



Food Vinebrations

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FOOD + WINE = LOVE

THE BOX PAIRING SYSTEM It's Time to Box Up your Pairings!

In my previous tutorials, especially in the Grape Tasting, I showed you how to classify white wines and red wines based on their acidity for whites and tannins for reds. If

“AS I ATE THE OYSTERS WITH THEIR STRONG TASTE OF THE SEA AND THEIR FAINT METALLIC TASTE THAT THE COLD WHITE WINE WASHED AWAY, LEAVING ONLY THE SEA TASTE AND THE SUCCULENT TEXTURE, AND AS I DRANK THEIR COLD LIQUID FROM EACH SHELL AND WASHED IT DOWN WITH THE CRISP TASTE OF THE WINE, I LOST THE EMPTY FEELING AND BEGAN TO BE HAPPY AND TO MAKE PLANS.”

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, A MOVEABLE FEAST

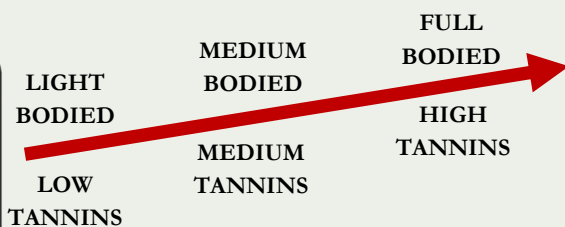
you haven't read that yet, a little reminder can be seen at the bottom of this page, however I would

recommend following the grape tasting tutorial for a better understanding.

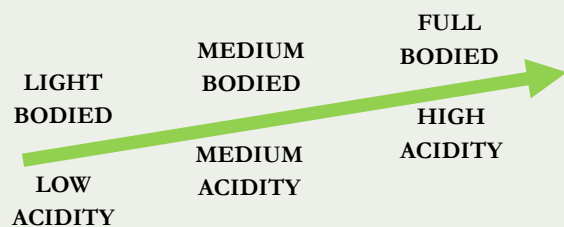
From that, I will now give you a great tool for remembering which wines you should pair with what food, no more embarrassing nights out with the boss handing you the wine list, you will become a champion for pairings!

For those who are skeptical about this system, I am sure you will find a couple of odd wines out there that don't fit in it, my purpose isn't to revolution the world of wine, just to offer a system that probably works 95% of the time. For the remaining 5%, you might need to think outside the boxes...and to read my expanded guides. Have fun guys, this is the Box Pairing System!

REMINDER: THE BODY OF WINES



The Body of Reds



The Body of Whites



THE BOX PAIRING SYSTEM

How on Earth does it Work?..

First of all, let me briefly introduce the concept. Wine is a vast subject where every grape, every region, every producer and even every vintage is unique! There is always a great danger in reducing something so complex into a simpler system, and like I said earlier, it's not always going to work, and it will never replace deep wine studies. But if you want instant results and if you feel lost every time you open a wine list, then the boxes are for you!

The **Box Pairing System** is based on the concept that wine can be organized in 6 families, or put into 6 "boxes": 3 for whites and 3 for reds. Instantly, you might argue that there is no room for rosés or sparkling wines in there. And you would be right, the system doesn't cover them yet, however, I will talk about them separately to show you where they fit (doesn't Champagne fit anywhere anyway?..). I won't delay you any longer, enthusiast wine drinkers, let me take out my boxes straight away!

WHITE WINE BOXES

WHITE BOX #1: LIGHT-BODIED & EASY-DRINKING WHITES

In the Box: Pinot Grigio

Some of my friends would argue that most wines are easy to drink, it only depends on the circumstances... However, that box is really made of wines that don't need much effort from your taste buds, thirst-quenching whites that are intended for a night out with your mates. Most people would start drinking wine with the good old Pinot Grigio and completely reject it when they actually start caring about their drink. Not a bad wine *per se*, it is very simple and works well as a crowd-pleaser, not a beast of character.

This box's relationship with food is almost non-existing, which in a way is great because if it doesn't interact much, sure it won't react badly. A safe choice that's used too often in restaurants, it won't make an experience out of your night. Keep them wines under your hat if you're lost or broke, but my advice would be to try and drink stuff from the other boxes instead.

BODY: LIGHT TO MEDIUM -

TEXTURE: LIGHT & WATERY

AROMAS: DELICATE | STONE FRUIT
| ALMOND | SOMETIMES HONEY

SWEETNESS: DRY

FOOD PAIRINGS

ON ITS OWN

LIGHT SALAD | COLD ANTIPASTI

SIMPLE BAR FOOD

Cheap
&
Cheerful

WHITE BOX #2: AROMATIC WHITES WITH WEIGHT

In the Box: Chardonnay, Viognier, Chenin Blanc, Gavi di Gavi, Rioja Blanco, Godello, older Soave (5+ yrs), Soave Superiore, Xarel-lo...

