



Fresh, Spicy Reds

Savory, firm reds with lots of personality, such as Dolcettos, Barberas, some Zinfandels, cru Beaujolais wines, Argentine Malbecs, Chilean Carmenères, and other wines

*Y*ou want a red wine with character. Something more intense than a mild-mannered red, more compelling than a pretty, fruity red but nothing very imposing or powerful. A spicy red is probably just what you'd enjoy.

Spicy reds are what we reach for almost every evening when we want red wine. They're wines that go well with the kinds of foods we like to eat—medium-substantial foods with savory flavor and often a little bit of heat. They're good when they're young and fresh, and they offer us lots of variety. The spicy red category encompasses wines from dozens of grape varieties and just about every wine-producing country on earth.

SUBTLETY, BE GONE!

The fresh, spicy style of red wines combines two main taste characteristics:

- Medium to high intensity of aroma and flavor
- Assertive but not imposing structure

Let's deal with the structural characteristics first. Wines in this style are usually medium-bodied to nearly full-bodied, and they do have perceptible tannin and/or acidity. Their alcohol can be medium or high, but even if it's high, it doesn't define the wines by making them generous or sweet or causing them to give a "hot" sensation in the rear of the mouth. These wines have substantial texture: they're moderately dense, and they can be fleshy, velvety, or grainy in mouth feel. They are not thin, and you wouldn't call them soft,

Spicy reds can have flavors of pepper, cinnamon, or clove, but also fruit flavors, especially fresh fruits.

because their tannin is too operative a structural element. When you taste a spicy red, you get a sense of angularity rather than roundness.

The aromatics of fresh, spicy reds are fairly pronounced. As the name of this style implies, spiciness is one of the common types of aromas and flavors present: these wines can have notes of black pepper, cinnamon, clove, or just a more generic spicy flavor. But they also usually have fruity aromas and flavors, especially of fresh fruits (as opposed to baked fruits, stewed fruits, or dried fruits), often berries. Sometimes the fruit flavors are tart, and they're hardly ever what you might call "plump." Many spicy reds also have a mineral component to their taste.

Even though many of these wines have spicy aromas and flavors, not all of them do: The word *spicy* in the name of this style is descriptive partly of the actual aromas and partly of the wines' personality. Just as spices enliven a dish and add a note of complexity (even if you don't always explicitly taste the spice), these wines enliven your palate and bring a new complexity to your meal.

What defines wines of this style is their particular combination of fresh, vibrant aromas and flavors with firm, solid structure.

Of course, like every other stylistic category, this style covers a range of taste profiles, some of them verging toward softness and others toward leanness. But the vibrancy of aromatics is a common chord.

STYLISTIC SIBLINGS

*H*ere's how the other three styles of red wines relate to fresh, spicy reds:

- Mild-mannered reds could be described as firm because they are lean, but they are much less flavorful than these wines, and their aromas and flavors are less vibrant.
- Soft, fruity reds also can have fresh and vibrant aromas, but they have a softer structure and smoother texture.
- Powerful reds, which we discuss in the next chapter, are altogether bigger and bolder than wines of this style.

In a way, fresh and spicy reds occupy a middle ground between the biggest and most flavorful wines and the most subtle, elegant wines.

HOW FRESH-AND-SPICY HAPPENS

Spicy red wines tend to come from grapes grown in moderate climates, rather than the very warmest areas. (Very warm climates would naturally encourage so much ripeness in the grapes that the wines' aromatics would express overripe or baked fruits rather than fresh-fruit character; they would also encourage fuller body, higher alcohol, riper tannins and lower acidity than this style has—a richer, softer style all around.) Wines of this style also come from winemakers more interested in producing moderate wines that work well with food rather than the richest, most extreme wines possible.

The grape varieties for spicy reds tend to be those that are expressive in aroma and flavor, particularly those that have spicy aromatics. The wines might or might not be aged in oak. For those that are, the oak can bring, or supplement, the element of spiciness. The oak's tannin can also contribute to the firm structure of wines in this style.

A quintessential spicy red wine comes from Argentina, where the Malbec grape is practically a national treasure.

More than any other red wine style, the spicy-red category is about individuality. In other words, you will find less sameness from wine to wine in this category. That's because wines of this style come from a wide assortment of grape varieties and places.

