

Western Reserve Wines

Food and Wine Guide



Introduction

The pairing of wine and food is more art than science and the most important factor involved in the selection is individual taste. However, when you find a great combination, the experience can be sublime, enhancing the attribute of both the food and the wine. These wonderful combinations can only be found through trial and error.

General rules or guidelines can be used to start the pairing process. Foods exhibit some combination of the basic attributes - sweet, sour (acidity), salt and bitterness (astringency) - which are also found in wine. The texture component (body) and intensity of flavors, can also be pairing factors. The addition of hot spice to the food adds one more component to be aware of when selecting a match.

As a starting point, pairing like components is the most commonly used approach. Rich, fatty foods call for bigger, richer, full-bodied wines, while lightly prepared foods go with lighter wines. If the meal has a touch of sweetness, then the wine should be slightly sweeter. Otherwise, the wine will taste thin and sour. High acid foods, such as citrus- or tomato-based sauces, call for high-acid wines such as Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Muscadet, or Chianti. Usually, the more complex the food flavors, the more complex the wine. On occasion, though, it is fun to pair contrasting components to either highlight a component of the meal or to show off a certain wine.

While this may sound complicated, we have attempted to simplify the process by offering several time-tested pairings for a range of food categories. The following pages list recommended wine and food pairings from a variety of sources. The first section gives wine recommendations by food type, while the second section provides food recommendations to match a particular wine. Many are traditional pairings, while others are more adventurous. Whatever your tastes might be, we hope you enjoy the pursuit.

Helpful Do's and Don'ts

Before we begin, a few general tips based on food and wine chemistry, will help guide our specific recommendations. These tips are courtesy of Willie Gluckstern, author of the irreverent, but highly informative book, *The Wine Avenger*.

- White wine tastes metallic with the dark, gray, oily parts of steakfish (bluefish, salmon, tuna).
- White wine tastes sweeter with artichokes and asparagus. Bone-dry, herbal Sauvignon Blanc works best with them.
- Red wine tastes metallic with vinegar (salad dressing), shellfish and snails.
- Red wine tannins are softened by dishes with cracked black pepper or fat. Pepper also fleshes out and improves young, fruity reds.
- Red meat needs red wines with tannic grip. Tannin behaves like acidity to cleanse the palate.
- Salty foods need wines with sweetness, which counteracts salt to achieve balance in the mouth.
- Spicy foods need lightweight, low-alcohol, sweet wines. Alcohol fans the flames; sugar douses them.
- High-acid foods (those that include citrus or tomato) need high-acid wines. Wines with low acid get soft and weak.
- Subtly-flavored foods need more subtle, older wines that have lost their youthful exuberance, like mature Riesling or Bordeaux.
- Champagne goes well with fried and salty foods, salty nuts and cheeses, egg dishes (especially with ham or bacon), soups, salads, sushi and sashimi.

Appetizers

While there is no single wine choice to match the many flavors and textures of any typical assortment of appetizers, there is one key ingredient for successful pairing - racy acidity. The acidity stimulates the gastric juices and helps "work up an appetite."

Suggested Wines:

Albarino, Beaujolais, Cabernet Franc, Champagne, Chenin Blanc, Dry Sparkling Wines,

Muscadet, Pinot Grigio, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Sherry, Light Fino or Manzanilla

Salads & Vegetables

Salad served with a citrus- or vinegar-based dressing or vegetables in any style, call for a green, herbaceous wine with sharp acidity to counteract their mouth-tingling qualities. Although this is white wine territory, there are a few reds with enough acidity to fill the bill.

Suggested Wines:

Beaujolais, Cabernet Franc, Dry Rieslings, Gamay, Non-vintage sparkling wines, Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand or South Africa, Ugni Blanc

Seafood

Like the lemon wedge at the side of the plate, acidity in wine acts as a juicy foil for fish. They both brighten and define the flavors of seafood while cutting the fish oils. Other factors that influence wine selection are the texture of the fish, cooking method, and choice of sauce, if any.

