



Aldiploma

Module Eight

Food and Wine Pairing

Food & Wine Matching for Every Occasion

Food and wine matching is very exciting - it can enhance the dining experience and make both food and wine more enjoyable! But, understandably, many people are either intimidated, confused or both as there are just so many different combinations. This is where this module comes in handy as we break the food down into a variety of different groups and then explain some of the best wine styles to pick.

People have different personal preferences so it's always helpful to remember that there is never just one perfect pairing - at the end of the day, the most important thing is to pick a wine you like and a dish you like! If you want to learn more about this challenging but exciting subject to get more out of your dining experience, then you've come to the right place.

Don't forget **Module 2 (The Principles of Wine Tasting)** has **10 Top Tips for food & wine pairing**

Three Simple Steps

When it comes to food & wine matching there are a few simple steps to follow that will really help:



Look – colour matters

Interestingly, colour isn't often discussed when it comes to food and wine matching but paler dishes do tend to work better with paler, lighter, more delicate wines. So light fish, seafood and chicken match well with white wines, whereas pinker meats and foods like pork, salmon, tuna and prawns can work with white, rosé and lighter reds, and red meat is most often a better match with red wines.



Depth – determine the intensity

Is the dish or wine subtle in flavour or are they both packing a punch? The intensity of your wine should be matched with the food. Usually if the dish is subtle in smell and flavour, you want a light, subtle wine, e.g. a Pinot Grigio, whereas if it's a bold, aromatic dish you typically want a pronounced wine.



Taste – work with the dominant flavour

As a rule of thumb, when it comes to wine and food matching you need to consider what the main elements are of both the food and the wine. Ideally you want them to be balanced so there isn't one part of the food or the wine that will overwhelm or dominate the other. For example, high acid wines pair better with high acid foods.

Some dishes have multiple components, but it is the dominant flavour that will most impact the wine. It could be the sauce - for example, with a curry it matters less what the main component is i.e. prawn, chicken, lamb or veg, but whether the sauce is tomato based, coconut or how spicy it is. Seasoning can also impact, particularly salt or lemon.

While for the majority of the time you want the weight and intensity to be similar so that the food and wine complements each other, sometimes you want them to contrast. An example is if you have a fatty dish. Paired with a rich, heavy, textured, high alcohol wine, it might overwhelm the palate. So, in this instance a wine with fresh acidity to 'cut through' the richness would be a better match, such as an Italian red, which may have high levels of acidity and tannins.

How do I work out what goes well with what I am cooking?

Other factors to take into consideration when pairing food and wine, is how the food you are making is cooked, as that tends to affect both the texture and taste. Is it roasted, steamed, fried or grilled on the BBQ?

Raw foods such as salads suit a delicate, elegant wine but a flavourful grilled or barbecued piece of chicken will suit a more structured, lightly oaked white. And a rich, slow cooked piece of beef will definitely be ideal with a robust red.

Ultimately though it is the sauce or seasoning that is most important. Salt is one to watch out for – it may enhance the flavour of a dish but did you know it also inhibits the body's ability to detect acidity in wine? As a result it can make wine appear softer and more approachable. Therefore, high acid wine can taste better with food than on its own. It's important to note though that too much salt can make a wine appear a bit 'flat'.



Matching by food category

All of this makes it tricky to pair food types with wines – of course roast chicken is very different to a chicken tikka masala, or coq au vin, or a chicken pie, because of the different sauces, spices and cooking techniques!

However, there are some general rules to follow within different food categories which can help you to find a great match.

Poultry



When it comes to the poultry category (chicken, turkey, duck and goose), they are all quite different due to different flavour intensities. But, with chicken (and indeed turkey), in pretty much all of its guises, it works brilliantly with medium to full-bodied white wines. So if there was one grape to pick go with **Chardonnay**; whether that was for a roast chicken, a chicken pie or chicken and chips. A wine that has texture and some flavour with a bit of oak ageing is also a good choice. Garlic flavoured chicken (like a chicken Kiev) will benefit from wines high in acidity, such as a **Chablis**.

