

A detailed photograph of a picnic spread on a light-colored, textured cloth. In the center, a wine glass filled with white wine stands on a wooden cutting board. To the right, a bottle of wine with a floral label is partially visible. In the foreground, a wooden cutting board holds several slices of blue cheese and pieces of bread. To the left, a small basket contains red cherries. In the background, a loaf of bread and a small plate with purple flowers are visible. A book with a dark cover and gold lettering is in the bottom left corner. The scene is set outdoors on a grassy area, with sunlight filtering through the background.

# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

By Rob Lewis  
Winemaker, Sommelier and Wine Educator

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## About the Author and why the book

Hello and thanks for taking the next step in your food & wine pairing journey by purchasing my book.

In most books, the "About the Author" is at the back of the book. However, I wanted you to read my wine story first. Why? Well, I wanted you to understand the backstory of my experiences so that you would fully understand and appreciate why I'm so passionate about wine, and food and wine pairing. I think it helps put things into perspective.

I've been in the wine industry since 2008 and have been teaching a food & wine pairing class for almost 15 years now. My background is not unlike many of you when it relates to understanding wine, as I really wasn't a wine drinker or that much of a foodie for much of my life.

However, an experience with a friend Wade at a restaurant one evening changed the trajectory of my life. I remember that night like it was yesterday. We were at an upscale yet casual pizza restaurant that focuses on amazing pizza's but also has a wine menu probably 20 pages in length. I was intimidated by the options, but my friend who worked in the wine industry took me under his wing and said to "trust" him.

He ordered a bottle of Old Vine Zinfandel for the table and the waiter brought a couple glasses and opened the bottle. My friend tasted and said it was delicious. Now, you should know that my only experience with Zinfandel was the pink kind (White Zinfandel), so I was quite surprised by the dark color of this wine.

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My friend said it was delicious so i decided to give it a big gulp. Hmm, at that moment, I kinda stopped breathing because it was the driest thing I had ever consumed. I'm sure I made every silly face a person makes when first trying a big wine. I said, "who the hell could drink this?" He laughed and said, "you should have taken a smaller sip for one, but also wait for the pizza to arrive, it'll get better."

Pizza arrives at the table. My first taste of pizza was amazing. I have to say I was very skeptical of having a sip of the wine again, as I remember how dry and overpowering it was. However, my trust in my friend won the day and I had a bite of pizza. I remember the delicious meaty and savory mozzarella cheese from the bite and then I remember taking a smaller sip of wine to marry the flavors together,

I chewed and paused. It seemed like an eternity, but was probably only a few seconds, The wine had changed. I'm pretty sure I had an out of body experience, my mind was kinda blown. It was creamy, it was fruity, I could taste the wine flavors, the pizza was enhanced and the wine had softened and most importantly, it was delicious. I remember looking at him and saying, "what the hell happened?" He just laughed and said, "let's enjoy dinner."



That moment was a defining moment in my life as I set myself on a quest to discover what happened to me that night at dinner. I also decided that I needed to share that experience with everyone that would listen.

Within a year, I enrolled with Le Cordon Bleu (United States Sommelier Association) and became a Certified Sommelier. Additionally, I had started making wine at home and decided to learn the science of winemaking and started attending online classes with the University of California Davis. UC Davis as it is a highly acclaimed winemaking (enologist) University.

Fast forward a few years, I've left the corporate world in a completely different industry and have opened a winery and wine school. Now I have two wineries, two distilleries, teach classes at both wineries and I'm a part-time faculty member of Madison College in Madison Wisconsin teaching winemaking, food & wine pairing and more. Let's say I've come a long way in my wine journey. With the support of my wife Michelle, in 2024 I decided to put my training, education, experience and fun wine stories down on paper (or digital e-book), to share with anyone wanting to learn more about their own wine journey.

Each chapter will start with textbook information, things you should know. Then, I'll give you an exercise to enhance the knowledge you have read and I'll share a personal story related to the topic. **T**

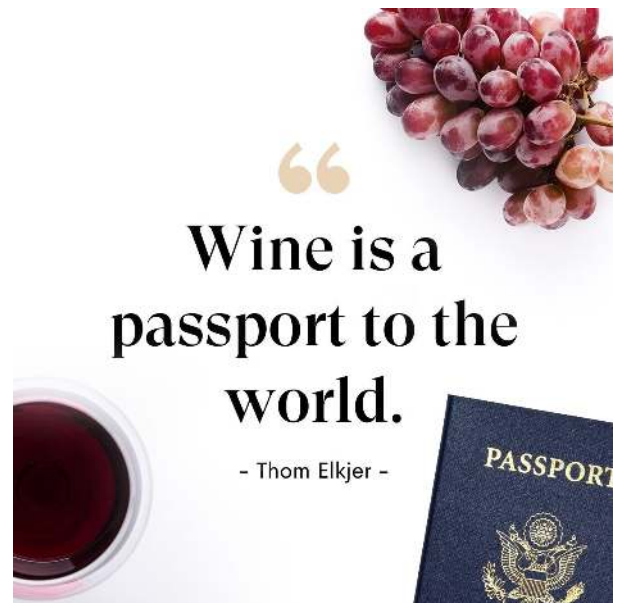
Cheers! Salute! Enjoy!

## How to get the most out of this book:

Let's think of this book as a wine journey, as if you were on a 4 day culinary vacation .

One could just read the book through in one sitting and only occasionally participate in the activities. However, I would compare that to going on a Tuscan journey through the beautiful hills of the Italian countryside only to remain in the bus and just observing through the bus window. Yes, you were there, but not much enjoyment.

So please, take the time necessary to really get the most out of this book. Also, taking a journey is certainly fun by yourself, but taking a journey with someone special in your life would make the trip even more rewarding. Have that someone special take this wine journey with you. Neither of you will be disappointed.



Here you will find your recommended packing list and daily itinerary. I promise it will be a journey worth taking.

**Shopping List:** If done in 4 consecutive days you may only need one bottle of each wine. However, if you plan to finish the bottle on any given day, maybe a couple bottles of each makes sense.

**Wine:** Sweet style **Riesling** (maybe a blue bottle German Riesling), **Pinot Grigio**, Buttery (oaky) **Chardonnay**, **Pinot Noir** and a **Cabernet Sauvignon** (California preferred, not a Bordeaux)

**Foods:** milk chocolate, sliced lemons, unsweetened tea, olives, cheese (example; young cheddar or gouda), tomatoes, sliced salami, hot sauce, alfredo sauce, mushrooms, unseasoned cooked chicken and a small rock. I'm not kidding about the rock. 🤪

**Day 1:** Read Chapters 1-2; complete exercises.

**Day 2:** Read Chapters 3-6; complete exercises.

**Day 3:** Read Chapter 7-9; complete exercises.

**Day 4:** Read Chapter 10; complete the finale exercise. This will end up being your dinner this evening. Plan to stay home this evening as you may be consuming a lot of alcohol. 😊

## Chapter 1: Before You Learn The Magic

So why learn about wine anyway? Here are my thoughts on what learning about wine really means. I think life can be lived in a casual way, or with passion. You may play a musical instrument, cook seriously or tend a beautiful garden, and maybe the things you love aren't vital, but they make life richer.

My view is passion is never wasted. That's why, wine lovers learn to taste wine, understand wine and appreciate wine in a meaningful way. I know the effort we put into understanding and appreciating wine adds an extra dimension to the basic daily routine of just eating and drinking. It turns obligation into pleasure, a daily necessity into a celebration of life. When you learn the science behind tasting, behind pairing, your culinary experiences in life will be forever enhanced.

What I have to share in this book comes from years of personal study and from teaching my classes over the decades. The science behind the magic of food and wine pairing is just a few chapters away. However, I think taking a step back in history before springing forward in gastronomy might be appropriate here.

### **Let's take a look at the history of Wine Pairing.**

Wine has been paired with food for centuries. Our early ancestors may not have intended to create perfect matching of food and wine for the same reasons we do today. Although winemaking may go back as far as 10,000 years ago, recent archaeological finds place the origins of wine making (in large scale) to around 4100 BC in Country of Georgia. and the local food appeared to be consumed together.

In early times wine was paired with food since it was safer to drink than the local water supply. The alcohol in wine was very effective at killing the bacteria in food that was consumed back then too.



The main objective to wine pairing with food is to enhance the dining experience. In many cultures winemaking and culinary practices and experiences evolved over thousands of years. Many pairings that are considered "classics" today are the result of a region's cuisine and wine growing up and merging together over the past several centuries.

For example, in Italy one rarely dines without wine. The region's wine is known to be "food friendly" to match the areas cuisine. It makes sense as it's the same farmers hands crafting the local food and grapes from the same soil, sunshine and rain.

Many old wine adages such as "white wine with fish; red wine with red meat" are no longer observed. As our culinary and wine knowledge has evolved over time, our experiences and understanding in pairing them together has too.

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Before diving into the intricate world of food and wine pairings, it is essential to understand the basics of wine. Wine is a complex beverage that is generally made from fermented grapes, and the process of winemaking can vary greatly depending on the grape variety, region, and winemaker. Different types of wines, such as red, white, rosé, and sparkling, each have their own unique characteristics that can greatly influence how they pair with food.

One key factor to consider when pairing food and wine is the acidity of the wine. Wines with higher acidity tend to pair well with foods that are also high in acidity like salads with a vinaigrette dressing. On the other hand, wines with lower acidity can complement richer, creamier dishes that may overpower a more acidic wine. You'll see me discuss acidity many times in this book as I feel it is the most important component in food and wine pairing. Yes, there are others, but acidity is truly a make or break component. I'll explain in more detail later.

Another important element to take into account when pairing food and wine are the tannins in red wines. Tannins are compounds found in the skins, seeds, and stems of grapes, as well as the oak barrels where wine is aged. Foods that are high in fat, such as a steak or a creamy cheese, can help soften the tannins in red wine to create a harmonious pairing. The reason tannins pair so well with fat and proteins is the tannin structure binds with the fat and proteins in your saliva. That chemical reaction creates the drying sensation in your mouth. To balance that dryness, you need to replace it with the same thing that was bound i.e., fat and protein. I'll go more into this subject later too.



Also consider the intensity of both the food and the wine when pairing the two together. A delicate white wine may be easily overshadowed by a heavily spiced dish, while a bold red wine could overpower a light seafood dish. Finding a balance between the flavors and textures of the food and wine is key to creating a successful pairing that enhances both elements.

We will discuss some of those elements: **acidity**, **tannin** and **intensity** several times in the next few chapters. I will continue to give examples on pairings. I'll share the benefits in food and wine pairings using components as a guide, and how you can physically experience the pro's and con's in tasting by doing the exercises. Make this book a workbook. Something you read, do the exercises and take notes.

