

WINEAWESOMENESS.COM

the backlabel®

FOR THE LOVE OF PIZZA

A MONTHLY WINE JOURNEY CURATED FOR ADVENTUROUS



THIS MONTH'S RECIPES BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



PIZZA CAMP IS THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ACHIEVING PIZZA NIRVANA AT HOME, FROM THE CHEF WHO IS MAKING WHAT BON APPETIT MAGAZINE CALLS “THE BEST PIZZA IN AMERICA.” JOE BEDDIA’S PIZZA IS OLD SCHOOL—IT’S ALL ABOUT THE DOUGH, THE SAUCE, AND THE CHEESE.

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By LOGAN LEE

FOR THE LOVE OF PIZZA



I first fell deeply in love with pizza in kindergarten. Truth be told, I probably fell in love with the cheesy, bread goodness as a toddler, but my first discernible pizza memory starts with the Pizza Hut BOOK IT! reading program. The Pizza Hut personal pan pizza might have motivated literacy more than any other single consumer good in the history of humankind, and for that, we're here to salute pizza, in all its delicious forms.

About 3 years ago, we similarly devoted the backlabel mag to the delectable food, but that month's edition focused on the pie's relationship with NYC. This edition is dedicated to making it easier to enjoy pizza in your casa and pairing it up with some adult grape juice, which leads us to introduce you to our new fave king of 'za...

We're super lucky to connect with the owner of Pizzeria Beddia and author of Pizza Camp, Joe Beddia, and get every little knowledge nugget on making kick-ass pizza right in the comfort of home. Whether you're living in a 50-square-foot NYC apartment or a palatial McMansion in the 'burbs, Joe has the tips and tricks to impress your posse with your pizza skillzzz. But be careful, once you master the pizza, you may find the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles showing up at your place for a feast post catching all the bad dudes in your neighborhood's sewer system.

This month, we're going through crusts, styles, sauces, and toppings. It's a pizza tour de force, but just as importantly, we've got some serious vino from across the globe to pair up with all the different types of slices. This month's red wine selections run the gamut from Tasmania to California to Spain to Uruguay to Italy. These reds will prove to remind you of some crowd-pleasing faves, but at the same time, we think you're going to meet some new faves from places just off the beaten path. And this month's whites hail from New Zealand, Italy, oh yeah, and some fancy AF bubbles from Spain!

So let's dig in! Learn a bit more about how to make some awesome slices. Discover wine from four different continents. And, hopefully, you'll share a bunch of fun times eating and drinking with friends and fam.

Cheers!
LL



2013 JOSEF CHROMY PEPIK PINOT NOIR

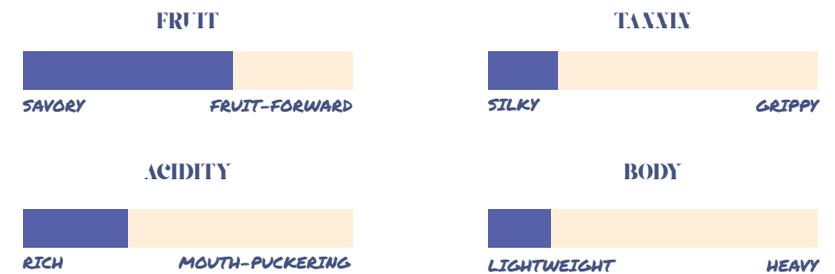
100% PINOT NOIR

TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

NOSE: Ripe, uber vibrant, and flesh-y black cherries in a fancy clay pot

PALATE: Plump cherries wrapped in candied rose petals and delicately sprinkled with black pepper

MOOD: Your best friend's wedding is coming up and you want to brush up on a few dance moves before the big day. You push the coffee table aside, bust out the speakers, and get twerkin'.



We know what everyone is thinking... Isn't Tasmania the home of the Tasmanian devil? Yep... it is, but it's also home to some seriously amazing wine! 'Pepik' is Josef Chromy's entry-level Pinot and it's an awesome intro to Tasmanian Pinot Noir. Vino from Tasmania is so good because of the climate, which is similar to Europe's mild summers, long autumns, and cool nights. The island is particularly perfect for producing high quality, elegant, yet affordable Pinot Noir! So that's exactly what we've found just for you.

The nose is like a fresh fruit stand popped up in the plant section of Home Depot. You'll find complex whiffs of clay pots combined with fresh cherry and red currants. The sippin' will cause straight up salivation. The palate is all about bright flavors of cherry, boysenberry, and dried fig that all ends with a spicy, leathery bang. This Tasmanian Pinot is your subtle winter warmer that doesn't hold you hostage in a flannel blanket like a big Cab Sauv.



Bake up a thin crust pie with red sauce and dollops of zesty goat cheese and a sprinkle of fresh herbs.



