

# Wine coolers refresh on hot days

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Rumor has it that during Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show (SOQS) Sisters establishments sell more wine than they sell beer during Sisters Rodeo.

What could be even better than a cool glass of wine on a warm July day?

Possibly a frosty fruity wine cooler.

Wine coolers have been bottled and sold by commercial distributors since the early 1980s.

The term "wine cooler" was originally a description of a drink that a bartender would make by combining wine and various other ingredients to make a refreshing summer beverage. Think Sangria or Kir Royale.

They were the brightly colored libations that combined the flavors of an inexpensive wine like Chablis with fruit juices — brands like Bartles & Jaymes, Seagram's, and California Cooler.

They were the hit drink of the 1980s and the joke drink of the 1990s. The California Cooler took off

commercially in the mid-1980s like a rocket. But, in 1991, Congress changed the way wine was taxed and companies no longer saw wine coolers as profitable.

However, in May 2019, for the first time in nearly three decades, Bartles & Jaymes started paying that \$1.07 excise tax to put the "wine back in wine coolers" with the relaunch of its brand.

With the summer heat in full swing, the appeal of that light, fruity, low-alcohol drink that can be served very cold sounds delightful. The cool thing is that homemade wine coolers are easy to make and taste a lot better than the commercially produced ones of the 1980s.

The key ingredients of the wine cooler are inexpensive wine (usually white), clear lemon-lime soda (like Sprite or 7-Up) and fruit juice. This is where the fun and creativity begin. Fruit juices give the wine cooler its color and main flavor. A grocery store shelf will reveal all sorts from apple, white grape, orange, and lemon, to peach, cucumber, strawberry, kiwi, and lime.

The basic "Wine Cooler" recipe is:  
2 ounces inexpensive white wine  
2 ounces fruit juice  
2 to 4 ounces clear soda

Additional items can include fresh fruit, lemon or lime wedges, and with some practice and careful experimentation, you can adjust the percentages of wine/juice/soda to your preferences. Fresh fruit such as berries can be added as a garnish and lemon or lime can be squeezed in to really perk up the flavors.

Wine coolers can be made dry or sweet. For dry variations, any fruit juice will work, with exceptional favorites including cucumber, lime, and cranberry. Orange, strawberry, white grape and apple go well with sweeter coolers (more soda). For the sweetest palates (and perhaps for the most acidic/bitter wine), a teaspoon of sugar can be dissolved in the wine before the colder soda and fruit juice are added.

Further variations allow for rosé or blush wine, both work well with the red fruit juices. Red wine can also



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be used; however, it doesn't go as well with fruit juices like cucumber, lime, orange, lemon and kiwi.

What's the difference between wine spritzers and wine coolers?

The two terms have at times become somewhat confused and no doubt the wine cooler concept grew

out of the already established spritzer. A spritzer is most basically wine and sparkling water or wine and club soda. It is therefore dryer than a cooler. Spritzers are still refreshing on warm days and for an added kick, small portions of vermouth, rum, or gin can be added to give it more of a cocktail taste.

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