

Best reds for summer chilling

If there's only so much crisp, dry white you can take when the weather turns warm, fear not - it's okay to chill a red from time to time. Matt Walls explains why and how, recommending 25 cool candidates

IS IT ME, or does eating strawberries on a grey winter's day feel a bit wrong? Seasonality has been embraced by restaurants and home cooks alike; and there's no denying the superiority of local produce that's freshly picked.

Wine isn't as strictly seasonal, but I'm sure most wine lovers get the difference between a 'fireside red' and a 'picnic red'. When it's cold outside I want something warming, velvety and luxurious. In warm weather, I instinctively reach for a red that's juicy, crisp and refreshing - and lightly chilled.

Most reds taste their best when cool, but some red varieties and styles take better to chilling than others.

Chilling whites is straightforward enough; getting reds to the right temperature isn't quite so easy, but there are several methods to try. And it's worth it - much is made of >

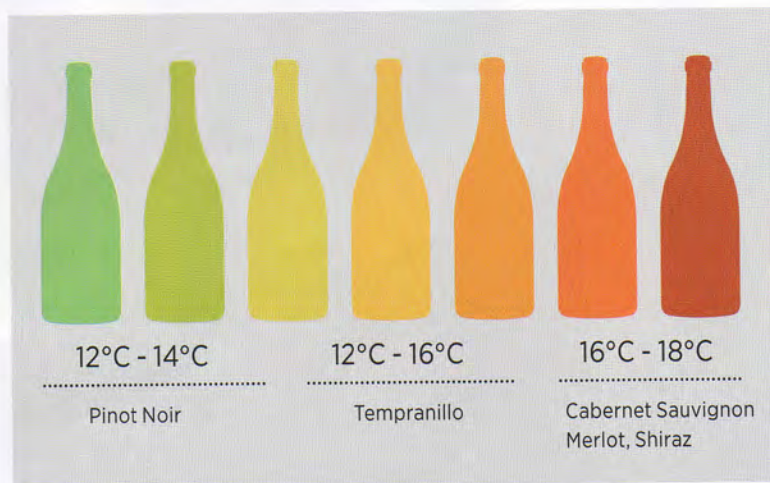


Quick tips for chilling your reds

The ideal solution is a dedicated wine fridge for reds from a reputable supplier such as Eurocave. But if you don't have the space or the budget, then try the following to lightly chill your reds:

- 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 overchilling the wine
- 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
- 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
- If you're in a hurry, 8-10 minutes in the freezer will suffice, but more gentle methods are preferable
- 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

Photograph on previous page: Mike Prior



Above: recommended serving temperatures for a range of popular red wine varieties

decanting and glassware, but when it comes to serving your reds, getting the temperature right is also crucial.

Don't sweat it

Which red wines are best served cool? That's easy – all of them. The myth that red wines should be drunk at room temperature comes from the old French verb *chambrier* – to bring something up to room temperature. But this was before the advent of central heating, and was indicative of a temperature rather lower than the 20°C that is typical today.

Christopher Delalonde MS is beverage manager at London's Bleeding Heart restaurant group, and he has noticed: 'Some people like their wines *chambré*, but not so much now. "Room temperature" in the



Above: a service fridge in a restaurant – 16°C-18°C is the recommended temperature for most reds

21st century – what does that mean anyway? At 9am or at 10pm? It doesn't mean anything.'

Many years ago, (cooler) room temperatures coincided with drinking temperature. Now it doesn't, so we need to serve wine differently. For a red wine, much warmer than 18°C is too high; 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. But take care not to chill red wine too far. Much below 12°C and aromas and flavours become muted, tannins take on an astringent quality and the wine can feel unpleasantly tight.

What works, what doesn't

Though all reds appreciate a little chilling, some benefit more than others. Laurent Richet MS is head sommelier at Restaurant Sat Bains in Nottingham. As a rule, he keeps his service



Photograph: Cultura RM / Alamy Stock Photo

fridges for red wines at 16°C, but some reds such as Châteauneuf-du-Pape he prefers to serve at around 18°C because 'it's more full-bodied and has more alcohol'.

