



OVERCOMING A WINE RUT
John Mitchell, sommelier and wine director at Stella! in New Orleans, lends advice to those bored with standard sips.

John Mitchell is a master at piquing guests' palates in unexpected ways. Last year, the ambitious wine director redesigned his by-the-glass program to feature only Greek options; this fall, he converted his bottle list from French to Spanish. We asked Mitchell for some fresh, esoteric alternatives to crowd-pleasing favorites destined to prevent tongue tedium.

If you sip Chardonnay, try Godello.

Mitchell says Chardonnay lovers will be drawn to the orchard fruit flavors found in this grape native to Galicia, Spain. Oak aging draws out tropical aromas and a rounder mouthfeel.

If you sip Riesling, try Assyrtiko. Assyrtiko grows in the hot volcanic soils on the Greek island of Santorini, "but still retains all of this beautiful acid and citrus, with shockingly great minerality," says Mitchell, adding that he's often amazed at its similarity to classic Riesling.

If you sip Pinot Noir, try Nerello Mascalese. The high-elevation vineyards near Mt. Etna in Sicily are home to this elegant grape, which shares red fruit characters similar to wines from Burgundy, France. "The aromatics, along with their high acidity, make them incredibly wonderful with food or on their own," he says.

If you sip Syrah, try Mavrodaphne. Greece's Peloponnese region and the island of Cephalonia produce this grape, which is often used to make dessert wines. Mitchell prefers the dry versions, which he describes as dense, with juicy black fruit and Syrah's peppery, meaty qualities. —**KELLY MAGYARICS**

los angeles wine bars



Andaz West Hollywood

Los Angeles is a great big freeway. Walking from wine bar to wine bar is impossible, so jump in a car, or better yet, a taxi, and check out some of the best that Los Angeles has to offer. The city is blessed with lots of bars serving California wine, but you have to look a bit harder to find international wine lists. Here are three that serve up a broad worldview. —**M.D. & J.J.**

Primitivo Wine Bistro (primitivowinebistro.com) in Venice has over 60 wines by the glass, including those from China, Morocco, Greece and Lebanon, as well as Old World standards from France, Spain and Italy. You can get a 2.5-ounce tasting pour, a five-ounce glass, or splurge for the whole bottle.

Located on hip Sunset Boulevard in way-cool West Hollywood, the **Andaz West Hollywood** (westhollywood.andazhyatt.com) boasts 20 wines by the glass, four premium sparkling wines and many more by the bottle. Some of the standout

by-the-glass offerings are Domaine Gilles's 2005 Pinot Noir from Nuits-St.-Georges in Burgundy, and the hard-to-find Domaine de la Ragotterie's 2004 Pineau des Charentes Blanc from the southwest of France. But why not order a bottle of Champagne, sit back and hold hands with the one you love as the sun sets dramatically over the Hollywood hills? Sinfully delicious triple-fried French fries drizzled with truffle oil and an artfully presented Cowgirl Creamery cheese plate are some of the favorite bites of the see-and-be-seen crowd.

If you're heading out for a game at Dodger Stadium or a concert at the Greek Theater, stop in for a glass or two at **Barbrix** (barbrix.com) in Silver Lake, and don't forget to taste a few of chef Don Dickman's small plates. With more than 20 wines by the glass and about 60 offerings by the bottle, the wine list covers the globe and has a few notable mentions from Hungary, Uruguay and Greece, as well as Italy, Austria, Spain and France.