In the following chapters of this book, we will dive deeper into the intricacies of food and wine pairings, exploring different flavor profiles, regional pairings, and tips for creating your own perfect matches. By understanding the fundamentals of wine and how it interacts with food, you will be well-equipped to unlock the magic of pairing food with wine. Doing so will elevate your dining experiences to new heights. So, before you learn the magic, let's take the time to become familiar with the basics that will lay the foundation for a delicious journey ahead.



## Understanding how to properly sample wine

I realize that before you get knee deep into the science of properly pairing wines with food, you should really have a foundational grip on the proper way to sample wine. It's not just pouring and drinking. You'll get more enjoyment out of the wine and certainly when pairing it with food if you understand the basics of the wine drinking experience. **So this next topic is an exercise, so please open your favorite bottle and pour yourself a glass. Like you needed my permission anyway.**

There are at least three good reasons why you should learn how to **properly taste wine**. It's important as it **helps you appreciate what you're drinking**. Secondly, it provides a **systematic and standard way to analyze the wine** that can be applied to all wines. And thirdly, it helps you **develop a recognized language that you can share with others**. Let's learn to the steps to taste wine like a professional.

First look for **visual clues**, the goal here is to get as many clues as possible by just looking at the wine intensity and color.

**Intensity** - That is how much color the wine has. It can be pale, medium, or deep. To assess it, hold the glass at a 45° angle and look at its color at the rim. Place behind something white so that the wine color is not distorted.



**Color** - The color range is as follows: White Wine: lemon, gold, amber. Rose' Wine: pink, pink-orange, orange. Red Wine: purple, ruby, garnet, tawny.

Next, swirl the wine for a few seconds and take a short sniff as we are now **smelling the wine**. Let's assess the aromas' intensity and their characteristics.

**Aromas Intensity** Do you struggle to identify them or can you immediately identify them? It's pronounced if it's the latter, otherwise, it is light or medium.

**Primary Aromas** develop in the alcoholic fermentation process. You could smell fruit, flowers, herbs, spice, vegetables, and others. For example lime, gooseberry, green bell pepper, and flint are common aromas for Sauvignon Blanc. Varietal aromas associated with wine variety or blend of varieties.

**Secondary aromas** develop in the post fermentation process. You could smell bread, toast, yogurt, cream, butter, vanilla, smoke, coffee, and others. Flavors associated with microbial respiration (e.g. yeast eating sugar aromas)

**Tertiary aromas** develop in the maturation process from time, temperature oak aging and/or oxygen actions. You could smell leather, mushrooms, tobacco, and others for red wines and honey, cinnamon, gingers, and others for white wines.

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**Taste the wine,** take a sip of wine. You need to aerate it, to spread it all over your mouth so that you can taste as many flavors as possible. To do that try sucking in air as if you are pulling it through a straw, and then move the wine around in your mouth. Hold it in a few moments, pull in more air a few more times, hold it, then swallow. Then think about what you experienced. Most people don't take the time to think... I want you to take the quiet time to think.

**Sweetness.** Do you taste a hint of sugar? If not it's dry. If there's a tiny amount that is off-dry, a bit more is medium, then sweet and very sweet.

**Acidity.** Have you ever had a tingling sensation on your tongue and increased salivation after a glass of white wine? That's because of its acidity. Acidity is what gives wine its tart and sour taste. All wines lie on the acidic scale 3 to 4 pH (water is 7pH). Acidity is important for wine quality because it slows the rate of chemical reactions, which causes wine to go bad.

**Tannins.** Have you ever had your tongue and mouth dry out after the first sip of red wine? That's because of the tannins. You'll find tannins only in red wine and that's because they come from the skin of the grapes and other factors.

**Alcohol.** Have you ever felt the wine to be heavy or watery? Is it warm when swallowing? That's the alcoholic level of the wine. You'll find it in the wine label as ABV percentage, or percentage of Alcohol By Volume.



**Body.** The combination of sweetness, acidity, tannins, and alcohol will give you a sense of its body. The alcohol component generally plays a big part in determining the body of the wine.

**Balance.** Were all the various components in equilibrium between them? If so, was it a pleasant experience?

**Finish.** How long are the desirable sensations lasting in your mouth after you have had your wine? The longer the finish the higher the quality.

**Complexity.** Have you ever noticed that wine flavors evolve in your mouth and change as you taste them? That's complexity. When you drink a complex wine you shouldn't rush to the next sip, but enjoy it as long as the flavors last.

A quick word on **decanting**, it's simply pouring wine from the bottle into a vessel to "breathe". Decanting oxidizes the wine, reducing the prevalence of certain acids and tannins - making wine taste smoother. It can also turn stinky sulfur compounds from winery reduction methods into wines that are fruity and delicious! In most cases decanting for 30 minutes is plenty of time. It's like magic!

## Chapter 2: The Basics of Food and Wine Pairing

### Understanding Taste Profiles Using Isolated Components

When it comes to pairing food and wine, one of the most important concepts to grasp is the principal that individual components are the backbone of how something taste. By knowing and understanding the components of both the food and the wine, you can create a harmonious pairing to enhance the overall dining experience.

As I mentioned, sometimes taste will be complementary, as similar elements of food match similar elements in the wine. However, some taste will be contrasting, meaning the wine and food are opposites but yet enhance each other overall.

In general, taste profiles can be broken down into several categories; these are **sweetness, acidity, bitterness (tannin), saltiness, and umami**. These are the primary elements. When pairing food and wine, it's important to consider how these elements interact with each other. For example, a sweet dessert wine may not pair well with a savory dish that is high in salt, as the sweetness of the wine may be overpowering. On the other hand, a high-acid wine can help cut through the richness of a fatty dish, creating a balanced and enjoyable pairing.

Another important aspect of understanding taste profiles is to consider the intensity of both the food and the wine. If you have a dish that is particularly bold and flavorful, you might want a wine that can stand up to it without being overwhelmed. Likewise, a delicate dish may be best paired with a more subtle wine that won't overpower its flavors. By matching the intensity of the food and the wine, you can create a pairing that allows all elements to shine.



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In addition to taste profiles and intensity, it's also important to consider the texture of both the food and the wine. For example, a creamy pasta dish may pair well with a rich, buttery Chardonnay, while a grilled steak might be better suited to a bold, tannic red wine. By matching the base components and the textures of the food and the wine, you can create a pairing that is both satisfying and complimentary.

Ultimately, understanding components is crucial to creating successful food and wine pairings. By considering the components, flavors, intensity, and textures of both the dish and the wine, you can create harmonious pairings that elevate the dining experience. Experimenting with different combinations and paying attention to how the elements interact with each other can help you develop a deeper appreciation for the art of food and wine pairing. We'll provide exercises along the way to assist.

The best way to learn this is to identify the specific elements of food and wine you want to isolate, then take notes and think about what's happening in your mouth. Is it salty? Are you salivating or is your tongue drying out? Use the exercise below to assist with this understanding,

**Exercise in Understanding Components:** This is an exercise that isolates common components found in food and wine. In this exercise you'll be tasting the components only. In a small 1-2oz cup, place one of each item; (milk chocolate, lemon juice, tea bag or unsweetened tea, olive and a clean rock). With each taste, hold it in your mouth and experience what happens on your palate. Take time to think about the experience.

Sample the milk chocolate, this represents **sweetness**.

Sample the lemon juice, this represents **acidity** (you will be salivating).

Sample the tea, this represents **tannin** (you will notice your tongue drying out).

Sample the olive, this represents **saltiness**,

Then put the rock in your mouth and suck on it. (I hope you cleaned your rock).

The "taste" of the rock is **minerality**. (yes, you put the clean rock in your mouth and suck on it)

**Personal Story:** Teaching people to think about what they are experiencing is very fun for me. Especially when it comes to the rock which represents "'minerality'. When teaching my classes, once everyone puts the rock in their mouth I always say, **"You are now experiencing minerality, you'll see that term on many wine descriptions. This is also the time when I know I'm a good instructor, as I've convinced seemingly intelligent adults to suck on a rock."** This always generates a big laugh.



## Summary

Feel free to write down any after-reading insights and thoughts

After reading and completing the exercise, I have learned...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



## The Importance of Balance

In the world of food and wine pairing, one of the biggest considerations is balance. Achieving the perfect balance between the flavors of the food and the wine can truly elevate the culinary experience. When the flavors of the dish and the wine complement each other or perfectly contrast each other, it creates a harmonious balance that enhances the overall taste sensation. The picture above illustrates the magic of balance when you get it right.

Balance is crucial because it prevents one element from overpowering the other. For example, if you have a bold and spicy dish, pairing it with a delicate and light wine may result in the wine being completely overshadowed. On the other hand, pairing a rich and full-bodied wine with a light and delicate dish may cause the food to be overshadowed by the wine. Finding the right balance ensures that both the food and wine are able to shine on their own while enhancing each other's flavors.

When considering balance in food and wine pairing, it is important to take into account the individual components; the acidity, sweetness, tannins, and body of both the food and the wine. For example, a dish with high acidity, such as a salad with a vinaigrette dressing, may pair well with a wine that also has high acidity, like a Sauvignon Blanc. The acidity in the wine can help balance out the acidity in the food, creating a harmonious pairing.

I know we've already discussed all of the individual components already, but when these components are in balance, the wine and food can be extraordinary. The final exercise in this book will greatly enhance your skill in balancing components in food and wine. Don't worry, you'll get there.

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Another important aspect of balance in food and wine pairing is the weight or body of both the dish and the wine. Pairing a light and delicate fish dish with a full-bodied red wine may result in an unbalanced pairing, as the wine may overpower the delicate flavors of the fish. It is important to consider the weight of both the food and the wine to ensure that they complement each other and create a balanced pairing.

Achieving balance in food and wine components is essential in creating a memorable dining experience. Remember, balance is key in creating the perfect pairing. Balance allows both the food and wine to shine on their own while enhancing each other's flavors. Again, I will guide you in exercises on how to properly do this.

## Matching Intensity Levels

Matching intensity levels is one more key concept in the world of food and wine pairing when it comes to creating the perfect pairing, it's essential to consider the intensity of both the food and the wine. This means taking into account the flavors, aromas, and textures of the dish and how they will interact with the characteristics of the wine.

One of the simplest ways to match intensity levels is to pair light dishes with light wines and heavy dishes with heavy wines. For example, a delicate seafood salad would be best complemented by a crisp, light white wine like a Chablis, while a hearty beef stew would pair beautifully with a full-bodied red like a Barolo. By matching the intensity levels of the food and wine, you can achieve a magical balance that enhances both the dish and the wine.



Another important factor to consider when matching intensity levels is the **overall flavor profile** of the dish. If a dish is particularly spicy or rich, it's important to choose a wine that can stand up to these bold flavors. **For spicy dishes, a slightly sweet wine** like a Riesling or Gewürztraminer can help balance out the heat, while a **rich, buttery Chardonnay** can **compliment the creamy textures of a dish** like lobster mac and cheese. Sounds good right?