Quite easy to spot, these whites all have a slightly richer texture, often reminiscent of dairy products, which we sometimes call “buttery” or “creamy”. The best natural example is the Chardonnay grape, the one that makes all the fantastic white Burgundy such as Chablis, Meursault or Puligny-Montrachet. If you don’t want to break the bank, fabulous examples are coming from Australia or California, displaying more “tropical fruit” characteristics.

Their texture, along with their medium acidity, makes them the perfect pairing wines for creamy dishes or buttery sauce. In general, prefer the ones from hot climates for more exotic creamy dishes (curry, masala...) and the Old World options for rich traditional French sauces like *Beurre Blanc* or *Béchamel*.



A fish dish where you **WOULDN'T SQUEEZE LEMON** is for this box



BODY: MEDIUM TO FULL BODIED

TEXTURE: BUTTERY | CREAMY | RICH

AROMAS: DEPENDING ON VARIETAL.

EX: 2 COMMON STYLES OF CHARDONNAY:

- 1) **OLD WORLD:** APPLE | PEAR | MINERALLY | CRISP
- 2) **NEW WORLD:** MANGO | FIG | BANANA | FULL BODIED

SWEETNESS: OFTEN DRY TO OFF DRY

FOOD PAIRINGS

OLD WORLD

NEEDS FOOD
RICH FRENCH SAUCE
WHITE FISH, SCALLOPS
CHICKEN, PORK

NEW WORLD

WITH OR WITHOUT
ASIAN CREAMY DISHES
PRAWNS, LOBSTER
CHICKEN, PORK

MAIN AROMATIC PROFILES OF SOME OF THESE WINES

ORIGIN	GRAPE	TEXTURE	MAIN AROMAS
Chablis, FR	Chardonnay	Buttery	Minerally Green Apple Sea Breeze
Monterey, USA	Chardonnay	Creamy	Mango Fig Banana Coconut Vanilla
Condrieu, FR	Viognier	Rich & Generous	Peach Apricot Honey Jasmine
Gavi di Gavi, IT	Cortese	Buttery	Tropical Fruit Mango Almond
Rioja Blanco, SP	Viura, Malvasia...	Rich	Floral Light White Fruit Minerally
Soave, IT	Garganega	Oily	Marjoram Almond Peach Zesty
Vouvray, FR	Chenin Blanc	Rich to Creamy	Stewed Apple Pear Marmalade Floral

WHITE BOX #3: MOUTH-WATERING HIGH-ACIDITY WHITES

In the Box: Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Verdejo, Soave (young), Albariño, Gewurztraminer...

If you are still unsure about the location of the acidity receptors on the sides of your tongue, have a sip of those! Like a Granny Smith whack of acid, this gives them a great freshness and crisp mouthfeel.

Since the body of white wines is based on their acidity level (see page 1), we say that these ones are full-bodied. Therefore, they can even be paired with red meat at times.

From here, you can pick the wine that has aromas you wish to match with your food, but remember, we pair the structure first!



AVOID PAIRINGS WITH CREAMY DISHES, ACID MAKES IT CURDLE!



Any dish where you **WOULD SQUEEZE LEMON** is for this box



BODY: OFTEN FULL BODIED

TEXTURE: SHARP | PUNGENT | MOUTH-WATERING

AROMAS: DEPENDING ON VARIETAL.

EX: 2 COMMON STYLES OF SAUVIGNON:

3) NEW WORLD: GOOSEBERRY | GRAPEFRUIT | NECTARINE

4) OLD WORLD: MINERALLY | AUSTERE | FULL BODIED

SWEETNESS: BONE DRY TO DESSERT WINE

FOOD PAIRINGS

OLD WORLD

NEEDS FOOD
SHELLFISH, SEAFOOD
GRILLED FISH
ROAST CHICKEN
BARBEQUED PORK

NEW WORLD

ON ITS OWN
ROAST RED PEPPER
FRESH GOATS CHEESE
MEDITERRANEAN
SWEET CHILI SAUCE

MAIN AROMATIC PROFILES OF SOME OF THESE WINES

ORIGIN	GRAPE	TEXTURE	MAIN AROMAS
Marlborough, NZ	Sauvignon Blanc	Round but Sharp	Gooseberry Grapefruit Pineapple
Sancerre, FR	Sauvignon Blanc	Lean & Crisp	Austere Minerally Grassy
Clare Valley, AUS	Riesling	Crisp, slightly Oily	Petrol Candied Lime Floral
Rheingau, GER	Riesling	Lean & Crisp	Floral Minerally Citrus Honey
Alsace, FR	Riesling	Lean & Crisp	Green Apple Honey Minerally
Alsace, FR	Gewurztraminer	Rich but Crisp	Lychee Rose Grapefruit

RED WINE BOXES

RED BOX #1: LIGHT-REDS WITH LOW TANNINS

In the Box: Pinot Noir, Beaujolais wines & others made of Gamay, Garnacha...

