

THE ENOTECA TURI APPROACH TO FOOD AND WINE MATCHING

Giuseppe Turi guides you through the four factors which will help you choose the wine you like

London is experiencing a culinary golden age; the wealth of cultural diversity has brought with it a variety of food traditions, which have become part of our everyday lives. Taste and flavours unknown only 15 years ago are now part of the London food scene. There has been no problem in matching wines with the variety of food styles and the notoriously sophisticated and demanding British palate. Wine is imported from all over the world, having been scrutinised and selected by some of the most ruthlessly fastidious “swill and spit” fraternity. This enormous choice has created its own problems: it can be challenging to find the right wines to match the food one is eating.

At Enoteca, we take the view that matching food and wine is not an exact science; the most important thing to understand is that personal preference is dictated by one's likes and dislikes. Our palate is sensitive to different tastes; some dislike the pungent **aromas** of a fruity wine, others are sensitive to the **acidity**, and others still cannot stand the **tannins**. Here are some guidelines to help choose the wine that is right for you:

Fruit Each grape variety has its own character, which is expressed in the fruit of the finished wine. The degree and complexity of the fruit is what determines its quality. Thus, the lower the yield of the vine, the greater the fruit produced, and old vines will also add minerality, giving the wine complexity. So for example, a good Australian chardonnay has fruit in abundance, but no complexity, as compared with an old vine Chablis Grand Cru, which will have not only a great deal of fruit but also masses of minerality.

Aromatics: All wines have fruit, but few can be described as fruity; some grape varieties, such as fiano, gewurtztraminer, moscato (Muscat), viognier produce very aromatic and fruity wines. Other more neutral grape varieties such as chardonnay, chenin blanc, pinot bianco, trebbiano and verdicchio, to name a few, are not so floral, but have more subtle aromas

Aromatic wines are a perfect match for oriental food, or dishes, which are very spicy, or with many herbs e.g a Riesling or a Gewurtztraminer from Trentino Alto Adige or Alsace, but if fruitiness is not to your liking, you will prefer a good Chardonnay from Australia or Sicily

Acidity: Acidity is what gives balance and freshness to wines; grapes from cold climates produce wines with more pronounced acidity; but also some grape varieties such as barbera and cortese (as in Gavi di Gavi) produce wines with pronounced acidity

With food, acidity is welcomed to balance sweetness and oiliness. A dry, crisp white such as a Gavi di Gavi or a Chablis, is perfect for oily fish and shellfish.. Reds such as Barbera d'Alba or Chinon from the Loire, are perfect with liver or duck. Those of us who are sensitive to acidity prefer lighter wines from slightly warmer climates, or fine wines with rich fruit such as Valpolicella Ripasso or a Vermentino from Tuscany

Tannins: Generally speaking, only red wines have tannins. These are present in the skins, pips and stalks of the grapes. They support the fruit of the wine and, together with the acidity, contribute to its longevity. International grape varieties such as cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and syrah from the northern Rhone, have high tannins. In Italy, you will find sagrantino, nebbiolo (producing Barolo and Barbaresco) and sangiovese (Chianti and Brunello di Montalcino), to name a few, which all have high tannins; whereas pinot nero, barbera and dolcetto among others have low tannins

Tannins are welcome with rich foods and rich sauces, such as braised or slow-cooked meats, because they cleanse the palate and help with digestion. Wines with high tannins cannot be drunk without food, as they give an astringent mouthfeel, saturating the palate.

Cooler climates produce greener and sharper tannins; whereas in warm climates the tannins will be rounder and softer. So, if one is sensitive to tannins, the answer is to choose a wine from Sicily, Puglia or the South of France such as Nero D'Avola, Primitivo or Chateauneuf du Pape; but best of all, buy a great wine – a Barolo or Barbaresco, Brunello or Bordeaux, lay it down for 10 years and enjoy it when it is ready to drink. With age, tannins precipitate, and in fine wines, fruit and minerality will evolve in complex, elegant and refined flavours

At Enoteca, all our fine wines have been purchased on release, lain down in a temperature-controlled cellar, and put on the list when ready to drink

**Enoteca Turi was winner of the Most Exceptional Wine List Award at the ITV Restaurant Awards 2005, and voted “Best Italian” in Zagat Guides 2007
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