THE GRAPES OF SPICY REDS

This taste category is an extremely eclectic one, and it's the home for dozens of unusual grape varieties that are cultivated only here and there around the world. Classic varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot hardly figure in this category, in fact. The only truly major red variety that is significant here is **Syrah**. And even then only some Syrah wines—the leaner, and less powerful of them—fall into this style.

Pinot Noir, another major red variety, can make spicy red wines, but this seems to occur mainly when the grapes are not as ripe as most winemakers and critics feel that they ought to be. Therefore, this style is not the norm for Pinot Noir.

Here are some grape varieties that make wines that fairly consistently fall into the spicy red style. You'll see most of these names on wine labels, because many spicy reds are varietal wines. We list them alphabetically:

- **Barbera** is a high-acid, low-tannin grape from Italy that makes lively, refreshing red wines with vivid fresh-fruit flavors.
- **Blaufrankisch** is a Germanic grape that makes exciting spicy reds in Austria and Hungary; under the name **Lemberger**, it also grows in Germany and in parts of the United States.
- **Cabernet Franc** is frequently used for blending, but by itself, in the Loire Valley, it is a source of well-knit, substantial red wines with earthy and fruity aromatics; it also makes some varietal wines in North and South America.

- **Carignan** brings firm, tannic, spicy character to blended wines in Spain and Southern France.
- **Dolcetto**, from Italy's Piedmont region, produces medium-bodied reds with black-peppery and fruity aromas and flavors.
- **Gamay** is the grape of France's Beaujolais district; depending on winemaking technique, it can produce soft, fruity reds or spicy reds.
- **Kadarka** is a Hungarian grape making red wines with high acidity and cherry fruitiness.
- **Lagrein**, from Northern Italy, makes wines that are fairly firm in tannin, with red berry and plum flavors.
- **Malbec** forms the backbone of Cahors wine in Southwestern France and also makes very fruity, spicy reds in Argentina.
- **Montepulciano**, an Italian grape that grows mainly in coastal Adriatic regions, makes wines with berry fruit aromatics; the wines can be fairly light-bodied wines in the soft, fruity red style, but the more substantial among them are spicy reds.
- **Mourvèdre**, a grape of Spanish origin that's grown in Southern France and also somewhat in California, is a small, thick-skinned grape that makes full-bodied, tannic wines with aromatics that range from fruity to gamy.
- **Pinotage**, a South African grape that's a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault, makes fairly tannic but rich reds with berry-fruit aromatics.
- **Sangiovese**, central Italy's ubiquitous grape, makes wines in all four styles, including many spicy reds characterized by tart cherry aromas and flavors and firm but not overpowering tannin.
- **Tempranillo**, Spain's important red grape variety, is grown

all across that country and makes dark, fairly tannic wines with aromas that include berries and spice; very long aging, which was once the norm in Rioja, can mellow Tempranillo wines into the mild-mannered style.

- **Xynomavro** is a Greek grape whose wines are marked by firm tannin and acidity.
- **Zweigelt** is an Austrian grape that's a cross between Blaufrankisch and **St. Laurent**, which is a relative of Pinot Noir; Zweigelt wines are gentler and inherently less spicy than Blaufrankisch wines.

AROUND THE WORLD OF SPICY REDS

Italy, France, Austria, South Africa, California, Washington, Chile, and Argentina are just some of the places that boast wines in the spicy red style. If part of what you love about wine is adventure and discovery, exploring this style will please you.

The Back Roads of France

Many of France's spicy reds come from some of the country's lesser-known wine regions. That's a bonus, because it means that they're good values. **Southwestern** and **Southern France** make lots of wines in this style, usually under geographical names. **Cahors** comes mainly from the Malbec grape and varies in weight and richness according to the producer; most of the less expensive Cahors wines are in this style, while the most expensive wines tend to be powerful reds (see the next chapter). **Madiran**, made mainly from the Tannat grape, is another spicy red from Southwestern France.

From southern France, **Corbières**, made from Carignan with Syrah and Mourvèdre, is a terrific value wine in this style, as is **Minervois**, a wine blended from the same varieties plus Grenache. **Fitou, Faugères, St.-Chinian, Côtes du Roussillon, and Côtes du Roussillon-Villages** are other red wines from the same general area

with similar grape blends. Many other wines from southern France, including **Provence**, could be in this style or not, depending on their growing area, grape blend, and winemaking. Cooler zones, such as the hilly **Coteaux Varois** area, are most likely to make this style.