After the tutorial on the Grape Tasting, you know that tannins (responsible for the dry, astringent feel on your gums) are located in the grape skins. Well these varietals are usually big berries with thin skins, so the wines are very **aromatic but without the dry tannins**.

According to our chart on page 1, this makes them light-bodied reds. In fact, they react to food in pretty much the same way as most white wines would, displaying a great acidity, only their aromas recall more berries and dark fruits.

For those that have a little bit of tannins, you can actually chill them in the fridge or on ice for about 20 minutes before drinking, to bring up the fruitiness. If you want to surprise your guests or your own taste buds, pair them with fish or seafood, nothing extremely fishy though (avoid the likes of oysters or eel). If you are more of a traditionalist, they do work with white meat of course but I wouldn't recommend red meat or anything too strong, except for great Burgundian reds for herb-crusted lamb or Beef Bourguignon.



You can Have these Reds with Seafood or even Slightly Chilled!

BODY: LIGHT TO MEDIUM-BODIED

TEXTURE: LIGHT & LEAN

AROMAS: DEPENDING ON VARIETAL.

EX: 2 COMMON STYLES OF PINOT NOIR:

5) **NEW WORLD:** STRAWBERRY/CHERRY JAM | CRACKED PEPPERCORN

6) **OLD WORLD:** FRESH CHERRY | WET LEAVES | MUSHROOM | MEATY

SWEETNESS: OFTEN DRY

FOOD PAIRINGS

OLD WORLD

NEEDS FOOD
MUSHROOM RISOTTO
GRILLED FISH
CHICKEN, PORK
RACK OF LAMB

NEW WORLD

ON ITS OWN
TOMATO BASED DISH
BLOOMY RIND CHEESE
TURKEY & CRANBERRY
CHICKEN, PORK

MAIN AROMATIC PROFILES OF SOME OF THESE WINES

ORIGIN	GRAPE	TEXTURE	MAIN AROMAS
Marlborough, NZ	Pinot Noir	Juicy	Cherry Jam Strawberry Raspberry
Burgundy, FR	Pinot Noir	Lean to Rich	Cherry White Peppercorn Meaty Earthy
Beaujolais, FR	Gamay	Light, Round	Candied Berries Butterscotch Violet Rose
Catalayud, SP	Garnacha	Big & Jammy	Liquorice Overripe Cherry Spicy
Ahr, GER	Spatburgunder	Lean to Rich	Raspberry Sweet Cherry Earthy


RED BOX #2: SMOOTH & EASY-DRINKING REDS

In the Box: Merlot, Tempranillo, Montepulciano d’Abruzzo, Australian Shiraz, Corvina (Valpolicella)...

Probably the most represented box on restaurant lists, it contains very nice wines for everyday consumption. From the juicy Merlot to the naturally smooth Montepulciano d’Abruzzo, it is a box of wines for sharing with friends around good simple food.

Unlike some bigger reds (box 3), they won’t take over your thoughts and leave you speechless, on the contrary, they might help you to break the ice and start a conversation (enjoy responsibly).

Some of these wines would have been aged in oak casks for a richer texture and spicier aromas. A full tutorial on oak ageing is available on my website, but here is a little reminder in case.

<p>AMERICAN OAK GIVES WINES WITH A BIG OPENING ON NOTES OF VANILLA, MOCHA, CHOCOLATE, COCONUT OR DILL. THESE WINES OFTEN HAVE A SHORTER LENGTH.</p> <p>EX: RIOJA CALIFORNIA...</p>		<p>FRENCH OAK GIVES SMOOTHER, SILKY TANNINS. SUBTLE AT THE START, IT BUILDS UP A VERY LONG FINISH WITH DRY SPICINESS (NUTMEG, CLOVES & CINNAMON).</p> <p>EX: BORDEAUX, MOST ARGENTINE MALBEC...</p>
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<p>BODY: MEDIUM-BODIED</p> <p>TEXTURE: SMOOTH TO SILKY</p> <p>AROMAS: DEPENDING ON VARIETAL.</p> <p><i>EX: 2 COMMON STYLES OF MERLOT:</i></p> <p>7) NEW WORLD: CHOCOLATEY RIPE PLUM FRUIT CAKE</p> <p>8) OLD WORLD: STRAWBERRY PLUM HERBAL</p> <p>SWEETNESS: DRY</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FOOD PAIRINGS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OLD WORLD & NEW WORLD</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ON ITS OWN OR WITH:</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>BURGER</td> <td>PIZZA</td> <td>CHARCUTERIE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BAR FOOD</td> <td>CHEESE BOARD</td> <td>PÂTÉ</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CHICKEN</td> <td>PORK TURKEY</td> <td>POULTRY</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">SIMPLE CUT OF BEEF (SIRLOIN, STRIPLOIN...)</td> </tr> </table>	BURGER	PIZZA	CHARCUTERIE	BAR FOOD	CHEESE BOARD	PÂTÉ	CHICKEN	PORK TURKEY	POULTRY	SIMPLE CUT OF BEEF (SIRLOIN, STRIPLOIN...)		
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CHICKEN	PORK TURKEY	POULTRY											
SIMPLE CUT OF BEEF (SIRLOIN, STRIPLOIN...)													