Texture is one more crucial element to consider when matching intensity levels. **Creamy dishes** like risotto or alfredo pasta call for a **wine with a similar creamy texture**, such as a White Bordeaux or Albarino. On the other hand, dishes with a crispy or crunchy texture, like fried chicken or tempura, pair best with a wine that has a bit of acidity to cut through the richness.

It may all seem intimidating, but the art of **matching intensity** levels is important for creating successful food and wine pairings. By considering the intensity, flavor profile, and texture of both the food and wine. I encourage you to experiment with different combinations to find the perfect match for your palate, and **don't be afraid to think outside the box** to discover new and exciting flavor combinations. Follow the exercises in this book to master some of these skills. Remember, this is FUN not WORK! Just keep experimenting.

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**Exercise in Balance and Intensity:** Have few slices of salami, some cheese like a young cheddar or gouda and also have a slice of tomato and a slice of lemon. Next have two glasses of wine (you're allowed to have two glasses as this is for science 😊) make one glass a Pinot Grigio and one glass a Cabernet Sauvignon or another big dry red.

**First,** try the salami alone with the white wine. How was it?

**Next** have a slice of salami with a piece of tomato and have it with the white wine again. Did it improve?

**Now** squeeze the lemon on a piece of salami and tomato and have it with the white wine again, Did it improve or did it overpower the wine? Right now, we're just trying to balance the acidity in food to match the wine.

**We're moving to red wine now,** take a sip of red wine and have it with a piece of salami. How was that?

**Next** have a sip of red wine with a piece of salami and a piece of cheese? How was that? I bet way better as the fat balanced the tannin/dryness of the wine.

**Last taste,** have the red wine again with two or three pieces of cheese? Is it getting better or is it overpowering the wine? I bet it was amazing as the fat in the cheese was balancing the tannin in the red wine. Taste is amazing!

Acidity causes you to salivate, Acidity causes a PH change in your mouth that your body fixes by causing you to salivate. When you have a wine that causes you to salivate, a food that does the same will be an amazing pairing, That's why your salami tasted better with the white wine after you used tomato and lemon. Now with the red wine, when you added fat (cheese) the wine softened. Here's the science; tannin from the wine binds with the fat and proteins in your saliva. When that happens, your mouth dries out. To create balance; you add cheese with the wine and it replaces the fat/protein that the wine removed.

***Personal Story:** Now remember my pizza and red wine story in the beginning of this book? This is the exact experience I had that really got me into wine. Now it's not just red wine and fat but let's take a look at a common meal people have especially when going out on a Friday night. Have you ever gone out for a fish fry? Your fried fish is always accompanied with a slice of lemon. The purpose of the lemon isn't to make your fish "lemony" but to assist your palate in cutting through the richness of the grease from the fried food. Next time you go out for a fish fry, ask your server why the lemon wedge is there. I bet they won't have the correct answer for you, Anyway, how would you make that meal great? What wine would you pair it with? A solid Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc would certainly do the trick.*





**Exercise:** Choose your favorite red and white wine. Open both and have a glass of each available for this exercise. (Don't let either go to waste, re-cork them and put them in the refrigerator and enjoy them within the next couple of days.) Now round up these next few food items; a piece of dark chocolate, a piece of milk chocolate, a slice of lemon (or lime), a piece of salami, a piece of cheese and finally a few olives. Sample each with with a bite of each of the ingredients. Pay attention to what's happening on your palate.

Some of these pairing are amazingly good (cheese & red wine), some of these aren't as tasty (red wine & taste of lemon).

## Summary

Feel free to write down any after-reading insights and thoughts

After reading and completing the exercises, I have learned...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 3: The Role of Wine in Pairing

### The Impact of Wine Varietals

In the world of wine and food pairings, understanding the impact of different wine varietals is a key. Each grape variety brings its own unique characteristics to the table, influencing the overall taste and experience of a dish. Whether you prefer a bold **Cabernet Sauvignon** or a crisp **Sauvignon Blanc**, the varietal you choose can greatly enhance or detract from the flavors of your meal based on the components of the wine and food collectively.

One of the most important factors to consider when pairing wine with food is the acidity of the varietal. Wines with high acidity, such as **Sauvignon Blanc** or **Pinot Grigio**, can help cut through rich and fatty foods, cleansing the palate and can enhance the flavors of the dish. On the other hand, wines with lower acidity, like **Merlot** or **Malbec**, can complement dishes with more subtle flavors, providing a smoother and more balanced pairing. I bet you're starting to get why I talk about acidity so much.



Another key element to consider when pairing wine varietals with food is the tannin structure of that wine. Tannins are naturally occurring compounds found in grape skins, seeds, and stems that give wine its structure and texture. Wines with high tannin levels, such as **Tannat** from Uruguay or Californian **Syrah**, pair well with rich and fatty meats, as the tannins help to break down the proteins and enhance the flavors of the dish. Conversely, wines with **low tannin levels**, like **Pinot Noir** or **Grenache**, are better suited for lighter dishes, as they provide a softer and more delicate pairing.

The **tannins in wine give structure and backbone to the wine**. They can be sensed by a puckering sensation in the mouth much like drinking tea. While tannins can't really be smelled or tasted, they do leave a tactile drying sensation and sense of bitterness in your mouth. This is due to the tannins interacting with the proteins found in your saliva.

The **bitterness associated with wine is usually derived from tannins and they add that gritty texture, chalky and astringent taste**. They also enhance the body or weight of the wine.

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The fruitiness of a wine varietal can also have a significant impact on the pairing. Why? Because **we perceive fruit as sweet**. Some wines can have big fruit flavors, but be completely bone dry. Wines with pronounced fruit flavors, such as **Gruener Veltliner** or **Zinfandel**, can enhance the sweetness of a dish or complement the flavors of fruits and vegetables. Conversely, wines with more earthy or mineral notes, like **Alsatian wines** or **Cabernet Franc**, are better suited for dishes with savory or umami flavors, providing a more complex and nuanced pairing.

A more generalized, continental breakdown of wine styles can be made: **New World** wine producing countries of the **U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina and South Africa** tend to make wines with more intensity, fuller body and higher alcohol. **Old World** wine countries of **France, Italy, Spain and Germany** generally smell less fruity but more earthy. Historically, the latter group has more nuanced, moderate-alcohol wines. However, the power and depth of **Italian Barolo** and **French Hermitage** are two examples that break the delicate mold.



Understanding the impact of wine varietals and countries are essential in creating successful food and wine pairings. Considering factors such as **acidity, tannins, and fruitiness**, you can enhance the flavors of your meal and create a harmonious pairing. Experimenting with different varietals and dishes is a fun and rewarding way to explore the world of wine and food pairings. Don't be afraid to get creative and try new combinations. Cheers to discovering the perfect pairing and I hope you're not tired of hearing about acidity and tannin because I'm just getting started. Yes, it's that important!

## Considering Wine Regions

Are you ready to explore the world? I'd love to travel the world and explore, but you can also do that by just going to your local supermarket. When it comes to mastering the art of food and wine pairings, one of the key factors to consider is the wine region. Each wine region around the world produces wines with unique characteristics and flavors, influenced by the climate, soil, and winemaking techniques used in that particular area. This is called "**Terroir**". It's a **French term roughly meaning "sense of place"** By understanding the wine regions and the types of wines they produce, you can better select the perfect wine to complement your meal.

One of the most famous wine regions in the world is Bordeaux, located in southwestern France. **Bordeaux** wines are known for their **bold flavors and complex aromas**, making them a perfect match for rich and flavorful dishes such as steak or lamb. The region is also famous for its red blends, which combine different grape varieties to create a harmonious and balanced wine that pairs well with a variety of foods.

Another popular wine region to consider is **Tuscany**, located in central Italy. Tuscany is known for its iconic red wine, **Chianti**, which is made primarily from the **Sangiovese** grape. Chianti wines are characterized by their medium body, high acidity, and cherry flavors, making them an excellent choice for pairing with tomato-based dishes, such as pasta with marinara sauce or margherita pizza.



For those who prefer white wines, the **Burgundy** region in eastern France is a must-visit. Burgundy is famous for its **Chardonnay** and **Pinot Noir** wines, which are known for their elegance, complexity, and versatility. Chardonnay wines from Burgundy are rich and creamy, with flavors of green apple and citrus, making them a great match for creamy pastas, seafood dishes, and poultry. There's also a sub-region in Burgundy called **Beaujolais** that creates a young fresh wine from the **Gamay** grape.

When exploring wine regions for food and wine pairings, it's important to consider not only the types of wines produced in that region but also the specific wineries and producers. Each winery has its own unique style and techniques, which can greatly influence the flavor profile of the wine.

**Exercise:** You're going to love this one. Head to the supermarket and either pick up a premade lasagna or shop for the ingredients to make your own (preferred). Also, pick up a white and red bottle of wine produced in Italy. You'll be amazed with your dinner that the white and red wine both pair excellently with your lasagna. Why? Well it's the same terroir. The same water, sunshine, heat etc., that created the flavors of that dish as it is with the wine. Italian food and Italian wine (at least Italian grape varietals) are meant to be together.

***Personal Story:** When people visit the wineries and tell us they are making an Italian dinner for the evening and they want to know which of our wines would pair best. We always recommend a Pinot Grigio for the white wine and our Sangiovese for the red wine, In fact, Sangiovese is the principle red grape grown and produced in Tuscany Italy. In the next chapter we discuss regional pairing. However, this personal story and the exercise in this section reflects regional pairing at it's best.*

## Exploring Wine Aging

In the world of wine, aging is a crucial process that can greatly impact the flavor, aroma, and overall quality of a bottle. When it comes to exploring wine aging, there are a few key factors to consider. Firstly, it's important to understand that not all wines benefit from aging. While some wines, such as red Bordeaux or Barolo, can improve with age, others, like most white wines and rosés, are meant to be enjoyed young and fresh.

Wines from cooler climates such as Bordeaux are known to be more age worthy because of the terroir and specifically with it being a cooler climate. **Wines from cooler climates are noticeably more acidic.** This acidity in wine allows wine to age longer as it is also a preservative. That said, **wines in warmer climates are generally less acidic, higher in sugar** and don't generally have the time for aging on their side. However, there are also exceptions to the rule such as wines that are heavily tannic. Tannin is also a preservative and always assist wine to age gracefully.



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One of the main reasons why certain wines are aged is to allow them to develop more complex flavors and aromas. During the aging process, chemical reactions take place within the wine that can soften harsh tannins, integrate flavors, and create new and interesting characteristics. This is why aged wines often have more depth and nuance than their younger counterparts. So what about winemakers aging wine in oak barrels, what role does that play?

