



## Basic Wine Pairing

There are many food & wine pairing philosophies. It is likely that you already have your own favorite foods. When you begin trying different wines, you will also discover favorites. The general feeling today is that wine should not be a mystery. Rather, it is to be enjoyed and thought of as something of interest and pleasure. Until you are comfortable with your own pairing you can walk into a reputable wine store armed with your favorite recipes, ask for help, and turn a great meal into something wonderful.

### Pairing Tips:

Drink what you like with the food that you like. While this may sound oversimplified, it speaks to the fact that there is so much out there to choose from, why not? Perhaps your taste leans towards spicy food. It is likely that you will also lean towards a fuller bodied wine with spicy notes.

One of my personal favorite guidelines for pairing is to keep the wines local, that is, Italian wine with Italian dishes, Portuguese wine with Portuguese food. I also pair by thinking in this manner, casual wine with casual food, Champagne with Hors D'oeuvres and special occasion foods. Bubbles go with everything, especially Asian and fried foods.

The basics of pairing food and wine should be considered when selecting a wine for a meal but should not paralyze you.

- Don't let one overwhelm the other-try to maintain a balance between the type of flavors in both the wine and food. Lighter food, lighter wine.
- Think about the ingredients in the dish, not just the main ingredient such as fish, chicken, etc. Is there acidity, sweetness, spice? The wine should be paired with the boldest flavor.
- If there is acidity in both the food and wine, the acidity will recede and the other characteristics will come out.
- If there is earth in wine, there should be less in the food or the flavor will be that of dirt. Cheese is one of the most prominent foods that this can happen with.

- Glass shape will help to reveal the wine's best characteristics. For instance, a white wineglass is smaller and more tapered at the top to keep the chill on the wine, a red wineglass more open to allow the wine to breathe and a champagne glass is tall and narrow to allow the bubbles to flourish.

Another easy to understand pairing tip is this; think about wine in relationship to a standard household item - milk. Wine can be classified by weight and most of us will understand this well. Compare wine to the types of milk we are familiar with such as skim, 1%, 2%, whole, and cream. Now think of your food in terms of weight and you will be on the road to more interesting pairings.

Also, think about the components of wine and food such as salty, sweet, & acid. For example, a high acid salad dressing, your homemade Vinaigrette, needs a high acid wine like Sauvignon Blanc. While Vinaigrette can be light it is still high in acid. Chardonnay would be too "weighty" for Vinaigrette and the acid in it would make the Chardonnay taste flat. Think not only about the protein (chicken, beef, fish) but more importantly the sauce that is going on the center plate protein. The sauce ingredients should be considered as well as the protein when selecting your wine.

Some of my favorite pairings are:

- Hors D'Oeuvres with Prosecco, An Italian Bubbly that is dry, light, and crisp.
- Asian food with Prosecco or a Light, Crisp, Dry White such as Orvieto or Soave from Italy
- Hearty Comfort food dishes with Reds.
- Roast Chicken with Rose.
- Mushroom centric dishes with Pinot Noir
- Osso Buco with Barolo or a Piedmontese Table Wine

A helpful tip for conserving on the wine consumption is to alternate sips of wine and water.

My best advice, is to TASTE and find what you like. After a while you will be able to taste the wine and food in your mind's eye when selecting the appropriate wine. I sometimes will decide on the wine and then select the recipe.