

# US Sommelier Association Wine School

## MATCHING WINE WITH FOOD

Most wines are produced as an accompaniment to food, and there are many established guidelines for matching wine with food successfully. Originally wine styles evolved to complement the cuisine of a region, so this is often a good starting point for finding a good wine and food combination.

- There is no single choice of wine that must be drunk with a certain dish, but some are definitely a better match than others.



### The Basic Considerations

To achieve the best match it is necessary to analyze the basic components in both the wine and the food. The principle is to try to strike a balance between these; so neither one overpowers the other. The main elements to consider are:

- **Match the weight/richness of the food and the body of the wine.**
- **Match the flavor intensity of the food and the flavor intensity of the wine.**
- **Match acidic foods with high-acid wines.**
- **Match sweet foods with sweet wines.**

Avoid combining oily or very salty foods with high-tannin red wines.

These guidelines will help avoid wine and food clashes, or one overpowering the other. Other considerations can help us find wine and food combinations where the wine and the food really enhance each other.

- **Pair 'chewy' meat with tannic wines.**
- **Pair salty foods with sweet or high-acid wines.**
- **Pair fatty and oily food with high-acid wines.**
- **Match or contrast flavor characteristics of the food and the wine.**

### Weight/Richness of the Food and the Wine



The first and most important consideration is to match the weight of the food with that of the wine. Rich heavyweight foods, like game, roast meats and red meat casseroles, need a full-bodied wine. Powerful red wines are often the favored choice, although it is the body of the wine, which is the most important consideration rather than its color or flavor.

For many meat dishes, a rich full-bodied white wine is a better match than a lighter red wine. Lighter food, such as plain white meat or fish, is complemented by more delicate wine. Although white wines are the normal choice, light-bodied, low-tannin red wines such as young Pinot Noir can also be successful.

Always remember the contribution of the sauce. A rich creamy sauce will need a wine of sufficient body to match the food and flavors that will complement the smooth creamy, buttery taste.

### Flavor Intensity of the Food and the Wine

After weight, the next most important element to consider is flavor and how intense that flavor is. Flavor intensity, although similar to weight, is not the same thing.

Think of a food that has a lot of weight but is low in flavor, say a plate of plain boiled potatoes or plain boiled rice; both are heavy in weight but light in flavor. At the other end of the scale think of a plate of raw, thinly sliced red or green peppers; these are high in flavor but light in weight. Wines can be the same.



Riesling, for example, makes a lightweight wine that is intensely flavored, while Chardonnay makes full-bodied, heavyweight wines that can be low in flavor. Delicate wines and strong-flavored foods do not match.

It is also worth considering the way the food has been cooked. If a food is cooked by a moist, gentle method such as steaming, it will require a lighter-flavored wine than a food that is roasted, which will require a wine that is fuller-bodied and more robust in flavor because the method of cooking adds intensity of flavors to the food.

A slow-cooked dish that has been braised or stewed will be weightier and need intensely flavored wines, because the food's flavors are intensified by the method of cooking.

#### Acidity in the Food and the Wine



Sour flavors in food make wines taste less acidic, and therefore less vibrant and refreshing. For this reason, any acidity found in the food should be matched by acidity in the accompanying wines. Acidity is something we rarely think about in food. Tomatoes, lemons, pineapples, apples and vinegar are all high in acidity.

One of the characteristics of Italian red wines is their noticeable acidity. This is because two ingredients –tomatoes and olive oil, dominate much Italian cuisine and other acidic ingredients such as lemons, vinegar (balsamic) and wine are often used –hence wines that go with Italian food need high acidity.

Vinaigrette is an example of acidity being added to a dish. The oil needs to be cut by the sharpness of acidity, so when making a vinaigrette you blend olive oil and vinegar together. Dishes dominated by tart acidic flavors, like lemon, lime or vinegar, can be difficult and require care when matching as they will overpower many wines.

#### Sweetness in the Food and the Wine

Dry wines can seem tart and over-acidic when consumed with any food with a degree of sweetness. Sweet food is best with wine, which has a similar or greater degree of sweetness; the sweeter the food, the sweeter the wine needs to be. Late-harvest wines, especially botrytis-affected wines, and sweet Muscat-based wines are the ideal choice for puddings.

#### Oil, Salt and Tannins

Tannin in combination with oily fish can result in an unpleasant metallic taste, so the general recommendation is to avoid red wines with fish. However, low tannin reds or rosés are fine with meaty fish. Wines with a high tannin content can also taste bitter with salty foods.

### 'Chewy' Meat and Tannins

Tannin in red wine reacts with protein. Foods with a high protein content, particularly rare red meat, will soften the effects of the tannin on the palate. This is why wines from high-tannin grape varieties, such as Cabernet Sauvignon or Syrah/ Shiraz, go well with roast meats, stews and steaks.

Light, fruity red wines with low levels of tannin, like Beaujolais and Valpolicella, will complement white meats because these are low in proteins and lighter than meats such as lamb and beef.



### Salty Foods and Sweet or High-Acid Wines

Salty foods are enhanced by a touch of sweetness. Think of classic combinations like prosciutto and figs. The same works with wine. Roquefort cheese and Sauternes, or Port and Stilton are famous matches. Salty foods also benefit from a little acidity.

Salty foods such as olives, oysters and other shellfish go best with crisp, dry, light-bodied white wines. Although neither sweet nor high in acid, Fino Sherry (which can appear to have a light 'saltiness' of its own) is a classic accompaniment for olives or salted nuts.

### Fatty/Oily Foods and High-Acid Wines



Wines with a good level of acidity can be superb with rich, oily foods, such as pâté. For example, Sauternes works well with foie gras. Here the weight of both wine and food are similar, and the acidity in the wine helps it cut through the fattiness of the food.

This is also an example of matching a sweet wine to a savory food. Crisp wines such as Riesling and unoaked Barberas can make a good match with fatty meats such as duck and goose.

Foods that have been cooked by frying will need wines with high acidity, because the method of cooking increases the fat content, which is 'cut through' by the acidity. Low acid wines would result in a 'cloying' combination.

### Key Flavors in the Food and the Wine

The flavor character of a food can sometimes complement or contrast with flavors in the wine. Often the dominant flavor of the food is in the sauce.

- **Smoked foods** need wines with enough character to cope with the strength of the smoking. Lightly smoked salmon is a classic partner for Brut Champagne; smoked meats like pork can benefit from some slight sweetness in the wine like that found in some German Rieslings; smoky barbecued flavors suit powerful oaked wines like Australian Shiraz. The stronger the smoke, the greater the oak flavor in a wine can be without dominating. (The inside of oak barrels are often 'charred' over a naked flame, so oak-ageing can sometimes impart a 'smokiness' or subtle 'burnt' character to a wine).

- **Spicy foods** are best matched by wines that are made from really ripe, juicy fruit, either unoaked or very lightly oaked (many spices accentuate the flavors of oak). Wines such as New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc can work well with highly spiced foods, as can ripe Chilean Merlot. Spicy wines, such as Gewurztraminer can also complement spicy dishes. (When describing a wine, the term 'spice' can mean a number of different aromas and flavors such as white pepper, black pepper, cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger.) Hot spices like chili reduce the sweetness in wine and can make dry red wines seem more astringent.
- **Fruity flavors** in food can be matched with fruity/floral wines. For example, a Muscat might be paired with a fruit salad.

These guidelines and recommendations should avoid disastrous combinations, but individual taste is the final consideration. Experimentation can yield surprising results. Perhaps one of the most striking illustrations of this is strawberry steeped in red wine (try un-oaked Shiraz) with freshly ground black pepper.

### Grape varieties

In the past two decades a radical change has come about in all except the most long-established wine countries: the names of a handful of grape varieties have become the ready reference to wine. In senior wine countries, above all France and Italy (between them producing nearly half the world's wine), more complex traditions prevail. All wine of old prestige is known by its origin, more or less narrowly defined, not just the particular fruit-juice that fermented.

For the present the two notions are in rivalry. Eventually the primacy of place over fruit will become obvious, at least for wines of quality. But for now, for most people, grape tastes are the easy reference-point – despite the fact that they are often confused by the added taste of oak. If grape flavors were really all that mattered these notes would be short.

But of course they do matter, and a knowledge of them both guides you to flavors you enjoy and helps comparisons between regions. Hence the originally Californian term "varietal wine" – meaning, in principle, from one grape variety.

