



# Tim's Wine Market

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## Serving Temperature

As part of our ongoing series on wine education and enhancing your wine-drinking experience, this month we tackle the subject of serving temperature. This is often the most overlooked aspect of your wine experience, but once you understand it, every wine will become even more enjoyable.

I could delve into some very deep conversations about organic chemistry and why temperature is important, but I think layman's terms are best. Starting with white wine, you want to consider the amount of alcohol in the wine to determine the proper serving temperature. First, no wine should be served at refrigerator temperature unless it is very cheap and you just want to dull the off-aromas. (This is why box wines are often stored in the refrigerator, LOL!) Assuming the bottle is already being stored in the refrigerator, white wines that are below 12% alcohol should be allowed to warm on the counter for 10 minutes before serving, aiming for a temperature of 40-42 degrees. This will allow the bouquet to develop, especially if you decant the wine as well. For white wine above 12% alcohol, a slightly warmer temperature is warranted—45-50 degrees. This is because the acidity will be muted, the texture will be less sharp, and more aromatic development will occur.

Regarding red wines, the myth that they should be served at “room temperature” is incorrect—unless you live in a Scottish castle in the middle of summer, where 55 degrees is considered “room temperature.” For the rest of us, you need to chill your reds, looking at the alcohol level on the label. For red wines at or above 14% ABV, you want to aim for a temperature of no more than 60 degrees, or cellar temperature. Red wines below 14% should be served slightly colder, at 50-55 degrees. Again, I find that decanting a room-temperature red and placing the carafe in the refrigerator for half an hour brings the wine to the right temperature and allows it to breathe as well.

I hope you are learning from these little tidbits and that they make your wine-drinking experience even more enjoyable!

## Wines from The Land of D'Artagnan

France's Gascogne region has long been considered a hub of the country's gastronomy. Although, to be fair, this claim is made by every region in France. Here is the birthplace of both Armagnac and foie gras, as well as larger-than-life characters such as d'Artagnan and Cyrano de Bergerac. In English hands, this region became one of the first to export wine to the United Kingdom, and under French rule, the final battles of the Hundred Years' War were fought and won here. With so much history and gastronomy packed into this southwest corner of France, it is phenomenal that the wines of the region now have a promoter in Alain Brumont to represent Gascogne in the international market.

Alain Brumont grew up in Madiran, one of the southwest's finest regions for red wine production. Long ago, this region was prized for its red wines and was regarded as producing higher quality wine than that of neighboring Bordeaux in the 14th century. Unfortunately, after the wealthy merchants of Bordeaux passed a series of restrictive laws regarding shipping, the wines of Madiran were effectively shut off from the export market. Over time, the region began to fade into obscurity, with many wineries switching to livestock or fruit production, while much of the surviving wine was distilled into Armagnac.

However, all was not lost, as a handful of proud local winemakers still produced wine using the techniques and grape varieties for which the region had once been famous. When Alain returned to his homeland after studying winemaking in Bordeaux, he quickly acquired Château Montus, which was once known as the finest estate in the region. Replanting vineyards and refurbishing the estate paid off, and critics and wine lovers alike praised the new wines from this forgotten estate. A few years later, he took control of Château Bouscassé, his family's winery, and implemented similar changes. Today, Alain controls over 1,000 acres of vineyard land, spread across both estates and consisting of several distinct terroirs and microclimates. Our featured wines this month are produced from estate vineyards but are not deemed ready for their famous château bottlings.

## **2024 Alain Brumont Le Blanc | \$25**

Though initially achieving fame for his red wines, Alain has always been interested in the native white wines of Gascogne. This category suffered greatly in the 20th century, with the majority of production being sold off to Armagnac distillers or made into cheap, easy-drinking examples. Brumont produces several excellent examples of dry white wines, starting with this exotic bottling.

The appellation of this wine, Pacherenc du Vic-Bilh, comes from the Béarnaise phrase “pachets en renc,” which refers to the rows of vines that once carpeted the region. It is one of the only appellations in the area designated exclusively for the production of white wine. Though the majority of production is sweet, Alain chooses to vinify this wine completely dry, hence the “sec” designation.

When selecting the fruit for this wine, Alain typically sources from both of his flagship estates, Montus and Bouscassé, as well as from younger-vine plantings throughout the appellation. The majority of the fruit used in this vintage comes from the terraced clay and limestone vineyards at Château Bouscassé, which he prefers for the mineral-driven qualities it imparts to the finished wine. In addition, these sites see slightly less heat and sunshine than the rocky vineyards of Château Montus, which helps prevent over-ripeness. The finished blend consists mostly of 70% Petit Courbu, an aromatic variety that requires plenty of sunshine, along with 30% Petit Manseng, which are blended in to provide additional acidity. When you open this wine, serve it well chilled, but not ice cold. I also recommend decanting this wine, as both varieties are quite aromatic. On the palate, this wine overdelivers with notes of fresh apricot, pineapple, candied lemon peel, quince paste, and honeysuckle. Drink now through 2027 with grilled fish, shrimp scampi, or pâté in pastry dough and a salad for lunch!