**Oak barrels play a significant role** in winemaking. Wine aging in barrels can have a profound effect on the resulting wine, affecting the color, the flavor, tannin profile and texture of the wine. The chemical properties of oak itself can have a profound effect on the wine.

**Phenols** within the wood interact with the wine to produce **vanilla** type flavors and can give the impression of tea notes or sweetness, The degree of **"toast"** on the barrel can also impart different properties affecting the tannin levels of the wine as well as the aggressive wood flavors.

So when enjoying younger wines a way to "soften" the tannin structure is to decant them. Essentially you are infusing the wine with oxygen to soften the tannin structure to allow more fruit flavors to become present.

Exploring wine aging is understanding the role of storage conditions. Proper storage is essential for allowing a wine to age gracefully. **Wines should be stored in a cool, dark place with consistent temperature and humidity levels.** Exposure to heat, light, or fluctuations in temperature can cause a wine to spoil prematurely, so it's crucial to take care when storing aged bottles.

When it comes to pairing aged wines with food, there are a few general guidelines to keep in mind. Aged red wines, with their softer tannins and complex flavors, pair well with rich, hearty dishes such as braised meats, aged cheeses, and game meats. On the other hand, aged white wines, with their oxidative notes and nutty flavors, are best paired with dishes like roasted poultry, creamy sauces, and nutty cheeses.

Exploring wine aging can be a fascinating journey that allows you to discover new flavors, aromas, and textures in your favorite bottles. By understanding the aging process, storage conditions, and pairing guidelines, you can enhance your wine and food pairing experiences and truly appreciate the magic of a well-aged bottle.



If you don't have a wine cellar as most people don't, I'd encourage you to purchase a wine refrigerator. This at least allows the wine to be stored cooler and at proper humidity. I would suggest storing both red and white wines this way. White wines can be consumed right out of the refrigerator while red wines should be slightly warmer, You'll want to warm up the reds a bit for about 30-60 minutes. If red wine is served too cold, the tannin structure is very pronounced and aggressive. If you experience this, just wait a few more minutes,

## Summary

Feel free to write down any after-reading insights and thoughts

After reading and completing the exercises, I have learned...

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## Chapter 4: The Role of Food in Pairing

### Understanding Flavor Profiles

When it comes to pairing food and wine, one of the most important concepts to grasp is understanding flavor profiles. I know, you've heard me say this a few times already. I can't over estimate the importance of understanding components in food and wine and how they synergistically create flavor. Every dish and every wine has its own unique set of flavors, and the key to a successful pairing lies in finding complementary or contrasting flavors that enhance the overall experience. The last exercise in this book will go a long way in helping you understand this.

One of the most common methods for pairing food and wine based on flavor profiles is to match like with like or complementary as we've discussed previously. For example, an earthy **Pinot Noir** will pair beautifully with a dish made with **mushrooms or walnuts** as the **similar earthy flavors** will enhance each other. Conversely, contrasting flavors can also create a dynamic pairing, such as pairing a spicy Thai curry with a crisp and refreshing Riesling to balance out the heat. A thing to remember is a very simple phrase, "sweet tames heat". So when having something spicy for dinner, pair it with a sweeter wine. These are examples of **complementary and contrasting tastings** and I will go into more depth later.

Flavor profiles are essentially the combination of tastes, aromas, and textures that make up a particular food or wine. For food, this can include elements such as sweetness, acidity, saltiness, bitterness, and umami. In wine, flavor profiles can encompass characteristics like fruitiness, acidity, tannins, earthiness and oakiness. These sound familiar right? By identifying these key components in both the food and the wine, you can begin to see how they interact with each other and how they can either complement or clash with one another.



Let's understand wine aromas (food aromas too) through science. As it turns out, those little whiffs of fruit, flowers, and "minerality" helps us deconstruct a wine. Behind those countless flavors we sniff is a molecule. It enters your nose, impacts your olfactory receptors, and generates a signal to your brain which tells us things like, "I'm smelling apples!"

Now imagine when you are pairing a wine like the "smells like apples", with food that has similar flavor profiles like an apple, walnut salad with a feta cheese. The molecules impacting your olfactory receptors would be generating a signal to your brain telling you that, "this is absolutely delicious!" This is how intensity of flavors are created.

# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

It is important to understand the intensity of flavors when pairing food and wine. A delicate dish with subtle flavors may be overwhelmed by a bold and robust wine, while a hearty and flavorful dish might need a wine with enough body and complexity to stand up to it. By matching the intensity of flavors in both the food and the wine, you can ensure a harmonious pairing that allows each element to shine.

Ultimately, understanding flavor profiles is about experimenting and exploring different combinations to see what works best for your palate. Don't be afraid to try new pairings and think outside the box – you may discover a surprising match that becomes your new favorite. With a basic understanding of flavor profiles and a willingness to experiment, you can unlock a world of delicious possibilities when it comes to pairing food and wine.

**Exercise:** You only need two things for this exercise - a milk chocolate bar and some Chili pepper flakes (like the ones you shake on pizza). Now sample the milk chocolate all on its own. It's sweet right? Very pleasurable. Now sample the chili flakes on their own. Kinda spicy right? Now have a piece of milk chocolate with some chili flakes... not bad right? Remember, "sweet tames heat". You just had a "contrasting tasting" experience. I'll explain later.

**Bonus Exercise:** If you have an open bottle of Pinot Noir, grab a glass and have it with walnuts. You'll experience the walnut like never before! The wine balances the earthiness of the walnut and the acidity makes it shine. An acidic white wine will make the walnut pop too! Not literally pop, but it'll taste earthier.

***Personal Story:** When teaching my food and wine pairing class in person we always do this exercise. I have the student take a piece of chicken and dip it into hot sauce, Then I have them have it with a sip of Pinot Grigio, Well, it's a learning experience because acidity causes an increase in heat perception and at this point everyone is looking at me wondering why I did that to them. I immediately tell them to have a sip of their sweet riesling.. then you can see the comfort comes over their eyes. Remember, "sweet tames heat".*

## Incorporating Texture and Temperature

Incorporating texture and temperature into your food and wine pairings can also enhance the pairing experience to a whole new level. Understanding how these elements interact will help you create balanced combinations that will tantalize your taste buds. Texture refers to the mouthfeel of both the food and the wine, while temperature can greatly impact the flavors and aromas of both too.





# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

When considering texture in a food and wine pairing, think about how the **weight and richness of the dish** will interact with the body of the wine. For example, a creamy pasta dish may pair well with a full-bodied **Viognier** from the **Rhone Valley of France**, as the richness of the food will complement the weight of the wine. On the other hand, a light and delicate seafood dish may be better suited to a crisp and refreshing **Portugal Vihno Verde**. Experimenting with different textures can lead to surprising and delightful pairings. Also experimenting with wines from around the world makes it fun. Watch a travel video on the country of the wine you're tasting, Your wine may even taste better!

Temperature also plays a crucial role in food and wine pairings. Serving both the food and the wine at the appropriate **temperature can enhance the flavors and aromas** of each. For example, a rich and hearty beef stew may be best enjoyed with a bold red wine that has been served slightly below room temperature. Conversely, a light and refreshing salad may be better paired with a chilled white wine. Paying attention to temperature can make a significant difference in how the flavors of the food and wine interact.

When incorporating texture and temperature into your food and wine pairings, it's important to consider the overall balance of the meal. Again all of the components of food and wine need to be considered. For example, a spicy dish may be best paired with a slightly sweet wine to help offset the heat. Sweet (sugar) tames the heat in food (flavor not temperature). Finding the right balance of texture and temperature can take your dining experience to new heights.

Experimenting with different combinations of texture and temperature can be a fun and rewarding experience. Don't be afraid to try new things and trust your instincts when it comes to pairing food and wine. By paying attention to these elements, you can create memorable dining experiences that will delight your palate and impress your guests. So next time you're planning a meal, consider how texture and temperature can enhance your food and wine pairings.



**Exercise:** Pour a glass of red wine and white wine in a glass.. Then put both bottles in the refrigerator, but don't drink those glasses yet. Wait for 60 minutes, then pour yourself a glass of each of the red and white wines that are now colder. Then set your glasses side by side. Take a sip of the cold white wine as it should be acidic and refreshing. Take a sip of the warm white wine as it will taste flabby. Take a sip of the warmer red wine and it should be delightful. Take a sip of the cold red wine and you'll notice the wine is considerably more tannic and dry. This is certainly an exercise in proper temperature.

# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

**Personal Story:** *In one of my food and wine classes we were sampling the wines I previously poured. Before class I had many wines in the refrigerator. When we started discussing Chardonnay, I was talking about its essence of vanilla from the French oak barrels and how creamy it was. As I was tasting it though, I wasn't experiencing it.. I asked the class if they had the same problem and all said yes. I went to the back room and pulled a chardonnay from storage as it was essentially room temperature. I poured each person a sample of that wine. To their amazement, the wine tasted as I described being hints of vanilla and creaminess. With this wine being to cold, the acidity was more present and sharper and made the experience entirely different.*

## Pairing with Seasonal Ingredients

Pairing with seasonal ingredients is a key aspect of creating a harmonious and memorable dining experience. By understanding the flavors and characteristics of seasonal ingredients, you can enhance the overall enjoyment of both the food and wine. Spring, summer, fall, and winter each bring their own unique bounty of fruits, vegetables, and herbs that can be expertly paired with the perfect wine selection.

In the **spring**, **fresh vibrant** ingredients like asparagus, peas and strawberries are in abundance. These flavors pair well with light bodied red and white wines, these will be fresh pairings. I'm thinking a fresh, crisp Riesling.

What about **summer produce**, cherries and blackberries have bold and intense flavors that are best paired with equally **bold acidic wines** such as a Rosé from Provence Italy. The richness of these wines can stand up to the robust flavors of summer produce, creating a harmonious balance of taste and texture. **Like sunshine in a glass.**

As the weather cools down in the **fall**, **heartier** ingredients like butternut squash, apples, and cranberries come into season. These ingredients pair well with **medium-bodied wines** such as Merlot or Zinfandel. The earthy and robust flavors of these wines complement the warmth and richness of fall ingredients, creating a cozy and comforting dining experience.



**Winter** is a time for hearty and comforting dishes like braised meats, root vegetables, and dark leafy greens. These **bold and robust flavors** are best paired with full-bodied wines such as an Italian Barbaresco or Brunello di Montalcino.. The depth and complexity of these wines can stand up to the richness of winter ingredients, creating a luxurious and indulgent dining experience. Some people drink light and fruity wines in the summer but switch to big, bold dry red wines in the winter. It may be seasonality much like the produce.

By understanding the characteristics of seasonal ingredients and how they interact with different wines, you can create a truly memorable experience that showcases the best of both food and wine. Additionally, I have heard from many wine drinkers that they drink sweet reds and whites in the summer and drink dry reds and whites in the winter. Is this you? I certainly know I like big dry reds in the winter as the higher alcohol wine warms the belly.