- At least seven varieties –
  - **Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, and Muscat** – have tastes and smells distinct and memorable enough to form international categories of wine.
- To these you can add **Merlot, Malbec, Syrah, Semillon, Chenin Blanc, Pinots Blanc and Gris, Sylvaner, Viognier, Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, Tempranillo**

The following are the best and/or most popular wine grapes.

#### Grapes for red wine

**Agiorgitiko (St George)** Versatile Greek (Nemea) variety with juicy damson fruit and velvety tannins. Sufficient structure for serious ageing.

**Baga** Bairrada (Portugal) grape. Dark and tannic. Has great potential, but hard to grow.

**Barbera** Widely grown in Italy, at its best in Piedmont, giving dark, fruity, often sharp wine. Fashionable in California and Australia; promising in Argentina.

**Blaufränkisch** Mostly Austrian; can be light and juicy but at best (in Burgenland) a considerable red. LEMBERGER in Germany, KEKFRANKOS in Hungary.

**Brunello** Alias for SANGIOVESE, splendid at Montalcino.

**Cabernet Franc, alias Bouchet (Cab Fr)** The lesser of two sorts of Cabernet grown in Bordeaux but dominant (as "Bouchet") in St-Emilion. The Cabernet of the Loire, making Chinon, Saumur, Champigny, and rosé. Used for blending with CABERNET SAUVIGNON, etc, or increasingly, alone, in California, Australia.

**Cabernet Sauvignon (Cab Sauv)** Grape of great character: spicy, herby, tannic, with characteristic blackcurrant aroma. The first grape of the Médoc; also makes most of the best California, South American, East European reds. Vies with Shiraz in Australia. Its wine almost always needs ageing; usually benefits from blending with eg MERLOT, CABERNET FRANC, SYRAH, TEMPRANILLO, SANGIOVESE etc. Makes aromatic rosé.

**Cannonau** GRENACHE in its Sardinian manifestation: can be very fine, potent.

**Carignan** In decline in France. Needs low yields, old vines; best in Corbières. Otherwise dull but harmless. Common in North Africa, Spain, and California.

**Carmènere** An old Bordeaux variety now virtually extinct in France. Widely used in Chile where until recently it was often mistaken for MERLOT.

**Cinsault/Cinsaut** Usually bulk-producing grape of Southern France; in South Africa crossed with PINOT NOIR to make PINOTAGE. Pale wine, but quality potential.

**Dolcetto** Source of soft seductive dry red in Piedmont. Now high fashion.

**Gamay** The Beaujolais grape: light, very fragrant wines, at their best young. Makes even lighter wine in the Loire Valley, in central France, and in Switzerland and Savoie. Known as "Napa Gamay" in California.

**Grenache, alias Garnacha, Cannonau** Useful grape for strong and fruity but pale wine: good rosé and vin doux naturel— especially in the South of France, Spain, and California – but also the mainstay of beefy Priorato. Old-vine versions are prized in South Australia. Usually blended with other varieties (eg in Châteauneuf-du-Pape).

**Grignolino** Makes one of the good everyday table wines of Piedmont.

**Kadarka, alias Gamza** Makes healthy, sound, agreeable reds in East Europe.

**Kékfrankos** Hungarian BLAUFRÄNKISCH; similar lightish reds.

**Lambrusco** Productive grape of the lower Po Valley, giving quintessentially Italian, cheerful, sweet, and fizzy red.

**Lemberger** See BLAUFRÄNKISCH. Württemberg's red.

**Malbec, alias Côt** Minor in Bordeaux, major in Cahors (alias Auxerrois) and especially in Argentina. Dark, dense, tannic wine capable of real quality.

**Merlot** Adaptable grape making the great fragrant and plummy wines of Pomerol and (with CABERNET FRANC) St-Emilion, an important element in Médoc reds, soft and strong (and à la mode) in California, Washington, Chile, Australia. Lighter but often good in North Italy, Italian Switzerland, Slovenia, Argentina, South Africa, New Zealand etc. Grassy when not fully ripe.

**Montepulciano** A good central-eastern Italian grape, and a Tuscan town.

**Morellino** Alias for SANGIOVESE in Scansano, southern Tuscany.

**Mourvèdre, alias Mataro** Excellent dark aromatic tannic grape used mainly for blending in Provence (but solo in Bandol) and the Midi. Enjoying new interest in, for example, South Australia and California.

**Nebbiolo, alias Spanna and Chiavennasca** One of Italy's best red grapes; makes Barolo, Barbaresco, Gattinara, and Valtellina. Intense, nobly fruity, perfumed wine but very tannic: improves for years.

**Periquita** Ubiquitous in Portugal for firm-flavored reds. Often blended with CABERNET SAUVIGNON and also known as Castelão.

**Petit Verdot** Excellent but awkward Médoc grape, now increasingly planted in Cabernet areas worldwide for extra fragrance.

**Pinot Noir (Pinot N)** The glory of Burgundy's Côte d'Or, with scent, flavor, and texture that are unmatched anywhere. Makes light wines rarely of much distinction in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Hungary. But now also splendid results in California's Sonoma, Carneros, and Central Coast, as well as Oregon, Ontario, Yarra Valley, Adelaide Hills, Tasmania, and New Zealand's South Island.

**Pinotage** Singular South African grape (PINOT NOIR x CINSAUT). Can be very fruity and can age interestingly, but often jammy.

**Primitivo** Southern Italian grape making big, rustic wines, now fashionable because genetically identical to ZINFANDEL.

**Refosco** In northeast Italy possibly a synonym for Mondeuse of Savoie. Produces deep, flavorsome and age-worthy wines, especially when grown in warmer climates.

**Sagrantino** Italian grape found in Umbria for powerful cherry-flavoured wines.

**Sangiovese (or Sangiovetto)** Main red grape of Chianti and much of central Italy. Aliases include BRUNELLO and MORELLINO. Interesting in Australia.

**Saperavi** Makes good, sharp, very long-lived wine in Georgia, Ukraine etc. Blends very well with CAB SAUV (eg in Moldova).

**Spätburgunder** German for PINOT N. Quality is variable, seldom wildly exciting.

**St-Laurent** Dark, smooth and full-flavored Austrian speciality. Also in the Pfalz.

**Syrah, alias Shiraz** The great Rhône red grape: tannic, purple, peppery wine, which matures superbly. Very important as Shiraz in Australia, and under either name in California, Washington State, South Africa, Chile, and elsewhere.

**Tannat** Raspberry-perfumed, highly tannic force behind Madiran, Tursan, and other firm reds from Southwest France. Also rosé. Now the star of Uruguay.

**Tempranillo** Aromatic fine Rioja grape, called Ull de Llebre in Catalonia, Cencibel in La Mancha, Tinto Fino in Ribera del Duero, Tinta Roriz in Douro, Aragonez in southern Portugal. Now Australia, too. Very fashionable; elegant in cool climates, beefy in warm. Early ripening.

**Touriga Nacional** Top port grape grown in the Douro Valley. Also makes full-bodied

reds in south Portugal.

**Zinfandel (Zin)** Fruity adaptable grape of California (though identical to PRIMITIVO) with blackberry-like, and sometimes metallic, flavour. Can be structured and gloriously lush, but also makes “blush” white wine.

### Grapes for white wine

**Albariño** The Spanish name for North Portugal's Alvarinho, making excellent fresh and fragrant wine in Galicia. Both fashionable and expensive in Spain.

**Aligoté** Burgundy's second-rank white grape. Crisp (often sharp) wine, needs drinking in 1–3 years. Perfect for mixing with cassis (blackcurrant liqueur) to make “Kir”. Widely planted in East Europe, especially Russia.

**Arinto** White central Portuguese grape for crisp, fragrant dry whites.

**Arneis** Aromatic, high-priced grape, DOC in Roero, Piedmont.

**Blanc Fumé** Occasional (New World) alias of SAUVIGNON BLANC, referring to its smoky smell, particularly from the Loire (Sancerre and Pouilly). In California used for oak-aged Sauvignon and reversed to “Fumé Blanc”. (The smoke is oak.)