MAIN AROMATIC PROFILES OF SOME OF THESE WINES

ORIGIN	GRAPE	OAK	TEXTURE	MAIN AROMAS
Rioja, SP	Tempranillo		Juicy, Smooth	Strawberry Mocha Vanilla Spices
St-Emilion, FR	Mostly Merlot		Smooth & Silky	Plum Minty Nutmeg Clove Cinnamon
Central Valle, CHL	Merlot		Smooth	Fruit Cake Chocolate Tobacco Ripe Plum
Montep.d’Abruzzo, IT	Montepulciano		Smooth & Supple	Blackberry Raspberry Violet
McLaren Vale, AUS	Shiraz		Juicy, Smooth	Ripe Raspberry Spices Farmyard

RED BOX #3: BIG & BOLD REDS

In the Box: Cabernet Sauvignon (incl. Right Bank Bordeaux blends), Malbec, Barolo, Rhone Syrah & GSM blends, Hawkes Bay Reds, Meritage wines, West Cape Blend, Nero d'Avola, Amarone della Valpolicella...

If you still don't know how to spot tannins* on your gums, have a sip of those! Just like a teabag left in the pot for too long, they will dry your gums straight away! According to our chart on page 1, this makes them full-bodied.

Perfect for big foods such as game or fillet of beef, their complex aromas include earthy & meaty notes, as well as dark berries & sometimes floral/herbal hints. Apart from some rare New World examples (Chile, Hawkes Bay in NZ, sometimes Argentina...), they are quite food dependent and often too big for drinking on their own.

Unlike the previous box, these wines aren't made for simply sharing with friends for a casual night out, they are beasts of character and will take over your thoughts and become the center of attention.

Often better with a bit of age, they are the ones that might require decanting for aeration and disposal of eventual sediments. Check out my decanting tutorial to do it like a pro!

Decant Us!



* Check out the "Grape Tasting" tutorial for more info on tannins.

<p>BODY: FULL-BODIED</p> <p>TEXTURE: SHARP, DRY, SOMETIMES SILKY</p> <p>AROMAS: DEPENDING ON VARIETAL.</p> <p><i>EX: 2 COMMON STYLES OF MALBEC:</i></p> <p>9) ARGENTINA: BLACKCURRANT VIOLET PEPPERY VELVETY</p> <p>10) CAHORS: TART FIRM TANNINS MEATY EARTHY</p> <p>SWEETNESS: DRY</p>	<p>FOOD PAIRINGS</p> <p>OLD WORLD & NEW WORLD</p> <p>OFTEN NEED FOOD WITH THEM:</p> <p>GAME SERIOUS CUTS OF BEEF (FILLET...)</p> <p>TRUFFLE RICH GRAVY ROOT VEG</p> <p>BLUE CHEESE MATURED CHEESE</p> <p>DARK CHOCOLATE</p>
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MAIN AROMATIC PROFILES OF SOME OF THESE WINES

ORIGIN	GRAPE	OAK	TEXTURE	MAIN AROMAS
Médoc, FR	Mostly Cab.Sauv		Silky but Firm	Meaty Blackcurrant Minty Herbal Spicy
Cahors, FR	Mostly Malbec		Sharp & Firm	Meaty Savoury Earthy Plum
Mendoza, ARG	Malbec		Velvety	Blackcurrant Peppery Violet Dark Chocolate
Barolo, IT	Nebbiolo	LARGE 	Big & Dry	Leather Tar Spicy Violet Dark Berries
Chateaufeuf du Pape, FR	Mostly GSM	LARGE 	Big & Dry	Complex Spicy Tobacco Cedarwood Berries
Napa Valley, USA	Cabernet Sauvignon		Velvety	Ripe Blackcurrant Jammy Vanilla Caramel