***Personal Story:** When teaching my class, the experiences of my students always changes based on the season in which I teach the class. In my food and wine class I always use sliced tomatoes. As you can imagine, in my summer classes I'm using fresh tomatoes from my garden and the tomatoes are crisp and acidic. However, when I teach this class in the winter or spring the tomatoes are store purchased and not as fresh, crisp or acidic. This makes the experience different.*

## Summary

Feel free to write down any after-reading insights and thoughts

After reading and completing the exercises, I have learned...

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## Chapter 5: Pairing Techniques and Strategies

### Complementary Pairings

In the world of food and wine pairings, understanding the concept of **complementary pairings** is essential. Complementary pairings are all about finding flavors that enhance and elevate each other, creating a harmonious balance on your palate. This subchapter will delve into the art of complementary pairings, offering insights and tips to help you understand how to prepare complementary pairings.

When it comes to **complementary pairings**, the key is to look for **flavors that mirror each other** in a way that brings out the best in both the food and the wine. For example, pairing a rich, buttery Chardonnay with a creamy pasta dish can create a luxurious and indulgent experience. The wine's creamy texture complements the richness of the dish, while its acidity cuts through the creaminess, balancing out the flavors. Think of a creamy buttery chardonnay with a piece of lobster dipped in butter. Yes, sounds delicious doesn't it.

Another important aspect of **complementary pairings** is considering the texture of both the food and wine. **Matching textures are complementary.** For example; pairing a light, crisp Sauvignon Blanc with a delicate seafood dish with a touch of citrus (lemon) can create a refreshing and palate-cleansing experience. The wine's acidity cuts through the richness of the seafood and the acidity in the food complements the acidity in the wine, while its bright flavors complement the delicate flavors of the dish.



Mastering the art of complementary pairings can take your meal to the next level. By understanding how flavors interact and complement each other, you can create unforgettable dining experiences that will leave your guests impressed and satisfied. So next time you're planning a dinner party or a romantic evening at home, remember to consider the concept of complementary pairings and watch as your meals come to life with flavor and harmony.

**Exercise:** Grab a glass of your favorite sweet wine. I'd recommend a riesling or gewurtraminer and pair it with a fruit you might have at home like grapes, melons, strawberries or even watermelon. This can be a very delicious pairing.

**Personal Story:** Writing this section had me reflect on how often I haven't created a romantic evening and dinner with my wife using a complementary pairing. Maybe I should head out to buy a lobster and an amazing bottle of Chardonnay from Sonoma CA.

## Contrasting Pairings

In the world of food and wine pairings, there are countless combinations to explore. One interesting concept to consider is the idea of **contrasting pairings**. These pairings involve **matching foods with wines that have contrasting flavors, textures, or aromas**. By doing so, you can create a unique and dynamic dining experience that can truly elevate your meal. **These pairings quite honestly can be the most exciting!**

One **classic** example of a **contrasting pairing** is pairing a **rich and creamy dish with a crisp and acidic wine**. For instance, a creamy pasta dish like fettuccine alfredo can be perfectly complemented by a bright and zesty Sauvignon Blanc. The acidity of the wine helps to cut through the richness of the dish, creating a harmonious balance on your palate.

Another **classic** example is having a **dry wine that binds with the protein and fat in your saliva** and pair it with a food that is **high protein and/or high in fat**. The fat replaces the void the wine left and makes it a delicious pairing. Remember my example at the beginning of this book that changed the trajectory of my career? It was a simple glass of Old Vine Zinfandel, a dry red wine paired with a delicious slice of pizza with all of its delicious melted mozzarella cheese. Again, tannins in wine bind with protein, so this pairing is "contrasting" and works beautifully.



Another contrasting pairing to consider is **pairing spicy foods with sweet wines**. The sweetness of the wine can help to cool down the heat of the spices, creating a delicious contrast of flavors. For example, **spicy BBQ wings** can be wonderfully paired with a slightly **sweet Riesling**. The sweetness of the wine helps to enhance the flavors of the BBQ while providing a refreshing counterpoint to the heat.

When it comes to contrasting pairings, don't be afraid to think outside the box. Experiment with pairing unexpected flavors and textures to create a truly memorable dining experience. For instance, try pairing a rich and indulgent chocolate dessert with a dry and earthy red wine like a Pinot Noir. The combination of the sweet chocolate and the savory wine can create a complex and satisfying flavor profile that will leave your taste buds wanting more.



# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

**Contrasting pairings** can also be a fun way to explore different wine regions and grape varieties. For example, try pairing a spicy **Mexican dish** with a **fruity and bold Malbec** from Argentina. The combination of the spicy food and the robust wine can create a delightful contrast of flavors that will transport you to the vineyards of South America with every bite.

Contrasting pairings are a creative and exciting way to explore the world of food and wine pairings. By experimenting with different flavors, textures and aromas, you can create unique and memorable gastronomic experiences that will delight your senses and expand your palate. Your guests will love it if you did this at a party. So next time you're planning a meal, don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone and try a contrasting pairing, you'll never know what delicious discoveries you might make.

**Exercise:** You going to love this one as you probably already do it everyday. Well I do anyway. Open your favorite bottle of red wine and put several slices of your favorite cheese on a plate. Enjoy!! Again, you're doing this as a science experiment, so no one will judge you.



## Regional Pairings

In the world of food and wine pairing, **regional pairings can play a crucial role** in enhancing the overall dining experience. By matching wines from a specific region with dishes that originate from the same area, you can create harmonious and complementary flavors that truly showcase the essence of both the wine and the food.

One classic example of regional pairings is the combination of French **Bordeaux wine** with dishes from the Bordeaux region, such as rich and hearty beef stew or duck confit. The **earthy and bold flavors** of the wine perfectly complement the savory and complex flavors of the dishes, creating a match made in culinary heaven.

Similarly, **Italian Chianti wine** pairs beautifully with dishes from Tuscany, such as tomato-based pastas, roasted meats, and aged cheeses. The acidity and fruitiness of the wine balance out the richness of the dishes, creating a well-rounded and satisfying dining experience.

When it comes to **Spanish wines**, pairing a **Rioja** with traditional **Spanish tapas like patatas bravas, chorizo, and manchego cheese** is a match made in gastronomic heaven. The bold and spicy flavors of the wine complement the bold and savory flavors of the tapas, creating a delightful and memorable dining experience.

What about some delicious **German wines like; Gewurztraminer or Spatburgunder** paired with **German foods** like pretzels, schnitzel and all of the amazing German sausages available? Sounds delicious right?



In the world of food and wine pairing, regional pairings offer a unique opportunity to explore the flavors and nuances of a specific wine-producing region. By matching wines with dishes from the same area, you can create harmonious and complementary flavors that truly showcase the essence of both the wine and the food.

So next time you're planning a dinner party or a special meal, consider exploring regional pairings to elevate your dining experience to a whole new level. Have a "French Party" with friends and family and encourage everyone to bring a French wine, a French dish and maybe their favorite beret!

## Summary

Feel free to write down any after-reading insights and thoughts

After reading the past few chapters and doing the exercise, I have learned...

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## Chapter 6: Special Considerations for Pairing

### Pairing with Spicy Foods

key to successfully pairing wine with spicy dishes lies in finding a balance between the heat of the food and the flavors of the wine. When the pairing is done well, the wine can help to cool the palate and enhance the flavors of the dish. Remember sweet tames heat?

One of the best wines to pair with **spicy foods** is a slightly **sweet white** wine, such as a Riesling or Gewürztraminer. These wines have a touch of sweetness that can help to counterbalance the heat of the spicy food. The acidity in these wines also helps to cleanse the palate, making them an excellent choice for pairing with spicy dishes like Thai curry or spicy Mexican cuisine.



Another great option for pairing with **spicy foods** is a **sparkling wine**, such as Champagne, Prosecco or Cava. The effervescence of these wines can help to cut through the spiciness of the dish, while the crisp, refreshing flavors can help to cleanse the palate between bites. Sparkling wines are particularly well-suited for pairing with spicy appetizers or dishes with a lot of heat, as they can help to refresh the palate and prepare it for the next bite.

For those who prefer red wine, a light-bodied, fruity red wine like a Dornfelder,, Dolcetto or Gamay can be a good choice for pairing with spicy foods. These wines have enough fruitiness to balance out the heat of the dish, while their lighter body and lower tannins make them a good match for spicy foods that are not too heavy or rich. These wines can be particularly well-suited for pairing with spicy dishes like Indian curry or spicy grilled meats.

Pairing wine with spicy foods can be a fun and rewarding experience when done thoughtfully. By choosing wines that have a touch of sweetness or effervescence, you can create a pairing that enhances the flavors of both the wine and the food.

Experiment with different wine styles and dishes to find the perfect pairing that suits your palate. If you love spice and heat and can't get enough of it, pair **spicy food** with a **high acidic wine like; Albariño or Chenin Blanc**. The acidity will **intensify the experience**. Cheers to exploring the exciting world of wine and food pairing!

## Pairing with Desserts

When it comes to choosing the right wine to accompany your sweet treat, there are a few key factors to consider. The sweetness level of the dessert, the acidity of the wine, and the overall flavor profile of both the wine and the dessert all play a role in creating a harmonious pairing.

One important **rule of thumb** when pairing wine with desserts is to make sure that the **wine is sweeter than the dessert**. If the wine is not sweet enough, it may **taste bitter or sour** when paired with a sweet dessert. For example, a rich and decadent chocolate cake would pair beautifully with a sweet, fortified wine like a Port or a late harvest Riesling.

Another important consideration when pairing wine with desserts is the acidity of the wine. You're learning the power of acidity when it comes to pairings. Wines with **higher acidity** can help **intensify sweetness** of the dessert, creating a more balanced flavor profile. For example, a tart lemon tart would pair well with a crisp, acidic wine like a Sauvignon Blanc or a Champagne.

Here's an interesting point. **Many "sweet" wines from Germany like Riesling are actually very high in acidity**. However, the residual sugar or added sugar in the wine disguises it. Your palate doesn't notice the high acidity with these wines because of the higher sugar.

In addition to sweetness and acidity, it's also important to consider the overall flavor profile of both the wine and the dessert when making a pairing. For example, a fruity dessert like a berry cobbler would pair well with a wine that has similar fruit flavors, such as a Pinot Noir or a Zinfandel. On the other hand, a rich and creamy dessert like a cheesecake would pair well with a wine that has more savory notes, such as a Chardonnay or a Merlot. Yummy pairings here for you to try.

Overall, pairing wine with desserts is a **fun and creative process** that can enhance your dining experience. You can create a surprising and delicious pairing that will delight your taste buds and elevate your meal to a whole new level. So next time you're enjoying a sweet treat, don't forget to pour yourself a glass of wine and experiment with different pairings to find your perfect match. Cheers!



