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~ WINEMAKING AT A HIGHER LEVEL ~

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Summer's Bounty Brings out the Best in Wines **What El Dorado Winemakers Are Drinking This Summer**

There's no better time to discover the intensity of fresh foods than summer. And El Dorado County is, for those seekers of freshness, the perfect place to enhance summer's bounty with wine.

So what are local winemakers eating and drinking during the hot days and cool nights of the season? Here's a hint: Their inspiration comes from nearby farms.

El Dorado County winemaker Vaughn Jodar will wait it out until the summer season bestows him with what he considers to be a perfect, indispensable ingredient.

"If summer was a flavor, it would taste a lot like a fresh, locally grown tomato," he says. "I wait for the hot weather to do its magic, and when the tomatoes are just right, I know just which wines to pair them with." For Jodar, a fresh bruschetta pairs perfectly with his silken 2005 Sangiovese, saying, "It just adores tomatoes and garlic. The delightful aroma and taste of strawberry jam in the wine really shine."

But he isn't the only winemaker in his region to love the casual, fresh food and wine pairings of the season.

Sierra Vista Winery's John MacCready drinks whites and pinks while his grill is in full operation all summer long. "We're grilling almost every day and we experiment with flavors," he says. A recent winner: chicken thighs marinated in apricot brandy marinade, paired with one of his newer whites — a refreshing Roussanne. "The 2006 vintage leads with citrus flavors like lime and lemon peel, making it the right choice when a hot day requires a cool balance," he says. Slices of locally grown stone fruits like nectarines, peaches and plums add to the dish's presentation.

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Paul Bush of Madroña Vineyards often craves rich flavors that will stand up assertively to a juicy steak or spicy chicken. For him, it's a Zin. "Summer's full bodied, spicy meats demand a wine that isn't shy or tentative," he explains. "This season, I'll entertain with our 2005 Zinfandel. I love it because of its bold marriage of fruit and spice with ripe plum, raspberry, cherry and pepper notes, and just a hint of clove and cinnamon." Bush says he will be drinking his classic El Dorado Zinfandel with another seasonal favorite: tree-ripened, grilled peaches and fresh goat cheese.

Lava Cap and Sierra Oaks are other El Dorado wineries that offer Zinfandels that belong near the grill or by the pool — perfect complements to slow, languorous summer evenings. The 2005 Lava Cap Reserve Zinfandel is capable of balancing a tangy BBQ sauce, while the smoky aroma and full body of the Sierra Oaks NV "Zinzabar," a blend of 62 % Zinfandel and 38% Barbera, works with grilled chicken or a nice Italian pasta dish. Top off these meals with a fresh berry cobbler and you have a winning summer treat.

For the full enjoyment of fresh fruits or quick stir-fries chock full of the season's best produce, Stefan Tscheppe of Perry Creek Winery suggests their 2006 Muscat Canelli. "The fresh character of this wine reminds me of tasting ripe grapes at harvest time," he says. A hint of melon and mint flavors, backed by a lively acidity and a hint of residual sugar, create a refreshingly fizzy sensation on the palate.

El Dorado winemaker Brian Fitzpatrick has a hard time choosing from so many wonderful wines during the summer season. "When the sun starts setting, we're scrambling for a quick and tasty meal to prepare and enjoy with a chilled glass of wine," he says. Fitzpatrick often recreates a favorite "tried and true" scallops recipe to go with his organically grown Sauvignon Blanc bearing the Irish name of Eire Ban. "We developed our recipe back in 1984, and we still look forward to preparing it today." He'll add a fresh salad or organically grown vegetables lightly tossed in olive oil.

Slices of toasted baguette and a summertime eggplant mixture are offered at Justin Boeger's home along with his favorite wines. Boeger, who is the winemaker for his family's business near Placerville, uses an Eggplant Caponata recipe developed especially for the winery's special events.

"I open up a bottle of our Primitivo to enjoy while I cook," he explains. "Then, I mix together fresh eggplant, basil, capers, tomato sauce and kalamata olives... I wouldn't be a Boeger if I didn't add a little of the wine to the mixture as well." His 2005 Primitivo is bold yet lush enough to work with the Caponata, due in part to its subtle acidity and soft tannins.

For more summer recipe ideas and our winemakers' fun wine pairing suggestions, visit the El Dorado Winery Association's website at www.eldoradowines.org/wine-recipes.html.

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Editor's Note: *The recipes mentioned are attached in this e-mail. Please let us know if we can provide you samples of any of these El Dorado wines.*