2017 SILICON VALLEY WINE CO. "ONESANDZEROS" RED

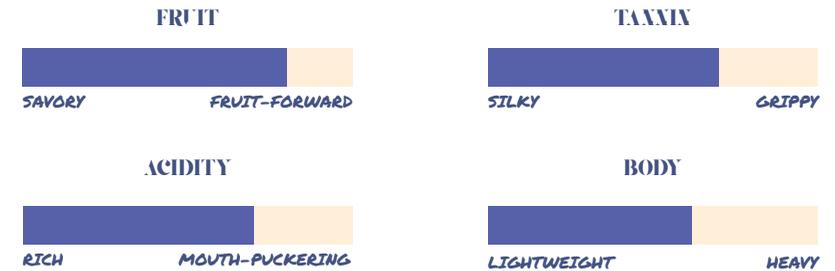
60% ZINFANDEL, 40% SYRAH

CALIFORNIA

NOSE: Like fresh rhubarb pie stashed in pop's cedar cigar box

PALATE: Like your senses got wrapped in a flannel blanket by a warm fire while notes of black currant and vanilla smolder slowly in the background.

MOOD: An especially frigid night means staying inside and throwing it back to childhood with a badass blanket fort in the living room.



The vino comes from a California young gun winemaker, Jason Goelz, who dreamed of making vino at 19 years old. Like a start-up founded in a garage, Goelz took 5000 bucks and started making wine in 2008 at the ripe age of 28. The nose on this winter warmer specialty is wafting of jammy dark fruit like rhubarb, macerated strawberry, and blackberry with bold notes of vanilla. The juice completely envelopes the mouth with the bold fruit that fades into a toasty, cuddling fire.

This Zin and Syrah blend will warm up even the most devastatingly cold winter's night. Sippin' this juice is like being held hostage in an electrically charged flannel blanket set on high. It's a wine made for snuggle time with bold, jammy flavors that swish all across your mouth.



Keep it warm and hearty with an Italian sausage and peppers pizza. Jazz it up with some crushed red pepper for an added level of heat.



2017 SVWC "THE DEVELOPER" CABERNET SAUVIGNON

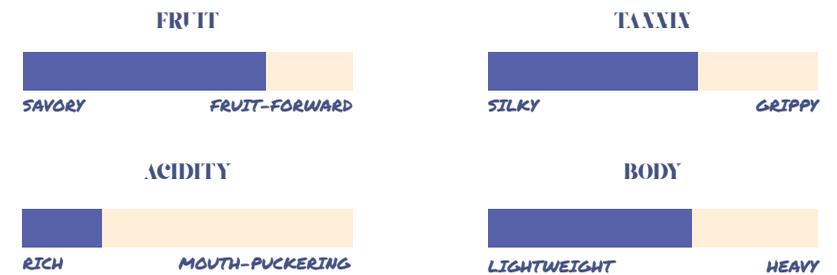
100% CABERNET SAUVIGNON

CALIFORNIA

NOSE: Black currant, clove, leather, and tobacco, like a hipster's shopping list

PALATE: A lush combination of dark chocolate, blueberries, and cherry cola create a sultry swirl of balanced juice with a big, jammy body.

MOOD: It's your one day of the month to treat yourself, and your budget allows for a faux-fancy solo picnic in the park with a fine selection of cheeses and the clear intention of catching a buzz.



It all started when a teenage kid was the designated driver for his family going wine tasting in Napa, CA. It was then, that Jason Goelz, future owner and winemaker, fell in love with the industry. Jason-Stephens Winery opened in October 2008 in the Santa Clara Valley of California, which is situated right on the cusp of America's home of tech businesses AKA Silicon Valley.

With its big body and jammy flavors, this juice definitely needs to be categorized in the winter warmer category. The nose is a complicated cornucopia of black currant, cloves, leathery tobacco, and cola. The sippin' is a delectable combo of dark chocolate, blueberries, and cherry cola. This is the vino perfect for cuddling up with on the sofa for steak night at your place.



This Cab Sauv calls for something bold to spar with. Bake up a braised lamb pizza with arugula and tzatziki drizzle.



2018 UGGIANO LUCERE CHIANTI DOCG

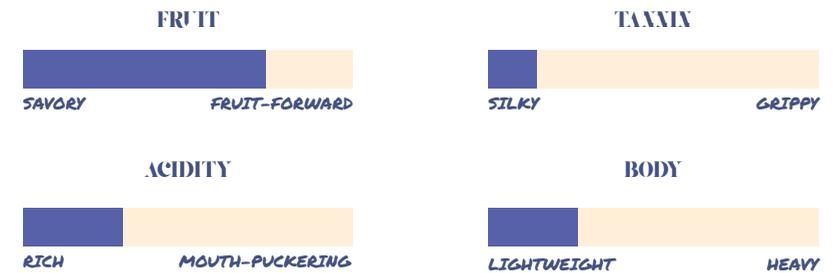
90% SANGIOVESE, 10% CANAILOLO

TUSCANY, ITALY

NOSE: Like cherries and wildflowers doing backflips on a balsamic trampoline

PALATE: A warm embrace of juicy, full, velvety texture that's rounded out by delicious plum and black cherry.

MOOD: With a little imagination and a lot of time spent on Google streetview, you track down the part of town with the most Tuscan vibe (which consequently is a park with a very small hill) and set up shop with an Italian-themed picnic.



