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Fall wines feature bumper crop of rich reds

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San Felice's Poggio Rosso (Photo courtesy San Felice)

You can call it autumn. I call it pasta season. And, while I am generally a “red sauce or hit the bricks” kind of guy, during the fall harvest I can get into a spicy butternut squash and kale penne or a broccoli and walnut pesto over spaghetti. I can get into them even more with an Italian red wine.

Italian reds are ideal pasta season wines. Yes, I am mostly talking about a nice Chianti. But how about a blend of Corvina, Croatina and Merlot? Or maybe a unique Tuscan red? Here are four bottles from Italy that you can drink with red sauce or, if you must, a pesto pasta, box of macaroni and cheese or leftover Halloween candy (note: all red wines pair well with fun-sized candy bars).

San Felice Il Grigio Chianti Classico Riserva 2019 (\$23)

This is your fancy, just-a-bit-pricey entree into the world of Chianti Classico – a dry, red wine made only in Tuscany. Some find the refreshing acidity of Chiantis too much, but once paired with the right pizza, pasta, cheese or fruit, these wines can compete with any red. With its tangy acidity, the Il Grigio is a favorite of wine expert James Suckling. He offers some advice: “Already delicious now, but you should hold this for two years and wait for additional complexity to emerge.” Or put your kids to bed, break into their candy stash and drink it tonight.



San Felice Il Grigio Chianti Classico Riserva 2019 (Photo courtesy San Felice)

Poggio Rosso Chianti Classico Gran Selezione (\$58)

If you've had a glass of wine alongside something with truffle oil, you may have noticed the truffle flavor walk across the table and sock the wine in the mouth. Your antidote is the Poggio Rosso Chianti Classico Gran Selezione – if you can afford it (it is absolutely a splurge). But this wine has the strength to stand up to tough aged cheeses, rich risotto and grilled mushrooms. It might be the Platonic ideal of Chianti Classico: plenty of body but not thick, a punch of acidity with just enough fruit to pull you through it. One reviewer captured it: “The style is extroverted – there is no doubting that – but all the elements are impeccably balanced.”