Although not a lesser-known region, the **Rhône Valley** boasts some spicy red wines such as **Gigondas** and some **Côtes du Rhône**s, from the southern part of the region, and some **Crozes-Hermitage** wines, from the north.

The red wines of France's **Loire Valley** are quintessential spicy reds. These wines are made from Cabernet Franc grapes and carry district names such as **Chinon**, **Bourgueil**, **St. Nicolas de Bourgueil**, and **Saumur-Champigny**. They tend to be very dry-textured, with vegetal and red-fruit aromatics and sometimes a provocative coffee-grounds character. They are extremely versatile with food.

Finally, the better **Beaujolais** wines are spicy reds. These are the so-called *cru* Beaujolais, which are named for specific towns or districts, such as **Fleurie** or **Brouilly**. These wines tend to have more substance and tannin than basic Beaujolais wines, which are soft, fruity reds. But a basic Beaujolais or **Beaujolais-Villages** from a small, traditional producer could also fall into the spicy red category.

Those Spicy Italians

The better red wines of Southern Italy are robust, rich wines that would fall into the powerful red style. But **Northern** and **Central Italy** have dozens of red wines in the fresh, spicy style.

Two of our favorite wines are Dolcetto and Barbera—varietal wines that come from various districts in the **Piedmont** region. Dolcetto is, literally, the spicier of the two, with aromas and flavors of black pepper as well as ripe berries. For its forthcoming spicy flavor and its firm texture, we'd consider it something of a poster child for the whole spicy red category. Barbera wines can express this style when they are not very ripe and oaky; the less expensive bot-

tlings tend to have little or no oak, and those are the best to look for. Barbera is an unusual wine for this category in that it is hardly tannic at all unless it is oak-aged. But it is high in acidity, and that acidity gives it the zestiness appropriate for this style.

The **Trentino–Alto Adige** region grows Lagrein and makes a delicious varietal wine from it. The lightest versions of Teroldego, another varietal wine from this region, are spicy reds (the richer versions tend to be powerful reds).

Central Italy has tons of wines based on the Sangiovese grape, which can make wines in all four red styles. Your best bet for finding a spicy style is to try a **Chianti Classico**—as opposed to a varietally-labeled Tuscan Sangiovese—that’s fairly inexpensive, say \$15 or less. Ask your wine merchant for recommendations in this price range.

Among the best-value reds in Italy—if not the world—is Montepulciano d’Abruzzo. Made from the Montepulciano grape, these reds are amazingly consistent in quality, and great food wines. In **Abruzzo**, the home of the Montepulciano grape, the least expensive Montepulciano d’Abruzzo wines tend to be soft, fruity reds, while the better wines are spicy reds. In the nearby **Marche** region, winemakers blend Sangiovese with Montepulciano, and these blends—wines such as **Rosso Cónero** and **Rosso Piceno**—can be spicy reds.

Finally, there are the islands. Cannanou di Sardegna is a **Sardinian** wine that’s often spicy in style, and wines from the cool pocket of **Mount Etna** in **Sicily** are far fresher and spicier than is the norm for Sicilian reds. A relatively recent discovery for us came from visits to the cool-climate regions of Sicily, where we found exciting, spicy reds bearing names such as **Etna Rosso**, **Faro**, **Cerasuolo di Vittoria**, and Frappato. The last of these comes from a light-colored, indigenous, spicy red variety of the same name, grown in Southeastern Sicily. The Frappato grape adds a distinct, delicious flavor of cherries to its wines, which include Cerasuolo di Vittoria—a wine that’s typically a blend of Nero d’Avola and Frappato.

THE STYLE FOR VALUES

*S*picy reds represent some of the wine world's real values, for those who enjoy this style. Many of these wines come from relatively unknown grape varieties and/or regions and therefore can't command the high prices of wines from famous regions and grapes. Also, many wines of this style are not ambitious wines—not a wine-maker's attempt to make a special, small-production wine of today's international standards, reflecting very ripe grapes and new-oak aging. (Such efforts would likely tip a wine into the powerful red style.) In many regions of the world that make both powerful reds and spicy reds, such as Tuscany, Piedmont, the Rhône Valley, and parts of Spain and Portugal, it is the less expensive wines that are spicy reds and the pricier wines that are powerful reds.

