



Find a wine

This list of pairings has been specifically designed to help when you're in a hurry so you may not find exactly what you want on it. If you're stuck, look up [Sauces](#) or [World Food](#) below for a steer or, if you're a member, write to me at fiona@matchingfoodandwine.com and I'll get back to you with a more precise suggestion

Beef

The classic accompaniment for a gutsy red - Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz and Merlot will all fit the bill. The rarer it is and the thicker it's cut the gutsier wine it can take. If it's cooked for longer and sliced more thinly it may need a lighter wine like a red Bordeaux or Chianti. If it's braised in a stew try a rustic red like a Cotes du Rhone Villages or an Argentinian Malbec.

Charcuterie

Rustic salamis and patés like salami, air dried ham, country pates and terrines go well with light, fruity reds such as Beaujolais Villages and Valpolicella or with a full bodied dry rosé. Posh patés that contain foie gras are traditionally paired with a sweet wine but a full bodied Chardonnay works well too.

Cheese

It's a myth that cheese and red wine are natural bedfellows. In fact most cheese goes better with dry white wine or sweet wine than red, especially goats cheese (the classic match for Sauvignon Blanc), stinky washed rind cheeses like Munster and Epoisses (better with an aromatic wine like a Gewurztraminer or Tokay Pinot Gris) and blue cheeses like Stilton and Roquefort (traditional matches for port and Sauternes respectively). Red wines go best with hard (but not too strong) cheeses and sheeps' cheeses. Rule no 1 of cheese and wine matching: don't crowd your cheeseboard with too many strong flavours!

Chicken

Chicken takes on any flavour you put with it so unless you're serving a simple roast chicken (in which case try a medium bodied red or white burgundy or other good chardonnay or pinot noir) think in terms of how it's cooked and the other ingredients in the dish rather than the chicken itself. (See Sauces and World Food for a steer)

Duck

Classically paired with pinot noir. It generally works though confit duck and duck casseroles can take a stronger, gutsier red such as a Madiran or Languedoc red

Eggs

Very good with fizz - champagne or champagne-style sparklers. Eggs and bacon are oddly good with claret.

Fish

Simply grilled, fish is the ideal accompaniment for classic dry white wines like Chablis, Spanish Albarino and Sauvignon Blanc. Richer dishes with butter, cream or potato (like fishcakes) usually work well with Chardonnay. Seared 'meaty' or spice-crusting fish like salmon or tuna can take a light red like Pinot Noir.

Fruit

Some fruits - apples, pears, apricots, peaches and nectarines - are wine-friendly (Sauternes and other late harvest Semillons and Sauvignons usually do the trick); others, like citrus fruits, less so. Incorporating cream into the dish usually helps. The addition of fruit to a savoury dish like apples with pork or plums with duck is often an indication of where to go with the wine (a dry white being a better option with a pork and apple dish for example)

Lamb

Another paradise for classic reds, simply grilled or roast lamb is what you choose when you have a fine red to show off. Or even a less elevated one - lamb and rioja is a classic. Once the treatment gets more robust - a moussaka or a tagine, for instance - a gutsier red like a southern French or Spanish red is called for. Marinate it with lemon, Greek style, and you're in to dry white wine territory (something lemony like inexpensive Sauvignon or Assyrtiko)

Pasta

Has little taste in itself so depends how you sauce it. Lighter pasta dishes with spring vegetables or seafood, for example need a lighter wine (a neutral Italian white like Pinot Grigio) than baked pasta dishes like lasagne (where a Zinfandel or southern Italian red will be a better match). See also sauces below

Pork

Like chicken a chameleon meat that can take on all kinds of flavours (see Charcuterie, Fruit and Sauces) but tends to be slightly fattier which suggests a wine with good levels of acidity - Italian reds like Chianti, for example or a good cru Beaujolais. Served cold its a very good partner for a dry Riesling or Chenin Blanc

Risotto

A classic Italian dish that suggests an Italian wine. Almost any crisp, dry white will work (unless the risotto is made with red wine in which case drink something like a Dolcetto or Barbera). Maybe try something more unusual like a Verdicchio, Vernaccia or Orvieto.