**Bourboulenc** This and the rare Rolle make some of the Midi's best wines.

**Bual** Makes top-quality sweet madeira wines, not quite so rich as malmsey.

**Chardonnay (Chard)** The white grape of burgundy, Champagne, and the New World, partly because it is one of the easiest to grow and vinify. All regions are trying it, mostly aged (or, better, fermented) in oak to reproduce the flavors of burgundy. Australia and California make classics (but also much dross). Italy, Spain, New Zealand, South Africa, New York State, Argentina, Chile, Hungary and the Midi are all coming on strong. Called Morillon in Austria.

**Chasselas** Prolific early-ripening grape with little aroma, mainly grown for eating. AKA Fendant in Switzerland (where it is supreme), Gutedel in Germany.

**Chenin Blanc (Chenin BI)** Great white grape of the middle Loire (Vouvray, Layon, etc). Wine can be dry or sweet (or very sweet), but with plenty of acidity. Bulk wine in California, but increasingly serious in South Africa. See also STEEN.

**Clairette** A low-acid grape, part of many southern French blends.

**Colombard** Slightly fruity, nicely sharp grape, makes everyday wine in South Africa, California, and Southwest France.

**Fendant** See CHASSELAS.

**Fiano** High quality grape giving peachy, spicy wine in Campania.

**Folle Blanche** High acid/little flavour make this ideal for brandy. Called Gros Plant in Brittany, Picpoul in Armagnac. Also respectable in California.

**Furmint** A grape of great character: the trademark of Hungary both as the principal grape in Tokáj and as vivid, vigorous table wine with an appley flavour. Called Sipun in Slovenia. Some grown in Austria.

**Garganega** The best grape in the Soave blend. Top wines, especially sweet

ones, age well.

**Gewurztraminer, alias Traminer (Gewurz)** One of the most pungent grapes, distinctively spicy with aromas like rose petals and grapefruit. Wines are often rich and soft, even when fully dry. Best in Alsace; but also good in Germany (Gewürztraminer), East Europe, Australia, California, Pacific Northwest, and New Zealand.

**Grauburgunder** See PINOT GRIS.

**Grechetto or Greco** Ancient grape of central and south Italy noted for the vitality and stylishness of its wine.

**Grüner Veltliner** Austria's favorite. Around Vienna and in the Wachau and Weinviertel (also in Moravia) it can be delicious: light but dry, peppery and lively. Excellent young, but the best age five years or so.

**Hárslevelü** Other main grape of Tokáj (with FURMINT). Adds softness and body.

**Kéknyelü** Low-yielding, flavorful grape giving one of Hungary's best whites. Has the potential for fieriness and spice. To be watched.

**Kerner** The most successful of recent German varieties, mostly RIESLING x SILVANER, but in this case Riesling x (red) Trollinger. Early-ripening, flowery (but often too blatant) wine with good acidity. Popular in Pfalz, Rheinhessen, etc.

**Laski Rizling** Grown in northern Italy and Eastern Europe. Much inferior to Rhine RIESLING, with lower acidity, best in sweet wines. Alias Welschriesling, Riesling Italico, Olaszrizling (no longer legally labelled simply "Riesling").

**Loureiro** The best and most fragrant Vinho Verde variety in Portugal.

**Macabeo** The workhorse white grape of north Spain, widespread in Rioja (alias Viura) and in Catalan cava country. Good quality potential.

**Malvasia** A family of grapes rather than a single variety, found all over Italy and Iberia. May be red, white, or pink. Usually plump, soft wine. Malvoisie in France is unrelated.

**Marsanne** Principal white grape (with ROUSSANNE) of the northern Rhône (eg in Hermitage, St-Joseph, St-Péray). Also good in Australia, California, and (as Ermitage Blanc) the Valais. Soft full wines that age very well.

**Moschofilero** Good, aromatic pink Greek grape. Makes white or rosé wine.

**Müller-Thurgau (Müller-T)** Dominant in Germany's Rheinhessen and Pfalz and too common on the Mosel. It was thought to be a cross between RIESLING and Chasselas de Courtellier, but recent studies suggests otherwise. Soft aromatic wines for drinking young. Makes good sweet wines but usually dull, often coarse, dry ones. Should have no place in top vineyards.

**Muscadelle** Adds aroma to white Bordeaux, especially Sauternes. In Victoria as Tokay it is used (with MUSCAT, to which it is unrelated) for Rutherglen Muscat.

**Muscadet, alias Melon de Bourgogne** Makes light, refreshing, very dry wines with a seaside tang round Nantes in Brittany.

**Muscat** (Many varieties; the best is Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains.) Widely grown, easily recognized, pungent grapes, mostly made into perfumed sweet

wines, often fortified (as in France's vins doux naturels). Superb in Australia. The third element in Tokáj Aszú. Rarely (eg Alsace) made dry.

**Palomino, alias Listán** Makes all the best sherry but poor table wine.

**Pedro Ximénez, alias PX** Makes very strong wine in Montilla and Málaga. Used in blending sweet sherries. Also grown in Argentina, the Canaries, Australia, California, and South Africa.

**Petit (and Gros) Manseng** The secret weapon of the French Basque country: vital for Jurançon; increasingly blended elsewhere in the Southwest.

**Pinot Blanc (Pinot BI)** A cousin of PINOT NOIR, similar to but milder than CHARDONNAY: light, fresh, fruity, not aromatic, to drink young. Good for Italian spumante. Grown in Alsace, northern Italy, south Germany, and East Europe. Weissburgunder in Germany. See also MUSCADET.

**Pinot Gris (Pinot Gr)** At best makes rather heavy, even "thick", full-bodied whites with a certain spicy style. In Germany can be alias Ruländer (sweet) or GRAUBURGUNDER (dry); Pinot Grigio in Italy. Also found in Hungary, Slovenia, Canada, Oregon, New Zealand...

**Pinot Noir (Pinot N)** Superlative black grape (See p.12) used in Champagne and elsewhere (eg California, Australia) for making white, sparkling, or very pale pink "vin gris".

**Roussanne** Rhône grape of great finesse, now popping up in California and Australia. Can age well.

**Sauvignon Blanc (Sauv BI)** Makes very distinctive aromatic grassy wines, pungent in New Zealand, often mineral in Sancerre, riper in Australia; also good in Rueda, Austria, north Italy, Chile's Casablanca Valley, and South Africa. Blended with SEMILLON in Bordeaux. Can be austere or buxom. May be called BLANC FUMÉ.

**Savagnin** The grape of vin jaune of Savoie: related to TRAMINER?

### **Riesling (Ries)**

Riesling is making its re-entrance on the world-stage through, as it were, the back door. All serious commentators agree that Riesling stands level with Chardonnay as the world's best white wine grape, though in diametrically opposite style. Chardonnay gives full-bodied but aromatically discreet wines, while Riesling offers a range from steely to voluptuous, always positively perfumed, and with more ageing potential than Chardonnay. Germany makes the greatest Riesling in all styles. Yet its popularity is being revived in, of all places, South Australia, where this cool-climate grape does its best to ape Chardonnay. Holding the middle ground, with forceful but still steely wines, is Austria. While lovers of light and fragrant, often piercingly refreshing Rieslings have the Mosel as their exclusive playground. Also grown in Alsace (but nowhere else in France), Pacific Northwest, Ontario, California, New Zealand, and South Africa.

**Scheurebe** Spicy-flavoured German RIES x SILVANER (possibly), very successful in Pfalz, especially for Auslese. Can be weedy: must be very ripe to be good.

**Semillon (Sem)** Contributes the lusciousness to Sauternes and increasingly

important for Graves and other dry white Bordeaux. Grassy if not fully ripe, but can make soft dry wine of great ageing potential. Superb in Australia: old Hunter Valley Sem, though light, can be great wine. Promising in New Zealand.

**Sercial** Makes the driest madeira (where myth used to identify it with RIESLING).

**Seyval Blanc (Seyval BI)** French-made hybrid of French and American vines. Very hardy and attractively fruity. Popular and reasonably successful in eastern States and England but dogmatically banned by EU from "quality" wines.

**Steen** South African alias for CHENIN BLANC, not used for better examples.

**Silvaner, alias Sylvaner** Germany's former workhorse grape. Rarely fine except in Franken – where it is savoury and ages admirably – and in Rheinhessen and Pfalz, where it is enjoying a renaissance. Good in the Italian Tyrol; now declining in popularity in Alsace. Very good (and powerful) as Johannisberg in the Valais, Switzerland.

