

The Wine Lover's Dream List

Places to explore, foods to savor, wines to enjoy—the essential experiences you must have before shrugging off your mortal coil.

BY KELLY A. MAGYARICS

*S*omeone once said that life is too short to drink cheap wine. Indeed, time spent on earth is blinkingly fast and undeservedly fleeting. But those who enjoy the sublime pleasure of good food and wine shared in the presence of cherished friends are obliged to live a little more intensely, and dream a little bigger. Maybe you have a desire to play winemaker on the West Coast; a longing to sip Sauvignon Blanc on the rugged islands of New Zealand; or would simply be content to get your hands on some to-die-for selections whose contents must pass your lips before you cross over to the great wine cellar in the sky. We've compiled a few of our wishes and dreams and asked industry insiders for theirs. So open a stellar bottle, settle in, and read on for inspiration to help you start creating your personal checklist of must-have wine experiences.

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WOLFGANG PUCK

Award winning chef and restaurateur.

Dream Wine: There are too many—it's too complicated to select just one. But I do enjoy Champagne from the early 1950s, 1947 Cheval Blanc and great old Burgundies.

Dream Dish: During white truffle season in Piemonte, I love eggs scrambled with them and a Barolo from a good year. I also love baby lamb chops with a good Côtes du Rhône.

Dream Wine Destination: Obviously the Wachau—especially for the wiener schnitzel and fine Grüner Veltliners.



The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of

You may assume those in the food and wine business would be jaded by their never-ending epicurean encounters, but you'd be wrong. Here, chefs, sommeliers, writers and more happily gush about and share favorite bottles, unforgettable dishes and where they like to savor the sweet life.



JIM MEEHAN

General manager of New York's PDT, the 2009 recipient of the award for the World's Best Cocktail Bar at Tales of the Cocktail. Meehan is known to use local wines in many of his inventive creations.

Dream Wine/Dish/Wine Destination: One of my favorite wine books is Edward Steinberg's *The Making of a Great Wine*, which tells the story of Angelo Gaja as the author follows the 1989 Sori San Lorenzo from field to glass. The first great wine I ever tasted was a Gaja Barbaresco poured by my brother, who used to work for the importer. After reading the book, which explains how Gaja practically single-handedly positioned wines from Italy among the best in the world, I would love to drink that wine with Gaja himself in Piemonte, during the fall, over a dinner of wild boar and the local delicacy—white truffles.



LESLIE SBROCCO

Wine author, consultant and judge on PBS television's "The Winemakers."

Dream Wine: Simple. Champagne. If I'm not dreaming about it, I'm drinking it. I dream of one day bathing in it. But unlike Marilyn Monroe, I'll have a big straw.

Dream Dish: Foie gras and dry Sherry. I'm salivating now just thinking about rich, creamy foie offset by the elegant grip of an Amontillado VORS (Thirty Year, Very Old Rare Sherry). It's a decadent discovery.

Dream Wine Destination: With so many seductive wine regions dotting the globe, I spend my life in permanent exploration mode. The irresistible siren call of New Zealand, however, brings me back time and time again. Not only does the country shine with aromatic whites, its reds are rising stars. Where else can you navigate glaciers, bungee jump over mountainous ravines and drink world-class Pinot Noir? All in a day's work.

GET OUT THERE!

Experience a taste of the day-to-day life of a winemaker, and discover that it's one part wine and roses, and at least three parts blood, sweat and tears.

Crushpad (crushpadwine.com) At this San Francisco-based, state-of-the-art winemaking facility, you are an integral part of the process, from selecting vineyard sources, checking in on growing conditions, and making fermenting and aging decisions. If you don't live in the Bay Area, no matter—you can check on your baby virtually and receive tasting samples.

Long Island Wine Camp (winecamp.org) Four-day food and wine experience offered several times a year on Long Island's North Fork. Learning sessions and tastings, plus a case of wine.

Vint Hill Craft Winery (vinthillcraftwinery.com) Select local Virginia grapes or from California, and ponder decisions like barrel type, acid and sugar levels, yeasts, enzymes and tannins—and finally, design labels.

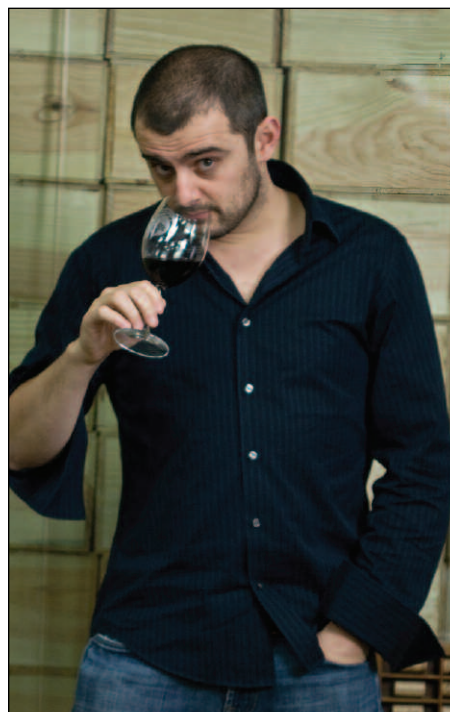
GARY VAYNERCHUK

Entrepreneur, and host of the popular site WineLibraryTV.com.

Dream Wine: A wine loaded with a root beer flavoring upfront, finishing off like the feeling you get when the New York Jets win a Super Bowl. It would be awful not to mention the fantastic mid-palate that is tight, fresh and focused and acts as the perfect half time for this wonderful wine.

Dream Dish: One that mixes sweet breads, caviar, West Coast oysters and bacon.

