


<<Back



The World's Top Wines 2008

By: **Janice Kleinschmidt**

Provided by 



Ask one of these pros for which one to drink and where to get it (© istockphoto/Owen Price)

If the Master Sommeliers of the world were stranded on a boat, (or yacht with limited luggage space) and had room for just five wines, what would they be? Lest you doubt the veracity of the following recommendations, consider the fact that among the world's 6.6 billion-plus population, a mere 158 held the prestigious Master Sommelier title as of Jan. 1. We suggest you take their recommendations seriously - quite seriously if you're planning a 'round-the-world voyage.

San Francisco-based Tim Gaiser, Education Chair for the American Chapter of the Court of Master Sommeliers (itself headquartered in Napa), chooses three French bottles: a 1988 Krug Champagne from Reims (for its "complexity and longevity"); a 2000 Francois Raveneau Chablis Grand Cru "Le Clos" from Burgundy ("It has a singular, immense personality and makes no apology for its greatness"); and a 1990 Domaine de la Romanée Conti "La Tâche" Grand Cru from Burgundy ("One sip of this legendary red Burgundy and you would not only think it was sent straight from heaven, but you would also understand what all the fuss over Burgundy is about").

Gaiser's remaining bottles would be a 1989 Aldo Conterno Barolo Riserva "Gran Bussia" from Piedmont, Italy, and a 2003 Robert Weil Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese Goldkapsel, Kiedricher Gräfenberg from Rheingau, Germany. "The 1989 Granbussia captures the power and poetry of the Nebbiolo grape to perfection. Each sip beguiles and seduces, and the finish is at least 20 leagues long," Gaiser says, applying an apropos metaphor. As for the lengthy-named German wine, he calls it "one of the greatest dessert wines ever made," while noting that fewer than 50 half-bottles were made. "I tasted it once, and the memories of its ethereal aromas and flavors will last a lifetime," he says.

Virginia Philip, Master Sommelier at The Breakers in Palm Beach, Fla., also relies heavily on French wines. Her picks include a 1985 Taittinger "Comtes de Champagne" rosé from Reims ("red cherry, strawberry and cranberry notes linger on the long finish, with a hint of brioche"); a 1966 Domaine Leroy Meursault "Poruzots" from Burgundy (a chardonnay with "hazelnut, mineral and apple notes with a hint of truffle oil"); and Mommessin "Clos de Tart" Monopole Grand Cru, Morey Saint-Denis, also from Burgundy (a pinot noir of which she says, "Silky yet powerful tannins linger on the finish with all the terroir associated with the vineyard swirling around in the glass").

Philips' fourth wine would be a Tempranillo blend, a 1994 Muga "Prado Enea" Gran Reserva from Rioja, Spain. "The Muga has a canny knack for working with some of the most difficult dishes to pair," she says, perhaps imagining the type of dinner she might concoct from the dwindling pantry of a small galley. "I have got to take it with me!" Finally, she opts for a Napa, Calif., wine: the multivintage ZD Wines "Abacus," a Cabernet Sauvignon she describes as a marriage of the fruitiness in younger wines and the complexity of older wines.

Wayne Belding, a Master Sommelier at The Boulder Wine Merchant in Colorado, confesses to being an Old World oenophile, so all of his top five wines come from Europe: two reds, two whites, and one fortified wine. "No wine is a better all-around beverage for pairing with food, especially fresh seafood, and sipping on its own than a great Riesling," he says. His top choice would be a 1996 Trimbach Clos Sainte Hune Riesling from Alsace, France, which he calls "a wine to contemplate during the long hours at sea." Another "great seafood wine," he says, is the 1999 Francois Raveneau Chablis Grand Cru Valmur that "captures the senses with the pure apple and tropical fruit tones of chardonnay and the classic, flinty, mineral and herb character of a fine Chablis."

For reds, Belding would take a Burgundian pinot noir: a 1999 Clos des Lambrays Grand Cru with "beautiful layering of red and black fruit nuances, along with elements of flowers, vanilla, herbs and spices." His other red, a 1990 Giacomo Conterno "Monfortino" Riserva Barolo from the Piedmont region of Italy, "provides just the contemplative, complex and endlessly nuanced character needed for my voyage," Belding says. "It's an exciting wine that will recall the bounty of the land when one is far away at sea."

Pointing out that 1870 was one of the last years before phylloxera devastated the vineyards of Europe, Belding waxes eloquently on an 1870 Blandy's Verdelho Solera Madeira with "a penetrating and enchanting aroma that only a century of maturity can impart. Its tangy, smoky, nutty, floral and caramel aromas fairly leap from the glass." In fact, he claims, "There is no other wine in the world that compares," adding that it pairs well with sushi (a dish a world voyager is likely to enjoy on more than one occasion). Belding further notes Madeira's historical tie to sailing, as the island off the northwest coast of Africa was a provisioning stop for ships across the Atlantic around the Cape of Good Hope to the East Indies. The island's wine, he notes, was placed in barrels and used as ballast for ships. "After a few trans-equatorial crossings, people found that the hitherto very tart and lean wine had been transformed into a much more pleasurable beverage."

Madeline Triffon, Master Sommelier of Michigan-based Matt Prentice Restaurant Group, emphatically states that, "Modern Greek wine is a must!" for a 'round-the-world voyage. "We could toast the beginning of the voyage with a special Hellenic quaff, honoring the Greek sailors of old," she suggests. And to do so, she recommends the "floral, dense and smooth" 2006 Katogi Averoff Traminer.

Like Belding, Triffon would select a Riesling - though hers would come from Germany: a 1993 Zilliken Saarburger Rausch Spätlese. "At the end of a hot sunny day on deck, a fruity-tart,



EXPERT PANEL

Tim Gaiser

Education Chair for the American Chapter of the Court of Master Sommeliers

Virginia Philip

Master Sommelier at The Breakers in Palm Beach, Fla

Wayne Belding

a Master Sommelier at The Boulder Wine Merchant in Colorado

Madeline Triffon

Master Sommelier of Michigan-based Matt Prentice Restaurant Group

aromatic Riesling would be fabulously refreshing," she says. She also would carry Thierry Allemand's 2000 Cornas "Chaillot," a Rhône Syrah that she calls "a stunner, with oodles of white pepper, raspberry, tar and smoke meat. The difficulty will be in keeping hands off the bottle too soon into the trip!"

For a time "when a chill sets in," Triffon would want a bold red wine. "The list would not be complete, she says, without "a bottle of what the U.S. does best: heroic Cabernet Sauvignon." Napa Valley's 2002 "Gaston" from Palmaz Vineyards fills the bill with pure blackberry fruit and edgy tannins. "This is the type of rich red one savors slowly, after the sun goes down," Triffon says. "This wine would warm the bones and the heart with its powerful, expansive flavors." Lastly, she considers a bottle of Champagne "an absolute necessity" for docking at the final destination. "Duval-Leroy's 'Cuvée Femme' 1995 would do the trick - an ultra elegant sparkler with the lightest touch and a finish that goes on for days."



All content © Copyright 2001 - 2008 WorldNow and KLTV, a [Raycom Media Station](#).
All Rights Reserved. For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).