



FOOD & DINING

Simple rules for wine and food pairings

Walk into many wine and spirits stores, and you will likely encounter a dizzying array of selections. While wine selections at such stores were once limited to a few well-known brands, many niche and private wineries have begun to make their vintages available to a wider clientele, so now shoppers are treated to both familiar and less well-known options.

To novice dinner party hosts, the vast array of wines and flavors can make selecting a bottle or two to accompany a meal a bit more challenging. But one need not be a master sommelier to find the right pairing. The following tips can help anyone select wines to go with their menu or the type of occasion.

- Work from light to dark. Just as you begin a dinner service with some appetizers and salad before moving to heavier courses, the wine should follow suit. Select lighter wines to accompany the earlier course before opting for deeper, richer wines as the meal progresses.
- Consider champagne to accompany

appetizers and opening courses. Champagne works particularly well with salty foods, which is why it is often a good match for hors d'oeuvres. If your's is a cocktail party only, you may want to exclusively serve champagne, which typically pairs well with passed finger foods and even bite-sized desserts.

- Opt for sauvignon blanc when you do not want the flavor of the wine to be overwhelmed by the food. Sauvignon blanc works with early courses that pack a flavorful punch. Sauvignon blanc can be grassy or tropical in flavoring, depending on the region in which the grapes were grown. It is commonly described as crisp and fresh in flavor and is often recommended with sushi.
- Match delicate seafood dishes with a light wine. Pinot grigio or chablis are delicately flavored and will pair well with seafood. Fish that is served in a rich sauce may be better matched with a heartier chardonnay.
- Make rose your go-to wine when serving

cheese. Although some cheeses work great with white or red, rose is typically a safe bet when serving cheese because of its acidity and fruity character, offering the best of both worlds.

- Hearty meats, such as steaks and chops, pair well with rich reds. Cabernet sauvignon and bordeaux are great when paired with meat. Malbec and shiraz can hold their own if meats are spiced and extremely flavorful.
- Rustic wines will work best with rustic recipes. Try to find a wine from the same region from which the meal originated. Pinot noir is a light-bodied red wine that has full flavor and can work with many pasta dishes as well as earthy ingredients, such as mushrooms.

Though some people follow a strict personal code regarding wine pairings, your personal tastes should dictate what you ultimately serve. Experimentation can yield an unexpected flavor combination that complements the nuances of both the food and the wine.

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