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Best summer red wines to drink chilled

There are plenty of red wines that you can drink slightly chilled in the summer months, contrary to popular myth. Here is our guide to your options, with expert advice on how to chill wine quickly if you're pushed for time.



Ellie Douglas
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Yes, you most definitely can drink red wines chilled.

This probably isn't the best way to enjoy that 2005 claret you've been lovingly ageing, but chilling down lighter styles of red – think good primary fruit and low tannin – can be a great alternative to whites and rosé in the summer months.

Red wine styles to think about chilling:

Beaujolais plus **Gamay** wines from other areas if you can find them, such as Oregon or South Africa.

Valpolicella Classico or wines made with **Corvina grapes**

Lighter styles of **Pinot Noir**

Some **Loire Valley Cabernet Franc**

Frappato

Dolcetto

There are many more, of course, and winemaking style is also important. You don't want too much oak, for instance.

What you need to know about chilling red wine

Sarah Jane Evans MW, co-chair of the **Decanter World Wine Awards**, said that 'as a rule of thumb, the cheaper and/or simpler the red wine the more it will benefit from being served cool or chilled.'

‘Think of the refreshing rustic reds served straight from the fridge in tumblers in Mediterranean bars.’

If price seems a bit of blunt instrument, then consider being wary of tannin and over-use of new oak, in particular. Focus on fresher styles with good primary fruit flavours.

‘Chilling emphasises tannin and oak, so be careful to serve a well-structured red only a few degrees cooler than usual,’ said Evans.

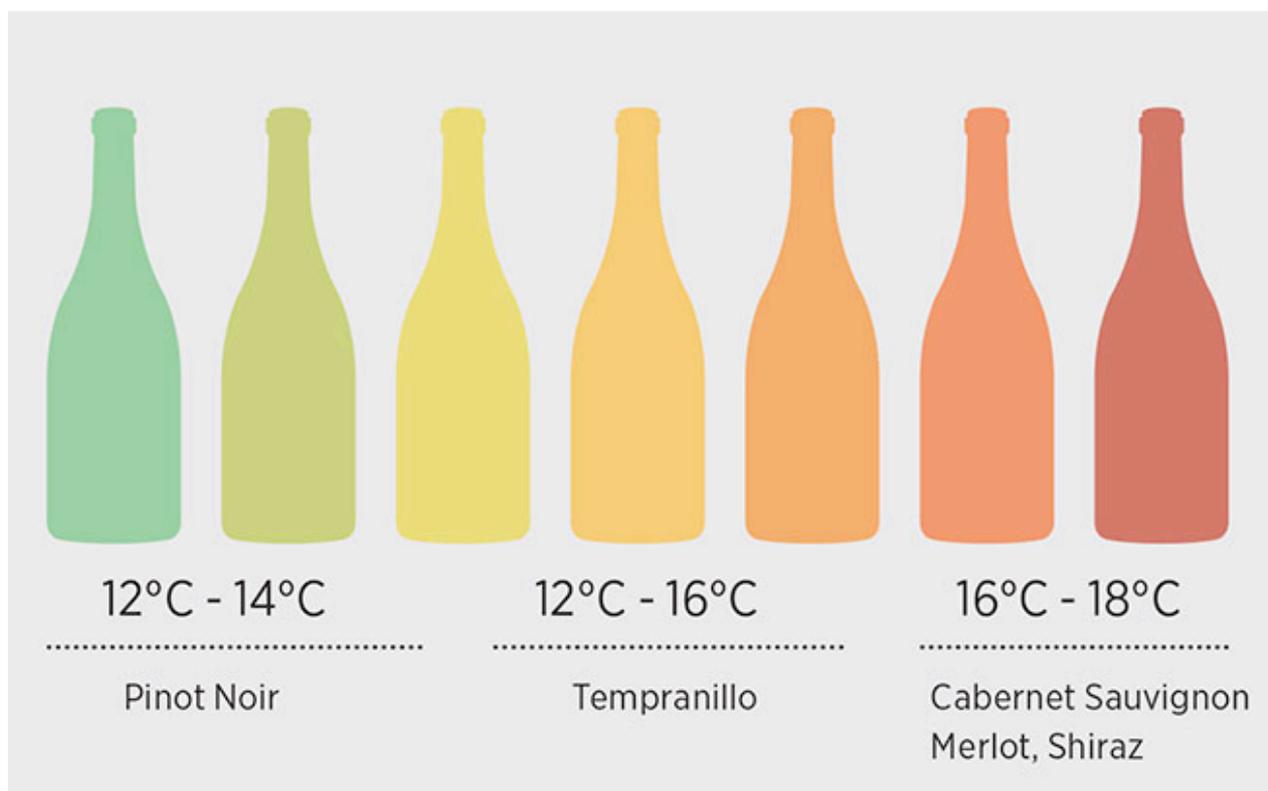
One reason why stainless steel vats can be used in wineries, and sometimes also concrete, is to help protect those fresh, primary fruit flavours in at least a portion of the wine.

A pale colour can also be a good indicator, because it suggests lighter extraction in the cellar.

How long to chill red wine for

‘Good summer reds should be served at 10°C-16°C (50°F-60°F)’ says Peter Richards MW, in his upcoming tasting of lighter summer wines, in the September 2020 issue of Decanter.

‘That’s significantly cooler than many a summer’s day, so don’t be afraid to pop them in the fridge for 30 minutes before serving if the weather’s warm.’ Evans also recommends putting a wine in the fridge for half-an-hour, which will particularly tone down the sensation of soupy warmth in a relatively high alcohol red.



