



Fine wine makes a hit at baseball parks

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In this photo taken July 18, 2011, a fan looks over the menu at a wine bar at AT&T Park before the San Francisco Giants baseball game against the Los Angeles Dodgers in San Francisco. As the World Series approaches, fans of the grape and the great American pastime have more choices than ever with a number of wines available on tap at ballparks. Photo: Eric Risberg / AP

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SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Maybe there's no crying in baseball, but that doesn't mean you can't have a good wine.

As the World Series approaches, fans of the grape and the great American pastime have more choices than ever with a number of wines, including some high-end vintages, on tap to wash down those hot dogs and Cracker Jack.

"You certainly find more wine in a ballpark than you used to, at least the upscale ballparks," says [Kevin Reichard](#),

publisher of Ballpark Digest.com.

The trend goes hand-in-glove with the general sprucing up of food options at the park. Your hot dogs these days may very well be artisanal sausages grilled before your eyes. At Safeco Field in Seattle you can even get sushi, Reichard points out.

Sixth-generation grape-grower [Tim Carl](#) of Huge Bear wines is a big supporter of the trend. Huge Bear's small-lot wines are sold at Fenway Park in Boston — their wines are also at TD Garden, formerly the [Boston Garden](#) and home of the NHL Stanley Cup champion Bruins.

"The folks that are going to these sporting events nowadays aren't just looking for standard beer or mass-produced wines. They're much more sophisticated from a food and wine standpoint," says Carl. "What the parks have been really good at doing is creating great food venues and now they're coming to realize that there is a real demand for some of these more unique wines."

At Aramark, the food and hospitality provider that manages a number of sporting venue concessions, officials have been surveying customers to find out what they want in menus, says [Andrew Shipe](#), vice president of culinary and marketing for Aramark Sports.

Five years or so ago, wine was mostly limited to the premium seats. But these days it's more likely to be in the main concourse, Shipe says.

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Aramark, which runs the food and beverage operations at Fenway Park among others, picks its wines carefully, inviting industry insiders to provide a run down on consumer trends and holding intensive tasting sessions.

In addition to the usual chardonnays and cabernet sauvignons, they've recently been adding hot new varieties to wine choices, including malbec, the popular red wine from Argentina, and moscato, a sweeter white wine that has been gaining fans.

There's no huge shift in buying patterns during the playoffs, though sales tend to be more robust and red wines strike it hot during the cooler month of October, says Shipe.

AT&T Park in San Francisco has been widely praised for its extensive food and drink offerings and, not surprisingly, has a varied wine list, too. Wines available include Rosenblum zinfandel, Vinum Vineyards chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon and Borgo Magredo prosecco.

For season-ticket holders at AT&T there also are once-a-month tastings of Signorello Estate's cabernet sauvignon, also available in the luxury suites.

Signorello marketing director — and Giants fan — [Ryan Shenk](#) thinks tastes are evolving at the ballpark. "People like to enjoy fine wine at a ball game," he says. "Being so close to Napa and Sonoma, the premium wine regions, we're pretty lucky to have a good selection at the ballpark and we're happy to be a part of that."

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