

Gallo Family's
GALLO of SONOMA®



Wine & Food
Pairing Guide

What is food and wine pairing? It is the simple process of identifying wines with flavors and body that complement or contrast with the particular entrees you offer. Wine, made from grapes, is actually a food. Like other foods, wine has many distinct qualities; some wines are sweet, some fruity, and some, like a great steak, are heavy and robust.

The key principle that always applies is this: There is NO one right or “perfect” wine choice when pairing food and wine. The main goal should always be to enhance the dining experience

4 Helpful Hints When Pairing Wine & Food

1. Identify the weights of the food and wine.

A food's body is similar to wine. Salads are light and crisp, while duck is typically richer and heavier. The following wines are ranked by their typical weight (heavy to light):

Cabernet Sauvignon
Zinfandel
Syrah/Shiraz
Merlot
Pinot Noir
Chardonnay
Pinot Gris
Sauvignon Blanc

2. Match the weight of the food and wine.

Again, the wine should be as full-bodied as the food it is going to accompany. Keep in mind that food preparation can impact the food's weight. Take, for instance, breaded shrimp v. shrimp scampi. When shrimp is breaded, a portion of the shrimp's flavor is masked and shifts its weight down. When pairing wine, look for light-bodied wines



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that will not hide the flavors of the shrimp. In contrast, the shrimp scampi, sautéed in butter and garlic, increases in weight and needs a heavier wine in order to be tasted through the strong scampi flavors.

3. Identify the dominant flavor of the food.

For example, a breast of chicken's dominant flavor is chicken. However, when a herb like rosemary is added by the chef, the rosemary usually becomes the dominant flavor.

Many times, the dominant flavor will follow the "with" in a menu item. Examples are "pasta with a pesto sauce" or "rack of lamb with mint jelly."

4. Select wines with aromas and flavors that enhance the flavor of the food.

There are two common methods of selecting wines, those that complement the meal and those that contrast with the meal.

When choosing wines that "complement" the meal, the flavor in the food tends to match the same flavor in the wine, often highlighting other flavor complexities. For example, a Cabernet Sauvignon with hints of mint would complement a lamb with mint sauce.

Another way to choose good pairings is to "contrast" flavors. For example, let's serve the shrimp sautéed with olive oil and garlic. A good wine to pair is a crisp Chardonnay with lots of citrus. The citrus and acid in the Chardonnay contrast with the shrimp in much the same way as a twist of lemon would. It's like adding an extra ingredient to the dish. Contrasting wines with food uses a distinct flavor in the wine like an added seasoning.