Dream Wine Destination: Baja California, Mexico because I have never been there. I really believe in the wines I have tasted so far, and it fascinates me.



ZANE LAMPREY

Host of the cult sensation "Three Sheets," on its fourth season on Fine Living Network, for which he travels around the globe and drinks.

Dream Wine: The more I learn about wine, the more it's ruined for me—I can now more easily pick out flaws and structural things that just don't work, so a wine has to be pretty

good for me to enjoy it. I toured Tuscany in a Ferrari, tasting Sangiovese—that was obviously pretty amazing.

Dream Dish: On the St. Martin episode, we had seafood and barbecue made by this French local that was just perfection.

Dream Wine Destination: I could never pick just one, but how can you really get better than the South of France or Tuscany in summertime? New Zealand and Croatia are also gorgeous, and it's mind boggling to look at a European chateau and ponder how that person's house is older than my country.

PHOTO CENTER RIGHT BOBBY QUILLARD

ANDREA IMMER ROBINSON

Master Sommelier, author, Dean of Wine Studies at the French Culinary Institute, host of "Simply Wine, With Andrea Immer" on the Fine Living Network, and "Pairings with Andrea" on the Food Network.

Dream Wine: Since it is a "dream list" I am not putting my usual price filter on. My dream wine without a doubt is Domaine de la Romanée-Conti Le Montrachet.

Dream Dish: The dream dish (to go with the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti Le Montrachet) is my husband John's lobster pasta with vanilla bean butter sauce, but prepared by Thomas Keller so it is perfectly sourced and prepared without me having to sacrifice my husband to the fish store and the stove.

Dream Wine Destination: Napa Valley. Yes, I live here so what could I be thinking? But seriously, I pinch myself every day on the drive to preschool as I see the golden light of morning and then later the purple light of dusk over the vines, the foothills and then the Mayacamas and Mt. St. Helena. Of all the great wine destinations, you cannot beat Napa for the warmth of welcome, the quality of food and hospitality, and the proximity of it all. There are no slogging-long drives to get from one magical place to the next. There is rarely bad weather. Plus there are wonderful wine families that make you confident the Napa Valley and its wine and farming culture are in good hands for the long haul.

OMG WINES

We're not going to split hairs and debate the merits of one producer over another, but just be sure to get your hands on a bottle of each of these wine styles during your lifetime. Trust us.

Aged German Riesling: The delicate peach, citrus and floral notes of their youth evolve over time into enticing petrol and wet stone aromas and flavors. Since German Riesling's bracing acidity and residual sugar act as preservatives, these beauties are gorgeous when they are staggeringly aged.

Perfectly mature First Growth Bordeaux: Though the tannins can be overpowering and rough when first bottled, as the years pass they fall out as sediment, rendering a bottle that's balanced and smooth, with secondary characteristics of cedar and leather. Impatient types can buy already aged bottles from a reputable retailer for instant gratification.

California cult Cabernet: Fruity and unabashedly bold, big wines like these command hefty price tags. But there's a good reason for that: the painstaking care that goes into each bottle and the über-small yields result in concentrated, over-the-top flavors. Succumb to the powerful hold these wines have over their legions of fanatics.

Grower's Champagne: Unlike in other wine regions, in Champagne it's very unusual for a winemaker to also grow the grapes. That's what makes these sparklers so extraordinary, and so satisfyingly quaffable.

Any wine produced and sipped locally: If you have ever swooned over a glass sipped on a winery patio that overlooks the very vineyard where the grapes are growing, just keep in mind that the same bottle poured at home will never taste as amazing. So drink up the wine (and the experience).



CAT CORA

Author, and the first and only female Iron Chef on Food Network's "Iron Chef America."

Dream Wine: I just created my dream wine called "Coronation." I partnered with Leslie Rudd and Rudd Vineyards and it is dynamite. Coronation blends the right balance that I have always loved in my wines, and is truly representative of the wine country for me.

Dream Dish: I love a delicious slow-cooked lamb shank with a really rich reduction, gigantes beans, gremolata and a big red wine.

Dream Wine Destination: There are many but right now, I would love to see Argentina's wine region and taste their great bife de chorizo and chimichurri made by the locals. And their Malbecs are slammin'!



MICHEL RICHARD

Award-winning chef and owner of Washington, D.C.'s Citronelle and Central.

Dream Wine: I love Châteauneuf du Pape, and Château Rayas is one of the best. Normally I like to share my food and wine with good friends, but when I open this bottle, I don't want to share with anyone.

Dream Dish: Roasted chicken with garlic and potatoes. Growing up we used to grab a chicken right from our yard. In our household, my mother would serve one chicken for eight people, and it was considered polite to take the worst cut of chicken and pass the plate, leaving the better pieces for the next person at



the table. I had a trick though—I used to leave the table to go to the bathroom, and when I came back, voilà, the moist and tasty leg would be left on the plate, waiting for me. Every time I eat a garlic chicken, I feel like I am twelve again.

Dream Wine Destination: Napa Valley. I have thirty years of wonderful memories there. I like spending time with the winemakers—they are like super chefs, with the same love for the wine as we have for our food in the kitchen. I love to be in the rows and rows of vineyards, everything is so neat and so perfect. There is something so special about being where all the excellence of food and wine come together.

ALDO SOHM

Sommelier at New York City's Le Bernardin, and winner of the 2008 World's Best Sommelier competition.

Dream wine: Although that changes depending on my mood, currently it is the 1959 Château Haut-Brion.

Dream Dish: The Pork Belly Buns at [New York's] Momofuku.

Dream Wine Destination: For the scenery it is Patagonia in Argentina. For the wines it is Burgundy. **WF**



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