**Tocai Friulano** North Italian grape with a flavour best described as "subtle". No relation to TOKAY, but could be Sauvignonasse (see SAUVIGNON BLANC).

**Tokay** See PINOT GRIS. Also supposedly Hungarian grape in Australia and a table grape in California. The wine Tokay (Tokáj) is FURMINT, HARSLEVELU and MUSCAT.

**Torrontes** Strongly aromatic, MUSCAT-like Argentine speciality, usually dry.

**Trebbiano** Important but mediocre grape of central Italy (Orvieto, Soave etc). Also grown in southern France as Ugni Blanc, and Cognac as St-Emilion. Mostly thin, bland wine; needs blending (and more careful growing).

**Ugni Blanc (Ugni BI)** See TREBBIANO.

**Verdejo** The grape of Rueda in Castile, potentially fine and long-lived.

**Verdelho** Madeira grape making excellent medium-sweet wine; in Australia, fresh soft dry wine of great character.

**Verdicchio** Potentially good dry wine in central-eastern Italy.

**Vermentino** Italian, sprightly with satisfying texture and ageing capacity.

**Vernaccia** Name given to many unrelated grapes in Italy. Vernaccia di San Gimignano is crisp, lively; Vernaccia di Oristano is sherry-like.

**Viognier** Ultra-fashionable Rhône grape, finest in Condrieu, less fine but still aromatic in the Midi. Good examples from California and Australia.

**Viura** See MACABEO.

**Welschriesling** See LASKI RIZLING.

## Food and Wine

The dilemma is most acute in restaurants. Four people have chosen different dishes. The host calculates. A bottle of white and then one of red is conventional, regardless of the food. The formula works up to a point.

But it can be refined – or replaced with something more original, something to really bring out the flavors of both food and wine.

**Before the meal – apéritifs**

The conventional apéritif wines are either sparkling (epitomized by Champagne) or fortified (epitomized by sherry in Britain, port in France, vermouth in Italy, etc). A glass of white or rosé (or in France red) table wine before eating is presently in vogue. It calls for something light and stimulating, fairly dry but not acidic, with a degree of character; Chenin Blanc or Riesling rather than Chardonnay.

**Please note:** Avoid peanuts; they destroy wine flavors. Olives are also too piquant for many wines; they need sherry or a Martini. Eat almonds, pistachios or walnuts, plain crisps or cheese straws instead.

## Food A–Z

**Abalone** Dry or medium white: Sauv Bl, Côte de Beaune Blanc, Pinot Gr, or Grüner Veltliner. Chinese style: try vintage Champagne.

**Aioli** A thirst-quencher is needed for its garlic heat. Rhône, sparkling dry white; Provence rosé, Verdicchio.

**Anchovies** A robust white – or fino sherry.

**Antipasti** Dry white: Italian (Arneis, Soave, Pinot Grigio, prosecco, Vermentino); light red (Dolcetto, Franciacorta, young Chianti); fino sherry.

**Apples, Cox's Orange Pippins** Vintage port (55 60 63 66 70 75 82).

**Artichoke vinaigrette** An incisive dry white: New Zealand Sauv Bl; Côtes de Gascogne or a modern Greek; young red: Bordeaux, Côtes du Rhône. *With hollandaise* Full-bodied slightly crisp dry white: Pouilly-Fuissé, Pfalz Spätlese, or a Carneros or Yarra Valley Chard.

**Asparagus** A difficult flavour for wine, being slightly bitter. Sauv Bl echoes the flavour, but needs to be ripe, as in Chile. Sem beats Chard, esp Australian, but Chard works well with melted butter or hollandaise. Alsace Pinot Gr, even dry Muscat is gd, or Jurançon Sec.

**Aubergine purée (Melitzanosalata)** Crisp New World Sauv Bl eg from South Africa or New Zealand; or modern Greek or Sicilian dry white. Or try Bardolino red or Chiaretto. Baked aubergine dishes can need sturdier reds: Shiraz, Zin.

**Avocado with seafood** Dry or slightly sharp white: Rheingau or Pfalz Kabinett, Grüner Veltliner, Wachau Ries, Sancerre, Pinot Gr; Sonoma or Australian Chard or Sauv Bl, or a dry rosé. Or Chablis Premier Cru.

**Avocado with vinaigrette** Manzanilla sherry.

**Barbecues** The local wine would be Australian. Or south Italian, Tempranillo, Zin or Argentine Malbec. Bandol for a real treat.

**Beef, boiled** Red: Bordeaux (Bourg or Fronsac), Roussillon, Gevrey-Chambertin, or Côte-Rôtie. Medium-ranking white burgundy is gd, eg. Auxey-Duresses. Or top-notch beer. Mustard softens tannic reds, and horseradish kills everything – but can be worth the sacrifice.

**roast** Ideal partner for fine red wine of any kind, esp Cab Sauv.

**Beef stew** Sturdy red: Pomerol or St-Emilion, Hermitage, Cornas, Barbera, Shiraz, Napa Cab Sauv, Ribera del Duero or Douro red.

**Beef Stroganoff** Dramatic red: Barolo, Valpolicella Amarone, Cahors, Hermitage, late-harvest Zin – even Moldovan Negru de Purkar.

**Beurre blanc, fish with** A top-notch Muscadet-sur-lie, a Sauv Bl/Sem blend, Chablis Premier Cru, Vouvray or a Rheingau Riesling.

**Bisques** Dry white with plenty of body: Pinot Gr, Chard, Gruner Veltliner. Fino or dry amontillado sherry, or montilla. West Australian Sem.

**Boudin noir (blood sausage)** Local Sauv Bl or Chenin Bl – esp in the Loire. Or Beaujolais Cru, esp Morgon. *blanc* Loire Chenin Bl, esp when served with apples: dry Vouvray, Saumur or Savennières. Mature red Côtes de Beaune, if without apple.

**Bouillabaisse** Savoury dry white, Marsanne from the Midi or Rhône, Corsican or Spanish rosé, or Cassis, Verdicchio, South African Sauv Bl.

**Brandade** Chablis, Sancerre Rouge or New Zealand Pinot Noir.

**Bread-and-butter pudding** Fine 10-yr-old Barsac, Tokáj Aszú or Australian botrytized Sem.

**Brill** Very delicate: hence a top fish for fine old Puligny and the like.

**Cajun food** Works well with Fleurie, Brouilly or Sauv Bl. With gumbo: amontillado or Mexican beer.

**Carpaccio, beef** Seems to work well with the flavour of most wines. Top Tuscan is appropriate, but fine Chards are gd. So are vintage and pink Champagnes.

**Cassoulet** Red from southwest France (Gaillac, Minervois, Corbières, St-Chinian or Fitou) or Shiraz. But best of all is Beaujolais Cru or young Tempranillo.

**Cauliflower cheese** Crisp aromatic white: Sancerre, Ries Spätlese, Muscat, English Seyval Bl, or Schönburger.

**Caviar** Iced vodka. If you prefer Champagne, it should be full-bodied (eg Bollinger, Krug).

**Ceviche** Try Australian Ries or Verdelho; South African or New Zealand Sauv Bl.

**Charcuterie** Young Beaujolais-Villages, Loire reds such as Saumur, Swiss or Oregon Pinot N. Young Argentine or Italian reds. Sauv Bl can work well too.

**Chicken/turkey/guinea fowl, roast** Virtually any wine, including very best bottles of dry to medium white and finest old reds (esp burgundy). The meat of fowl can be adapted with sauces to match almost any fine wine (eg coq au vin with red or white burgundy). Try sparkling Shiraz with strong, sweet, or spicy stuffings and trimmings.

**Chicken Kiev** Alsace or Pfalz Ries, Hungarian Furmint, young Pinot N.

**Cheesecake** Sweet white: Vouvray or Anjou or fizz, refreshing but nothing special.

**Cheese fondue** Dry white: Valais Fendant or any other Swiss Chasselas, Roussette de Savoie, Grüner Veltliner, Alsace Ries, or Pinot Gr. Or a Beaujolais Cru. For Wine & cheese, see p.27.

**Chilli con carne** Young red: Beaujolais, Zin, or Argentine Malbec.

## Chinese Food

- **Canton or Peking style** Dry to medium-dry white – Mosel Ries Kabinett or Spätlese trocken – can be gd throughout a Chinese banquet. Light Monbazillac, too. Gewurz is often suggested but rarely works (but brilliant with ginger), yet Chasselas and Pinot Gr are attractive alternatives. Dry or off-dry sparkling cuts the oil and matches sweetness. Eschew sweet-and-sour dishes but try St-Emilion \_\_, New World Pinot N, or Châteauneuf-du-Pape with duck. I often serve both white and red wines concurrently during Chinese meals.

