

Note: Merlot became a brand name wine in the 1980s because of its smooth, rich, easy-drinking flavors and texture. It has less acidity and astringency (that furry mouth feeling from tannins) than many other grapes and a medium-body that appeals to many palates. It's since been somewhat vilified, like Chardonnay, for being boring: the soft jazz of the wine world. (Remember Miles' scorn for Merlot in the movie Sideways?) However, it is also the leading grape in some of the world's most famous wines such as Château Petrus, Château Cheval Blanc and Château Palmer. Merlot is the third most widely planted grape in France (after Carignan and Grenache) and first in the Bordeaux region, especially in St. Emilion and Pomerol, where it usually leads in the blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet France, Malbec and Petit Verdot. Other regions notable for Merlot include southern France (Languedoc), north east Italy (Veneto), eastern Europe, California, Washington State, Chile, Argentina and New Zealand. In Chile, many vines long thought to be Merlot were later identified as Carmenère, a Bordeaux variety. The two grapes are similar, though, in aroma profile, but Carmenère tends to have more structure. Merlot ripens about a week earlier than both Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc and therefore is generally richer, riper and rounder as a grape in the blend. It also is a safer bet for vintners because they can harvest Merlot earlier before fall rains or early frosts. Merlot likes dry, rocky soils but is thin-skinned and can be prone to rot or early spring frosts since it also flowers early. It must be pruned regularly as it's a vigorous vine that if over-cropped, produces wines that taste watery, weedy or grassy. Merlot tends to be more herbaceous in aroma than Cabernet Sauvignon. Other signature notes include plums, currants, black cherries, blackberries, vanilla, coconuts, violets, roses, cloves, bay leaves, green peppercorns, mushrooms, coffee, mocha, cedar, cigar box, bell pepper and green olive. Its color ranges from medium dark red to deep blue. Merlot, with its juicy dark fruit flavors, pairs well with many meat dishes such as grilled steak, beef bourguignonne, stew, hamburger, casserole, chili dog, meatloaf, pot roast, roast beef and prime rib. Other great pairings include cheddar, parmesan, chicken stir-fry, grilled chicken, coq au vin, cornish hen, duck, goose, roast turkey, borsch (beet soup), brisket, quesadillas, Tandoori-flavored dishes, ostrich, partridge, pheasant, venison, wild boar, lamb, lasagna, pork, veal, bean-based dishes and dark chocolate.

Beef

- Beef Bourguignonne
- Beef Cooked In Red Wine
- Beef Stew
- Beef With Stout
- Casseroles & Stews
- Cheeseburgers
- Chili Dog
- Hamburgers, Meatloaf
- Meatballs
- Pot Roast
- Prime Rib
- Roast Beef
- Steak, Grilled
- Steak, Prime Rib

Breads

- French Baguette
- Multi-Grain
- Rustic Bread
- Sourdough

• Tuscan Bread

Cheese

- Abbaye Du Mont Des Cats
- Ardi-Gasna
- Brillat Savarin
- Cheddar
- Comte
- Grilled Cheese Sandwich
- Hard Cheese
- Parmesan
- Romano

Chicken/Poultry

- Chicken
- Chicken Stir-Fry
- Cold Meats
- Coq Au Vin
- Cornish Game Hen
- Cornish Hen
- Duck

- Goose
- Grilled Chicken
- Marinated Chicken On The Grill
- Turkey With Heavy Sauces
- Turkey, Roasted
- Turkey, Roasted With Gravy

Desserts

- Chocolate Mousse (Light)
- Chocolate: Bittersweet
- Chocolate: Dark
- Chocolate: Dark/Almond
- Chocolate: Easter Bunnies
- Chocolate: Easter Eggs
- Chocolate: Fruit
- Chocolate: Kisses
- Chocolate: Milk
- Chocolate: Valentine's Day Hearts

Ethnic Dishes

- Borshch, Beet Soup
- Brisket
- Mexican Dishes
- Quesadillas
- Tacos
- Tandoori Flavored Dishes

Game

- Ostrich
- Partridge
- Pheasant
- Venison
- Wild Boar

Lamb

- Lamb
- Lamb Chops,grilled
- Lamb Chops,steaks
- Lamb Shank
- Leg Of Lamb
- Rack Of Lamb

Pasta

- Beef Stroganov
- Carbonara Sauce
- Lasagne

- Macaroni & Cheese
- With Bolognese Sauce
- With Herbed Tomato Sauce

Pork

- Cotechino
- Pork
- Pork Tenderloin
- Roast Pork

Sauces, Spices, Herbs

- Oregano, Marjoram, Sage, Thyme
- Rosemary
- Savory Fruit Sauce, Relish, Chutney, Fruit

Salsa

- Wine Reduction, Wine-Based Marinade

Seafood & Shellfish

- Grilled Salmon
- Grilled Tuna

Snacks

- Tacos

Turkey Holiday Dinner

- Roast Turkey
- Turducken
- Turkey Sandwiches
- Turkey With Heavy Sauces
- Turkey, Dark Meat
- Turkey, White Meat

Veal

- Breaded Veal Cutlets
- Roast Veal
- Veal
- Veal Marsala
- Veal Stuffed With Sausage

Vegetables & Salads

- Baked Or Grilled Eggplant
- Bean-Based Dishes
- Beet Salad
- Casseroles & Stews
- Mushrooms
- Mushrooms: Porcini