Chianti is the most famous vino hailing from Tuscany, Italy, which is a powerhouse of a wine region just south of Florence that is also a mecca for art, food, and culture. Located just a few miles southwest of Florence is Azienda Uggiano. The winery was founded in 1976 and has made a name for itself by producing clean, modern, and fresh Chianti with a nod to the traditional food-friendly style of old.

The juice is a ruby red color with garnet hues. Bright red cherry jumps from the glass with layers of subtle wildflowers, violets, and balsamic notes that follow. The palate is juicy, full, velvety and round with plum and black cherry. The only thing that can make this vino a bit better is a big, cheesy slice of pepperoni pizza!



You can never go wrong with your own spin on a classic pepperoni pizza covered in melty Italian cheeses.



2018 BE BIKE GARNACHA

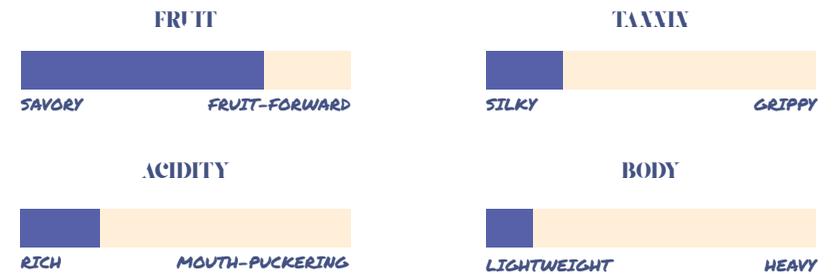
100% GARNACHA

NAVARRA, SPAIN

NOSE: Picking fresh red raspberries in a wonderland of fennel and anise

PALATE: Lush, velvety, and silky smooth with tons of fresh, ripe red fruit inhabiting a wild briar patch of herbs.

MOOD: You got roped into helping your friends move into their new apartment across town, but under two conditions: you pick the bottle and you've got exclusive control over the unpacking playlist.



This juice hails from the Spanish wine region dubbed Navarra, which is one of Spain's most diverse and ancient wine regions, and it surrounds the city of Pamplona AKA the town that hosts the running of the bulls. We're not 100% sure, but we're guessing the bike on this label was used to hightail it out of the way of some big ass bull horns. One thing we are sure of is that Navarra is home to some excellent Garnacha and this organic version is straight-up gulp-able.

The grapes are turned into wine in concrete tanks and aged in oak, but this process ensures the wine isn't just an oaky mess. The hue is an intense garnet that shows off ripe red fruit like raspberries, currants, and cherries laced with fennel and licorice. The sippin' is lush, velvety-y, and silky smooth with tastes of all the fresh and ripe red fruit rolled around in a wild briar patch of herbs.



Perfect for an all-out Spanish pork showcase with chorizo and serrano ham over a white sauce pizza.



2018 TRAVERSA CABERNET FRANC

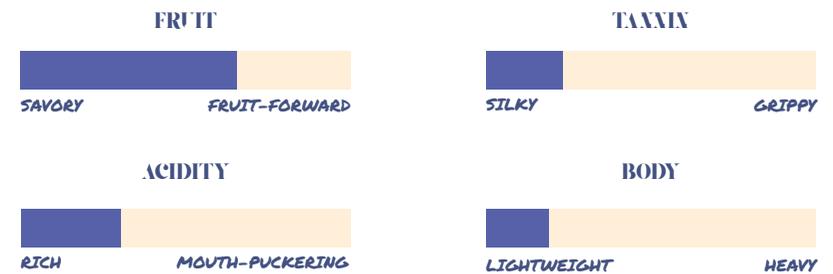
100% CABERNET FRANC

MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

NOSE: Like popping open a fresh jar of succulent, dried black cherries

PALATE: Bright and lip smacking with tastes of plum, herbs, and a touch of salty black olives

MOOD: It's chilly but not too chilly, which means it's finally time to fire up that little chiminea you got 2-day shipping on. You pour a glass and enjoy a cozy toast to yourself for ordering this charming source of warmth off Amazon.



Since 1956, the Traversa family has a legacy of three generations nurturing their vineyards in Montevideo. Using eco-friendly yet advanced methods, their wines reflect the terroir of the heartland of Uruguay's wine-growing regions. Terroir is just a fancy wine word meaning the wine develops the taste of a specific place.

These luscious Cab Franc grapes are picked by hand in the vineyards that are nestled against Uruguay's beach on the Atlantic Ocean. The juice is young and vibrant with an herbaceous nose that is like opening a canister of succulent, dried black cherries. The palate is bright and lip-smacking with tastes of plum, herbs, and a touch of salty black olives.



Creamy cheeses topped with sliced, salty black olives make for a simple and satisfying pizza right at home.