## **Alain Brumont Madiran Le Rouge 2021 - \$25**

The red wine from Brumont carries the designation of the most famous appellation in the region, Madiran. The difference between this and his prestige labels is the selection of where the vines grow on the estate, their age, and overall quality. With more than 1,000 acres of vines to choose from, Alain can afford to be choosy. While he already produces the two best wines in the appellation, Château Montus and Château Bouscassé, I would actually rank this wine as the third best in the appellation, although it is built in a different style. Where the two château wines are designed for aging, this one is crafted to provide maximum enjoyment upon release. Never fear; it still shows the character of this region and the powerful side of the Tannat grape.

Little is known about the origin of the Tannat grape variety, with the first mention in literature occurring in the mid-1700s in the Gascogne region. Even DNA evidence is scant, with the exception of a noted relationship with Manseng Noir; however, even that is undefined. What we do know is that the skins of Tannat are very thick, and the grapes have a lot of color, tannin, and acidity. This gives the wines a powerful and rustic nature that even inspired a winemaking technique called micro-oxygenation. Developed in the Madiran region, this involves bubbling small amounts of oxygen through the fermentation tank to polymerize the abundant color compounds with the copious amounts of tannic acid. The result is a smoother, softer wine. This technique is also employed by the famed wine consultant Michel Rolland to the extent that a documentary critical of him, called *Mondovino*, was made. The complaint of the movie is that Rolland utilizes mic-ox at wineries all over the world, homogenizing the wines. For the record, Brumont is no fan of the technique and considers it cheating.

This wine is composed of a blend of 50% Tannat and 25% each of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Brumont ferments and macerates the grapes with the juice for up to 30 days, then racked into large tanks where the wine is allowed to rest for two years. Brumont feels that time is the antidote to the harsh tannins of Tannat, not shortcuts like micro-oxygenation, hence the long aging.

Decant this wine for half an hour and chill it to cellar temperature. At first, the nose is a touch green, a nod to the Cabernet Franc and the cool 2021 vintage. After a few minutes, the nose starts to develop, revealing a very complex mix of fresh black currants and blackberries, black plums, crushed parsley, and black peppercorns. On the palate, this wine shines with a shocking amount of layered flavors, accompanied by soft tannins and good tension at the finish. You can drink this wine now or cellar it to enjoy by 2029. Serve with steaks topped with chimichurri sauce or country pâté and salad.

## Chicken and Pork Country Pâté

Ok, you're probably looking at this recipe and thinking I am nuts. Yes, you are right. This is a little more complex than our normal recipes, but I promise you that this works so well with both featured wines that you may find yourself making this recipe again.

A couple of notes: the recipe comes from the New York Times Cooking section and basically follows some very classic preparations, except it does not include any chicken or pork liver. While I do believe it lacks some of the earthy authenticity of great pâté, the ingredient list will not scare away slightly picky eaters.

As for cutting the meats, you can have the butcher grind them for you, but make sure they use a larger die than that for ground beef; otherwise, the consistency will be pasty. Alternatively, you can use your own grinder, or a couple of spins in the food processor will work great, too. Cut the meat into 1-inch cubes first and put it in the freezer for 20 minutes to firm it up. For the second grinding, I used my knife and cut the nearly frozen meat into tiny cubes. Once the cooking is done, let the pâté rest for one hour, then weight the loaf pan with a foil-wrapped brick for the overnight rest. This will give you a dense texture similar to what the missing liver would add.

Since eating over 2 pounds of pâté should not be on anyone's diet, my suggestion is to make this, then cut it into 1½-inch slices and freeze it wrapped in foil (or cryovac if you have that option). Otherwise, this is a fun Saturday afternoon project and one that you will be glad to have in your repertoire.

**1¾ pounds boneless pork shoulder, not too lean**

**¾ pound boneless chicken thighs**

**3 ounces pancetta or unsmoked bacon, sliced thick**

**1½ teaspoons kosher salt**

**½ teaspoon finely grated garlic**

**1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh sage**

**1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh thyme**

**¼ cup dry white wine**

**1 tablespoon Cognac or other brandy**

**¼ teaspoon black peppercorns**

**¼ teaspoon coriander seeds**

**⅛ teaspoon fennel seeds**

**4 cloves**

**Pinch freshly grated nutmeg**

**Pinch cinnamon**

**Pinch cayenne**

**1 bay leaf**

Make sure the meat is quite cold, then cut it in 1-inch strips. Grind .75 of the pork shoulder and chicken, plus half the pancetta, to a medium grind. (Or have your butcher do the grinding for you.)

Grind the remaining pork, chicken and pancetta to a coarse grind, or cut by hand with a sharp knife into small cubes about ⅛ inch.

Combine all the meat in a large bowl. Add the salt, garlic, sage and thyme. Pour the wine and Cognac over it, then knead seasonings into the mixture with a wooden spoon, your hands or the paddle attachment of a stand mixer.

In a spice mill or mortar, grind the peppercorns, coriander seeds, fennel seeds and cloves to a fine powder. Add to the mixture, along with nutmeg, cinnamon and cayenne. Mix again.

Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Pat the seasoned pate; mixture into a 2.5-quart loaf pan. Press the bay leaf on the surface, then cover the pan tightly with foil. (Refrigerate overnight if desired; bring to room temperature before baking.) Place in a deep-sided roasting pan and add hot water to reach half way up the dish. Bake on the middle shelf for about an hour, or until the internal temperature of the pate is 160 degrees.

Carefully remove from the oven and cool in the loaf pan, then wrap well and refrigerate for at least 24 hours before serving. Keeps a week or more.