astonishing array of commercial whites in production.

In the past couple of weeks I've tasted grüner veltliner, roter veltliner, godello, albillo, txakoli, riesling, picpoul, ribolla gialla, roussanne and many others. They are all available commercially. Some, like the aromatic Italian timorasso, the Basque country's effervescent txakoli, or Jura's nutty, bone-dry savagnin only appear on restaurant wine lists and in specialist wine merchants. Others, such as the Austrian native grüner veltliner or Spain's godello, are becoming more and more popular.

There's no single variety that challenges sauvignon but how do you work your way through the cornucopia on offer? The best thing is to think style: do you like the steely minerality of chablis, the oily pungency of viognier and chenin blanc, or the honeysuckle aromas of roussanne? Do you like your white wine with a powerful kick of alcohol or as light as can be?

On the light, aromatic scale there's huge choice: albariño from Galicia

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and its similar (but spicier) cousin godello, and the barely known, lightly perfumed albillo (Laithwaites Cabrito from south of Madrid is very fine).

If you like your whites invigorating, head for the mountains. The Swiss produce vast amounts of deliciously fresh white wine (chasselas, or fendant, is their most popular grape). They're a thirsty lot and export practically nothing so what you find here is expensive but it's worth it: keep an eye out for Fendant Classique Domaine des Muses 2013.

Light whites are the fashion now but there's joy to be had from full-bodied styles, especially with food. Roussanne and marsanne, almost always blended in their native Rhône, produce wines with a luscious viscosity, flavours from melon to pear and honeysuckle, and crisp acidity.

One of the greatest exponents of roussanne outside France is Randall Grahm of Bonny Doon in California – his Le Cigare Blanc is lip-smackingly good. The South Africans, who love big, bold whites, are no slouches either, as the Swartland Winery's fresh, savoury roussanne (below) attests.

Five whites *to broaden your repertoire*



Morgenhof Estate Chenin Blanc 2014
Simonsberg-Stellenbosch, £11.99

Bold, fresh and buttery with hints of ocean air and iodine. Melony palate with nutty edge and a sharp acidity. Try with fish pie.
Waitrose



Zensa Fiano 2015,
Puglia, £10.50

Honeyed demi-sec palate, floral, perfumed, with lime and a touch of grapefruit. It's charming, refreshing, easy on the palate but with excellent length. Try it with five-hour pulled pork.
Oddbins



Swartland Winery, Roussanne, South Africa 2015, £9.65

A lovely viscous attack then fresh stone fruit (apricot and peach), fine acidity, hints of white flowers and salinity. A blend of savoury and sweet. Enjoy with crab, lobster, paella.
Strictly Wine



Diwald Grüner Veltliner Grossriedenthaler Löss Austria 2015, £14.99

Sharp acidity, grapefruit and an intensity only a genius could wring out of 12 per cent alcohol. Try with garlicky prawns.
Red Squirrel Wine



Marjan Simcic, Ribolla Gialla, Slovenia, £13.75

Savoury and intensely dry at first, with nice hints of lemongrass and honeysuckle, subtle grainy texture, then a sudden splash of juice on the palate. Enjoy it with a Thai green curry.
Slurp