

7 Easy Rules

for a Perfect Wine & Food Pairing, Every Time

1. Match intensity

Most successful food and wine pairings result when there are matching intensity levels between the wine and the food. For example, a low-alcohol, slightly sweet wine paired with fruit salad is a win.

2. Match or contrast

Great food and wine combinations come not only from *matching* flavors, texture, and taste components but also in *contrasting* them.

3. Use bridge ingredients

“Bridge Ingredients” tie the dish and wine together by adding a final touch that works well with both the wine and food. For example, crumbled goat cheese in a salad makes it a better match for Sauvignon Blanc because the cheese and wine share similar tangy flavors. Adding peppercorns to a sauce help it pair with a peppery wine, such as a Syrah. A sprinkling of toasted nuts on top of a dish helps bridge it to toasty, buttery, nutty Chardonnays.

4. Find similar levels of sweetness

Foods with some sweetness are best paired with wines with similar levels of sweetness. If the food is sweeter than the wine, the wine will taste dry, astringent, oaky, and/or tannic.

5. Fruity with fruity

Dishes with a significant fruit component – pork with sautéed apples, barbecued chicken with apricot glaze, beef stew with dried plums – pair beautifully with fruity wines. 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.

6. Pair great with great, humble with humble

It’s a good idea to match the level of your food with the quality of your wine. 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.

7. What grows together, goes together

You’ll find that local foods and wines often pair well together. After all, they evolved together over many years. The bubbles and acidity of Lambrusco cut through the local rich, fatty salumi and cheeses. Hearty, rustic coq au vin pairs well with an earthy, Old World Burgundy.