Salads

Not supposed to be a good accompaniment for wine because of the sharpness of the classic vinaigrette dressing but main course salads rarely cause major problems. Dry crisp whites and rosés tend to work best other than with warm meat-based salads like chicken livers or pigeon breast which can take a light red like pinot noir

Salmon

Like chicken depends on the way it's cooked. Served lightly cooked or steamed or with a buttery sauce, Chardonnay is usually the answer. Give it an Asian twist and try a Sauvignon Blanc or Australian Riesling. Sear it and try a Pinot Noir. See also Sauces

Sauces

Creamy/buttery - natural Chardonnay territory - the richer the sauce, the fuller the Chard. Other richly textured white wines like Viognier and good quality Chenin Blanc work well too

Tomato-based

Italian reds generally cope best. Or wines made from Italian grapes such as Barbera or Sangiovese. Dry earthy Italian whites such as Verdicchio work too especially with uncooked tomato sauces

Barbecue

A challenge for wine. Big ripe sweet reds like Zinfandel, Shiraz and Chilean Cabernet can cope but may result in flavour overload if they're high in alcohol

Meaty sauces like gravy

Traditional medium-bodied French wines such as red Bordeaux and Cotes du Rhone. (A traditional English ale is better)

Sweet and sour or fruit based savoury sauces

Modern fruity rosés work well with sweet and sour. Pinot noir and Merlot pick up on the flavour of berry fruits. Riesling is good with apple sauce

Shellfish

Raw or cold

Any crisp dry white - classically Muscadet. Chablis and Sancerre but wines like Pinot Grigio, Picpoul de Pinet and Spanish Albarino work well too. Riesling can also be good with crab and scallops, depending on the preparation (see Asian flavours below)

Cooked

Dishes like grilled prawns and lobster and seared scallops are quite luxurious so treat yourself to a good quality Chardonnay, white Graves or another Semillon-Sauvignon blend or Champagne.

Smoked fish

Cold smoked fish tends to go well with Riesling (see also How to Match Smoked Salmon) Fish served hot like smoked haddock are better with dry whites such as unoaked Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc or Soave

Soups

I'm not convinced of the virtues of drinking wine with soup - it can seem like too much liquid unless it's more like a stew than a soup - but you may not share my prejudice! A dry white like Albarino will deal with most smooth vegetable soups. For chunkier soups try a light, rustic red like a Cotes du Rhone

Stews and casseroles

Usually need a medium to full bodied gutsy red - a southern French, Spanish or Portuguese red normally does the trick or a Syrah/Shiraz or Grenache. If made with wine drink the same or a similar wine with it. Classic French style fish stews are better with a crisp dry white or dry rosé

Vegetarian

Follow exactly the same approach as you would for a meat or fish based meal. Light dishes, including salads, lighter wines. More robust dishes such as vegetable bakes or veggie lasagnes gutsier wines, especially reds (See also Sauces and World Food). You may however want to serve a vegetarian wine - one that uses no animal-based products in the production process (ingredients like egg whites are sometimes used for fining)

World Food

The problem about most ethnic cuisines is that dishes tend to arrive on the table at the same time so it's generally a question of finding a wine that will rub along OK rather than a stellar match.

Chinese

Fruity rosé is a pretty good choice overall. Sparkling wine goes well with dim sum and pinot noir is

fantastic with crispy duck

Greek

See Middle Eastern. Greece's own sharp lemony whites are fantastic with seafood though

Japanese

Again, sparkling wine, especially champagne is good with sushi and sashimi. Good quality red Bordeaux and other medium bodied blends of cabernet and merlot go well with meat-based dishes.

Indian

Depends on the overall level of heat. Mild dishes can take a dry white or rosé. Medium-hot dishes are better with a modern, fruity white or red such as an Australian Semillon-Chardonnay or Colombard or a Cabernet-Shiraz blend. Very hot curries are impossible to pair with wine. Stick to lager!

Mexican

Sauvignon Blanc is great with ceviche and dishes with guacamole, lime or coriander. With more robust, meaty dishes try a Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon

Middle Eastern (Turkish/Lebanese)

Crisp dry whites and rosés go well with mezze. Soft medium bodied reds similar to those recommended for Moroccan food below are good with grills

Moroccan

Dry rose with salads, dry southern French, Spanish or even Moroccan reds with tagines (or other wines made from Grenache, Syrah and Tempranillo)

Thai and other Asian flavours

Aromatic whites such as dry Riesling and Alsace Pinot Gris work best. Austrian Gruner Veltliner is good with the more delicate flavours of Vietnamese food