

Make Wine Your Perfect Picnic Partner

Master Sommelier Andrea Robinson Shares Her Favorite Picnic Wine Picks and Tips

CHICAGO – Whether it’s a peaceful lunch in the country, a lively get-together in a downtown park or an outdoor concert complete with charcuterie – there’s no better companion for a picnic spread than a lovely glass (or plastic cup) of wine.

Master Sommelier Andrea Robinson, one of the nation’s leading wine educators and host of Fine Living TV Network’s “Pairings with Andrea,” says there’s something about wine, picnic fare and the fresh outdoors that brings out the best in each other.

“Wine really is the perfect partner for any kind of picnic spread,” says Robinson. “Since wine is so versatile, it can go with everything from an elaborate cheese platter to a bucket of cold fried chicken. And choosing a wine to take on a picnic can be as easy as grabbing a bottle out of your refrigerator or wine pantry or getting a little more adventurous at your local wine shop.”

Andrea shares these favorite food and wine pairing suggestions:

Picnic on the beach – Substantial salads, such as **Hot and Spicy Shrimp and Avocado Salad**, spooned into wraps or pitas for easy eating is a great option for a day spent soaking up rays on the beach. Try pairing your salad with a **Sauvignon Blanc**, whose richly layered flavors and floral aromas unfold on the palate.

Picnic at outdoor concert or movie in the park – We know that buttered popcorn and movies go hand and hand, so treat yourself to gourmet savory popcorn such as **Truffled & Herbed Popcorn** and wonderful wine-friendly cheeses. For the most flexible popcorn pairing, pop the cork on a **Brut sparkling wine**, whose lively acidity and yeasty quality are a great partner to the buttery, toasty taste of popcorn.

Picnic on the boat – For an afternoon dockside boat picnic, it can be fun to make finger food versions of your favorite entrees, such as **Prosciutto-Sage Chicken “Ravioli” Bites**. Round it out with seeded crackers and savory dips such as hummus and tapenade. Pair it with a dry **Rosé**, whose tangy character is the perfect compliment to this picnic meal.

Pick Up and Go Packaging

Grab-and-go wine options are now making it easier than ever to make wine a part of an outdoor gathering. From hip Tetra Paks to practical mini bottles or wine cubes, as wine packaging undergoes an evolution, packing up, carrying and serving a favorite wine is easy, delicious – and stylish.

Andrea dishes out the following tips to ensure a carefree picnic gathering.

- ✓ **Chill out** – Chill your wines ahead of time – even the reds – so they don't get too warm in outdoor temperatures. Once you arrive, try finding some shade to keep your wine out of the sun. There are also great backpacks, picnic bags and insulated wine jackets with a blue ice pack or pre-frozen insert that will help keep the bottles cool.
- ✓ **Think inside the box** – The new generation of boxed wines makes for a great choice when dining in the great outdoors, especially poolside or on the beach, where glass might be an issue. Try Tetra Paks, the soft-sided, flexible cardboard boxes sealed with plastic screw caps, which make transporting wine a breeze. Plus the super convenient screw cap means you won't have to fight with an opener or go searching for that corkscrew you forgot.
- ✓ **Stemware? Anything Goes** – No need to pack your fancy wine glasses. People tend to get bogged down by lugging around wine glasses or worrying about breaking them. Truth is any glass will do the trick – and that includes plastic.
- ✓ **Mix and Match** – Single serving wine bottles allow you to mix and match a variety of wines and food without having to transport several bottles of wine. It's a great way, too, to offer a different wine pairing with each course of your picnic spread.
- ✓ **How much wine to buy** – Plan for about two glasses of wine per guest and estimate five glasses per bottle. To determine which kind of wines to buy for a bigger group, use this formula: 60 percent white wine and 40 percent red wine.

For more information, tips and wine pairing advice, check out wineanswers.com or andreawine.com.

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About Wine Market Council

Wine Market Council is an independent, non-profit trade association of grape growers, wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and other organizations affiliated with the wine industry. For more information, visit winemarketcouncil.com or wineanswers.com.

About Andrea Robinson

Andrea Robinson is one of only 16 women in the world to hold the title of Master Sommelier from the prestigious Court of Master Sommeliers. Through her best-selling books, wine course DVD, award-winning television shows, andreawine.com Web site and Health and Eating Well magazine columns,

Andrea talks and teaches about wine with hundreds of thousands of wine consumers and professionals each year.