The Rest of Europe

Spain's spicy reds come from various regions. **Rioja** wines can have this style provided that they are vinified and aged more in a modern rather than a traditional manner, so that they emphasize freshness rather than an aged character. Riojas with some oak aging—Crianza- and Reserva-level wines—are also more likely to be spicy reds, provided again that they are not from very traditional producers. Wines from **Jumilla** and other Spanish wine zones made from the Monastrell grape variety (the grape called Mourvèdre in France) can qualify as spicy reds. So can various Spanish wines blended from Tempranillo and Cabernet, sometimes with other varieties; producers all over Spain are making these wines, which often carry appellations in the “Vino de la Tierra” category rather than the more traditional “Denominación de Origen” category. In the **Penedès** region of **Northeastern Spain**, some producers make wines that derive partially from the Carignan variety, which gives the wines a tannic, spicy edge.

Portugal makes many dozens of types of red wines, mainly

from native grape varieties, but many are soft and lack the freshness and edginess of spicy reds. In the **Douro** region in the north, reds that are based on the Touriga Nacional and Touriga Francesa grape varieties can be spicy, provided that they are not so huge that they fall into the powerful red style instead. The **Alentejo**, **Ribatejo**, and **Estremadura** regions also make wines in this style.

Although Austria is white wine territory, the country does make red wines in its warmer regions, such as **Burgenland**. Most of Austria's spicy reds are varietal wines from the Blaufrankisch or Zweigelt grape variety; both types are definitely worth trying. Many other elite Austrian red wines can have a spicy personality due to aging in small barrels of new oak—but some of these elite wines are rich enough to be powerful reds.

In **Greece**, some **Naoussa** wines and other Greek wines made from the Xynomavro grape variety are spicy reds. **Hungary's** contribution to the style includes wines from the Kadarka grape as well as from Blaufrankisch.

The New World Spice Route

A quintessential spicy red wine comes from **Argentina**, where the Malbec grape is practically a national treasure. Argentine Malbecs are generally medium-bodied, with forthcoming aromas and flavors of red and black berries and spice. These delicious wines are so affordable, usually \$15 and less, that you really should try them.

Chile has no comparable wine. Some Chilean reds can be classified as spicy, but not categorically. The best likelihood of finding a spicy Chilean red is to try Syrah wines from Chile, or Carmenère wines. For that matter, Argentine Syrahs also fall into this category.

We've already classified inexpensive Australian Shiraz wines (made from the Syrah grape) as soft and fruity reds. But in the mid-price range—between the soft, fruity style and the powerful style of the very top wines—are some spicy versions. These wines tend to have a specific geographic origin, rather than being blended from various parts of Southeastern Australia; the most peppery of them come from Victoria, in our experience.

AT THE WINE SHOP

*Y*ou can find many spicy reds wines at just about any decent wine shop and in better supermarket wine sections. But no one store, no matter how large, can carry every wine. If you want to try a particular wine or a particular type of wine, ask your wine merchant to get it for you.

South Africa's own grape variety, Pinotage, makes wines in this style. Producers make many variations on Pinotage, depending on their vineyard location and personal inclination. Some are meaty and rich, at the richest extreme of the spicy red style, while others fall squarely into the spicy red taste profile.

Not so with Zinfandel in California. Only the leanest, most reserved Zins are spicy reds. In the richer style of Zin, the grape's spicy character is lost in the wine's ripe, jammy fruitiness, creating a powerful red instead. But you can find plenty of spicy Zinfandels, especially among wines with no more than 13.5 percent alcohol. Check our listings at the end of this chapter, or ask your wine merchant.

Some California Pinot Noirs can qualify as spicy reds; these are mainly those in the lighter, leaner style. You can find an occasional spicy California Syrah (when they're not busy being powerful or very fruity). Some California wines from Italian grape varieties, such as Sangiovese or Barbera, can also be spicy. But generally the ripe, rich fruitiness of California's wines mitigates against the spicy style. Washington reds are more frequently spicy, especially Syrahs, but even some Merlots and Cabs. And a few wineries in Washington make Lemberger, which is a wine from the same grape as Austria's Blaufrankisch. The **Finger Lakes** region of **New York** also grows Lemberger.

The **United States** has plenty of other spicy reds—Cabernet Franc wines from the **North Fork of Long Island**, Chambourcin from **Pennsylvania**, and so forth—and we heartily recommend that you seek them out if you enjoy this style.

RECOGNIZING QUALITY IN SPICY REDS

While other red wine styles have inherent risk factors that could compromise quality—mild-mannered reds can be too light, powerful reds can be too huge, and fruity reds can be sweet, for example—the spicy red style has no such built-in risks. Perhaps that’s because it’s a moderate style, in the middle of the range of red wine tastes rather than at the lightest or richest end of the range.

