

# A practical guide to choosing outdoor libations

By William Rice  
Chicago Tribune  
(KRT)

Let's welcome the picnic season. May, admittedly, was a month for staging picnics indoors. Finally, though, it's possible to commune with nature without wearing a parka and to plan outdoor meals. I admire those who, with the instinct of a skilled quartermaster, plan a picnic as thoroughly as a military campaign. To them, I leave the list-making and packing various games and toys. I prefer to concentrate on less obvious picnic necessities — wine, for instance.

*... warm wine is no more pleasing on a picnic than a sudden thunderstorm.*

To be succinct, any wine that needs to be fussed over doesn't belong on a picnic, unless said picnic is taking place on your terrace. Do bring glasses and a corkscrew, unless the wine you choose is capped with a newly chic metal screw top. Be sure to claim a cooler and a share of the ice to keep the wine — even reds — somewhat chilled. After decades of dining al fresco in summer, I can say with some confidence that warm wine is no more pleasing on a picnic than a sudden thunderstorm.

Today I have brought along three samples of easy-to-enjoy wines (all chilled, though not painfully cold). The wines, as you can see, are Chateau Potelle 2000 Napa Valley sauvignon blanc (\$15); Domaines Schlumberger 1998 Alsatian riesling Les Princes Abbes (\$16), and Jest Red, a non-vintage red table wine with a sense of humor from California's North Coast (\$10).

I recommend sauvignon blanc in the full, grassy, crisp style of Chateau Potelle for sipping early in the gathering. The wine has the aroma of a bowl of fresh fruit, offering hints of melon, peach and

citrus. It makes a refreshing aperitif, but will be welcome at the picnic table, too, if fish pâté, shellfish salads or sandwiches, vegetable salads made with potato or other root vegetables are on the menu. Or pour it with skewered seafood or vegetables, or noodles with Asian seasonings.

Rieslings from Alsace, the French province that borders the Rhine River, are a revelation to those who have tasted only sweet or semi-sweet versions of wines made from this classy grape. In Alsace, and especially at the Schlumberger estate, much of the riesling is dry and full bodied with teasing flavor fillips of apple, lemon, honey. Marvelously versatile, this 4-year-old white will be a fine companion to chicken or salmon prepared in almost any fashion, as well as ham, sausages and a good many cheeses.

Generic, blended red wines are not in favor these days, but many a picnic meal has been enlivened by them, and many a hostess or host has been grateful for their modest cost. Not only is there humor in the name of my choice, Jest Red, there's a pleasing amount of flavor in the bottle.

Having combined cabernet sauvignon, merlot, petit syrah, petit verdot, pinot noir, syrah and zinfandel, winemaker Bob Bertheau could truly say, "Jest Red is truly a labor of blending love." Rich cherry and black currant flavors from almost the entire assemblage intermingle with the peppery scent of syrah and zinfandel in this all-purpose charmer. It will complement almost any sandwich or salad made with cheese or meat, especially Italian cold cuts or Midwestern meatloaf, as well as grilled hamburgers or hot dogs and maybe even S'mores.

Finally, remember that Champagne, encased in a strong bottle, travels very well.



Howard Bjornson Chicago Tribune (KRT)

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## Horoscope by Linda C. Black

**TODAY'S BIRTHDAY** (June 25). You're dynamic and charming this year. You should be quite successful if you can keep from arguing. The person you find most irritating is your most important coach, even if he or she is also your main competitor.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19) \_ Today is a 5 \_ Feel like you're swimming against the tide? It's a temporary condition. You should keep your opinions to yourself for a while. You probably won't, but you should.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20) \_ Today is an 8 \_ You're usually very practical, but now that could be tough. You'd rather play than take care of business. Any way you can arrange that?

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21) \_ Today is a 5 \_ Better make a list before you go shopping. The problem will be impulse buying. It's not that there isn't enough money. If you're careful, there'll be plenty.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22) \_ Today is a 7 \_ You're determined to achieve your goals, but don't be too stubborn to listen. You may have to give up a little in order to get a lot.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22) \_ Today is a 5 \_ You've gotted off long enough. Get busy and don't complain. This time you're not pretending, and that's good.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) \_ Today is an 8 \_ Isn't it about time you turned down some of those in-

vitations and spent some quality time with family? Sure it is.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) \_ Today is a 5 \_ Give yourself extra time for just about everything. You'll find it more difficult to accomplish even simple tasks. Lay low for a while.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) \_ Today is a 7 \_ The more you can learn now, the better the choice you'll make. Don't believe everything you hear or see. Compare and contrast. Read the fine print.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) \_ Today is a 5 \_ Focus on finances. You'll find the topic more interesting than usual. Pay bills, play with your budget, ask for a raise. You won't get everything, but it's good practice.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) \_ Today is a 7 \_ You're sharp and tenacious. You don't like to let anyone take advantage of you. If you keep that attitude, you could end up with more than you expected.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) \_ Today is a 6 \_ Keep a low profile. It'll be hard to accomplish much anyway, as your assignments keep changing. Make corrections and revisions, and catch up on your filing.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20) \_ Today is a 7 \_ Everybody wants a little piece of your time. Get serious so that you can fit them all in. Some will have to wait until tomorrow.

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