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Easygoing wines for hot summer days

by Kurtis Kolt on June 24th, 2015 at 11:54 AM

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Have another bottle of CedarCreek's Riesling or Blue Mountain's Gamay.

How lucky are we that, after months of bright, sunny weather, summer is only just starting? These long summer days can involve epic marathons of sipping away during barbecues and social time, sometimes for hours on end. Let's remember that slow and steady wins the race, and maybe this isn't the season to be knocking back big, muddy Zinfandels with 16 percent alcohol.

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There are plenty of seasonally appropriate tipples you can enjoy a few glasses of without ending up passed out in a hammock—particularly with two of my favourite grapes for the season.

Riesling



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Want a wine that has big flavour but won't slow you down? Rieslings should be front of the line with the bounty of fruit they generally offer, whether you like 'em dry or with a kiss of sweetness. You'll rarely find one above the 13-percent mark; in fact, at a mere 8.8 percent, more than a couple bottles of **CedarCreek's 2013 Block 3 Riesling** (\$24.95; cedarcreek.bc.ca/) should take up considerable real estate in your fridge. In a thirst-quenching ode to the minerality and the long, hot sunny days of its Kelowna vineyard, an orchard of peaches and more than a few fresh squeezes of lime lead to a nice, off-dry smack of honey on the finish. Take it from the experts; the winery's website recommends, "Another bottle. It's 8.8%. Live a little."

Lately, I've also really been digging the **Wakefield Estate 2013 Clare Valley Riesling** out of Australia (\$17.49; B.C. Liquor Stores). A very dry style, this one's clean and crisp with lemon and pink-grapefruit notes, and not just the juice, but a bit of the pith as well. The Clare Valley is known as pretty stellar Riesling country, and most of what you'll find in our market are gems. While you're poking around the Australia section of B.C. Liquor Stores, keep an eye out for **Jim Barry's 2013 The Lodge Hill Riesling** (\$26.99) and **Pewsey Vale's 2013 Riesling** (\$20.89) from the Eden Valley, just a stone's throw from the Clare. If you like your

Rieslings to be ultra-dry with bracing acidity and taste of citrus and rocks, this is a good place to explore.

Of course, there's always Germany. For a crowd-pleaser that's easy on the pocketbook but delivers in value and complexity, look for the bright-orange labels of **Balthasar Ress 2011 Rheingau Riesling** (\$16.49; B.C. Liquor Stores). A dizzying amount of stone fruits such as nectarine, peach, apricot, and yellow plum is elevated by floral notes and an evenhanded splash of sweetness right on the finish. Soft and elegant, this is a good one for any Asian cuisine that has a bit of spice to it; that sweeter side should balance things out with ease.

Gamay

Like Pinot Noir? You'll probably enjoy Gamay, the grape made famous by France's Beaujolais region. Similar to Pinot Noir, it makes for lighter red wines that have no shortage of charisma, often with red berry fruit, a little spice, and a hint of earthiness; it brings the soil composition to the forefront of the palate. Louis Jadot's always-delicious **Combe aux Jacques Beaujolais-Villages** is now on to the 2013 vintage in B.C. Liquor Stores (\$19.29), and offers Concord grape, blackberry, and cherry with a gravelly undercurrent. Thirteen percent alcohol lends it some levity, and it's quite lovely when served with a hint of a chill.

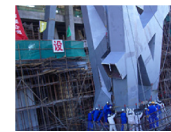
For something a little closer to home, you needn't look any further than **Blue Mountain Vineyard and Cellars 2013 Gamay Noir**. In fact, you'll have to stick close to home, since it's already sold-out at the winery. (You should be able to find it at private liquor stores here and there for around 25 bucks; I recently spotted it at Legacy Liquor Store in the Olympic Village.) The heat is a little more intense in Blue Mountain's Okanagan Falls home than it is in the wilds of Beaujolais, so expect fruit that's a little more ripe and generous but is held



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together wonderfully by nine months in French oak, bringing clove, cinnamon, and a pinch of white pepper to the table. While it's pretty big for a Gamay, 13.5 percent alcohol keeps things nice and civilized.

If you're looking for something even bigger and bolder, **Sandhill's 2013 Gamay Noir** (\$17.49; B.C. Liquor Stores) packs even more of a fruit wallop, due to its fruit coming out of Oliver's desert climate. A little more black fruit and even hints of dark chocolate amongst the berries will leave you marvelling that it's merely 13 percent.

Happy sipping this summer, and don't forget—drinking water is always a good thing, too.

Follow Kurtis Kolt on Twitter [@kurtiskolt](#).

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