EATS



DOUGH

MAKES TWO 1-POUND (454-GRAM) BALLS
(EACH MAKES A PROPER 16-INCH / 40.5-CM PIE)

1 ½ cups (355 g) cool water

2 teaspoons sugar

About ½ teaspoon active dry yeast

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

3 ½ cups (500 g) all-purpose or bread flour

1 tablespoon + ½ teaspoon fine sea salt

IMPORTANT NOTE WHILE MAKING DOUGH: TURN YOUR PHONE OFF AND DON'T SPEAK; IT'S A GREAT TIME TO LISTEN, IT'S A GREAT TIME FOR NEW IDEAS, IT'S NOT BUSY, YOU ARE PRESENT, AND YOU ARE SOMEWHERE ELSE. MAKING DOUGH SHOULD BE A CALMING, MEDITATIVE PROCESS AND A GREAT TIME TO THINK OF NEW IDEAS ABOUT PIZZA, OR ABOUT LIFE IN GENERAL.

Pizza is bread. It's really simple and a little complicated at the same time. Dough takes planning to develop good flavor, and if you do it right you'll thank me later. You can make dough with a sourdough starter, but I've found that a nice, slow fermentation is more consistent and the results are always perfect. Sourdough can be unpredictable.

Find yourself a nice all-purpose or bread flour. I use organic flour, but regular King Arthur will do fine. Traditionally, four ingredients are used in making dough (flour, water, salt, and yeast), but we're adding sugar to help with fermentation and a little oil to relax and fatten the dough.

It took me a couple of years to come up with this process, which produces a dough with excellent flavor, a crispy exterior, and a chewy interior. These measurements are in metric, as traditional Italian recipes always are. This is how I initially learned how to do it. They are more exact, which is vital in baking.

Start out by whisking the water with the sugar and yeast in a large stainless-steel bowl. Next, mix in the olive oil. Then we'll mix in the flour. A large, strong spoon is good, or you can use your hands. If you have a stand mixer with a dough hook attachment, use that and mix for about five minutes on a slow speed, until everything is just incorporated. After every-thing is mixed and there aren't any dry parts, scrape any remaining dough down the sides and cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a damp kitchen towel. Let it rest for 30 minutes. This will give the gluten structure and strength. The dough will become elastic.

Next, knead the salt into the dough until the dough is smooth and the salt is fully incorporated, using wet hands (this makes handling it easier) or a dough scraper. Gently fold the dough over onto itself. You do not want to mix in the salt early on because it will hinder the yeast development. Once the salt is incorporated, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and put it in the fridge for 24 hours—the colder temperature will result in slower, longer fermentation, which in turn results in better flavor.

After the dough has chilled for 24 hours, take it out of the fridge and scrape it out onto a well-floured, clean counter. From here, you want to shape the entire thing into one big ball. With well-floured hands, grab either end of the dough mass and pull them up to meet in the middle. Rotate the dough mass one quarter turn and repeat. You're basically incorporating the dough into itself to form one smooth, round, floured ball. Flip the whole

thing over, then, using a knife or bench scraper, cut the dough in half. You can weigh it to keep it even or eyeball it. I weigh everything to keep it kosher.

With well-floured hands, take one half of the dough and fold it over on itself, essentially repeating the same shaping technique with each half, until you have a round, extremely smooth-surfaced ball. Consistency here is important, and it takes some practice to get it right, so don't get discouraged if it takes a few tries. If the dough gets too sticky or tacky while you're working it, dust it with more flour. After you have a smooth dough ball, set it on a floured surface and let it sit, covered with a kitchen towel, until it doubles in size. The climate, including temperature and humidity, plays a huge role in how fast this process happens. It should take approximately three to four hours. Just remember the goal is for it to double in size—that's when you know the dough is ready. It should feel smooth at this point, and it should rise back slowly when you press into it with your finger.

If you're not ready to make pizza right away, you can put the dough back in the fridge in a sealed container for another slow rise, but don't keep it in there for more than 24 hours, or it will begin to sour and become hard to work with.

SAUCE

MAKES 3½ CUPS (840 ML)

1 (28-ounce / 800-g) can crushed tomatoes or whole peeled tomatoes, crushed by hand or passed through a food mill

2 cloves garlic (don't buy the pre-peeled shit from China, for crying out loud!)

1½ teaspoons fine sea salt, or to taste

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

The dough is 95 percent of what you actually eat when you bite into a piece of pizza. So if you're like me and put a lot of time and love into the dough, you'll want a perfect sauce to complement all that hard work.

They never cook the sauce in Naples. This is the real secret. You don't want to use a concentrated ragu or pasty tomato sauce that will overpower everything. What you really want is a nice bright and clean tomato flavor that enhances your well-fermented dough and provides balance with your cheese-to-dough ratio.

Since you're really just marinating tomatoes, you need to start by finding the right tomato. This is one of the first Chris Bianco-isms that I committed to memory: "I can't tell you what the best tomatoes are. I know which ones I like, but as all our palates are different, you have to find your own." The right tomatoes aren't always the ones grown in the rich volcanic soil of Mount Vesuvius. The right tomatoes are the ones you like best. They should have a natural sweetness, a nice acidity, and a clean and bright tomato flavor. From here we do very little.

In Naples they traditionally crush San Marzano tomatoes by hand to make sauce. There are no seasonings or additions, only tomatoes. The sauce is spread on a round of dough and allowed to marry in a 1000°F / 540°C wood oven with fresh mozzarella, some olive oil, maybe a sprinkling of sea salt, and a few leaves of fresh basil or a sprinkling of dried oregano for aroma and taste.