**Exercise:** A simple example would be having a glass of sweet riesling and a glass of Pinto Grigio or any non-sweet wine. Have a piece of milk chocolate with each and see which of the pairings taste best. You will notice that the wine needs to be sweeter than the food to make it taste pleasant. Otherwise, the wine taste unbalanced and cloying.

**Personal Example:** Recently I have been offering classes with Girl Scout cookies. I select 4 wines and 4 girl scout cookies that can be paired with them. My student experience a range of flavor profiles pairing sweet wines with cookies and pairing dry wines with cookies too.



## Pairing for Dietary Restrictions

When it comes to food and wine pairing, it's important to consider dietary restrictions to ensure that everyone at the table can enjoy the meal. Whether you or your guests have allergies, intolerances, or specific dietary preferences, there are plenty of options for creating delicious pairings that cater to everyone's needs.

One of the most common dietary restrictions is gluten intolerance or celiac disease. For those who need to avoid gluten, it's important to choose wines that are naturally gluten-free, such as red and white wines made from grapes. Additionally, opt for dishes that are naturally gluten-free, like grilled meats, seafood, and vegetables, to create a harmonious pairing that won't cause any discomfort.

For those who are vegetarian or vegan, pairing food and wine can be a fun and creative experience. Look for wines that are made without the use of animal products, such as certain white wines that are clarified using bentonite clay instead of egg whites. These are great questions to ask winery staff about. When it comes to food, there are plenty of plant-based options that pair beautifully with wine, such as roasted vegetables, lentil dishes, and tofu stir-fries.

Experiment with different combinations to find the perfect pairing that complements both the wine and the food, while still adhering to any dietary restrictions.

Overall, pairing food and wine for dietary restrictions can be a fun and rewarding experience. By being mindful of these restrictions and communicating them effectively, you can create delicious and inclusive pairings that everyone at the table can enjoy.

Don't be afraid to get creative and experiment with different flavors and ingredients to create a truly memorable dining experience for all. Also, adding condiments to dishes can greatly impact flavor profiles of wine, food and certainly the pairings. However, that's all part of the fun in experimentation. Example, adding a tomato based to the dish (ketchup, sliced tomatoes etc.,) will elevate the acidity in the dish, so be prepared to match with a wine that has acidity as well.



## Summary

Feel free to write down any after-reading insights and thoughts

After reading this past few chapters and doing the exercise, I have learned...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 7: Decoding Wine Labels and Vocabulary

### Decoding Wine Labels

Have you ever found yourself standing in the wine aisle, staring at a sea of bottles with labels that seem to be written in a foreign language? Fear not, decoding wine labels is easier than you think. Understanding the information on a wine label can help you make informed decisions when it comes to choosing the perfect bottle to pair with your meal. In the Old World, such as Italy, France, Germany etc., most of their wines are labeled based on a sense of place vs. the actual grape varietal in the bottle like much of the world wine making regions USA, New Zealand, etc.

One of the first things to look for on a wine label is the grape varietal. This will give you an idea of what flavors to expect from the wine. For example, a Cabernet Sauvignon will generally be bold and full-bodied, while a Chardonnay will be more medium-bodied with notes of butter and oak. Knowing the grape varietal can help you determine if the wine will complement the flavors of the dish you plan to pair it with.



The region where the wine was produced is another important piece of information to look for on the label. Different regions are known for producing wines with distinct characteristics. For example, wines from the Napa Valley in California are known for their bold fruit flavors and high alcohol content, while wines from Bordeaux in France are known for their earthy undertones and elegant structure. Understanding the region can give you insight into the style of wine you are about to enjoy. In fact, to pull out your phone and google specific wines when shopping is helpful. Doing so would tell you that the wines of Bordeaux are the

grape varieties of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petite Verdot, Malbec and others. So if you're looking for a Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot, consider a Bordeaux.

Pay attention to the **vintage year** on the label. This tells you the **year the grapes were harvested** and the wine was made. In general, wines from warmer years tend to be riper and more fruit-forward, while wines from cooler years may be more acidic and structured. It's important to note that not all wines are meant to be aged, so if you see a more recent vintage, it's likely meant to be enjoyed sooner rather than later. Additionally, it's important to know that wine produced in cooler climates present wines with more acidity and less fruit forwardness. Example would be a Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley with its big alcohol, high fruit, juicy flavor profile compared to its European counterpart Bordeaux. A Bordeaux, is less fruit forward, more acidic, earthy and considerably less alcohol.

Lastly, look for any special designations on the label, such as "reserve" or "grand cru." These terms indicate that the wine has met certain quality standards set by the winery or the region. While these designations can be a good indicator of quality, it's also important to trust your own palate and preferences when choosing a bottle. Remember, the best wine is the one you enjoy drinking. You can also look for points or ratings as a way to determine its quality. Please note though, points and ratings are the determination of a person or group and won't necessarily please your palate or budget. Points and rating are meant to be a guide and are generally used for marketing.

## Tips for Tasting and Evaluating Wine

Tasting and evaluating wine can be a fun and rewarding experience, especially when paired with the right foods. Whether you are a seasoned wine connoisseur or just starting to explore the world of wine, there are a few tips that can help you enhance your tasting experience. Hopefully you have more understanding and have practiced the information I shared at the beginning of this book in the "understanding how to properly sample wine." The next few steps will take you even farther in your wine tasting experience.

First and foremost, it is important to pay attention to the appearance of the wine. Start by observing the color and clarity of the wine in your glass. Swirl the wine around to release its aromas and take note of the legs – the streaks that form on the side of the glass after swirling. These visual cues can give you insights into the age and quality of the wine.

Bring the glass to your nose and take a deep sniff. Pay attention to the aromas that you detect, as this is your olfactory system hard at work. Are there notes of fruits, flowers, spices, or earth? Swirling the wine before smelling can help to aerate it and release more aromas. Take your time to savor the scents and try to identify specific aromas to help you understand the wine better. Yes, we covered this material but now you should be taking notes. Writing down what you smell, what you taste and how it makes you feel.

80% of what you perceive when tasting wine is through olfaction. Wine can account for more than a thousand volatile compounds that can evoke thousands of different aromas.

When it comes to tasting the wine, take a small sip and let it linger on your palate. Pay attention to the flavors that you perceive – are there hints of fruit, oak, or spices? Notice the acidity, tannins, and body of the wine. Is it light and refreshing or bold and full-bodied? Consider how these elements interact with each other to create a harmonious or contrasting experience. How long did the flavor last in your mouth? Are you taking notes yet?

As you continue to taste the wine, think about how it pairs with different foods. Experiment with different flavor combinations to see how the wine enhances or balances the flavors of the dish. Pay attention to how the acidity of the wine cuts through rich or fatty foods, or how the sweetness of the wine complements spicy dishes. The right pairing can elevate both the wine and the food to create a truly memorable dining experience. You are taking notes, right?

Lastly, trust your own palate and preferences when it comes to evaluating wine. Everyone has unique tastes and preferences, so don't be afraid to trust your instincts and explore different wines to find what you enjoy. **Remember that the best wine is the one that you love**, but don't be afraid to experiment and have fun with your wine tasting experiences.



## Building Your Wine and Food Pairing Vocabulary

Another key element to mastering the art of food and wine pairing like a sommelier is developing a strong vocabulary to describe the flavors, aromas, and textures of both wine and food. By expanding your wine and food pairing vocabulary, you will be better equipped to make informed decisions when selecting wines to complement specific dishes. Many wine terms can be found on the bottles labels.

It can be helpful to have a better understanding of wine terminology so you can more easily describe which wines you like most. It also gives you an opportunity to learn more about the winemaking process, which many wine lovers appreciate. However, the best way (and definitely the most fun) to understand "wine vocabulary" is to experience them for yourself by actually tasting wine.



Start by familiarizing yourself with common wine terms such as; **fruit forward**, the primary flavors in a fruit-forward wine are sweet fruits. Whether it's raspberries, blackberries, cherries, or gooseberries (ever try a gooseberry?), the fruit flavors dominate the taste of the wine. **Earthy wines**, the primary flavors in an earthy wine are anything but sweet fruit. Anything from clove and spice to beeswax and rocks (like flint or chalk), chocolate, and even cured meats can be noted in certain wines. **Buttery** wines, such as Chardonnay, achieves the taste due to a process called malolactic fermentation. This is when a bacteria converts the malic acid to lactic acid, which results in creaminess.

The sugar level of juice from wine grapes is measured in **Brix**. This allows the winemaker to estimate the final ABV. Alcohol by volume (**ABV**) is how much alcohol is in a wine after fermentation, and is usually inversely related to residual sugar. However, this is not the case for fortified wines, wines aged with brandy.

A wine's **body** refers to how much you feel the weight of the wine on your palate (in your mouth). Body isn't the result of any one particular characteristic in wine, but rather a culmination of several characteristics interacting together as the wine sweeps across your tongue. Sugar and alcohol are two of the primary elements that create a wine's body.

When it comes to food, it is important to know how to describe the **flavors, textures, and cooking methods** of different dishes. Terms like savory, sweet, spicy, creamy, and crunchy can help you pinpoint the key characteristics of a dish that will influence your wine pairing choices. Understanding how the cooking method (grilled, roasted, fried) and ingredients (herbs, spices, sauces) affect the flavor profile of a dish will also aid in selecting the perfect wine pairing.

As you continue to build your wine and food pairing vocabulary, consider keeping a tasting journal to record your experiences with different wine and food combinations. Note the aromas, flavors, textures, and overall impressions of each pairing to help you remember what worked well and what didn't. Also, write down how the wine made you feel. You'll be amazed to learn, over time, how wines make you feel. This will serve as a valuable reference guide as you explore new wines and dishes in the future.



# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

**Experimenting with different wine and food pairings** is another great way to expand your vocabulary and develop your palate. **Don't be afraid to try new combinations** and **step out of your comfort zone**. You may be surprised by the delicious discoveries you make along the way. Remember, the more you taste and experience, the more confident and knowledgeable you will become in the world of food and wine pairing. Here's your green light to finish the bottle.

Remember my view is **passion is never wasted**. That's why, wine lovers learn to taste wine, understand wine and appreciate wine in a meaningful way. I know the effort we put into understanding and appreciating wine adds an extra dimension to the basic daily routine of just eating and drinking. It turns obligation into pleasure, a daily necessity into a celebration of life.

## Chapter 8: Putting it All Together

### Hosting a Wine and Food Pairing Dinner

Hosting a wine and food pairing dinner can be a fun and exciting way to explore the world of flavors and aromas that come together when the perfect wine is paired with the perfect dish.

Although it can be fun to offer a challenging twist to your tasting party. You could offer "**blind tasting**" of the wines brought by your guest.