Any chicken cooked in a red wine sauce, like coq au vin will be better served with either that red wine or something similar which is usually a lighter, French red such as a Pinot Noir or a Côtes du Rhône. A richer chicken casserole or stew that is more flavourful and with a tomato sauce base will need a more flavoursome wine and a red blend from southern Italy would work well.

For spicier chicken dishes, a wine with slightly lower alcohol and a bit of sweetness to balance that spice is ideal. Top picks include a **Riesling** or a **Gewürztraminer**.

Duck is more commonly served with a fruity red such as a **Pinot Noir** or **Beaujolais** (from the Gamay grape) or a softer Italian red such as **Dolcetto** with some high acidity to cut through the fat. The same applies to goose.

Fish & Seafood



The tannin in red wines can make fish taste slightly metallic. Therefore, fish and seafood should be pretty much exclusively matched with white or rosé wines. The only exception would be meatier fish, such as a tuna steak, which can pair nicely with a delicate, light and fruity red wine with very low tannins.

A lot of fish and seafood is delicate in flavour and so served with little or without any sauce and just a drizzle of lemon. That means fresh lemony wines are the ideal match. Grapes such as **Albariño**, the Greek **Assyrtiko**, and lighter-bodied Chardonnay wines such as **Chablis**, work well. **Chenin Blanc**, **Grüner Veltliner**, **Pinot Grigio**, **dry Riesling**, **Sauvignon Blanc** and even **Champagne** (which also pairs particularly well with sushi!) also complement lighter fish.

Rosés can also be a delicious option. They are also amazing with fish stew!

Look out for high acid wines when eating fishcakes - French **Picpoul** is a fantastic match.

When it comes to shellfish, **Muscadet** is a famous match with oysters (and is brilliant with mussels). As a crisp white wine, it pairs well with oily fish, such as sardines too as it cuts through the oiliness.

Richer, meatier fish such as monkfish, turbot, salmon and even fish pie are a great match with riper southern Italian grapes such as **Fiano** or **Vermentino**, as well as a medium-bodied **Chardonnay**.

Fish and chips are brilliant with sparkling wines like **Champagne**, though **Sauvignon Blanc** is great with the zesty tartare sauce.

Smoked fish works well with oaky wines so try smoked haddock or kedgeree with a lightly oaked white **Bordeaux** or again, a **Chardonnay**.



Red meat, Pork & Game



Red meat and game both really need red wines to make them sing whereas pork (being pink in colour) can go with all wine varieties. Rich, fatty meats require reds with both acidity and tannin to bind with the proteins. And as we know, attention needs to be paid both to how the meat is cooked and whether it is being served with any sort of sauce.

Starting with beef – there are lots of different pairings depending on if the meat is tartare, steak, stew, pie, casserole, roast, slow roasted, or barbecued – the list goes on. Typically though, robust reds come into their own with classic roast beef or steak. That's because they make the firm tannins appear softer, so here is your opportunity to enjoy young and/or powerful reds from **Bordeaux** or the **Rhône**.

Hamburgers are quite juicy and when barbecued or fried can have a smoky edge to them so a New World, fruit forward wine works well such as a **Shiraz** or **Zinfandel**.

Both grapes also work well with a chilli con carne because the ripe fruit notes counteract the spice. Whereas, meatballs in a tomato sauce require an Italian red such as **Chianti** or **Barbera**. A slow cooked stew or casserole is a good match with a medium-bodied **Merlot** but a beef-based pie with the pastry, mushrooms and gravy benefits from a robust southern French wine or a **Spanish Tempranillo**.

Lamb in pretty much all of its guises (roast, kebab, stew or a Shepherd's pie) is a wonderful match with both **Cabernet Sauvignon** and **Cabernet Franc** because both grapes have lots of bright blackcurrant fruit, tannins and acidity. Whether from the New World or France, these wines work brilliantly with the meat.

With pork, because it can be quite salty, it works better with less tannic, slightly softer, fruitier reds. So whether you're cooking sausages, roast pork, gammon or pork chops then a supple red like a **Pinot Noir** or **Gamay** is a wonderful match. White wine works too. As ever, think about the sauces or accompaniments for your pork dish, as apple sauce, for example, pairs better with an apple-flavoured white such as a **South African Chenin Blanc**.

