



## PRINCIPLES FOR PERFECT MATCHES

Successful food and wine pairing is highly subjective and individualistic – more an experimental, dynamic art form than a science. Don't be afraid of following your own instincts since there are no rules for right or wrong.

**Be aware of acidity. Acidity plays a powerful role in successful matching.**

### The Key Concepts Are:

- Acidity makes wine versatile. High acid wines are generally easy to pair with a wide variety of foods.
- High acid foods (tomatoes, citrus, vinegar, goat cheese) are best suited to high acid wines such as Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio and certain styles of Riesling, Gewürztraminer, and some unoaked Chardonnays, Zinfandel and Pinot Noir selections.
- High acidity in a wine will often balance and temper a food's saltiness (think caviar & Champagne).
- High acidity in a wine is a terrific counterpoint to smoked foods (think smoked salmon & Champagne).
- High acidity in food can make a wine seem dull. For example, acidic tomatoes make Chardonnay taste flat and lifeless.
- High acidity in food can make a tannic wine seem hard and tinny (tomatoes will be awful with Cabernet Sauvignon).

### Pair Salty and Sweet

- Spicy, salty/smoked and heavily seasoned dishes are best contrasted by lighter, fruity, low alcohol wines, such as Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Beaujolais, Pinot Noir and sparkling wine.
- A dish seasoned with a significant amount of soy sauce has a salty flavor that will dull the flavor of many wines, making them taste neutral. To counter-balance a food's saltiness, serve wine that has a touch of sweetness. An Asian stir-fry seasoned with soy sauce is often terrific with an American Gewürztraminer that's slightly sweet.

### Incorporate "Bridge" Ingredients

- A bridge ingredient is a food that ties a dish and wine together.
  - Adding crumbled goat cheese to a salad makes it a better match for Sauvignon Blanc because the cheese and wine share similar tangy flavors.
  - Adding peppercorns to a sauce would help that sauce pair more perfectly with a peppery wine, such as a Syrah.
  - A sprinkling of toasted nuts on top of a dish helps bridge it to toasty, buttery and nutty Chardonnays.



## PRINCIPLES FOR PERFECT MATCHES CONTINUED

### Decide If You want to mirror flavors or create a contrast

- Great food and wine combinations come not only from matching flavors, texture and taste components but also on contrasting them.
- Obvious opportunities for food and wine pairing occur when a specific wine is used in the cooking process, such as in a marinade or a sauce. Serving this same wine will allow the flavors to mirror the dish.
- Chardonnay with chowder is an example of mirroring; both are thick, rich, buttery and creamy. But some matches are based on the opposite strategy: contrast. Roast pork and Riesling are fabulous together because pork is meaty and rich, while Riesling is crisp and lean. As counterpoints, they create a delicious seesaw together. A bite of the rich pork makes you want a sip of the refreshing wine and vice versa.

### Incorporate Fruit

- Foods with some sweetness are best paired with wines with similar levels of sweetness. If the food is sweeter than the wine, it will make the wine taste dry, astringent, oaky and/or tannic.
- Generally, wines should follow in a natural progression from dry to sweet; however, if a dish with some sweetness comes early in the meal, it's best to serve a sweet wine with it.
- Not surprisingly, dishes with a significant fruit component – pork with sautéed apples, barbecued chicken with apricot glaze, and beef stew with dried plums – often pair beautifully with fruity wines that have super fruity aromas. Gewürztraminer, Muscat, Viognier and Riesling are examples of fruity whites. Gamay (the grape that makes Beaujolais) and Australian Shiraz (Syrah) are examples of fruity reds.

### Match Delicate to Delicate, Robust to Robust

- The texture (body) and acidity of the wine are as important to matching it with food as its flavors.
- Delicate wine tastes like water when served with a dramatically spiced dish.
- Bold, spicy, and hot flavors are ideal for bold, spicy, big-flavored wines. Here are common wine varieties from most delicate to most bold:
  - Whites: Pinot Grigio, Albarino, Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Viognier, Chardonnay
  - Reds: Gamay, Barbera, Pinot Noir, Tempranillo, Sangiovese, Zinfandel, Merlot, Syrah/Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon

### Consider the Overall Intensity of the Dish

- When it comes to choosing a good wine partner, a hot spicy lamb curry, for example, is extremely different from lightly spiced lamb kabobs. You could pair Syrah with either of these dishes, but in the first case, you would want a Syrah known to be powerful, full-bodied, bold, super fruity and spicy to stand up to the intensity of the curry.
- Rich, fatty foods (duck, lamb, beef, cheese) match well with either slightly oaky white wines such as Chardonnay or young red wines such as Cabernet Sauvignon or Zinfandel.



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## PRINCIPLES FOR PERFECT MATCHES CONTINUED

### Consider Complexity

- To showcase a wine that is complex and expensive, pair it with food that is simply prepared. For example, with a truly extraordinary Cabernet Sauvignon or topnotch Bordeaux, serve a high quality, but simple, dish such as a fine steak or a low-key roast.

### Pair Great with Great, Humble with Humble

- This basic principle goes a long way toward success. Pot roast doesn't need a costly Pinot Noir to accompany it. But an expensive standing rib roast may be the perfect opportunity to spring for a pricey Merlot.

### Reconsider Oak

- Wines with a lot of oak flavor often end up tasting hard, flat and crude when you have them with food. California Chardonnays, which usually spend quite some time in oak barrels, are often overtly oaky and toasty. That makes them difficult as good food partners. By contrast, a French Chardonnay like Mâcon-Villages, or a Pinot Grigio or Riesling, none of which are commonly made with oak, are more food friendly.

### Don't Forget Dessert

- Be sure the wine is sweeter than the dessert. A good example of this is sauternes (a honeyed sweet wine) and a simple pear tart. The match works because the wine is sweeter than the dessert itself. When it's the other way around, the wine tastes dull and bland.
- Port works better with dark chocolate and bittersweet chocolate than milk chocolate desserts.

Most importantly, the food should not overwhelm the wine any more than the wine should overpower the food. Ideally, the result is synergistic: the two together are far more enjoyable than either the food or the wine by themselves. In this most imperfect world, enjoying great food and fine wine on the table with good friends and loved ones is one of our purest pleasures.

*“If food is the body of good living, wine is the soul.”*

—SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL