

Our picks for the fourth

With July Fourth just a couple of days away, most Americans worth their barbecue sauce are thinking of the backyard grill. If it isn't a family gathering, Independence Day will be an occasion to get together with friends for some grilled pulled pork, burgers, ribs or anything wickedly bad for you.

Right, it's time to let loose. Abandon those diets, rid the brain of "no, I shouldn't," live for today. Eat away.



WINE, ETC.

By Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr

Most of us have been behind the grill for months now, so the duty station is hardly new. For the men, though, it's a chance to show some cooking genius because, as the stereotype goes, only men know how to grill. Our wives would disagree, of course, but they are willing to go along with the claim because it relieves them of some responsibility. And, well, the male ego remains intact if they do.

We like feasts where nearly every course is on the grill or smoker. We use the Big Green Egg for smoked salmon and pork — ribs, loin or pork butt. On the grill will go beer-can chicken, corn on the cob, vegetables, skirt steaks or whatever. If you come to our house, be prepared to hold a plate or wield some tongs when it gets crazy.

Wine is always present at our July Fourth barbecues. It is an occasion to stow away the serious wines and reach for the simple and fruity wines that thankfully are relatively inexpensive. If wine is your choice for the outdoor feast, we have a dozen of our top recommendations.

To start, we like to serve our guests a rosé or prosecco. Rosés are becoming more popular because they are delicious on a warm day and add a splash of color to the occasion without any sweetness to dampen the palate. As for the dinner wine, look for a fruity red wine that will marry well with ketchup-based barbecue sauces.

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We know this is a time to have a lot of fun, but please drink responsibly and don't drive drunk.

Las Rocas Rosé 2013 (\$14).

Made from grapes grown on 30- to 50-year-old vines, this Spanish garnacha is a perennial hit for us. It has luscious raspberry notes and a hint of spice and lime.

Cune Crianza Rioja 210 (\$14).

A blend of tempranillo (80 percent), garnacha tinta and mazuelo, this simple but delicious wine has nice cherry notes with a dash of spice and oak.

Cline Cashmere Red 2012

(\$17). This Rhone Valley blend includes mourvedre, syrah, grenache and petite sirah. Cherry and raspberry notes with enough body to match steak, chicken and pork. Delicious and versatile.

The Great American Wine

Company Red Blend by Rosenblum 2012 (\$16.50). This is straight forward uncomplicated blend of 74 percent zinfandel, 20 percent petite sirah and 6 percent cabernet sauvignon. The Rosenblum Company has made a \$100,000 contribution to military charities from the sale of this brand, which also includes a chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon. This is a nice summer quaffer that could be chilled to 55-60 degrees for outdoor drinking with soft, round and ripe cherry flavors and an easy drinkability.

Yalumba Y Series Shiraz-Viognier 2012 (\$14). The white grape viognier gives this wine an aromatic lift and moderates the juicy exuberance of shiraz. We like this Australian producer for its restraint and consistency.

Thorn-Clarke Shotfire Shiraz 2012 (\$20). A regular favorite of ours, this wine has an intense blackberry nose with flavors of plums and other dark fruit. Hints of chocolate and spice. Great match to burgers and pork.

Marietta Old Vine Red Lot 60 (\$15). This wine never fails to please. A motley collection of red grapes — mostly zinfandel — it has an irresistibly rich, ripe character that begs for a second glass. Smooth texture and fruit-forward style is a great match for anything with a ketchup-based sauce or even



with un-sauced chicken.

Dry Creek Vineyard Fume Banc Sonoma County Sauvignon Blanc 2013 (\$14). David Stare of Dry Creek Vineyards and Robert Mondavi pioneered the fume blanc style of sauvignon blanc in California modeling their wines after Sancerre from the Loire Valley. This wine is a fantastic classic California sauvignon blanc, exhibiting citrus, grassy flavors with a distinctive mineral streak. A very refreshing and distinctive white wine that should accompany many summertime meals especially those with fish and chicken.

Buena Vista The Count Founders Red Wine Sonoma County 2012(\$20). For those lovers of the currently en vogue California red blends this offering from Buena Vista is a winner. A blend of 44 percent zinfandel, 17 percent syrah, 13 percent merlot, 11 percent cabernet sauvignon, 10 percent petite sirah and 5 percent carignane, this beauty is seamlessly smooth and overflowing with ripe cherry flavors and a hint of vanilla.

J California Pinot Gris 2013 (\$16). Pinot gris is just another name for pinot grigio but used more often on the West Coast. This perennial favorite of ours has good acidity with classic pear, lemon and mineral notes.

Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio 2013 (\$18). Bone dry, this pinot grigio is like biting into an apple — crisp, juicy and delicious. Citrus notes round out an elegant wine.

Quivira Dry Creek Zinfandel 2011 (\$22). We thoroughly enjoyed this delightful wine — a perennial favorite. It is blended with a bit of petite sirah, carignane, syrah and even cabernet sauvignon to give it more complexity and broader flavors. The result of this melange is a profile that ranges from raspberries and blackberries to ripe, sweet cherries.

Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc 2012 (\$15). It seems like this New Zealand producer has been selling wine with screw tops in the United States for decades. Each vintage we marvel at the freshness and exuberance of the classic New Zealand sauvignon blanc. Grassy aromas with citrus and stonefruit flavors are crisp and bright. All of its wines come adorned with screw caps.

Tom Marquardt is the retired editor and publisher of Capital Gazette Communications; Patrick Darr works in the local wine retail business. Some of the reviewed wines were provided as samples by the producers. To reach the authors or get help in finding a wine, go to their website at www.MoreAboutWine.com.