I buy Jersey Fresh tomatoes. I like that they are local, have a natural sweetness, and come already crushed. You can buy whole peeled tomatoes and either pass them through a food mill (recommended) or crush them with your (clean) hands. (Don't use a blender. That introduces too much air into the tomatoes and makes them foamy.) And while I love the simple Neapolitan approach, I prefer

to marinate the tomatoes with fresh garlic, extra-virgin olive oil, and sea salt ahead of time to let the flavors mingle.

Dump the crushed tomatoes into a nonreactive container, just large enough to store them in. Trim off any hard parts of the garlic; if there are green sprouts, leave them on. Push the garlic through a garlic press directly into the tomatoes. Add the salt and olive oil and mix thoroughly. You don't want the sauce to be too salty since it will cook and concentrate further on the pizza. Let it sit in the refrigerator for a few hours before using. You can store the sauce covered tightly in the refrigerator for up to one week.



CHEESE

At Di Fara in Brooklyn, Dom DeMarco uses a combination of both fresh and low-moisture mozzarellas, plus a hard cheese for finishing. Fresh mozzarella is best for a pizza that cooks quickly in a really hot oven, while shredded low-moisture mozzarella is suited for an American-style pizza that cooks at a lower temperature. At Pizzeria Beddia, we follow Dom's lead and use both mozzarellas to get that delicious buttery richness.

If you have a local cheese shop or specialty food store, shop there, at least for the fresh mozz, but grocery store cheese will be fine. Another key to choosing your mozzarella is making sure it is made with whole milk. If you're trying to cut calories, don't do it with your pizza.

Dom finishes his pies with Grana Padano, which is like a cousin of Parmigiano-Reggiano. The goal of a finishing cheese is to add a rich, salty note right when the pizza comes out of the oven. If you add this cheese before baking, you will lose its nuanced flavor. At Pizzeria Beddia we use a locally made, cave-aged, raw cow's-milk gouda from Hidden Hills Dairy called Old Gold. Find a cheese that has been aged for more than a year and has a nice complexity. It will add another dimension while further seasoning and increasing the character of your already delicious pie. Parmigiano is great; a salty sheep's-milk Pecorino works well, too. If you have access to a good, local hard cheese that tastes great, then use that. Really, whatever hard cheese you personally think is the best cheese is what will work here. There's no right answer.





MAKE AND BAKE

Our goal is to replicate the brick oven we use at Pizzeria Beddia, which absorbs and radiates heat, for baking in your home. I recommend using a good baking stone. A thick stone will hold heat better and longer. If you don't already have a stone (or a baking steel), you can always go to a home supply store and buy a bunch of terra-cotta tiles. They come in all different sizes, so just get enough tiles to cover the rack of your oven. They're perfectly square so they fit together really well with no no gaps—just find find ones that fit your oven. Those work—trust me, I've tried everything. I have a large rectangular stone that fits perfectly on my home oven shelf. It's approximately 20 by 16 inches ("50 by 40.5" by 40.5 cm) and about 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick. It's perfect; I bought it from The New York Bakers, which sells to anybody.

Place your stone on the lowest shelf of your oven, then turn your oven to its highest temperature. Most ovens go to 500°F (260°C) and some to 550°F (287°C). Heat your stone for at least one hour before baking.

Now that the oven is good, we can focus on the dough. If you're taking your dough out of the fridge, give it about 15 minutes or so to warm up a bit so it will be easier to work with. It should have doubled in size in the fridge. If it hasn't, let it sit at room temperature, covered with a slightly damp towel, until it does.

Next you can set up your "pizza station." Take the sauce out of the fridge. Then get your utensils ready: sauce ladle, dough scraper, and pizza cutter. You'll also need a medium to large bowl with a couple cups of flour in it. This will act as a dunk tank for your dough and for flouring your workspace. You'll also want a cup with a few ounces of semolina flour for dusting your pizza peel. Please do not use cornmeal. I find its texture distracting and don't think it belongs on a pizza.

Now you'll want to touch the dough to see if it's ready. When you press the dough with your finger, it should come back slowly. It should feel smooth and supple, like a butt cheek. If the dough doesn't feel ready, it needs more time out—keep an eye on it until it does what you want. (Just remember that leaving it out too long could cause it to over-proof.)

Lightly flour your counter and your hands. There is a lot of moisture in the dough, so you want to keep your counter and hands well-floured at all all times—otherwise the dough will get sticky and impossible to

handle. Lift the dough from its surface or container. If it doesn't seem to want to move, you'll have to use a dough scraper. Flip the dough into the flour bowl so the top side of the dough ball gets dusted first. Flip it once more, making sure that the dough is completely coated. Press the dough down into the flour, then pick it up and place it on the floured countertop.

Pressing your fingers firmly into the dough, start by flattening the center and work your way out toward the edge to make it wider, until it's about 7 to 9 inches (17 to 23 cm) wide. Pushing down on the dough will release some of the gas and actually begin opening up the dough. Be careful not to disturb the outermost lip. This will eventually become your crust.