Or maybe it’s because the definition of the style encompasses balance between aromatics and structure, and if a wine transgresses that balance, then it no longer represents the style. If too much tannin overpowers the flavors of a particular wine, for example, it’s no longer flavorful enough to be a spicy red. (Or maybe we just like this style so much that we’re blind to possible flaws!)

The very best wines in this style will be truly dry and attractively flavorful, with a presence of structure in your mouth that complements the wine’s aromatics. They will taste neither too structured (too tannic, too full-bodied) nor too aromatic (just flavorful, without any character contributed by tannin or acid to capture your interest beyond sheer flavor). They will strike a balance that tastes just right.

If you want to critique a spicy red wine—for example, if you’re evaluating the comparative quality of several wines in this style—here are some issues you can consider:

- Some wines can give a slightly sweet impression from oak or high alcohol; does this apparent sweetness detract from the lively freshness of the wine’s flavors?
- Some wines can have a slight bitterness of tannin.
- Many wines in this style can be short; their flavor, delicious as it is, is a front-of-the mouth impression that does not carry across the whole experience of the wine in your mouth.
- Some wines can be too dense in texture, which can detract from their vividness of expression.

TANNIN IS NOT (NECESSARILY) A DIRTY WORD

Too much tannin in a wine—whether from oak barrels or from the grapes themselves—can render a wine tough, at least when the wine is young. But a moderate amount of tannin can energize a red wine and give it substance without making it harsh. Tannin can enhance a wine’s weight and make its texture richer or denser than it would otherwise be. Most spicy reds have a moderate amount of tannin.

- Some wines can be too watery in texture and lack concentration of flavor (even if they have intensity of flavor).
- With age, a wine’s flavors could fade.

Somehow, though, wines of this style tend to defy close critical analysis. They are, above all, wines for drinking.

MAKING THEMSELVES HEARD AT THE TABLE

A week seldom goes by without our consuming at least one bottle of Piedmont’s Barbera or Dolcetto, often with pizza or a tomato-rich pasta dish. We find that spicy reds such as these are great with a wide range of foods. Wines in the fresh, spicy red style are also so delicious that they’re good for drinking even without food—for example, at a party. For that matter, they’re good with party foods, such as spicy cheese sticks, nachos, and nuts.

Because spicy red wines have plenty of flavor, they can accompany flavorful meals.

Because spicy red wines have plenty of flavor, they can accompany flavorful meals. Nothing (not even beer) is better with a sausage-and-pepper pizza. They also are delicious with spicy Mexican foods, grilled meats (even if you add a spicy barbecue sauce), chili, and pasta with an *arrabbiata* sauce (tomatoes, pancetta, and hot red pepper).

What you should avoid pairing with these wines are very mild dishes, of the sort that you wouldn't normally consider having a red wine with in the first place, such as shellfish, delicate white fish, or dishes with lemony flavor. Not only are the wines too flavorful, but also their tannin will do nothing for the dish, and the wine will probably taste bitter.

Another combination that's less than ideal is fresh, spicy reds with stews and similar long-cooked dishes. These dishes have lots of flavor but not of a fresh sort, and the wines' vivid, fresh flavors are likely to taste out of place as a result. But plain dishes with earthy flavors, such as grilled portobello mushrooms or green, leafy vegetables, make a nice contrast with these fruity-spicy wines.

PAIRINGS: FRESH, SPICY REDS WITH . . .

Monterey Jack cheese with jalapeños

Pizza with everything

Cheesy tacos with jalapeños

Gazpacho

Spaghetti with a spicy arrabiata sauce

Grilled Italian sausages

Meatloaf

Chicken cacciatore

Grilled swordfish with a soy-ginger marinade

Blackened fish

Paella

FRESH, SPICY REDS: WINES TO TRY

We drink more fresh, spicy red wines than any other type because they go with so many foods. Also, almost every red-wine-producing region in the world makes them. They're our in-between wines: more assertive than mild-mannered reds, but not as big and forceful as the powerful reds in the next chapter. We love them all.

If there is a spiritual home for spicy reds, it might be Southern France. Provence, the dual region of Languedoc-Roussillon, and the various districts of Southwestern France, such as Cahors and Madiran, are hallowed vineyard ground for classic spicy red wines.