**Szechuan style** Verdicchio, Alsace Pinot Blanc or very cold beer.

**Chocolate** Generally only powerful flavors can compete. California Orange Muscat, Bual, Tokáj Aszú, Australian Liqueur Muscat, 10-yr-old tawny port; Asti for light, fluffy mousses. Experiment with rich, ripe reds: Syrah, Zin, even sparkling Shiraz. Médoc can match bitter black chocolate. Banyuls for a weightier partnership. Or a tot of good rum.

**Chowders** Big-scale white, not necessarily bone dry: Pinot Gr, Rhine Spätlese, Albariño, Australian Sem, buttery Chard. Or fino sherry.

**Choucroute garni** Alsace Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Ries. Or beer.

**Christmas pudding, mince pies** Tawny port, cream sherry, or liquid Christmas pudding itself, Pedro Ximénez sherry. Asti or Banyuls.

**Cold meats** Generally better with full-flavoured white than red. Mosel Spätlese or Hochheimer and Côte Chalonnaise are v.gd, as is Beaujolais. Leftover cold beef with leftover Champagne is bliss.

**Cod** If roast, a good neutral background for fine dry whites: Chablis, Meursault, Corton-Charlemagne, cru classé Graves, Grüner Veltliner, German (medium) Kabinett or dry Spätlesen or a gd light red, eg Beaune.

**Coffee desserts** Sweet Muscat inc Australia liqueur or Tokáj Aszú.

**Confit d'oie/de canard** Young tannic red Bordeaux Cru Bourgeois, California Cab Sauv and Merlot, and Priorato all cut the richness. Choose Alsace Pinot Gr or Gewurz to match it.

**Consommé** Medium-dry amontillado sherry or sercial madeira.

**Coq au vin** Red burgundy. In an ideal world, one bottle of Chambertin in the dish, two on the table.

**Crab** and Ries are part of the Creator's plan.

**cioppino** Sauv Bl; but West Coast friends insist on Zin. Also California sparkling wine – or any other full-bodied sparkler.

**cold, with salad** Alsace, Austrian or Rhine Ries; dry Australian Ries or Condrieu. Show off your favorite white.

**soft-shell** Top Chard or top-quality German Ries Spätlese.

**with black bean sauce** A big Barossa Shiraz/Syrah.

**Creams, custards, fools, syllabubs** See also Chocolate, Coffee, Ginger, and Rum. Sauternes, Loupiac, Ste-Croix-du-Mont, or Monbazillac.

**Crème brûlée** Sauternes or Rhine Beerenauslese, best Madeira or Tokáj. (With concealed fruit, a more modest sweet wine.)

**Crêpes Suzette** Sweet Champagne, Orange Muscat or Asti.

**Crostini** Morellino di Scansano, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Valpolicella, or a dry Italian white such as Verdicchio or Orvieto.

**Crudités** Light red or rosé: Côtes du Rhône, Minervois, Chianti, Pinot N; or fino sherry. For whites: Alsace Sylvaner or Pinot Blanc.

**Dim-Sum** Classically, China tea. For fun: Pinot Grigio or Ries; light red (Bardolino or Loire ). NV Champagne or gd New World fizz.

**Duck or goose** Rather rich white: Pfalz Spätlese or off-dry Alsace Grand Cru. Or mature gamey red: Morey-St-Denis, Côte-Rôtie, Bordeaux, or burgundy. With oranges or peaches, the Sauternais propose drinking Sauternes, others Monbazillac or Ries Auslese.

**Peking** See Chinese food.

**wild duck** Big-scale red such as Hermitage, Bandol, California or South African Cab Sauv, or Barossa Shiraz – Grange if you can find it.

**with olives** Top-notch Chianti or other Tuscans.

**Eel,**

- **jellied** NV Champagne or a nice cup of (Ceylon) tea.
- **smoked** Strong/sharp wine: fino sherry or Bourgogne Aligoté. Schnapps.

**Eggs** See also Soufflés. Difficult: eggs clash with most wines and can actually spoil gd ones. But local wine with local egg dishes is a safe bet. So \_\_\_\_ of whatever is going. Try Pinot Bl or not too oaky Chard. As a last resort I can bring myself to drink Champagne with scrambled eggs.

**Quail's eggs** Blanc de Blancs Champagne.

**Seagull's (or gull's) eggs** Mature white burgundy or vintage Champagne.

**Oeufs en meurette** Burgundian genius: eggs in red wine calls for wine of the same.

**Escargots** Rhône reds (Gigondas, Vacqueyras), St-Véran or Aligoté. In the Midi, v.gd Petits-Gris go with local white, rosé or red. In Alsace, Pinot Bl or Muscat.

**Fennel-based dishes** Sauv Bl, or young, fresh red like Beaujolais.

**Fish and chips, fritto misto (or tempura)** Chablis, white Bordeaux, Sauv Bl, Pinot Bl, Gavi, fino, montilla, Kosu, tea; or NV Champagne and Cava.

**Fish baked in a salt crust** Full-bodied white or rosé; Meursault, Rioja, Albariño, Sicily, Côtes de Lubéron or Minervois.

**Fish pie (with creamy sauce)** Albariño, Soave Classico, Pinot Gr d'Alsace.

**Fish terrine** Pfalz Ries Spätlese Trocken, Grüner Veltliner, Chablis Premier Cru, Clare Valley Ries, Sonoma Chard; or manzanilla.

**Foie gras** White. In Bordeaux they drink Sauternes. Others prefer a late-harvest Pinot Gr or Ries (inc New World), Vouvray, Montlouis, Jurançon Moelleux or Gewurz. Tokáj Aszú 5 puttonyos is a Lucullan

choice. Old dry amontillado can be sublime. If the foie gras is served hot, mature vintage Champagne. But never Chard or Sauv Bl.

**Frankfurters** German Ries, Beaujolais or light Pinot N. Or Budweiser (Budvar) beer.

### **Fruit**

- **fresh** Sweet Coteaux du Layon or light sweet Muscat.
- **poached** Sweet Muscatel: try Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise, Moscato di Pantelleria or Spanish dessert Tarragona.
- **dried fruit (and compotes)** Banyuls, Rivesaltes or Maury.
- **flans and tarts** Sauternes, Monbazillac; sweet Vouvray or Anjou.
- **salads** A fine sweet sherry or any Muscat-based wine.

**Game birds, young, plain-roasted** The best red you can afford.

- **older birds in casseroles** Red (Gevrey-Chambertin, Pommard, Santenay or Grand Cru St-Emilion, Napa Valley Cab Sauv or Rhône).
- **well-hung game** Vega Sicilia, great red Rhône, Lebanon's Chateau Musar.
- **cold game** Mature vintage Champagne.

### **Game pie,**

- **hot** Red: Oregon Pinot N.
- **cold** Gd quality white burgundy, cru Beaujolais or Champagne.

**Gazpacho** A glass of fino before and after. Or Sauv Bl.

**Ginger desserts** Sweet Muscats, New World botrytized Ries and Sem.

**Goat's cheese (warm)** Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé or New World Sauv Bl. Chilled Chinon, Saumur-Champigny or Provence rosé. Australian sparkling Shiraz or strong east Mediterranean reds: eg Greek or Turkish.

**Goulash** Flavoursome young red such as Hungarian Zin, Uruguayan Tannat, Morellino di Scansano or a young Australian Shiraz.

**Gravadlax** Akvavit or iced sake. Grand Cru Chablis; California, Washington or Margaret River Chard; Mosel Spätlese (not Trocken).

**Guacamole** California Chard, Sauv Blanc, dry Muscat or NV Champagne. Or Mexican beer.

**Haddock** Rich dry whites: Meursault, California or New Zealand Chard, Marsanne or Albariño.

- **smoked, mousse or brandade** A wonderful dish for showing off any stylish full-bodied white, inc Grand Cru Chablis or Chard from Sonoma or New Zealand.