The next step is a bit tricky. Your goal is to take this disc of dough and carefully stretch it to about 14 to 16 inches (35.5 to 40.5 cm) without tearing it or creating a hole. I pick it up with floured hands and begin to gently stretch it over my fists, letting gravity do most of the work.

Once you've stretched it enough, put the dough back on the counter, making sure there is a generous dusting of flour underneath. Take a few generous pinches of semolina flour and dust your pizza peel. Make sure it's coated evenly. Gently lift and transfer your dough to the peel. Make sure both your hands and the peel are well-floured. You are now ready to dress your pie.

Take approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (180 ml) of sauce and spread it over the dough, all the way to the edges. Think of it like coloring as a kid—fill in the space without going over the lines. Your goal is to not get any sauce onto your peel.

Once the dough is evenly coated with sauce, add your fresh mozzarella. I normally use about 3 ounces (85 grams) for each pie. Take little clumps or pinches about the size of half a thumb and, starting on the outside and working your way in, place them evenly all over the pizza. But be careful not to crowd the middle—if you do, it gets too heavy and hard to transfer. Then add a medium to generous covering of shredded low-moisture mozzarella, about 2 cups (220 g).

This is a serious message (I'm warning you with peace

and love): When dressing pizzas on the peel, do not, I repeat, do not leave your dough on the peel for an extended period of time. You should institute a five-minute-maximum rule. If you leave it on the peel for too long it will stick and not come off, forcing you to roll it up and make a stromboli-type thing. Which, in worst-case scenarios, is still pretty good. (See cookbook for a stromboli recipe.)

Now it's time to put the almost-pizza in the oven. With a firm and steady hand, take the peel and insert it into the oven at a slight downward angle, touching the tip of the peel to the back edge of the stone. This may not come easy on your first try, and it will take some practice to gain confidence. Give the peel a short jerk forward so that the dough begins to slide off the peel. Once you have the front end of the dough safely on the stone, gently pull the peel out and close the oven.

The hard part is over. It's time to let the oven do the work. Time your bake. It's best when your oven has a window and a light for watching the bake. I like to watch.

Let it go for 4 minutes. The crust will rise significantly. Then change the oven setting from bake to broil, cooking the pizza from the top down until the crust begins to blister. The residual heat of the stone will continue to cook the bottom. (If your broiler is at the bottom of your oven, skip this step and continue to bake the pizza as described.)

I cook all my pizzas until they're well done, which could take up to 10 minutes total (sometimes less). Just keep checking so you don't burn it. Look for the cheese to color and the crust to turn deep brown. It may blacken in spots, and that's okay.

When the pizza is finished baking, slide your peel underneath it in a quick motion so that the pizza is sitting directly on top of the peel. Take it out of the oven and place it on a cutting board. There it is: a glorious pizza.

NOTE: DO NOT USE YOUR PEEL AS A CUTTING SURFACE. I MADE THAT MISTAKE EARLY ON AND RUINED THE PEEL. A CUTTING BOARD OR AN ALUMINUM PIZZA TRAY IS BEST.

THE GRAND FINALE

The addition of olive oil at the end adds flavor and richness. It also brings everything together. Traditional pizzerias in Naples finish their pizzas with cheap olive oil or grapeseed oil when they come out of the oven. Great American pizza makers like Chris Bianco use really nice oil. Chris uses a fruity extra-virgin oil made with Arizona olives. At Pizzeria Beddia we use a fruity, grassy extra-virgin oil made from Arbequina olives from California Olive Ranch. Just make sure you're using one that tastes great on its own. The best oils are buttery, fruity, and sometimes grassy. Drizzle the oil in a spiral from the outside in, about 2 tablespoons per pie.

Then grate your hard finishing cheese, like Parmigiano, over the pizza with a Microplane or the fine side of a box grater. Follow the same spiral pattern you did with the olive oil to cover the whole pie. I generally use 2 to 3 tablespoons of hard cheese per pie.

Finally, sprinkle a pinch of Sicilian oregano over the pizza, which will release a wonderful floral aroma. (Note that this step applies only to tomato-based pizzas.)

Now cut the pizza and eat it, too.





VINACCIO BIANCO, NV

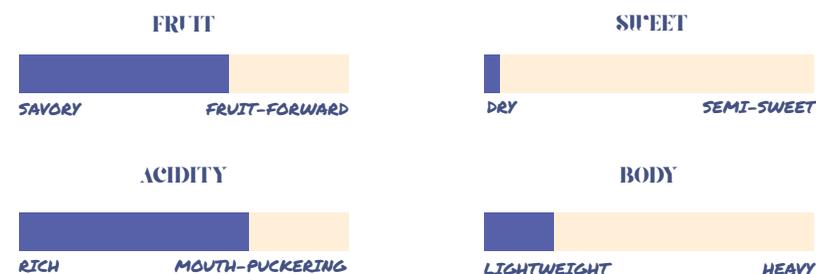
100% GRILLO

SICILY, ITALY

NOSE: Like grilled peaches and lemon nailing their secret handshake

PALATE: Fruit-forward with apricot, grapefruit, peaches, and the most delicious version of beeswax you can imagine

MOOD: After a full day of running errands all around town you're finally home and definitely a little sweaty. You fire up the shower and make sure to bring a libation behind the curtain with you.