WINE	PRODUCER/BRAND	REGION	COUNTRY
Pic St.-Loup	Ermitage ■ Château Lancyre ■ Mas de Mortières	Coteaux du Languedoc	France
Corbières	Château La Baronne ■ Les Deux Rives ■ Domaine de Fontsaïnte ■ Château Grand Moulin ■ Château Meunier St.-Louis ■ Château Les Ollieux Romanis ■ Roquefort St.-Martin ■ Château St.-James ■ Château Tersac	Languedoc	France
Coteaux du Languedoc	Domaine d'Aupilhac ■ Domaine Le Conte de Floris ■ Château de Lascaux ■ Domaine Mas Champart ■ Mas de Chimères ■ Domaine de Nizas ■ Château de Pech Redon ■ Château La Roque ■ Domaine des Tourelles	Languedoc	France
Faugères	Abbaye de Sylva Plana ■ Château Anglade ■ Domaine Leon Barral ■ Château Haut Fabregues	Languedoc	France
Fitou	Domaine Gauthier ■ Domaine Lerys ■ Champs des Soeurs	Languedoc	France
Minervois	Bonhomme ■ Borie de Maurel ■ Domaine des Combes Hautes ■ Château Coupe Roses ■ Château La Croix Martelle ■ Château Maris ■ Château Oupia ■ Château Paraza	Languedoc	France
St.-Chinian	Château de Combebelle ■ Château Miquel ■ Cave de Roquebrun ■ Domaine Trianon	Languedoc	France
Bandol	Domaine du Gros'Noré ■ Domaine de Pibarnon ■ Mas de la Rivière ■ Sainte Anne ■ Domaine Tempier ■ Château Vannières	Provence	France

WINE	PRODUCER/BRAND	REGION	COUNTRY
Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence	Château Calissane ■ Château Janet ■ Château Revelette ■ Château Vignelaure	Provence	France
Coteaux Varois	Château Routas ■ Domaine de Triennes	Provence	France
Côtes de Provence	Les Domanières ■ Château du Galoupet ■ Domaine Houchart ■ Domaine Richeaume	Provence	France
Les Baux-de-Provence	Mas de la Dame ■ Mas de Gourgonnier ■ Mas Ste.-Berthe ■ Domaine des Terres Blanches ■ Domaine de Trévallon	Provence	France
Côtes du Rhône	Jean-Luc Colombo "Les Abeilles," Réserve Perrin	Rhône Valley	France
Crozes Hermitage	Domaine Albert Belle ■ Bernard Chave ■ Domaine Alain Graillot ■ Domaine du Pavillon	Rhône Valley	France
Gigondas	Domaine du Cayron ■ Domaine Roger Combe ■ Domaine de Font-Sane ■ Domaine Les Goubert ■ Domaine Raspail-Ay ■ Domaine St.-Gayan ■ Domaine de Santa Duc	Rhône Valley	France
Côtes du Roussillon	Domaine du Mas Cremant ■ Primo Palatum ■ Domaine St.-Luc ■ Calvet Thunevin	Roussillon	France
Côtes du Roussillon-Villages	Domaine Bila-Haut ■ Château de Jau ■ Château De Pena	Roussillon	France
Cahors	Château La Caminade ■ Domaine de Lagrezette	Southwest France	France
Côtes du Frontonnais	Château Bellevue La Forêt ■ Château Le Roc	Southwest France	France
Irouleguy	Domaine Brana (Rouge)	Southwest France	France
Madiran	Château Bouscassé ■ Château Laffitte-Teston ■ Domaine Laffont ■ Château Montus ■ Domaine Moureou	Southwest France	France
Marcillac	Domaine du Cros	Southwest France	France

France's central Loire Valley boasts a different version of spicy red wines—medium-bodied, cool-climate, spicy red wines based on the Cabernet Franc grape. We must confess that we have a weakness for well-made Cabernet Franc wines, and the Loire Valley is the place we find them.

