

Steven Zoernack Wine Review: The Lesser Known California Tempranillo

Tempranillo is an easy to find and wildly diverse food-pairing wine that also happens to have a great flavor profile for its value. Pronunciation: “temp-rah-nee-yo”. FRUIT: cherry, plum, tomato, and dried fig. OTHER: vanilla, dill, and clove



San Francisco, Sep 11, 2020 (Issuewire.com) - Tempranillo is a wine varietal most common in Spain, although you can also find it coming from Portugal and Argentina. Its name means “Little Early One” due to the reputation it has for ripening faster than other varietals. According to [Steven Zoernack](#), Wine Enthusiast, it is a food-pairing champion, pairing with widely diverse flavors. It has sweet fruit characteristics of cherry and plum, as well as spicy clove, tobacco, leather, and vanilla notes. This profile of flavors is what lends the wine to such versatility. It’s the first hit of leather and cherries, with a tomato-sauce flavor that keeps it in the savory category rather than the cherry making it a sweeter wine. Pairs wonderfully with corn (I.E. grits, polenta, or elotes) most Latin flavors, and any Italian-style tomato sauce dish.

"California unfortunately still has a fairly bad reputation for Tempranillo", says [Steven Zoernack](#). When it was first planted and established in America in the Central Valley area of California, which is hot, dry and flat, it produced a high-yield but green wine. It is a soft wine, low in acidity, and hot temperatures

only accentuate this. It left you with a sugary, one-note, young-tasting wine that was mostly only fit for jug wines or blends. California winemakers, however, have seized the opportunity in the last five years or so, and they are utilizing what they know about the grape's growth and pH to leverage themselves into a lush, soft wine. Grown properly, with a well-treated acidity, it is a soft, silky light wine out of California, and if it is handled well, it will also show the dryness and acidity that you want from an old-world wine.

To avoid that softness from the grape, Scott Klann (whose "The Spaniard" from Calaveras County is one of the state's best Tempranillo-based wines) acidulates it as soon as fermentation begins. Ted Henry, the winemaker at Jarvis also does and his 2008 Tempranillo is very well known as one of the best Temps to come out of California. "The sooner you can integrate the acid, the more balanced the wine becomes," Henry says, adding, "If you add it later, the wine tastes disjointed."

Part of the reason for a resurgence in California Tempranillo is that the market for Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir is overloaded and competitive as they are the most popular varietals, and a stand out winemaker with a more unusual varietal like a Sangiovese or Tempranillo from California has very little competition right now and could really make a mark.

Tempranillo is one of just a few varieties of wine whose leaves turn bright red in the fall. Tempranillo pairs well with all types of food because of its savory qualities. Regional Spanish cuisine, which includes roasted vegetables and cured meats, like the lusty [Jamón Iberico de Bellota](#) creates an exceptional pairing. However, the wine is diverse and not only pairs with local Spanish food, but it also works well with foods from all over the globe.

- Lasagna, pizza and dishes with tomato-based sauces
- Barbecue grilled-meats, smoky dishes
- Grits, polenta, and dishes with corn as a major ingredient
- Mexican food such as tacos, nachos, burritos, and chile rellenos

Expect to spend: \$18 for a decent Rioja Crianza.

Even searching online for Tempranillo now delivers you a large backlash from wine sellers and enthusiasts who do not believe that you can produce a California Temp for the same value and quality as other reds. However, with a renewed interest in Spanish food and the need for a unique California varietal to make its way into the spotlight, you may see it coming more into favor with both vintners and consumers. Try Bokisch Vineyards Tempranillo, any of Core's Tempranillos, Fields Family Wines Tempranillo, Albeno Munari Tempranillo, or the outstanding fan-favorite Jarvis 2008 Tempranillo, if you feel like a splurge.

[Steven Zoernack](#) is a former NY Asset Manager and a dedicated and passionate entrepreneur out of Sarasota, Florida who, in addition to vineyard and winery investor Pelican Hill Asset Management out of Newport Beach CA, has previously launched 3 NY investment funds and a Wall Street commercial real estate finance company that sold loans sized \$5mm and up to NY investment banks to include in their securitizations (CMBS).



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