Write tasting notes regarding each wine on an index card. You can usually find this information on the wine bottle. Do this for each bottle of wine.. Then cover the bottle with tinfoil or put the bottle in a paper bag. Have your guest see if they can match the tasting notes to the correct bottle of wine. Imagine doing this if you have 5-6 different bottles of wine. How fun and challenging. You might even include food pairing ideas on your cards and have the recommended cheeses, fruits, nuts, pickled items (yes, pickles can be a fun pairing experience) available to sample with the wines.

If you choose to do a more "**formal pairing**", one important aspect to consider is the order in which the wines are served. It is generally recommended to start with lighter wines and progress to heavier wines as the meal progresses. So make this a progressive food and wine dinner. This allows your guests to experience the full range of flavors and aromas that each wine has to offer without overwhelming their palate. Start with something light and effervescence like a Champagne from France, Cava from Spain or even a bubbly from the U.S with some simple fruits or cheeses and end your progressive dinner with a succulnet cheesecake paired with a Portuguese port wine. Progressive dinners can be a lot of fun, especially with friends. Maybe have each friend be in charge of their own food and wine pairing during dinner.

# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

Another hosting wine and food pairing dinner idea, can be as simple as providing your guests with information about the wines they will be tasting. This can include details about the grape varietals, the regions where the wines were produced and any unique characteristics or flavor profiles that make each wine special. Do this tasting while watching a video about the region or listening to the music from the same area. An example would be, enjoying a **tasting of Chianti** while listening to **classic Italian music** or **watching the movie "Under The Tuscan Sun"**. Although my favorite would be **watching the movie "Sideways"** while enjoying a **bottle of Merlot**. Do I have any "Sideways" movie fans out there?

## Creating Your Own Experiences

You've been learning a lot about the components of food and wine and how to marry them together.

You've also learned the two principal types of pairing being complementary and contrasting,

To further your education with pairings, I would start considering making your tasting experiences a priority. So what does that mean?

From visiting a local winery and learning and educating yourself on the wine from the local producer can be inspirational. Meeting with the winemaker, asking questions about the harvest, the fermentation, the process from grapes to glass will create a true appreciation for the wine.

Maybe it's joining a local wine club. Enjoy the monthly wines offered and take part in all of the tasting events and food and wine pairings available.



**Exercise:** Invite some of your closest friends over all to your home one weekend evening. Have each person bring one bottle of wine of their choice, a cheese of their choice, a bread or cracker of their choice, a nut of their choice and something pickled of their choice. Set everything up on your kitchen table and you and your guest can start exploring pairings and having fun.

## Resources for Further Learning

In this subchapter, we will explore various resources that can help you deepen your understanding of food and wine pairings. Whether you are a novice looking to expand your knowledge or a seasoned wine enthusiast seeking to refine your palate, these resources offer valuable insights and practical tips to enhance your dining experience.

One of the best ways to learn more about food and wine pairings is by attending tastings and events hosted by local wineries or wine shops. These events provide an opportunity to sample different wines alongside complementary dishes, allowing you to experience firsthand how flavors interact and enhance each other. Additionally, many wineries offer guided tours and tastings that provide a wealth of information on wine production, grape varieties, and pairing suggestions.

For those who prefer to learn at their own pace, there are numerous books and online resources available that delve into the art of food and wine pairing. Books such as "**The Wine Bible**" by Karen MacNeil and "**What to Drink with**

**What You Eat**" by Andrew Dornenburg and Karen Page offer comprehensive guides to pairing wine with a variety of foods, while websites like Wine Spectator and Wine Enthusiast provide articles, reviews, and recommendations on the latest trends in wine and food pairing. I would also strongly consider looking in to the training program online at **Wine.Education** as I have partnered with an online program that teaches you the fundamentals. Additionally, I teach at **Madison College in Madison Wisconsin**. I would love to have you as one of my students as we are always adding new classes like; wine and chocolate pairings, wine and cheese pairing, double blind wine tasting classes, wine and charcuterie classes and more.



Another valuable resource for further learning is joining a wine club or enrolling in a wine education course. Wine clubs often feature curated selections of wines paired with tasting notes and food pairing suggestions, allowing you to explore new flavors and expand your palate. Wine education courses, such as those offered by the Court of Master Sommeliers or the Wine & Spirit Education Trust, provide in-depth training on wine regions, grape varieties, and pairing techniques, culminating in certification exams for those who wish to pursue a career in the wine industry. Again, at **Wine.Education**, we also have an online training program available.

Finally, don't underestimate the power of personal experience when it comes to learning about food and wine pairings. Experiment with different combinations of wine and food at home, take note of what works well and what doesn't. Trust your own palate to guide you in discovering new and exciting pairings. By actively engaging in the process of tasting, exploring, and experimenting, you will develop a deeper appreciation for the intricate dance of flavors that can be found in a well-paired meal.

## Chapter 9: The Future of Food and Wine Pairing

### Trends in Pairing

In the world of food and wine pairings there are constantly evolving trends that sommeliers and food enthusiasts alike are eager to explore.

One trend that has gained popularity in recent years is the emphasis on **sustainable** and **organic** pairings. This involves pairing wines with dishes made from sustainable and organic ingredients, creating a harmonious connection between the wine and the food. Sustainable and organic pairings not only enhance the dining experience but also promote **environmental awareness** and support for local farmers and winemakers.

Another emerging trend in pairing is the use of technology to enhance the pairing experience. From **wine pairing apps** to interactive wine and food pairing guides. Technology has made it easier than ever for food and wine enthusiasts to discover new and exciting pairings. This trend has opened up a world of possibilities for pairings, allowing individuals to explore a wide range of flavors and combinations.

The world of food and wine pairings is constantly evolving, with new trends and techniques emerging all the time. Whether you prefer contrasting flavors, regional pairings, sustainable and organic pairings, or are interested in using technology to enhance your pairing experience, there is something for everyone to explore.

### Sustainable and Organic Pairing Practices

When it comes to food and wine pairings, sustainability and organic practices are becoming increasingly important factors to consider. Sustainable and organic pairings not only benefit the environment, but they also enhance the overall dining experience by offering flavors that are pure and unadulterated. By choosing wines and foods that are produced using sustainable and organic methods, you can ensure that you are enjoying the very best that nature has to offer.



One key aspect of sustainable and organic pairings is the **concept of terroir**, which refers to the unique characteristics that a particular region imparts to its wines and foods. By selecting wines and foods that are grown and produced in the same region, you can create pairings that truly reflect the terroir of that area. This can result in harmonious flavor combinations that are truly exceptional.



# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

Another important consideration when it comes to **sustainable and organic pairings** is the use of natural and biodynamic farming methods. These practices eschew the use of synthetic chemicals and pesticides in favor of natural, sustainable alternatives. By selecting wines and foods that are produced using these methods, you can enjoy flavors that are cleaner, more vibrant and more true to their natural essence.



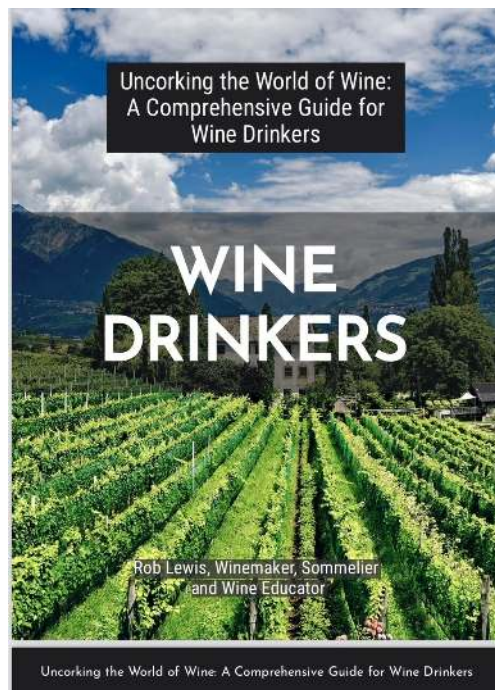
Sustainable wines are produced in vineyards that practice water and energy conservation, preserve ecosystems and local wildlife. A vineyard that produces sustainable wine actively encourages and maintains healthy soils because by doing that they'll be able to continue growing healthy grapes for years to come.

As well as that, vineyards producing sustainable wines, are also keen to protect the air quality and the water quality – they limit the use of chemicals to prevent them leaching into the water table, poisoning the groundwater, or floating off on the wind.

And a sustainable vineyard maintains relationships with the surrounding community and ensure its employee's wellbeing because they understand the bigger picture – without the support of the local community and without a dedicated workforce, no wine would be produced.

Sustainable wines are more than just the production process, it is about creating sustainability at every stage of the winemaking production – from growing the grapes to recycling glass bottles, to adopting social responsibility for the communities surrounding the vineyard. So, whether you are searching for red, white or orange wine, you can surely start searching (and consuming) wines produced in a way to protect our planet.

I've written another book "**Uncorking the World of Wine: A Comprehensive Guide for Wine Drinkers**". In this book, I venture into the history of wine and grape growing, different types of grape growing and winemaking; organic, sustainable, vegan, vegan-friendly, food and wine pairing and much more. It's truly an all encompasses book about the wine world we live in. If you haven't already picked up a copy of this ebook, I strongly encourage you to do so. It's for **Wine Drinkers**, and that's you! 😊





## Innovations in Pairing Technology

As technology continues to advance, the world of food and wine pairing is not exempt from innovations. In recent years there have been significant developments in pairing technology that have revolutionized the way we think about matching flavors and textures. One of the most exciting innovations in this field is the development of apps and websites that offer personalized pairing recommendations based on individual preferences and dietary restrictions. These tools take the guesswork out of pairing and help users discover new and unexpected combinations that they may not have considered before. Two popular Apps are; **Wine.com** and **Vivino: Buy the Right Wine**.

Another groundbreaking innovation in pairing technology is the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to analyze flavor profiles and suggest complementary pairings. These algorithms can process vast amounts of data to identify patterns and correlations that may not be immediately obvious to human tasters. This technology has the potential to greatly enhance the precision and accuracy of pairing recommendations, making it easier than ever to find the perfect match for any dish or wine. **Wine Ring** is an AI program that does this.

Virtual reality and augmented reality are also being used to revolutionize the way we experience food and wine pairings. By creating immersive environments that simulate the sensory aspects of tasting, these technologies can provide a more engaging and interactive way to explore different pairings. Users can virtually taste and smell different wines and dishes, allowing them to experiment with combinations and discover new favorites without ever leaving their homes. A company called **Priority Experiences** is a company that provides this. There are others though.

In addition to digital innovations, there have been advancements in physical pairing tools as well. For example, there are now specialized wine glasses designed to enhance specific flavor profiles and aromas, making it easier to appreciate the nuances of different wines when pairing them with food. There are also gadgets like wine aerators and decanters that can improve the taste and texture of wines, making them more enjoyable to pair with a variety of dishes. If you look at the website **Wine.Education** you will find many new tools and excellent glassware that can make your wine journey even more exciting.