'If it's a hot day,' Richet continues, 'I go for a lighter-bodied wine that's easy to enjoy cooler, say 10°C-12°C – Blaufränkisch, German Pinot Noir, Valpolicella chilled would be absolutely beautiful. Try a Morellino di Scansano on a hot day with a barbecue.' He also suggests fruitier styles of New World wines.

Delalonde suggests Barbera, Bobal, Cabernet Franc, Dolcetto, Gamay, Garnacha, Pinot Noir or Syrah as 'varieties you can chill down that will still provide fruit and juice without locking the tannic structure'. He adds: 'Sangiovese also works as long as it's not too oaked.' To this list, I would add Cinsault, Lagrein, Mencía, Poulsard and Zweigelt, though there are countless other lesser-known grapes that would also fit the bill: Agiorgitiko, Frappato, Grolleau, Refosco...

'If there's a link,' says Delalonde, 'it's the crunchy acidity that maintains the freshness.' Often, these red grapes produce wines that >

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Right: special sensors on Taylors' wine labels help consumers to cool the wines to the correct serving temperature



'With lighter red varieties you need to start with the purest fruit quality possible'

Alex Dale,
Radford Dale

rely on bright acidity for structure more than tannic heft. But more than the grape variety *per se*, it's the style of wine that counts when it comes to choosing a warm-weather red for chilling. A good rule of thumb is to choose a young wine with juicy fruit, crisp tannins and vibrant acidity.

Low alcohol is another welcome attribute in wines designed to quench your thirst. Alex Dale is founder and co-owner of Radford Dale in Stellenbosch, South Africa. He makes two red wines under the Thirst label: a Gamay at 11% alcohol and a Cinsault at just 10%. When making reds that are good to chill, he says: 'You need to start with the purest fruit quality possible with lighter red varieties such as Cinsault, Gamay and Pinot Noir. Picked at

lower sugar levels, naturally fermented – including carbonic maceration – and free of oak, you have all you need for making refreshing red wines.

'With naturally higher acidity, daintier fruit and more elegant tannins, they also have lower alcohol levels as a bonus.'

Conversely, some wines don't take well to chilling. Oaky wines with big tannic frames, such as Bordeaux blends, Amarone and Brunello, don't work as well – their structure becomes too dominant and assertive. Older wines also perform better at the warmer end of the scale due to their more savoury, complex aromatics. As Dale puts it: 'Extracted, tannic, oaky and high alcohol reds are not refreshing, at whatever temperature you serve them.'

Top tips on choosing cool reds

- Cooler regions are typically a safer bet than hot ones. Think Austria, Germany, New Zealand, northern and western France, northern Italy and Sicily, northwest Spain, eastern Europe, coastal Chile and South Africa, as well as cool-climate US and Australia
- Winning grape varieties are Barbera, Blaufränkisch, Cabernet Franc, Cinsault, Corvina, Dolcetto, Gamay, Grenache, Mencia, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Zweigelt and lighter Nebbiolo and Sangiovese styles
- It's the style, however, that is more important than grape or region: go for light- or medium-bodied wines with fresh acidity and discreet, fine tannins
- A pale colour is a good indicator – it suggests the wine has undergone a light extraction and it therefore won't be intensely concentrated
- Juicy, fruity flavours work better than savoury notes, so opt for a young wine in preference to an old one
- Reds that have a slightly sweet fruit character can work well, as the impression of sweetness is lessened at cooler temperatures
- Avoid heavily oaked wines – oak tannins quickly appear dry and astringent when chilled
- Wines with modest alcohol levels tend to be more thirst-quenching by their very nature, so as a rule, the lower the alcohol the better

'Chill a red down and flavours come into focus, alcohol becomes less apparent and structure tightens up'

Set the temperature

Restaurants that take their wine service seriously should have fridges to keep their reds at the right temperature. If they don't, you'll have to request an ice bucket. Small domestic wine fridges can be bought for less than £500, and are a worthwhile investment if you're serious about getting maximum enjoyment from your red wines at home. But if you don't have one, there are plenty of other methods.

