



The Matching of Wine and Food

A Common Sense Approach

by Lucio Sorré

Wine is the lifeblood of food. Water submerges the taste of food while chemical concoctions shield it. There is no mystique to the art of matching wine and food and no ironclad rules.

There is not one right wine for any particular food. A well-made wine, no matter where it comes from, will enhance the appropriate food no matter what its ethnic origin.

What the person who enjoys food (be it a lowly sandwich, an unsophisticated chicken wing or a royal roast beef) seeks, is palate enjoyment—a fusion of two different taste experiences that create a third which is greater than each individual taste.

Wine is a natural, complex, yet easy-to-appreciate beverage. The primary consideration for a proper marriage is that the character of the wine and that of the food should not overwhelm or suffocate each other. Wine and food are not meant to quarrel with one another.

General rules to harmonize wine with food date back to the days of ancient Greece and Rome. While rigid, specific rules regarding the serving of appropriate wines and foods were written in the 1500's and were followed for centuries, today's consumer drinks and eats what pleases the palate.

Red wine with red meats makes gastronomic sense. The tannin in the wine marries with the proteins in the red meat, causing digestion to begin almost immediately. Drunk with certain seafood, however, a tannic red wine will play havoc with a fillet of Dover sole and the wine might even acquire a metallic taste. Though, fresh salmon, swordfish or tuna, being rich in natural oils, marry well with light-bodied reds.

White wine with white meat and seafood is also a good general recommendation. Certain white wines might be overwhelmed by beef or lamb, but will rise to gastronomic heights when married with sole, shrimp, lobster or grilled breast of chicken.

Salads do not impart any characteristics to wine, but if dressed with vinegar, they inhibit the palate's assessment, robbing wine of its liveliness, making it taste flabby and dull. Lemon juice is preferred, as citric acid blends well with wine's makeup.

Cheese and wine are ideal combinations—just take care not to serve rich, piquant cheeses with light bodied wines and vice versa.

Spicy foods can be a challenge, but when served with a spicy or very fruity wine, the two meet their mates (Lambrusco from Italy, Shiraz from Australia).

Chocolate may also upset the taste of wine. Some claim that an old Cabernet will do the trick. An excellent, delightful combination with chocolate, especially dark chocolate, is Rosa Regale Brachetto d'Acqui—the wine has fruitiness, crispness, and the right natural acidity to balance rich chocolate desserts and keep the palate fresh and clean.