Overall, the innovations in pairing technology are transforming the way we think about food and wine pairings, making it easier and more enjoyable than ever to explore new flavors and combinations. Whether you are a seasoned sommelier or just beginning to delve into the world of wine and food pairing, these advancements can help you discover new and exciting pairings that will delight your palate and enhance your dining experience.

## Conclusion: Embracing the Art of Food and Wine Pairing

Embracing the art of food and wine pairing can truly elevate your dining experience to new heights. By understanding the principles behind pairing, understanding the individual components and how they relate to one another, you can enhance the flavors of both the food and wine, creating a harmonious and delightful combination that tantalizes your taste buds. Whether you are hosting a dinner party or dining out at a restaurant, knowing how to pair food and wine effectively will impress your guests and enhance your overall enjoyment of the meal. Yes, you've heard me reference this many times.

As you continue to explore the world of food and wine pairing, remember that there are no strict rules to follow. While certain guidelines can help you make informed choices, ultimately, the best pairings are the ones that you enjoy the most. Experiment with different combinations, be open to trying new things, and trust your palate to guide you towards the perfect pairing for your taste preferences. Most importantly, enjoy these experiences with friends.

Additionally, remember that the key to successful food and wine pairing lies in balance. Look for complementary flavors and textures that enhance each other, rather than overpowering one another. Consider the acidity, sweetness, and body of both the food and wine, and strive to create a cohesive pairing that brings out the best in both elements. You will learn these skills in the next exercise,

Becoming adept at food and wine pairing is a journey that requires practice, patience, and a willingness to learn. By honing your skills and expanding your knowledge, you can unlock a world of culinary possibilities and enhance your dining experiences in ways you never thought possible. So, embrace the art of food and wine pairing, and watch as your meals become transformed into unforgettable sensory experiences that delight and inspire you time and time again.



Now this photo is a picture of one of my classes following all of the same steps I outline in the next and final chapter.

I hope you've enjoyed reading and learning about wine and hopefully you have participated in all of the exercise's too. If you take the time to follow all of the steps in the next exercise's, I'm confident you'll have a "wow" moment.

## Chapter 10: Food and Wine Science Class

### Let's Unveil the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing Exercise

I was attending sommelier classes and winemaking classes at roughly the same time. I discovered that in each discipline we were discussing things like; acid, tannin, body, balance etc., but from two separate points of view in the wine world. **At that moment I knew this was the secret to pairing food and wine.**

I have taught this class live to over 2500+ students to date. This is the full exercise for the food and wine pairing portion of my class. If you follow the step by step instructions, you'll have a similar experience to those participants in my live class. So take your time and enjoy the experience.

#### **What you will need for supplies:**

**Wine:** Sweet Riesling, Pinot Grigio, Oaky Buttery Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and a Cabernet Sauvignon

(To answer the question in your head right now, the answer is yes. Yes, you will be sipping all of these in this exercise. Just don't drive afterwards, enjoy the evening at home 😊)

**Food:** sliced tomatoes, green olives, young cheddar cheese, sliced mushrooms, diced chicken (plain no seasonings), lemon wedges, Alfredo sauce and hot sauce

First let's discuss the power of acidity, Yes, I've mentioned acidity many, many times. Acidity can make things appear bigger than they really are. **Here's one great example I want you to try.**

**First sample your riesling and give it a rating between 1-10 with the bigger number being the sweetest.**

**Now, I want you to sample the Pinot Grigio and immediately upon swallowing sample the Riesling again.** What happened? Did your sweetness number just become higher? The wine became significantly sweeter. The wine didn't actually become sweeter, but your perception of sweetness changed thanks to acidity.

Do your best to follow the steps in this order. I will explain what happens on your palate, but I'd like for you to have these experience on your palate as your following along the guide. It will make more sense to you then.

# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

## Chicken + Lemon Pairings

**Pairing #1** Take a bite of chicken and have with the Pinot Grigio. How was it? Okay, nothing real special.

**Pairing #2** Next take a bite of chicken and have with your Chardonnay. Was it better? Yes, it was because the weight of the chicken more closely mirrored that of the Chardonnay plus the softer acid creates a nice balance.

**Pairing #3** Next squeeze lemon on the chicken bite and have it with the Chardonnay. How was that? okay?

**Pairing #4** Now squeeze lemon on the chicken and have it with the Pinot Grigio. How was that? It's getting better as the acidity in the Pinot Grigio mirrors the acidity in the lemon chicken.

**Key learning in this pairing;** In the book, I discuss heavily the importance in acidity with pairing foods. Acidity will brighten the dish and if the dish also has an acidity, it will pair well. We just added lemon to the chicken and increased its acidity, by doing so it balanced. One of the wines may have had more acidity than the other, so that's why using two different wines makes it a learning experience.

## Chicken + Tomato Pairing

**Pairing #1** Piece of chicken with a small piece of tomato with a sip of Chardonnay. How was that? Unless totally ripe and in season, it does not elevate the acidity.

**Pairing #2** Piece of chicken, tomato and a sip of Pinot Grigio. How was that? Not bad matching, as the wine's acidity elevated the pairing.

**Pairing #3** Piece of chicken, tomato and a sip of the Riesling. How was that? Pretty good as the tomato elevated the sweetness a bit on the riesling.

**Pairing #4** Piece of chicken, tomato and a sip of Cabernet. How was that? Not the best as the acidity can play havoc with the wine.

**Pairing #5** Piece of chicken, tomato, add cheese and now sip the Cabernet. How was that? Amazing... as the fat in the cheese balance the tannin in the Cabernet.

**Key learning in this pairing;** In the book I discuss heavily the importance in acidity with pairing foods. We just added lemon and a tomato to the chicken and increased its acidity even more. In this pairing we used 4 different wines with varying levels of acidity and tannin. You experienced how acidity works with the tannin in red wine and learned that when you added fat (cheese), it created a better balance than not having fat.

# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

## Chicken + Mushroom Pairing

**Pairing #1** Chicken, mushroom and sip of Pinot Grigio. How was that? It tasted very earthy didn't it? The acidity in the wine elevated the mushroom earthiness in the pairing. If you like mushrooms, it was good. If you hate mushrooms, you probably weren't a fan.

**Pairing #2** Chicken, mushroom and a sip of Chardonnay. How was that? Not bad, the earthiness and weight kinda balanced.

**Pairing #3** Chicken, mushroom and a sip of Cabernet Sauvignon. How was that? Okay but not excellent. Now do it again and add cheese to it. Was it better? Oh yes, that was a significant improvement. Why? The cheese created a balance with the tannin in the wine.

**Pairing #4** Chicken, mushroom and sip of Pinot Noir. How was that? Not bad, as the earthiness in the Pinot Noir matched the earthiness in the mushroom. Now add cheese and do that pairing again. How was that? Amazing right!! The earthiness was balanced and so was the tannin and fat.

**Key learning in this pairing;** In the book I discuss the importance in earthiness when pairing foods. Earthiness can be enhanced with acidity and earthiness can pair well with a food that's earthy too. We just added cheese with the mushroom and increased its umami, by doing so it balanced. This exercise works with walnuts as well as mushrooms.

## Chicken + Olive Pairing

**Pairing #1** Chicken, olive and sip of Chardonnay. How was that? okay but could be better.

**Pairing #2** Chicken, olive and sip of Pinot Grigio. How was that? Actually, pretty good as the elevated acidity in the wine neutralized some of the saltiness in the olive.

**Pairing #3** Chicken, olive and sip of Cabernet Sauvignon. How was that? Not the best pairing as the salt creates a weird sensation with the tannin in bigger dry wines. However, do this lineup again and add cheese. How was that? Way better right! Again cheese is magic with dry wines.

**Pairing #4** Chicken, olive and a sip of Pinot Noir. How was that? Again like the Cabernet, it wasn't great. Add cheese and you'll see that pairing improve.

**Key learning in this pairing;** In the book, I discussed heavily the importance in acidity with pairing foods. Acidity causes you to salivate, but you'll notice the acidity negated the salt from the olive, it paired well. We can simply add lemon to something salty, and your experience with tasting salt will change. Each wine brings something different to the pairing as we are blending components.



# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

## Chicken + Alfredo Sauce Pairing

**Pairing #1** Chicken dipped in Alfredo with a sip of Pinot Grigio. How was that? Not the best.

**Pairing #2** Chicken dipped in Alfredo with a sip of Chardonnay. How was that? Much better as the weight and the fat are assisting.

**Pairing #3** Chicken dipped in Alfredo with a sip of Pinot Noir. How was that? Pretty good as the fat in the sauce works with the tannin.

**Pairing #4** Chicken dipped in Alfredo with a sip of Cabernet Sauvignon. How was that? Actually pretty good. Again at the fat in the Alfredo works well with the tannin. Now add cheese to that same pairing to have your mind blown. So good

**Key learning in this pairing; In the book, I discuss the relationships with acidity and fat/protein with pairing foods. Acidity will brighten the dish but fat will bind with tannins as in the Alfredo sauce which made it work. When you added cheese there was even more binding. Also when you tasted the chicken, Alfredo and Pinot Noir you created this Umami experience. You could add cheese to that pairing for even a more satisfying experience.**

## Chicken + Hot Sauce Pairing

**Pairing #1** Chicken with hot sauce with a sip of the Pinot Grigio. How was that? HOT right! For most people this isn't a great pairing.

**Pairing #2** Chicken with hot sauce with a sip of Cabernet Sauvignon. How was that? Not great as the heat overpowers the flavor of the wine.

**Pairing #3** Chicken with hot sauce with a sip of Riesling. How was that? Probably the best pairing with hot sauce as the sweetness in the wine softens the heat from the hot sauce.

**Key learning in this pairing; In the book, I discuss the importance in acidity with pairing foods. and that it can intensify heat. When you added a spiced piece of chicken with the acidic wine, you got an explosion of heat. However, when you introduce sugar to the equation, the heat subsides.**

Hopefully you learned a little bit following along in that exercise. It really teaches you a lot about the component structures of food and wine. **This exercise was the Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing.**

I really hope you enjoyed this journey of food and wine pairing. Before I "gave you the goods" in this last exercise, I thought there was value in sharing lot's of pairing ideas throughout the book.

# Sommelier Secrets: Unveiling the Mystery of Food and Wine Pairing

If you have further questions or are interested in reaching out to me, please visit [Wine.Education](http://Wine.Education) and I will connect with you.

Cheers to discovering the magic of pairing food and wine and please reach out to me and share your wow moment! I can be reached at [rob@wine.education](mailto:rob@wine.education)....The QR code will take you to my website. Thank You!



## Final Book and Exercise Summary

Feel free to write down any after-reading insights and thoughts

After completing the book and all of the exercises, I have learned...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_