Finally, when it comes to venison and game then we are back into red wine territory and slightly lighter, more elegant reds such as **Pinot Noir** or Italian **Nebbiolo**; **Barolo** and **Barbaresco** for example.

Vegetables including tomato-based dishes



Vegetables are incredibly versatile and as such can be matched with a wide range of different wines although generally whites work better, especially if the wine has any green or herbal notes such as tomato leaf or green pepper. **Sauvignon Blanc** is a brilliant match for many veggie dishes.

Tomatoes and tomato-based sauces can be tricky to pair, but they are also great with **Sauvignon Blanc** as well as Italian Sangioveses such as **Chianti** – which is a perfect pairing for tomato based pizza and pasta dishes. The former is also a classic match with salads (such as Greek or a goat's cheese salad), asparagus and anything with a garlic butter or herby sauce, like a tartare sauce – also try a **Sémillon** or **Sémillon Sauvignon** blend.

Crisp Italian whites such as **Pinot Grigio** and **Gavi** are also tasty with salads, while rosé (from Provence especially) is excellent with a Niçoise salad.

Richer root vegetables (such as butternut squash and carrots) and corn-on-the-cob benefit from riper white wines and a New World **Chardonnay**, **Viognier** or **Chenin Blanc** is hard to beat. Riper **Pinot Gris** wines are good with onions. Whereas, mushrooms and any sort of truffle-flavoured, umami dishes are a stellar match with **Pinot Noir** or a northern Italian red, such as one made from **Nebbiolo**.

A nut roast or a vegetarian Wellington would both work well with light to medium red wines such as a **Grenache** based blend. However, with mushrooms, once they are in a rice-based, more creamy-textured dish like risotto, a white wine from Italy with fresh acidity would be a better match.



Cheese & Dairy



When it comes to cheese and dairy it is widely, but incorrectly, believed that red wines make a better match.

If there was one wine to match with the whole cheeseboard it would actually be **Chardonnay**. It's also brilliant with other dairy dishes that are cream based or quite buttery.

On the cheeseboard, the majority of cheeses do fare better with a white wine. For soft cheeses like a goats cheese, try **Sauvignon Blanc**. A zippy white wine, it also goes well with sharper zingier flavoured cheeses, like feta.

When it comes to hard cheeses, **Champagne** is a wonderful match with those such as Comté whereas, Manchego has a propensity for **Sherry**, as well as white wine. It also works well with a **Rioja**. Parmesan prefers red, whereas Cheddar works with white wine but also reds like a **Claret**.

Blue cheese such as Stilton and Roquefort traditionally work well with sweet wines, such as **Sauternes** or **Tokaji, Port** or **Tawny Port**.

Cheeses with orange rind, like Munster work well with **Gewürztraminer**.



Puddings & Desserts



The key rule to follow when it comes to puds, is that the wine should always be sweeter than the food, otherwise the wine will seem acidic and dry. It won't be surprising to most that when it comes to food categories there are lots of different types of dessert such as fruit-based puddings, cakes, chocolates, tarts and pastries.



With fruit-based puddings (including meringues and tarts), a sweet, grape-scented **Muscat** is a great choice. While for those with red fruits a sweeter, sparkling **Moscato d'Asti** or sweet **Riesling** is a refreshing match.

For apple pies, a tarte tatin or crumble, an apple scented sweetie from the Loire like a **Vouvray** is excellent.

For crème caramel, **French Sauternes** is fantastic, while off-dry sparkling rosé wines like a **Prosecco Rosé** generally work well with cakes.

Chocolate is hard to match, especially white chocolate, but both tawny and red Ports and sweeter sheries work well with milk and dark chocolate, as do classic French Vin Doux Naturel wines such as **Banyuls** or **Maury**. For white chocolate lovers, **Prosecco** or sweet **Riesling** works better.

For Christmas pudding and mince pies choose a cream or **Oloroso Sherry**, Australian Rutherglen **Muscat** or **Madeira**. The supremely sweet **Pedro Ximenez Sherry (PX)** is very decadent over ice cream!

Pairing wine and food