Ice buckets are messy, bulky to store and you need lots of ice readily available. A better option is the kind of chillable sleeve that you can store in the fridge or freezer and fits around the bottle. You can even use a decanter with a pocket for crushed ice. The problem with all of these methods is that without geeking around with a thermometer you don't know when you've hit the right temperature, so you risk under- or overchilling your wine.

The best method is simply to use your domestic fridge. Mine is set at 4°C and after 30 minutes a bottle of wine stored at 20°C is chilled to 16.5°C. There are several variables, but you can use this as a starting point for experimentation. The glass bottle keeps the wine cool for a while on the dinner table; place it in a metal wine cooler to retain the right temperature for longer.

Taylor's of Clare Valley, Australia (known as Wakefield in the UK), has come up with a smart solution. Sensors on the labels of their Promised Land and Estate ranges change colour depending on their temperature, with a guide to show you when to remove it from the fridge, meaning you don't have to rely on guesswork.

Stay cool

The subset of wines that work well slightly chilled is becoming broader, more exciting and fashionable, yet the wines are often well priced; I had no trouble selecting 25 different examples, all but one below £20 (p33). Perhaps it's because this style of wine isn't >

Right: chillable sleeves that are stored at freezer temperature present a good alternative to an ice bucket



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usually long-lived; most in my selection are best drunk this year or next. But a lack of longevity is not necessarily a shortcoming; ageability is overrated. Many of the most exciting new-wave wines coming out of Australia, California, Chile, South Africa and Spain are thrilling when young; the Sadie Family Wines Old Vine Series is a case in point.

These are not necessarily wines to meditate over, they're wines to refresh and invigorate. But that's not to say they lack complexity; and they all have character, drinkability and a sense of place. Thanks to their refreshment value, they come into their own in summer time; but, like me, you might find yourself warming to this style all year round. **D**

Matt Walls is an awarded freelance wine writer and author, publishing at www.mattwalls.co.uk

Walls' picks: 25 reds ideal for a little chilling



Domaine Georges Descombes, Morgon, Beaujolais, France 2015 93
£18 **H2Vin**

A beautifully pastoral wine from a stalwart of minimal intervention Beaujolais, this is joyful, but far from frivolous. Fleshy, textured black cherry fruit and aromatic turned earth flow from this natural and effortless expression of Morgon.

Drink 2017-2021 **Alcohol** 13%

El Viejo Almacén, Huaso de Sauzal País, Maule Valley, Chile 2014 93
£30.70 **Hedonism**

Renán Cancino rejects modern technology while turning his ancient, granite-grown País into a profoundly delicious wine. His lo-fi approach creates an aromatically wild wine with a tight, crystalline, saline finish. A great choice for thrill-seekers rather than purists. **Drink** 2017-2019 **Alc** 13.5%



August Kessler, N Pinot Noir, Rheingau, Germany 2012 92

£18.50 **Justerini & Brooks**
Kessler makes gorgeous Spätburgunders, and 2012 was a great year for German Pinot, as shown by his entry level N Pinot Noir, which is still going strong. Lively cherry fruit and a touch of pine sap; highly refreshing. **Drink** 2017-2018 **Alc** 13.5%

Comando G, La Bruja de Rozas, Méntrida, Spain 2015 92

£17.99 **Joseph Barnes, Vin Cognito**
A thrilling modern expression of Garnacha from granite soils high in the

Sierra de Gredos mountains southwest of Madrid. A lightly extracted, pale red that shimmers with saline red berry fruits. Elegant, mineral and refreshing. **Drink** 2017-2019 **Alc** 14.5%

Domaine Combiér, Cuvée Laurent Combiér, Crozes-Hermitage, Rhône, France 2015 92

£18.50 **Invinity**
2015 was a stunning vintage in Crozes-Hermitage. This example offers appetising aromas of smoky bacon, black olive and herbs – intense fruit too, but with no heaviness. It's beautifully tailored, and cut from exquisite Crozes cloth. **Drink** 2017-2021 **Alc** 13%