**Haggis** Fruity red, eg young claret, Châteauneuf-du-Pape or New World Cab Sauv. Or of course malt whisky.

**Hake** Sauv Bl or any fresh fruity white: Pacherenc, Tursan, white Navarra.

**Halibut** As for turbot.

**Ham, raw or cured** Alsace Grand Cru Pinot Gr, crisp Italian white or sweetish German white (Rhine Spätlese). Soft Pinot Noir or lightish Cab Sauv. With Spanish pata negra or jamon, try fino sherry or tawny port.

**Hamburger** Young red: Beaujolais or Australian Cab Sauv, Chianti or Zin.

**Hare** Calls for flavorful red: not-too-old burgundy or Bordeaux, Rhône (eg Gigondas), Bandol, Barbaresco, Ribero del Duero or Rioja Reserva. Australia's Grange would be an experience.

**Herrings,**

- **raw or pickled** Dutch gin (young, not aged) or Scandinavian akvavit, and cold beer. If wine is essential, try Muscadet 2003.
- **fried/grilled** Need a white with some acidity to cut their richness. Rully, Chablis, Bourgogne Aligoté, Greek white or dry Sauv Bl. Or try cider.

**Houmous** Pungent, spicy dry white, eg Furmint or modern Greek white.

**Ice-creams and sorbets** Fortified wine (Australian liqueur Muscat, Banyuls, PX sherry); sweet Asti or sparkling Moscato. Amaretto liqueur with vanilla; rum with chocolate.

**Indian food** Medium-sweet white, very cold: Orvieto Abboccato, South African Chenin Bl, Alsace Pinot Bl, Indian sparkling, Mateus Rosé, cava and NV Champagne. Or emphasize the heat with a tannic Barolo or Barbaresco, or deep-flavoured reds such as Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Cornas, Australian Grenache or Mourvèdre, or Valpolicella Amarone.

**Kedgeree** Full white, still or sparkling: Mâcon-Villages, South African Chard. At breakfast: Champagne.

**Kidneys** Red: St-Emilion or Fronsac: Nuits-St-Georges, Cornas, Barbaresco, Rioja, Spanish or Australian Cab Sauv or top Alentejo.

**Kippers** A gd cup of tea, preferably Ceylon (milk, no sugar). Scotch? Dry oloroso sherry is surprisingly gd.

**Lamb, roast** One of the traditional and best partners for v.gd red Bordeaux – or its Cab Sauv equivalents from the New World, esp Napa and Coonawarra. In Spain, the partner of the finest old Rioja and Ribera del Duero Reservas. New Zealand Pinot N for spicy lamb dishes.

**cutlets or chops** As for roast lamb, but a little less grand.

**Lamproie à la Bordelaise** 5-yr-old St-Emilion or Fronsac. Or Douro reds with Portuguese lampreys.

**Lemon desserts** For dishes like **Tarte au Citron**, sweet Ries from Germany or Austria, or Tokáj Aszú; the sharper the lemon, the sweeter the wine.

**Lentil dishes** Sturdy reds such as southern French, or Zin or Shiraz.

**Liver** Choose a young red: Beaujolais-Villages, St-Joseph, Cab Sauv, Merlot, Zin or Portuguese.

- **Calf's** Red Rioja crianza, Salice Salentino Riserva or Fleurie.

**Lobster, richly sauced** Vintage Champagne, fine white burgundy, cru classé Graves, California Chard or Australian Ries, Pfalz Spätlese.

- **salad** NV Champagne, Alsace Ries, Chablis Premier Cru, Condrieu, Mosel Spätlese, Penedès Chard or Cava.

**Mackerel** Hard or sharp white: Sauv Bl from Touraine, Gaillac, Vinho Verde, white Rioja or English white. Guinness is gd.

- **smoked** An oily wine-destroyer. Manzanilla sherry, proper dry Vinho Verde or Schnapps, peppered or bison-grass vodka. Or lager.

**Mediterranean vegetable dishes** Vigorous young red: Chianti, New Zealand Cab Sauv or Merlot; young red Bordeaux, Gigondas or Coteaux du Languedoc. Or characterful white.

**Meringues** Recioto di Soave, Asti or Champagne doux.

**Mezze** A selection of hot and cold vegetable dishes. Sparkling is a gd all-purpose choice, as is rosé from the Languedoc or Provence. Fino sherry is in its element.

**Mille-feuille desserts** Delicate sweet sparkling white such as Moscato d'Asti or demi-sec Champagne.

**Monkfish** Often roasted, which needs fuller rather than leaner wines. Try Australian/New Zealand Chard, Oregon Pinot N or Chilean Merlot.

**Moussaka** Red or rosé: Naoussa from Greece, Sangiovese, Corbières, Côtes de Provence, Ajaccio or New Zealand Pinot N.

**Mullet, red** A chameleon, adaptable to gd white or red, esp Pinot N.

**Mullet, grey** Verdicchio, Rully or unoaked Chard.

**Mussels** Muscadet-sur-lie, Chablis Premier Cru or a lightly oaked Chard.

**Nuts** Finest oloroso sherry, madeira, vintage or tawny port (nature's match for **walnuts**), Vin Santo or Setúbal Moscatel.

**Orange desserts** Experiment with old Sauternes, Tokáj Aszú, or California Orange Muscat.

**Ossobuco** Low tannin, supple red, such as Dolcetto d'Alba or Pinot N. Or dry Italian whites such as Soave and Lugana.

**Oxtail** Match with a rather rich French red such as St-Emilion, Pomerol, Pommard, Nuits-St-Georges, Barolo, Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Or Rioja Reserva or Ribera del Duero. Or California or Coonawarra Cab Sauv.

**Oysters, raw** NV Champagne, Chablis Premier Cru, Muscadet, white Graves, Sauv BI or Guinness.

- **cooked** Puligny-Montrachet or gd New World Chard. Champagne is gd with either.

**Paella** Young Spanish wines: red, dry white or rosé from Penedès, Somontano, Navarra or Rioja.

**Panettone** Jurançon moelleux, late-harvest Ries, Barsac, Vin Santo or Tokáj Aszú.

**Pasta** Red or white according to the sauce or trimmings:

- **cream sauce** Orvieto, Frascati or Alto Adige Chard.
- **meat sauce** Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Salice Salentino or Merlot.
- **pesto (basil) sauce** Barbera, Ligurian Vermentino, New Zealand Sauv BI, Hungarian Hárslevelü or Furmint.
- **seafood sauce (eg vongole)** Verdicchio, Soave, top white Rioja, Cirò, or Sauv BI.

- **tomato sauce** Barbera, south Italian red, Zin, or South Australian Grenache.

**Pastrami** Alsace Ries, young Sangiovese, or Cab Fr.

**Pâté**

- **chicken liver** Calls for pungent white (Alsace Pinot Gr or Marsanne), a smooth red like a light Pomerol or Volnay, or even amontillado sherry.
- **duck pâté** Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Cornas, Chianti Classico, or Pomerol.
- **fish pâté** Muscadet, Mâcon-Villages, or Australian Chard (unoaked).
- **Pâté de campagne** A dry white \_\_: Gd vin de pays, Graves, Pfalz Ries.

**Pears in red wine** A pause before the port. Or try Rivesaltes, Banyuls or Ries Beerenauslese.

**Pecan pie** Orange Muscat or Australian liqueur Muscat.

**Peperonata** Dry Australian Ries, Western Australia Sem or New Zealand Sauv Bl. Red drinkers can try Tempranillo or Grenache.

**Perch, sandre** Exquisite freshwater fish for finest wines: top white burgundy, Alsace Ries Grand Cru or noble Mosels. Or try top Swiss Fendant or Johannisberg.

**Pigeon** Lively reds: Savigny, Chambolle-Musigny; Crozes-Hermitage, Chianti Classico, or California Pinot N. Or try Franken Silvaner Spätlese.

- **squab** Fine white or red burgundy, Alsace Ries Grand Cru or mature claret.

**Pipérade** Rosé, or dry South Australian Ries.

**Pimentos, roasted** Sauv Bl, or light reds.

**Pizza** Any \_\_ dry Italian red. Or Rioja, Australian Shiraz, southern French red or Douro red.

**Pork, roast** A gd rich neutral background to a fairly light red or rich white. It deserves \_\_ treatment – Médoc is fine. Portugal's suckling pig is eaten with Bairrada Garrafeira. Chinese is gd with Pinot N.

**Pot au feu, bollito misto, cocido** Rustic red wines from the region of origin; Sangiovese di Romagna, Chusclan, Lirac, Rasteau, Portuguese Alentejo or Yecla and Jumilla from Spain.