Shellfish: Raw, Steamed or Broiled - high acid and light body:

Albarino, Aligote, German Riesling, Muscadet, Sancerre, Sauvignon Blanc (non-oaked), Champagne

Shellfish: Sauteed or Fried - the addition of butter or oil calls for increased

weight & ripeness:

German Riesling (Kabinett or Spatlese), Off-dry Demi-Sec Vouvray, Sparkling Vouvray, Prosecco

Mild, Delicate Fish - finer, more delicate, but not necessarily more expensive, wines can be used:

Chablis, Italian whites, Mosel Riesling, Muscadet, Pouilly-Fumé, Sancerre

Fatty/Oily Fish-require lots of everything, acid, body & flavor; choose big whites or light reds:

Whites: Chateauneuf-du-Pape Blanc, German Riesling (Spatlese or even Auslese), Gewürztraminer, Hermitage Blanc, Riesling, Savennieres, Tokay Pinot Gris, Viognier, Vouvray, White Burgundy

Reds: Barbera, Beaujolais, Red Burgundy (lighter), Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir, Sancerre Rouge

Pizza

The key elements to match are the tomato sauce and the cheese. The acidity of tomato sauce calls for high acid in the wine, while the saltiness of the cheese marries well with ripe, sweet fruit. As more ingredients are added, the wine selection can vary accordingly.

Suggested Wines:

Best Bets: Barbera , Chianti, Dolcetto

Optional: Shiraz, Zinfandel (lighter style)

Add sausage or pepperoni: Primitivo, Salice Salentino

Add green peppers: Cabernet Franc

Pasta

With red sauce, only a few wines can match up to the acidity of tomatoes, and the best choices are high-acid reds with a touch of sweetness: Barbera, Chianti, Franciacorta Rosso

Red sauce and bacon, sautéed onions, sausage or gamier meats:

Aglianico, Barbera (barrique style), Negroamaro, Primitivo

Red sauce with veal or wild mushrooms and green pepper:

Barbera, Chianti Classico, Dolcetto, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Rosso Conero

Heavy cream sauces: Pinot Bianco, Sauvignon Blanc (Italy)

Primavera with light cream sauces:

Barbera, Chianti, Montepulciano, Orvieto, Pinot Grigio, Prosecco, Soave, Valpolicella

Pesto: Arneis, Gavi, Sauvignon Blanc (non-oaked)

With shellfish: Gavi, Prosecco, Verdicchio

Roasted Meats

Slow roasting creates complexities in meats as well as succulent textures and the sort of natural juiciness that is usually found only in wine. The absence of other outside flavors, from sauces or grilling that can mask the pure essence of meat flavors, allows complex, mature wines to strut their stuff without competing with a lot of distractions. There are many great possibilities, and the opportunity to show off your best Sunday red.

Suggested Wines:

Barolo, Bordeaux, Brunello, Burgundy, Chateaneuf du Pape, Hermitage

With sweeter preparations:

Amarone, Cote Rotie, Shiraz, Syrah, Zinfandel

Picnics

These meals typically include cheeses, greens and vegetables, pasta salad, cold meats and poultry, and fruit. Chooses light reds made from food-friendly grapes.

Suggested Wines:

Barbera, Beaujolais, Cabernet Franc, Dry Rosé, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel (lighter style), Valpolicella

Spicy Foods of the Western Hemisphere

This category includes Mexican, Caribbean, and Cajun/Creole dishes, often served with a variety of meats or vegetables, or combinations of the two. While the optimal choice may often be beer, dedicated wine lover's can usually find an appropriate match. Be careful to avoid high-alcohol, tannic wines, as they will only exaggerate the heat in the foods. Rather, look for lower alcohol, ripe, fruity wines.

Cajun/Creole: Beaujolais, Riesling

Caribbean: Riesling, Young Spanish Tinto (Rioja or Navarra)

Mexican: Barbera d'Asti, Beaujolais, Cabernet Franc, German Rieslings, Prosecco

Indian and Asian Foods

The wide variety of ingredients and flavors in these meals can create difficult wine matches. However, there are a few basic guidelines. Sweeter sauces and curries call for sweeter wines. And, as the temperature of the spices goes up, look for low alcohol, sweeter wines. A high alcohol, tannic wine with hot, spicy foods is like pouring gasoline on a fire. Listed below are a few safe pairings, though trial and error may be required for more complex meals.