Elian da Ros, Le Vin est une Fête, Côtes du Marmandais, Southwest France 2014 92

£15 **H2Vin**
Blended from 40% Abouriou, 40% Cabernet Franc and 20% Merlot, this has discreet red berries on the nose and the most wonderful mouthfeel – smooth like silk pyjamas. Perfectly balanced, authentic and honest, it is quietly unforgettable. **Drink** 2017-2021 **Alc** 12.5%

Fedellos do Couto, Cortezada, Ribeira Sacra, Spain 2014 92

£19.95 **Vin Cognito**
100% Mencía from a schistous single vineyard above the river Sil. Fresh and juicy with plenty of impact, despite its lightness of body. The compellingly floral and peppery nose is irresistible. **Drink** 2017-2018 **Alc** 14%

Cossetti, Grignolino d'Asti, Piedmont, Italy 2015 91

£16.50 **The Knotted Vine**

Cherry in colour and flavour, this is a pale, fine-boned example of Grignolino with good mineral support. Light, with fine yet structured tannins, it's bright, vivid and perfectly balanced; as if drawn in red ink with a pin-point fountain pen. **Drink** 2017-2021 **Alc** 13%

David & Nadia Sadie, Pinotage, Swartland, South Africa 2015 91
£18.34 **OW Loeb**

These dry-farmed bush vines growing on granite soils produce an exceptional Pinotage. Full of violet and raspberry aromas, yet remains light-bodied with a twang of herbal bitters on the finish. Almost Italianate in structure. An elegant and sophisticated example. **Drink** 2017-2023 **Alc** 13.5%

Domaine de la Chapelle des Bois, Chiroubles, Beaujolais, France 2015 91

£12.50 **Stone Vine & Sun**
The highest of the 10 cru regions in Beaujolais, Chiroubles can be light – but not this exceptional 2015. Generously fruited but not over-extracted, this is refined and beautifully proportioned. Fresh and perfectly balanced, pure silk. Great value. **Drink** 2017-2021 **Alc** 13%

Envínate, Táganan Tinto, Tenerife, Spain 2014 91

£19.50 **Vintrepid**
A blend of esoteric local varieties grown on volcanic soils overlooking the Atlantic in Tenerife. Crunchy, spicy cranberry fruit and a tactile textural grain makes this sublimely drinkable and fresh. **Drink** 2017-2018 **Alc** 13.5% ➤

Walls' picks: 25 reds ideal for a little chilling (continued)

Hush Heath, Manoir Pinot Noir, Kent, England 2015 91

£18.99 **Harrods, The Wine Reserve, Vin Cognito, Whole Foods, Worth Bros**
English Pinot Noirs take well to light chilling. This highly successful example has pretty, defined redcurrant and cherry aromas with underlying herbal freshness. **Drink 2017-2018 Alc 11%**



Johan Vineyards, Farmlands Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon, USA 2015 91
£19.75 **Vinoteca**

A lovable biodynamic Pinot Noir produced without any additives by Norwegian ex-footballer Dag Johan Sundby. Bags of juicy Victoria plum and strawberry fruit pepped up with peppery spice. **Drink 2017-2019 Alc 13%**

Vino di Anna, Palmento, Etna, Sicily, Italy 2015 91

£16.70-£19.49 **Exel, Les Caves de Pyrene**
Closer to rosé than red, slightly cloudy. Made from 60- to 100-year-old Nerello Mascalese bush vines. Dangerously drinkable with vibrant acidity and a fine mineral streak, sketched out with great flair. **Drink 2017-2018 Alc 13%**



Elvio Cogno, Vigna del Mandorlo Dolcetto d'Alba, Piedmont, Italy 2015 90

£16.95 **Stannary St Wine Co**
Agreeably strict tannins help rein in the dark, fleshy fruits here; bramble, black cherry with liquorice and violets. Finishes dry and precise. A very drinkable, well-made Dolcetto - buttoned up and tucked in. **Drink 2017-2020 Alc 14.5%**