**Pumpkin/Squash dishes** Full-bodied fruity dry or off-dry white: Viognier or Marsanne, demi-sec Vouvray, Gavi or South African Chenin Bl.

**Prawns, shrimps or langoustines** Fine dry white: burgundy, Graves, New Zealand Chard, Pfalz Ries – even fine mature Champagne. (“Cocktail sauce” kills wine, and in time, people.)

**Quail** Alsace Ries Grand Cru, Rioja Reserva, mature claret or Pinot N.

**Quiches** Dry full-bodied white: Alsace, Graves, Sauv Bl, dry Rheingau; or young red (Tempranillo, Periquita), according to ingredients.

**Rabbit** Lively medium-bodied young Italian red or Aglianico del Vulture; Chiroubles, Chinon, Saumur-Champigny, or New Zealand Pinot Noir.

**Raspberries (no cream, little sugar)** Excellent with fine reds which themselves taste of raspberries: young Juliéñas, Regnié, even Pomerol.

**Risotto, with seafood** Pinot Gr from Friuli, Gavi, youngish Sem, Dolcetto or Barbera d'Alba.

- **with fungi porcini** Finest mature Barolo or Barbaresco.

**Rum desserts (baba, mousses, ice-cream)** Muscat – from Asti to Australian liqueur, according to weight of dish.

**Salads** As a first course, esp with blue cheese dressing, any dry and appetizing white wine.

- **salade niçoise** Very dry, \_\_, not too light or flowery white or rosé: Provençal, Rhône, or Corsican; Fernão Pires, Sauv Bl.
- **NB** Vinegar in salad dressings destroys the flavour of wine. If you want salad at a meal with fine wine, dress the salad with wine or a little lemon juice instead of vinegar.

**Salmon, seared or grilled** Fine white burgundy: Puligny- or Chassagne-Montrachet, Meursault, Corton-Charlemagne, Chablis Grand Cru; Grüner Veltliner, Condrieu, California, Idaho or New Zealand Chard, Rheingau Kabinett/Spätlese, Australian Ries. Young Pinot N can be gd. Salmon fishcakes call for similar, but less grand, wines.

- **smoked** A dry but pungent white: fino sherry, Alsace Pinot Gr, Chablis Grand Cru, Pouilly-Fumé, Pfalz Ries Spätlese or vintage Champagne. Also vodka, schnapps or akvavit.
- **carpaccio** Puligny-Montrachet, Condrieu, California Chard or New Zealand Sauv Bl.

**Sand-dabs** This sublime fish can handle your fullest Chard (not oaky).

**Sardines, fresh grilled** Very dry white: Vinho Verde, Soave, Muscadet, or modern Greek.

**Sashimi** If you are prepared to forego the wasabi, sparkling wines will match. Or Washington or Tasmanian Chard, Chablis Grand Cru, Rheingau Ries and English Seyval Bl. Otherwise, iced sake, fino sherry or beer. Trials have matched 5-putt Tokáj with fat tuna, sea urchin and anago (eel).

**Satay** Australia's McLaren Vale Shiraz. Gewurz from Alsace or New Zealand.

**Sauerkraut (German)** Lager or Pils. But a Ries Auslese can be amazing.

**Scallops** An inherently slightly sweet dish, best with finest whites.

- **in cream sauces** German Spätlese, Montrachet, top Australian Chard, or dry Vouvray.
- **grilled or seared** Hermitage Blanc, Grüner Veltliner, Entre-Deux-Mers, vintage Champagne, or Pinot N.
- **with Asian seasoning** New Zealand, South African Sauv Bl, Verdelho, Australian Ries, or Gewurz.

**Sea bass** Weissburgunder from Baden or Pfalz. V.gd for any fine or delicate white: Clare Valley dry Ries, Chablis or Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

**Shark's fin soup** Add a teaspoon of Cognac. Sip amontillado.

**Shellfish** Dry white with plain boiled shellfish, richer wines with richer sauces. With plateaux de fruits de mer: Muscadet, Chablis, unoaked Chard or dry Ries.

**Skate with brown butter** White with some pungency (eg Pinot Gr d'Alsace), or a clean straightforward wine like Muscadet or Verdicchio.

**Snapper** Sauv Bl if cooked with Oriental flavours; white Rhône with Mediterranean flavours.

**Sole, plaice, etc: plain, grilled or fried** Perfect with fine wines: white burgundy, or its equivalent.

- **with sauce** Depending on the ingredients: sharp dry wine for tomato sauce, fairly rich for sole véronique with its sweet grapes, etc.

**Soufflés** As show dishes these deserve \_\_\_ wines.

- **fish** Dry white: \_\_\_ Burgundy, Bordeaux, Alsace, Chard, etc.
- **cheese** Red burgundy or mature Cab Sauv.
- **spinach** (tougher on wine) Light Chard (Mâcon-Villages, St-Véran), or Valpolicella. Champagne can also be gd with many kinds of soufflé.
- **sweet soufflés** Sauternes or Vouvray moelleux. Or a sweet (or rich) Champagne.

**Steak au poivre** A fairly young Rhône red or Cab Sauv.

**Steak tartare** Vodka or light young red: Beaujolais, Bergerac or Valpolicella.

**Korean Yuk Whe** (The world's best steak tartare.) Sake.

**filet, tournedos, T-bone, fiorentina (bistecca)** Any top red (but not old wines with Béarnaise sauce: top Californian Chard is better). My choice: Château Haut-Brion.

**Steak and kidney pie or pudding** Red Rioja Reserva, Douro red, or mature Cabernet.

**Stews and casseroles** Red burgundy comes into its own; otherwise lusty full-flavoured red, such as Toro, Corbières, Barbera, Shiraz, or Zin.

**Strawberries and cream** Sauternes or similar sweet Bordeaux, Vouvray Moelleux or Jurançon Vendange Tardive.

**Strawberries, wild (no cream)** Serve with red Bordeaux (most exquisitely Margaux) poured over.

**Summer pudding** Fairly young Sauternes of a gd vintage (95 96 97 98).

**Sushi** Hot wasabi is usually hidden in every piece. German QbA trocken wines, simple Chablis, or NV brut Champ. Or, of course, sake or beer.

**Sweetbreads** A grand dish, so grand wine, but not too dry: Rhine Ries or Franken Silvaner Spätlese, top Alsace Pinot Gr or Condrieu, depending on the sauce.

**Swordfish** Full-bodied dry white of the country. Nothing grand.

**Tagines** These vary enormously, but fruity young reds are a gd bet: Beaujolais, Tempranillo, Sangiovese, Merlot and Shiraz.

**Tapas** Perfect with fino sherry, which can cope with the wide range of flavours in both hot and cold dishes.

**Tapenade** Manzanilla or fino sherry, or any sharpish dry white or rosé.

**Taramasalata** A rustic southern white with personality. Fino sherry works well. Try white Rioja or a Marsanne. The bland supermarket version goes well with any delicate white or Champagne.

**Thai food** Ginger and lemongrass call for pungent Sauv Bl (Loire, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand) or Ries (German Spätlese or Australian).

- **coconut milk** Hunter Valley or other ripe, oaked Chards; Alsace Pinot Bl for refreshment; Gewurz or Verdelho. And of course sparkling.

**Tiramisú** This Italian dessert works best with Vin Santo, but also with young tawny port, Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise or Sauternes and Australian Liqueur Muscats.

**Tongue** Gd for any red or white of abundant character, esp Italian. Also Beaujolais, Loire reds, New Zealand reds and full dry rosés.

**Trifle** Should be sufficiently vibrant with its internal sherry.

**Tripe** Red (eg Corbières, Roussillon) or rather sweet white (eg German Spätlese). Better: Western Australian Sem/Chard, or cut with pungent dry white such as Pouilly-Fumé or fresh red such as Saumur-Champigny.

**Trout** Delicate white wine, eg Mosel (Saar or Ruwer), Alsace Pinot Bl.

- **smoked** Sancerre, California or South African Sauv Bl. Rully or Bourgogne Aligoté, Chablis or Champagne. But Mosel Spätlese is best.

**Tuna, grilled or seared** White, red, or rosé of fairly fruity character; a top St-Véran, white Hermitage, or Côtes du Rhône would be fine. Pinot N or a light Merlot are the best reds to try.