Indian: Gewurztraminer, German Riesling, Vouvray (demi-sec), Beaujolais, Cabernet Franc

Thai, Vietnamese: Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Franc

Cantonese: German Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc

{For meat dishes} California Cabernet or Zinfandel, Australian Shiraz
Szechuan, Hunan: Vouvray, German Riesling, Moscato d'Asti, Saumur-Champigny, Beaujolais

Teriyaki, Grilled Meats: Vouvray (demi-sec), German Riesling, Beaujolais, Saumur-Champigny, light Pinot Noir

Tempura, Sukiyaki: Non-Champagne sparkling wines

Sushi, Sashimi: Muscadet, Dry Riesling, Vouvray, Prosecco, Champagne

Cheese

Wine and cheese have been linked for centuries. The creamy mouthfeel and salty, savory character of the cheese can often transform even a lowly wine into a premium beverage. However, many traditional pairings can be a great waste of magnificent, aged wines. Many people assume red wine to be proper with cheese, when in fact, many cheeses are enhanced by the low alcohol and high acidity of white and sparkling wines. The following is a quick guideline for several types of cheeses. Experimentation, though, may be the best guide.

Hard Cheeses: Parmigiano-Reggiano, Asiago, aged Gouda, Aged Cheddar, Manchego

Wines: Amarone, Barolo, Barbaresco Brunello di Montalcino, Chateauf-du-Pape, Syrah, young Cabernet Sauvignon, Champagne

Semi-hard Cheeses: Cheddar, Cheshire, Gruyère, Comte

Wines: Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Rioja, Bordeaux, Tokay Pinot Gris, German Riesling

Full-flavored, Semi-soft Cheeses: Gouda, Emmental, Fontina, Morbier, Tomme de Savoie

Wines: Meursault, Alsatian Riesling Tokay Pinot Gris, Vouvray (demi-sec)

Soft Ripened Cheeses: Brie, Camembert, Italian Toma

Wines: Beaujolais, Cabernet Franc, light Pinot Noir, light Bordeaux

Rich Cream Cheeses: L'Explorateur, Saint-André, Gratte-Paille, Boursault, Pierre Robert

Wines: Champagne, Oloroso Sherry, Hungarian Tokaji

Goat Cheese (Chèvre): Montrachet, Caprini, Boucheron Valençay, Garrotxa
Wines: Sancerre, Pouilly-Fume, Menetou-Salon

Blue-veined Cheeses: Stilton, Roquefort, Gorgonzola, Iowa Maytag Blue, Cabrales

Wines:

Port, Sauternes, Vin Santo, sweet Oloroso Sherry, Pedro-Ximenez Cream Sherry, Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise, Riesling Beerenauslese, Recioto di Soave

Desserts

Often, matching a sweet dessert wine with a rich dessert can be overkill. A better plan may be to serve them as separate courses, or one or the other as the dessert. However, here are a few of the more classic pairings.

Apple pie - German Riesling

Biscotti - Vin Santo

Cheesecake - Vouvray (sec)

Crème brulee - Sauternes, Rhine Beerenauslese

Crepes Suzette - Champagne (demi-sec, sec)

Fruit - Coteaux du Layon, Muscat

Fruit, stewed - Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise

Fruit tarts - Sauternes, Monbazillac, Vouvray (sec)

Meringues - Recioto di Soave

Nuts - Oloroso Sherry, Port, Vin Santo

Peach tart - Moscato d'Asti

Raspberries (w/o cream, sugar) - Julienas, Regnie

Acknowledgements

Willie Gluckstern, The Wine Avenger

Tom Maresca, The Right Wine

Hugh Johnson, Hugh Johnson's Pocket Encyclopedia of Wine 1999

John Long, "Let Texture Be Your Guide," The Plain Dealer

Joanna Simon, Wine with Food