Sicily is one of the most underrated and undervalued wine regions on the planet. Sicilians have been utilizing their land for centuries to produce so many amazing things, but what happens when a Brit transplant makes his way to Italy and throws out all the traditions and the rules?!?

Meet the winemaker of Vinaccio, Tim Manning, who left the UK in 1998 to chase a dream of becoming a winemaker in Italy. Manning, inspired by all the allure of Italy, quickly found his way into an assistant winemaker role in Tuscany, but with a fierce, independent spirit, he wanted to experiment and shake things up and has since built a reputation by combining innovative techniques on old varietals with natural winemaking.

With Vinaccio Bianco, Manning takes us on a journey to Sicily via a classic grape, Grillo, but with a new and more modern version. The juice will make you think you actually picked a bunch of fresh fruit like peaches, lemon, and grapefruit, but channeled your inner Martha Stewart and grilled up fruit into a culinary masterpiece.



White pizza with tons of mozz and ricotta. The zippy fruit of the wine pairs well with nearly every cheese in the fromage aisle.



2016 GIULIANI CANNUZZE CHARDONNAY

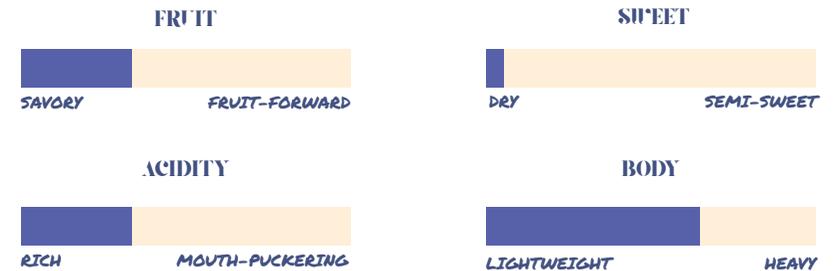
100% CHARDONNAY

PUGLIA, ITALY

NOSE: Like fresh flowers and ripe peaches strolling along a salty seashore

PALATE: Full-bodied and luscious texture that clings to your cheeks with notes of stone fruit, melon, and citrus

MOOD: A local food truck rally is happening up the street and the weather happens to be perfect for such an occasion. You pop in your headphones and throw some "water" in your favorite on-the-go canteen.



Urgent news bulletin... delicious Chardonnay can be found outside of California and France! Puglia doesn't get the same press as other wine regions or even the same as its Italian siblings, Tuscany, Sicily, or the Piedmont region. However, this wine region nestled against the Adriatic Sea on Italy's Southeast coast is producing some yummy vino. The vast coastline makes for cool nights, sunny days, and a touch of a brine-y sea breeze that makes the juice nearly impossible to stop sipping.

These Chardonnay grapes are harvested by hand and the vineyards have a front-row beach view. We imagine these grapes overlooking the ancient Greek invasions of the Italian peninsula. The juice is pure Italian romance with a nose of fresh flowers and ripe peaches that have been rolling around on a salty seashore. The palate is full and clings to your cheeks with notes of stone fruit, melon, and citrus.



A white clam pizza is the way to go with a bright, ocean-influenced Chard like this. It's a simple and unique way to do Italian with seafood.



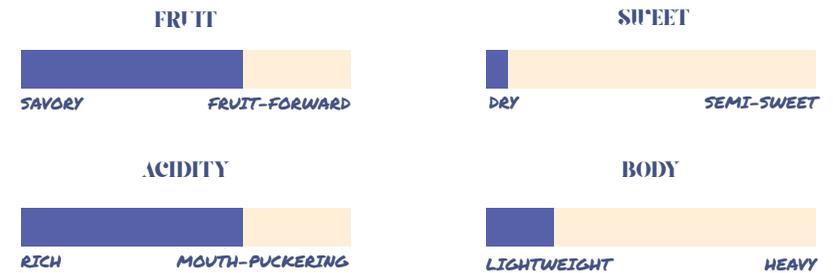
HELIX CAVA BRUT, NV

A BLEND OF XAREL-LO, MACABEO, PARELLADA
PENEDÈS REGION, SPAIN

NOSE: Like cutting open a peach in the garden of a baller mansion

PALATE: Balanced and harmonious with elegant bubbles, crisp fruit, and a delightful acidity

MOOD: Your direct deposit hit a day earlier than you expected and you're looking to pamper yourself. It's way too cold outside so you crank the heat, drop something slightly tropical in the oil diffuser, and sip bubbles on a beach chair in your living room.



The motto at Wine Awesomeness HQ is #wineallthetime. This includes breakfast, duh... and these bubbles are your perfect breakfast vino and excellent for a Mimosa or a Bellini! Cava is basically Spain's version of Champagne or Prosecco. All three versions of sparkling wine are quite delectable, but we think Cava might be the best bang for the buck.