- **carpaccio** Viognier, California Chard or New Zealand Sauv Bl.

**Turbot** Serve with your best rich dry white: Meursault or Chassagne-Montrachet, mature Chablis or its California, Australian or New Zealand equivalent. Condrieu. Mature Rheingau, Mosel or Nahe Spätlese or Auslese (not trocken).

**Veal, roast** A good neutral background dish for any fine old red which may have faded with age (eg a Rioja Reserva), a German or Austrian Ries, or Vouvray, or Alsace Pinot Gr.

**Venison** Big-scale reds inc Mourvèdre – solo as in Bandol, or in blends – Rhône, Bordeaux or California Cab of a mature vintage; or rather rich whites (Pfalz Spätlese or Hunter Semillon).

**Vitello tonnato** Full-bodied whites esp Chard; or light reds (eg young Cabernet or Valpolicella) served cool.

**Whitebait** Crisp dry whites: Chablis, Verdicchio, Greek, Touraine Sauv Bl, or fino sherry.

**Zabaglione** Light-gold marsala, Australian botrytized Sem or Asti.

## Wine & cheese

The notion that wine and cheese were married in heaven is not born out by experience. Fine red wines are slaughtered by strong cheeses: only sharp or sweet white wines survive.

- Principles to remember, despite exceptions, are first:
  - the harder the cheese the more tannin the wine can have.
  - And second: the creamier the cheese is the more acidity is needed in the wine.
- The main exception constitutes a third principle:
  - wines and cheeses of a region usually sympathise.
  - Cheese is classified by its texture and the nature of its rind, so its appearance is a guide to the type of wine to match it.

Individual cheeses mentioned below are only examples taken from the hundreds sold in good cheese shops.

**Fresh, no rind – cream cheese, crème fraîche, Mozzarella**

Light crisp white – Simple Bordeaux Blanc, Bergerac, English unoaked whites; or rosé – Anjou, Rhône; or very light, very young, very fresh red such as Bordeaux, Bardolino or Beaujolais.

**Hard cheeses, waxed or oiled, often showing marks from cheesecloth – Gruyère family, Manchego and other Spanish cheeses, Parmesan, Cantal, Comté, old Gouda, Cheddar and most “traditional” English cheeses**

Particularly hard to generalize here; Gouda, Gruyère, some Spanish, and a few English cheeses complement fine claret or Cab Sauv and great Shiraz/Syrah wines. But strong cheeses need less refined wines, and preferably local ones. Sugary, granular old Dutch red Mimolette or Beaufort are gd for finest mature Bordeaux. Also for Tokáj Aszú.

**Blue cheeses** Roquefort can be wonderful with Sauternes, but don't extend the idea to other blues. It is the sweetness of Sauternes, esp aged, which complements the saltiness. Stilton and port, preferably tawny, is a classic. Intensely flavoured old oloroso, amontillado, madeira, marsala, and other fortified wines go with most blues. The acidity of Tokáj Aszú also works well.

**Natural rind (goat's or sheep's cheese) with bluish-grey mould (the rind is wrinkled when mature), sometimes dusted with ash – St-Marcellin**  
Sancerre, Valençay, light fresh Sauv Bl, Jurançon, Savoie, Soave, Italian Chard or English whites.

**Bloomy rind soft cheeses, pure white rind if pasteurized, or dotted with red: Brie, Camembert, Chaource, Bougon (goat's milk 'Camembert')**

Full dry white burgundy or Rhône if the cheese is white and immature; powerful, fruity St-Emilion, young Australian (or Rhône) Shiraz/ Syrah or Grenache if it's mature.

**Washed-rind pungent soft cheeses, with rather sticky orange-red rind – Langres, mature Epoisses, Maroilles, Carré de l'Est, Milleens, Munster**

Local reds, esp for Burgundy cheeses; vigorous Languedoc, Cahors, Côtes du Frontonnais, Corsican, southern Italian, Sicilian or Bairrada. Also powerful whites, esp Alsace Gewurz and Muscat.

**Semi-soft cheeses, grey-pink thickish rind – Livarot, Pont l'Evêque, Reblochon, Tomme de Savoie, St-Nectaire**

Powerful white Bordeaux, Chard, Alsace Pinot Gr, dryish Ries, southern Italian and Sicilian whites, aged white Rioja or dry oloroso sherry. But

the strongest of these cheeses kill most wines.

## Food & finest wine

With very special bottles, the wine sometimes guides the choice of food rather than the usual way around. The following suggestions are based largely on the gastronomic conventions of the wine regions producing these treasures, plus much diligent research. They should help bring out the best in your best wines.

### Red wines

#### **Red Bordeaux and other Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines (very old, light and delicate: eg pre-60)**

Leg or rack of young lamb, roast with a hint of herbs (but not garlic); entrecôte; roast partridge or grouse, sweetbreads; or cheese soufflé after the meat has been served.

**Fully mature great vintages (eg Bordeaux 61 66 75)** Shoulder or saddle of lamb, roast with a touch of garlic, roast ribs, or grilled rump of beef.

**Mature but still vigorous (eg 85 86 89)** Shoulder or saddle of lamb (inc kidneys) with rich sauce. Fillet of beef marchand de vin (with wine and bone-marrow). Avoid Beef Wellington: pastry dulls the palate.

**Merlot-based Bordeaux (Pomerol, St-Emilion)** Beef as above (fillet is richest) or venison.

**Côte d'Or red burgundy** (Consider the weight and texture, which grow lighter/more velvety with age. Also the character of the wine: Nuits is earthy, Musigny flowery, great Romanées can be exotic, Pommard renowned for its four-squareness, etc.) Roast chicken, or better, capon, is a safe standard with red burgundy; guinea-fowl for slightly stronger wines, then partridge, grouse, or woodcock for those progressively more rich and pungent. Hare and venison ( chevreuil) are alternatives.

**great old burgundy** The classic Burgundian formula is cheese: Epoisses (unfermented). A fabulous cheese but a terrible waste of fine old wines.

**vigorous younger burgundy** Duck or goose roasted to minimize fat.

**Great Syrahs: Hermitage, Côte-Rôtie, Grange; or Vega Sicilia** Beef, venison, well-hung game; bone-marrow on toast; English cheese (esp best farm Cheddar) but also hard goat's milk and ewe's milk cheeses such as Berkswell and Ticklemore.

**Rioja Gran Reserva, Pesquera...** Richly flavoured roasts: wild boar, mutton, saddle of hare, or whole suckling pig.

**Barolo, Barbaresco** Risotto with white truffles; pasta with game sauce (eg pappardelle alle lepre); porcini mushrooms; Parmesan.

### White wines

#### **Top Chablis, white burgundy, other top Chards**

White fish simply grilled or meunière. Dover sole, turbot, halibut are best; brill, drenched in butter, can be excellent.

**Supreme white burgundy (Le Montrachet, Corton-Charlemagne) or equivalent Graves** Roast veal, organic chicken stuffed with truffles or herbs under the skin, or sweetbreads; richly sauced white fish or scallops as above. Or lobster or wild salmon.

**Condrieu, Château-Grillet or Hermitage Blanc** Very light pasta scented

with herbs and tiny peas or broad beans.

**Grand Cru Alsace**

**Ries** Truite au bleu, smoked salmon or choucroute garni.

**Pinot Gris** Roast or grilled veal.

**Gewurztraminer** Cheese soufflé (Münster cheese).

**Vendange Tardive** Foie gras or Tarte Tatin.

**Sauternes** Simple crisp buttery biscuits (eg Langue-de-Chat), white peaches, nectarines, strawberries (without cream). Not tropical fruit.

Pan-seared foie-gras. Experiment with blue cheeses.

**Supreme Vouvray moelleux, etc** Buttery biscuits, apples, or apple tart.

**Beerenauslese/Trockenbeerenauslese** Biscuits, peaches, greengages.

Desserts made from rhubarb, gooseberries, quince, or apples.

**Tokáj Aszú (4–6 putts)** Foie gras is thoroughly recommended. Fruit desserts, cream desserts, even chocolate can be wonderful.

**Great vintage port or madeira** Walnuts or pecans. A Cox's Orange Pippin and a digestive biscuit is a classic English accompaniment.

**Old vintage Champagne (not Blanc de Blancs)** As an apéritif, or with cold partridge, grouse or woodcock.