WINE	PRODUCER/BRAND	REGION	COUNTRY
Anjou; Anjou- Villages	Château de Fesles ■ Domaine de la Genaiserie ■ Domaine de Montgilet ■ Domaine Ogereau ■ Château Perray ■ Château Pierre-Bise ■ Domaine Richou ■ Domaine des Rochelles	Loire Valley	France
Bourgueil	Pierre Breton ■ Domaine de la Chanteleuserie ■ Pierre-Jacques Druet ■ Domaine de la Lande ■ Domaine des Ouches	Loire Valley	France
Chinon	Philippe Alliet ■ Domaine Bernard Baudry ■ Marc Brédif ■ Château de Coulaine ■ Couly-Dutheil ■ Domaine Dozon ■ Château de la Grille ■ Domaine Jacques Grosbois ■ Charles Joguet ■ Domaine Olga Raffault ■ Domaine Roncée	Loire Valley	France
Saumur- Champigny	Domaine Filliatreau ■ Domaine des Roches Neuves ■ Clos Rougéard ■ Domaine Saint-Vincent ■ Château de Targé ■ Château de Villeneuve	Loire Valley	France
St.-Nicolas- de-Bourgueil	Cognard-Taluau ■ Domaine Joël Taluau	Loire Valley	France

Italy is teeming with spicy red wines, and most of them are widely available in wine shops and, of course, in Italian restaurants.

WINE	PRODUCER/BRAND	REGION	COUNTRY
Montepul- ciano d'Abruzzo	Capestrano ■ Cataldi Madonna ■ Barone Cornacchia ■ Guelfi ■ Illuminati ■ Marramiero ■ Masciarelli ■ Monti ■ Camillo Montori ■ La Valentina ■ Valentini ■ Valle Reale ■ Zaccagnini	Abruzzo	Italy

WINE	PRODUCER/BRAND	REGION	COUNTRY
Rosso Cònero	Garofoli ■ Lanari ■ Moroder ■ Le Terrazze ■ Umani Ronchi	Marche	Italy
Rosso Piceno	Le Caniette ■ Cocci Grifoni ■ Monte Schiavo ■ Saladini Pilastrì	Marche	Italy
Barbera d'Alba	Poderi Colla ■ Giacomo Conterno ■ Elio Grasso ■ Marcarini ■ Renato Ratti ■ Vietti	Piedmont	Italy
Barbera d'Asti	Michele Chiarlo ■ Coppo ■ Prunotto ■ Vietti	Piedmont	Italy
Dolcetto d'Alba	Tenuta Carretta ■ Elvio Cagno ■ Poderi Colla ■ Marchesi di Gresy ■ Marcarini ■ Renato Ratti ■ Vietti	Piedmont	Italy
Dolcetto di Dogliani	Chionetti ■ Luigi Einaudi	Piedmont	Italy
Cannonau di Sardegna	Argiolas "Costera" ■ Contini ■ Dettori ■ Gabbas ■ Sella & Mosca	Sardinia	Italy
Cerasuolo di Vittoria; Frappato	COS ■ Planeta ■ Valle dell'Acate	Sicily	Italy
Etna Rosso	Benanti ■ Calabretta ■ Cottanera ■ Murgò ■ Spadafora ■ Val Cerasa	Sicily	Italy
Faro	Palari	Sicily	Italy
Lagrein	Abbazia di Novacella ■ Alois Lageder ■ Bottega Vinaia ■ Colterenzo ■ Franz Haas ■ Hofstätter ■ Tiefenbrunner ■ Elena Walch	Trentino–Alto Adige	Italy
Teroldego	La Vis ■ Cantina Rotaliana di Mezzolombardo ■ Roberto Zeni	Trentino–Alto Adige	Italy
Chianti Classico (non-Riserva)	Isole e Elena ■ Melini "Isassi" ■ Riseccoli ■ San Giusto a Rentennano ■ Tenuta di Lilliano ■ Villa Cafaggio	Tuscany	Italy
Chianti Rufina	Frescobaldi "Nippozzano" ■ Renzo Masi ■ Selvapiana	Tuscany	Italy

The remainder of our spicy red recommendations take you to Austria, Hungary, Greece, Portugal, and Spain, then to the Southern Hemisphere—Argentina, Chile, Australia, South Africa—and back to California, Oregon, Washington, and New York. Some of the wines below are varietal wines, while others go by regional names; we indicate the regional names with an asterisk.

