



Washington State Liquor Control Board

White Wine



5 Things You Need To Know

Basics

White wine as a category includes grape varieties such as Riesling, Sauvignon (or Fume) Blanc and, of course, Chardonnay. White wines can either be semi sweet, sweet or bone dry. They are most often pale straw or golden in color and not “white” at all. You will often see the French word ‘blanc’ used on labels. Blanc translates to white. Chardonnay as a grape varietal remains the most popular of white wines with over 70 in the 750 ml size currently listed as regular items in WSLCB stores. That’s more than the rest of the white grape varieties combined. White wine should be served somewhat below room temperature (not necessarily cold but at a room temperature cool enough to be refreshing to the drinker).

What does it taste like?

White wines can taste very fruit like with hints of apricots or peaches (Riesling) or more subtle flavors can be noted as either grassy or herbaceous (Sauvignon Blanc) or even different still with flavors of oak and butter. Butter? Yes, a wine described as rich and buttery is a sign of a well made and often expensive wine. A buttery wine is one with the taste or aroma of butter or butterscotch. It is usually used to describe white wines and often results from the wine's time in contact with yeast during barrel fermentation.

What does it go with? The tradition of white wine with chicken, fish or lighter sauces is perfectly appropriate. But as with white wine, the person enjoying the wine will decide what's best for their particular tastes. The sales person can recommend some basics and the choices are limitless but a few rules of thumb are good to know.

1. Dry white wines (Chardonnay, Sauvignon and Pinot Gris) are good pairings with most fish and chicken dishes. Some white wines that are a bit sweeter are perfectly fine as well. As versatile as Riesling is, many people are choosing it as a light cocktail wine with or without food.
2. White wine is perfect for summer when lighter fare and outdoor dining is common (or when there is a white carpet involved).
3. Some cheeses that white wine goes well with would include Brie or other lighter white cheeses. Experiment – that is half the fun.

White Wine in WSLCB Stores: By the numbers

- White wines available in the 750 ml size number over 130 (depending on the size of the store and not including Champagne). As previously mentioned, the biggest sub category is Washington and California Chardonnays, with nearly 70 offerings between them. Riesling is followed with 18 regularly listed offerings.
- White wines in most state stores are merchandised by region, variety and price. The more expensive selections are near the top of the shelf and the economy brands at or near the bottom.

Category Leaders

In Washington the leaders in the White wines by major sub category:

Chardonnay

California

- Kendall Jackson
- J Lohr Riverstone
- BV Coastal

Washington

- Chateau Ste Michelle
- Barnard Griffin
- Columbia Crest Grand Estate

Australia

- Yellow Tail
- Lindemans
- Jacobs Creek

Washington Riesling

- Columbia “Cellarmaster” Riesling
–slightly sweet
- Chateau Ste Michelle Riesling
- Hogue Late Harvest Riesling

Washington Sauvignon/Fume Blanc

- Barnard Griffin
- Hogue
- Columbia Crest Two Vines

Price ranges for white wines average from \$5 to \$19 with many below \$10.

What the future holds

White wine, in particular Chardonnay, dominates the wine consumers' purchases with nearly 25 percent of all wine sold at retail outlets. Versatility and the increasing number of choices, especially price friendly options from Australia, promise to keep Chardonnay a consumer favorite. Other varieties such as Riesling and Pinot Gris are popular types in LCB stores, especially Riesling for those new wine drinkers as they begin to explore the category.