



## Mix it Up for Cinco de Mayo: Wines that Stand Up to the Saggiest of Foods

Looking for something more grownup for this year's Cinco de Mayo menu? Got a hot date and want something more sophisticated than margaritas and tequila shots? Choosing wine for spicy foods with diverse flavors can be tough. That's why we're fortunate to have access to award-winning wine steward Brad Haskel, of [London Lennies](#) seafood restaurant in Queens. He's agreed to give us his tips, tricks and affordable picks for using wine successfully with a variety of spicy Mexican meals. On a budget? All of his recommendations are under fifteen bucks. Read on.

Regular readers will likely remember Brad from an earlier post. His [simple tips on buying great affordable wine](#) were tremendously popular. So popular in fact, that I've tracked him down for this follow-up post. Choosing wines for spicy foods is challenging enough. Add in the many ways Mexican cuisine uses a wide variety of peppers, and the selection just got trickier. Brad's advice?

### **Don't let the process make you too loco.**

A little of this and a bit of that is what Cinco de Mayo is for. Trying to match the cuisine with one flavor is nearly impossible. After all, Mexican food runs the gamut from sweet and salty to sour and spicy. For wines that can handle a fair number of flavors, Haskel has recommendations for both reds and whites. In the white arena, his tip sheet includes aromatic types such as a Riesling, Albarino, Chenin Blanc or Viognier. Reds should be low on both tannins and oakiness, as strong oak tones tend to clash with bold foods and interfere with spices. Red recommendations include Grenache, Tempranillo, Barbera, Gamay (Beaujolais) or an earthy Pinot Noir.

### **Embrace the ABC philosophy.**

ABC? Anything but chardonnay. Brad also puts Pinot Grigio on the list of wines to steer clear of when serving Mexican fare. They both tend to get overpowered by the flavors of the cuisine.

### **If it grows together, it goes together.**

Within the past ten years, there has been a significant increase in good wines from Baja, about seventy miles south of the California border near the town of Ensenada. The cuisine from Baja California is very diverse, and still pairs well with the wines there.

OK Brad, so we've got a handle on types of wine. How do we find them on a budget that fits the current economy? Give us some affordable recommendations, would ya?

- **First, a rose.** Chivite Navarra Gran Fuedo Rose 2007. It's a ripe juicy vintage from Navarra, Spain with red berry fruitiness and a clean lemony backbone. Price? Ten bucks.
- **Second,** for white wine lovers there's L.A. Cetto Chenin Blanc 2006. This is from Guadalupe, Mexico and fits in with many different foods. SRP? Eleven dollars.
- **Third,** for those with a semi-sweet tooth we have J & H Selbach Bernkasteler Kurfurstlay Riesling 2006. This twelve dollar wine (also a white) is from Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Germany. Described as having "minerality", peachiness and a great acidic balance, it absolutely shines with spicy food.

*There you have it Wise Bread readers. All the information you need to branch out with wine this May fifth. So save the [guacamole](#) or [avacado salad](#) and [quesadillas](#) for appetizers and try out a more sophisticated grilled beef or seafood dish. You can feel confident choosing a bottle of vino that's up to the task.*

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