Sepp Moser, Sepp Zweigelt, Neusiedlersee, Burgenland, Austria 2015 90

£9.95-£11.99 **Drinkmonger, Kwoff, The Oxford Wine Co, Winetrust100, WoodWinters**
The fruit is pure black cherry, both fresh and in compote. Joyfully uncomplicated, with a light, juicy texture. Vibrant, but

balanced, acidity adding to the overall sense of precision. A delicious Zweigelt. **Drink 2017-2019 Alc 12.5%**

Te Mata, Estate Syrah, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand 2015 90

£15.95-£19.99 **Grape to Glass, Hailsham Cellars, Tanners**
Flowing silky red fruits indicative of its Bridge Pa and Woodthorpe origins. Aromas of violet, peony, raspberry, cranberry, star anise and sandalwood. Not terribly long, but expressive, vivid and detailed. **Drink 2017-2019 Alc 13%**

Ailala, Souson, Ribeiro, Spain 2015 89
£12.45 **Q Wines**

Based around the local Souson grape, this is deeply coloured with figgy fruits and fairly dense texture. It's relatively full-bodied for chilling, but it works thanks to the snappy acidity, clarity of plum and blueberry flavour and crunchy tannin. **Drink 2017-2020 Alc 13.5%**



Domaine Filiatreau, Saumur-Champigny, Loire, France 2015 89

£13.75 **Yapp Bros**
Unburdened by unnecessary winemaking in an excellent vintage, this Cabernet Franc has strawberry and raspberry fruit with underlying bramble bush hints. A dose of crunchy, youthful tannin completes the package. **Drink 2017-2020 Alc 12.5%**

Gala, Notios, Peloponnese, Greece 2015 89

£11.65 **Hallgarten Druitt & Novum, Strictly Wine**
A winning blend of 85% Agiorgitiko and 15% Syrah from unirrigated hillside vineyards. It has a smooth mouthfeel leading to a tapered finish, overlaid with blackberry and blackcurrant leaf aromas. Straight, grippy, harmonious, well-crafted. **Drink 2017-2020 Alc 13.5%**

Concerto Medici Ermete, Lambrusco Reggiano Rosso, Emilia Romagna, Italy 2015 89

£11.95 **Albion Wine Shippers, Corkage**

Guildford, Dago Wines, Duncan Murray, Hennings, Hedonism, Penistone Court, Valvona & Crolla, VinumTerra, Winetrust100

Remarkably complex: vibrant and defined ripe black cherry, black olive, liquorice and fresh pear. More foaming than sparkling, with well-balanced acidity and lasting, authentic fresh fruit flavour. **Drink 2017-2019 Alc 11.5%**



Radford Dale, Thirst Cinsault, Stellenbosch, South Africa 2016 89

£13.49 **Les Caves de Pyrene**
Between a red and a rosé, this is made with carbonic maceration, producing a light, floral, peppery cranberry aroma with a lightweight chassis. Real thirst-quencher. **Drink 2017-2018 Alc 10%**

Collavini, Pucino Refosco, Colli Orientali, Friuli, Italy 2015 88

£14.05 **Hallgarten Druitt & Novum, Wine Poole**
Refosco is a good option for light chilling thanks to its brightness of fruit teamed with tangy acidity. Bright black cherry and plum fruit, finishing with a cleansing tannic draw. **Drink 2017-2019 Alc 12.5%**



Madai, Origen Mencía, Bierzo, Spain 2015 88

£10.95 **Winetrust100**
A lightly floral Mencía from 80-year-old vines in Bierzo, with vibrant raspberry and clove in a supporting role. Just as light and vibrant on the palate with piercing acidity and some fine tannin. **Drink 2017-2018 Alc 13.5%**

Planeta, Cerasuolo di Vittoria, Sicily, Italy 2015 88

£11.80 **Carruthers & Kent, Tannico**
Herbal cherry and pomegranate aromas, discreet tannin and a slap of fruity acidity make this Nero d'Avola/Frappato blend a great option. Uplifting and refreshing. **Drink 2017-2018 Alc 13%**

For full details of UK stockists, see p106