



SECRETS OF THE SOMMELIERS

SIX BASIC STYLES OF WINE

LIGHT WHITES: These are dry whites that are high in acid and light in body. Texture is reminiscent of non-fat milk and seldom feature oak flavors on the palate. The color is in the watery, pale straw or pale yellow category. Aromas and flavors remind you of green things in a grocery store: limes, herbs, green apples, green pears, etc. Over profile is light bodied, tart and citrus driven. Albarino, Dry Chenin Blanc, Gruner Veltliner, Orvieto, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Grigio & dry Pinot Gris, Moscofilero, Dry Riesling, Muscadet, Sauvignon Blanc, Soave, Torrontes and Dry Muscat. Pair these wines with foods you would squeeze a lemon on or dishes featuring vinaigrettes or citrus component. Food prep can be light - poached, steamed or raw or oily: fried and crispy.

SWEET WHITES: Depending on the varietal these are lighter-to-full-bodied whites that have a sweet sensation. The sweetness comes from actual residual sugar in the wine. The flavor and aromatics will differ from varietal to varietal but most feature some type of floral aroma such as honeysuckle. Flavors of peaches, apricots and other stone fruits are also quite common. Look for German style Riesling, Alsace style Pinot Gris, Gewurztraminer, Vouvray style Chenin Blanc and riper Gruner Veltliner. Pair sweeter wines with salty or spicy food. They are also a nice compliment to Asian fare as they are seldom produced with oak and pair nicely with the sweet, tart and spicy flavors.

HEAVY WHITES: These are full-bodied whites with a texture reminiscent of whole milk. The acidity in these wines is often low while the texture is round, soft and silky (especially wines from warmer climates). The color is in the yellow, gold and deep gold family. Many heavy whites have been exposed to oak aging which increases the color and richness on the palate. The aromas remind you of yellow things in a grocery store: yellow apples, bananas, pears, mangos and other tropical fruits as well as butter. Look for Chardonnay, Viognier and White Rhone blends. Pair these wines with foods that you would serve with drawn butter or a creamy sauce such as mushrooms, seafood and roast chicken.

LIGHT REDS: Light in body and color, these reds have low amounts of tannins. The light red's fruit profile is reminiscent of tart and tangy red fruits such as strawberries, raspberries and cherries (use the color of the wine as a clue to determine the fruit aromas). Depending on the growing region, these wines can also have a bit of astringency in the mouth. Grapes such as Pinot Noir, Gamay, Grenache and Sangiovese have thinner skins and will therefore produce wines that are lighter in color and tannins. Pair these wines as a bridge between "difficult" situations such as a chicken and lobster. The tartness in these wines also pair well with foods that have more richness and oil such as duck and salmon.

SPICY REDS: These reds vary in weight, texture and body and are spicy in flavor. The fruit profile is often of riper or stewed fruits like boysenberry, blackberry and raspberry jam. These wines can also have natural aromas of black pepper, cloves, star anise, white pepper and other baking spices. Look for Zinfandel, Cotes du Rhone, Syrah, Shiraz, Amarone, Grenache and Primitivo. They pair well with smoked, stewed or braised dishes as well as sauces that are heavily seasoned such as hoisin or BBQ sauce.

HEAVY REDS: Being full-bodied, dark-colored and opaque, with heavy amounts of tannins are characteristic of heavy reds. The color and aroma will remind you of dark fruits such as blackberries, cassis, blueberries, plums and vegetal notes such as black olives, green beans or bell peppers. Heavy reds often see oak aging and are suitable for aging. Look for Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Rioja, Tuscan Reds and Bordeaux. Tannins cut through fats and protein.

FOOD & WINE PAIRING ELEMENTS

RULE & NO RULES

- Subjective taste of the guest is the most important aspect
- No Rules but there are basic principles to build upon...
- Determine the primary/most dominant component of the dish and how to work with it
- Determine the supporting/minor players
- Don't forget the sauce or condiment!
- If a multi-course meal, think about the "arc" of wines: generally lighter to fuller body, drier to sweeter

STRUCTURE OF FOOD AND WINE

- Body
 - Weight of wine and food should match: Full with Full, Light with Light (otherwise one may overwhelm the other)
 - If wine is lighter bodied, must be powerful in flavor/high acid to stand up to the food
- Alcohol
 - Balances weight and body in food
 - Accentuated easily with too much spice heat or salt
- Acidity
 - Acidity of wine must match/exceed acidity of food (or will be "flabby")
 - Highlights the other core focal ingredients in food
 - Great balancer of sugar
- Residual sugar
 - Residual sugar of wine must match/exceed residual sugar of food (or will be bitter)
 - Counters physical or aromatic heat
 - Is a great match salty elements in foods

TEXTURES

- Tannin in Wine
 - Protein and fat will soften tannins
 - Certain fish + tannin = metallic
- Oils/Fat/Butter in Food
 - Acid and tannin (in red) can balance
 - Contrast of crisp wine often effective

OVERVIEW

- Matching weight with weight
- Acidity needs acidity
- Fish oils love acidity but hate tannins
- Tannins love fat but hate fish oils
- Acidity cuts saltiness
- Sweets need sweets
- Alcohol + spicy = fire
- Spicy + sugar = no fire

ALPANA'S TOP WINE TIPS

- The outlier on the wine list is the best value.
- Chill your red wines before drinking them. Red wines served at room taste acidic and bitter. Place your bottle in the refrigerator for 15 minutes to bring it down to around 55 degrees which is proper cellar temperature. This will enhance the structure, tame the acid and bring out the fruit.
- Values abound but you get significantly better quality wines once you hit the \$15 mark.
- By the glass programs at your favorite restaurants are an excellent way to discover affordable house wines as most restaurants feature bottles that sell for less than \$20 retail. Ask for the name of the distributor or importer so your local wine shop can special order it for you.
- Develop a relationship with a wine shop.
- Taste your wines blind, removes any preconceived notions and it's the best way to learn.
- Start a wine club! Establish a monthly theme, share the love and discover something new.
- Use your cell phone to take a photo of a wine you've just discovered. This way you can remember it and show it to the sommelier the next time you're out shopping for a similar taste.
- Screw caps are okay! They are convenient and they are not an indication that wine is of lesser quality.
- Invest in a decanter. Pouring your wine into a decanter helps it "breathe" which softens the texture. It's like yoga for wine.
- Invest in good stemware but don't go crazy.
- Travel south for value: southern Spain, Italy, France and even Argentina, Australia, South Africa and Chile are chock-full of delicious wines that won't break the bank.
- Buy second labels: check out the website of an expensive wine you like. Most of them make a second, less expensive offering under another name or label. For example the majority of Bordeaux houses offer a second label.
- When in doubt order Pinot Noir or Sauvignon Blanc, they pair well with most everything.
- Drink like a millennial - younger wine consumers go beyond their comfort zones and aren't afraid to try new wines. Explore wines from unexpected areas such as Portugal, Greece, Croatia, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, New York, Virginia, South Africa or try wines made from esoteric grape varieties