WINE	PRODUCER/BRAND	REGION	COUNTRY
Malbec	Bodega Norton ■ Bodegas Salentein ■ Catena ■ Santa Julia ■ Terrazas ■ Trapiche	Mendoza	Argentina
Shiraz	Brown Brothers ■ Green Point ■ Petaluma	Victoria; South Australia	Australia
Blaufränkisch	Heinrich ■ Krutzler	Burgenland	Austria
Zweigelt	Heidi Schrock ■ Heinrich ■ Höpler ■ Pockl ■ Umathum	Burgenland	Austria
Syrah	Errazuriz	Aconcagua	Chile
Carmenère	Caliterra ■ Carmen ■ Concha y Toro ■ Santa Rita	Maipo, Rapel	Chile
Syrah	Casa Lapostolle ■ Montes	Rapel	Chile
Xynomavro	Boutari	Naoussa	Greece
Kadarka	Takler Estate	Szekszârd	Hungary
Alentejo*	Joao Portugal Ramos Marqués de Borba Reserva ■ Quinta do Carmo “Don Martinho”	Alentejo	Portugal
Douro*	Bago de Tourigo Gouvyas ■ Manuel Pinto Hepañol Calços do Tanha Touriga Francesca ■ Quinta de Couvelhas ■ Quinta de Santa Julia de Loureiro ■ Quinta do Cotto ■ Quinta Seara d’Ordens ■ Quintodo Vale da Raposa	Douro	Portugal
Estremadura*	Campania das Quintas “Prova Regia” ■ Quinta de Cidro ■ Quinta de Pancas	Estremadura	Portugal
Ribatejo*	Falua Duas Castas	Ribatejo	Portugal
Pinotage	Backsberg Estate	Paarl	South Africa
Pinotage	Kanonkop Estate ■ Middelvlei Estate ■ Simonsig Estate ■ Warwick Estate	Stellenbosch	South Africa

WINE	PRODUCER/BRAND	REGION	COUNTRY
Jumilla*	Carchelo ■ Olivares	Jumilla	Spain
Rioja*	Bodegas Muga ■ Marqués de Riscal ■ La Rioja Alta	Rioja	Spain
Toro*	Dehesa La Granja “Bodegas Alejandro Fernandez”	Toro	Spain
Monastrell	Tierra Salvaje	Penedès	Spain
Zinfandel	Burgess ■ Elyse Vineyards ■ Fife ■ Franus ■ Grgich Hills ■ Green and Red ■ Niebaum-Coppola “Edizione Pennino” ■ Sky Vineyard	Napa Valley (CA)	USA
Cabernet Franc	Castello di Borghese ■ Corey Creek ■ Gristina ■ Palmer Vineyards ■ Pellegrini Vineyards	North Fork of Long Island (NY)	USA
Pinot Noir	Davis Bynum ■ J Wine Company	Sonoma (CA)	USA
Pinot Noir	Saintsbury “Garnet”	Carneros (CA)	USA
Pinot Noir	Wild Horse Vineyards	Central Coast (CA)	USA
Cabernet Franc	W. B. Bridgman ■ Columbia Winery	Columbia Valley (WA)	USA
Syrah	Barnard Griffin ■ Columbia Winery ■ Gordon Brothers ■ Hogue Cellars ■ McCrae Cellars ■ Owen-Sullivan ■ Snoqualmie ■ Thurston Wolfe	Columbia Valley/ Yakima Valley (WA)	USA
Lemberger	Covey Run ■ Hogue Cellars “Blue Franc” ■ Hoodsport ■ Kiona	Columbia, Yakima Valleys, WA	USA
Lemberger	Fox Run Vineyards	Finger Lakes (NY)	USA
Zinfandel	Cline Cellars ■ Marietta Cellars ■ Preston ■ Quivera ■ Rabbit Ridge ■ A. Rafanelli ■ Sausal ■ Seghesio ■ Trentadue	Sonoma (CA)	USA
Pinot Noir	Amity ■ Anne Amie ■ Elk Cove ■ Eyrice Vineyards ■ Sokol Blosser “Meditrina”	Willamette Valley (OR)	USA

WINES ON THE MOVE: THE THREAT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

Part of what makes this taste category so appealing is its inherent diversity, born of the fact that so many unusual grape varieties make wines in this style. These wines really are all about their individual grape varieties and less about their winemaking techniques.

But winemakers today face tremendous pressure to make wines that are international rather than ethnic in style—to make rich, soft, dense wines with ripe, fruity flavors and a polish that comes from oak aging. Such wines receive high scores from wine critics, command international respect, and garner high prices. When winemakers attempt to mold their Malbecs, Cabernet Francs, or Zweigelts into the international style, the wines can lose their innate beauty. Like so many long-haired, lip-glossed, bleached-smile contestants in a Miss Universe competition, spicy red wines can normalize to boring sameness.