Credit: Annabelle Sing/Decanter

Don't go too far, said Matt Walls, *Decanter's* lead reviewer for the **Rhône**, in the July 2017 issue of *Decanter* magazine.

'Cool down too much and aromas and flavours become muted, tannins take on an astringent quality and the wine can feel unpleasantly tight,' he said.

Should you ever chill a full-bodied red wine before serving?

The short answer is yes, sometimes. Have you ever been served a red wine too warm? It can easily happen, especially in hotter climates.

Even for full bodied reds, such as Cabernet Sauvignon or Shiraz, it's important to stop the wine getting too warm before serving.

'For a red wine, much warmer than 18°C is too high,' said Walls. 'Its flavours become blurred and soupy, its structure softens and alcohol becomes more noticeable.'

'Chill it down slightly and flavours come into focus, alcohol becomes less apparent, structure tightens up and the wine is more refreshing to drink.'

Quick tips for chilling red wines if you don't have much time

By Matt Walls

- 1.** Place the bottle in an ice bucket filled with ice and some water for about 10-15 minutes, but do take regular sips to make sure you're not over-chilling the wine.
 - 2.** A cool sleeve, such as the Le Creuset Cooler Sleeve, is less messy. Since most of these can be flattened, they can also be used as a cushion to keep decanters of red wine cool. Alternatively, use a decanter with an ice compartment.
 - 3.** If your red has been stored at around 20°C, pop it in the fridge for 25-30 minutes; set the timer on your oven or your phone so you don't forget to remove it.
 - 4.** If you're in a hurry, 8-10 minutes in the freezer will suffice, but more gentle methods are preferable.
 - 5.** Use a plastic or metal wine cooler to keep the temperature low once it's out of the fridge or freezer, or an ice bucket filled with cool water and ice cubes.
- Red wines to chill, reviewed by our experts
Wine recommendations updated July 2020.



Bonterra, Young Red, Mendocino County, California, USA 2018

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Is this a rosé? Not really, but in the right light you'd be forgiven for thinking it was. It is, in fact, the hard-press from Bonterra's rosé crush with a splash of Malbec added back in. It has a ruby hue and a nose of candy floss and raspberry jam....



Tetramythos, Agiorgitiko Nature, Peloponnese, Greece 2018

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The ideal wine to showcase Agiorgitiko's varietal typicity, unadorned by oak. Organically produced from north-facing vineyards at 715m altitude, the wine ages on lees for five months before being bottled unoaked, unfinned and unfiltered. The vivid deep cherry colour in the glass gives a clue as to the style –...



Stolpman Vineyards, Love You Bunches Carbonic Sangiovese 2018
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The “Love You Bunches” Carbonic Sangiovese from Stolpman Vineyards is a great example of the fun-loving, laid-back culture that permeates even the most serious Santa Barbara County wine projects. Meant to be drunk chilled, the nose here is juicy and grapey with a wonderful, perfumed funk hanging in the background....



Santa Tresa, Rina Russa Frappato, Terre Siciliane, 2019

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A perfect summer red: fresh, crisp and easydrinking. Made from organic grapes grown just 8km from the sea, there's a real vibrancy to both the palate and nose, which is packed with bright cherry and raspberry aromas. Vibrant acidity, no oak and no discernible tannin; just pure, fresh red berry...



Monte del Frà, Bardolino, Bardolino, Veneto, Italy, 2018

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The Bonomo family's estate is east of Lake Garda, 15km from Verona. This light, easy-drinking, Corvina-dominant red has cranberry, redcurrant and fresh cherry fruit, plus baking spices. Serve slightly chilled with antipasti.



Henri Bourgeois, Les Bonnes Bouches Sancerre Rouge, Loire, France 2016
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Made by leading Sancerre producer Henri Bourgeois, this is Pinot Noir from 40-year-old vines, aged in French oak for eight months. Fresh and food friendly, it has spicy, smooth cherry fruit and definite oak influence on the palate, though in balance. Expensive unless you buy it as part of a...



Sainsbury's, Taste the Difference Marzemino, Trento, 2018

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The Marzemino grape is planted throughout northern Italy, where it's often used in blends. Its main claim to fame is a mention in the opera Don Giovanni – just before his deliverance to hell, Don Giovanni calls out for a glass of Marzemino: 'Versa il vino! Eccellente Marzemino!' More heavenly...



Domaine Joel Delaunay, Gamay, Touraine, Loire, France, 2018

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In the Cher Valley on clay/silex soils. This is a great example of why Loire Valley Gamay should not be overlooked. Fine balance between bright, crisp cherry fruits, soft tannins and a distinctly mineral finish.



Marks & Spencer, Paul Sapin, Beaujolais, Fleurie, 2017

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Winemaker Jérôme Donzel's excellent entry-level Fleurie from 40-year-old vines ticks all the expected boxes. Semi-carbonic fermentation has resulted in a fragrant, elegant Fleurie that shows plenty of ripe strawberry fruit flavour, bright acidity and a savoury note to finish.



Kutch, Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, California, USA, 2017

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Succulent, bright and charming, this blend from Kutch's single vineyards is the winery's best value. It brims with vibrant red cherry flavours and floral aromas; whole-cluster fermentation has added spice, though it lacks a bit of finish. Despite the October fires, Sonoma Pinot Noir did well in 2017, as grapes...