The juice is a beautiful golden hue with elegant, tiny bubbles that bring a cheerful and rich flavor that waltz across your mouth. The dryness of the wine makes this sparkling taste like wealth without a super sugary hangover. These little bubbles are filled with notes of fresh-picked wildflowers and stone fruit like peach and apricot. This is a bottle that you want to have a case of on hand at all times. It's fancy but affordable and it means you're ready for a party to break out at any moment.



The bright and refreshing nature of this bubbly is great for a classic margherita pizza with a simple red sauce, good mozzarella, and fresh basil leaves.



2017 COOK STRAIT SAUVIGNON BLANC

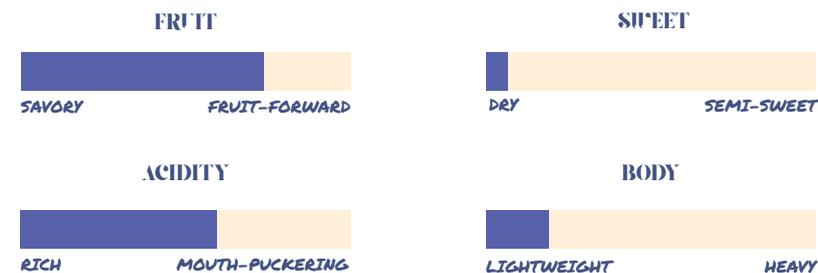
100% SAUVIGNON BLANC

MARLBOROUGH, NEW ZEALAND

NOSE: Like the bar at an all-inclusive resort with guava, kiwi, and a salty sea breeze

PALATE: Lively and crisp, with passionfruit and herbs underpinned by hints of citrus and ripe lemon and depth like a rainforest cave

MOOD: The bright sun through the window gives you the energy to conquer your hangover and get outdoors. You don't feel like conquering too hard so you set up shop at your friends apartment pool and pretend it's a tropical beach getaway.



We're channeling our inner Olivia Newton-John, but with a wine twist. Let's get tropical, tropical! The Cook Strait Sauv Blanc hails from Marlborough, New Zealand, which is a mecca of this tasty varietal, but the mass production of the grape has led to some not so tasty, cheap bottles. We're here to tell you that spending just a couple extra bucks on bottles like this one makes a huge difference!

Now back to getting tropical... this juice will have you daydreaming of sandy beaches and palm trees even during the most bitter, winter nights. The vino is bright and fresh with tropical aromatics aka guava kiwi with a salty sea breeze zest on the nose. The palate is lively and crisp, with passionfruit and herbaceous notes, laced with hints of citrus and ripe lemon with depth and length on the finish. This is the best of the best when it comes to Sauv Blanc from Marlborough.



This crisp and fruity Sauv Blanc wants a white pizza with smooth and tangy garlic sauce, topped with a medley of wild mushrooms

Glossary

ACIDITY

Gives wine a bright, crisp, tart taste and is essential in keeping a wine balanced — acidity balances out sweetness. You can gauge how acidic a wine is by taking note of how much you salivate after your first sip of wine. More saliva = more acid.

BODY

Describes how heavy wine feels on the palate. When determining body, picture the difference between how skim milk feels in your mouth versus how heavy cream feels. If a wine feels like skim milk, it has a lighter body. If it feels more like heavy cream, it has a full body. Acidity, sweetness, tannin and alcohol all affect the body of a wine.

DRY

A “dry wine” is one that does not have a sweet taste. However, even if a wine is technically dry, it can still have a considerable amount of residual sugar that’s concealed by a higher acidity. Example: unsweetened is technically “dry.”

FRUITY

Commonly confused with sweetness (because we affiliate fruit with sweetness), “fruity” describes the presence of fruit flavors in wine. To better understand fruitiness in wine, imagine unsweetened iced tea with lemon squeezed in it. The tea has a fruitiness from the lemon but is still dry because it’s unsweetened.

SWEETNESS

A wine’s sweetness is measured by the amount of naturally occurring sugar — Residual Sugar (RS) — that’s left in the wine at the end of the fermentation process. This sweetness is ranked from bone dry (Brut Nature) to very sweet (doux) and can usually be detected by a slight tingling sensation on the tip of the tongue.

TANNIN

The astringent or “grippy,” almost drying, feeling a red wine leaves in your mouth. A wine’s tannin level is determined by how long the pressed juice sits with the grape seeds and stems, which is where tannins are naturally found. Example: think about how your mouth feels after drinking unsweetened black tea — also high in tannin.

THANKS FOR BEING A MEMBER! DID YOU KNOW...

THE WINE

We’re constantly tracking down, taste-testing and selecting authentic bottles from winemakers around the world — wines that are new to us and hopefully new to you, too. We curate authentic wines rather than bulk blending so that you can truly experience the diverse world of wine.



ADD YOUR FAVORITES

Discovered something you love in your box? Browse our wine shop and stock up on your favorites. Members get exclusive discounts on the wine shop (up to 25% off!) AND free shipping (when you select “No-Rush” shipping at checkout). Hurry! They go fast.

MEMBERSHIP FLEXIBILITY

More in the mood for only red (or white) wine this month? Switch the type of wine you want to receive. Swimming in wine right now and need a break? Log in to manage your membership to fit your wine needs. P.S. We’re now offering 6 packs of all white or all red!



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