

Wine Advice: Selecting Wine to Pair With Fish



Many people are familiar with the old saying “pair white wine with fish and red wine with meat.” Although this “rule” has been discredited, when it comes to pairing wine with fish, white wine is much more common a pairing but that said, there is ample room for sparkling, rosé and red.



There are many different fish and seafood options to choose from on a year-round basis. Manitoba fishermen brave the winter cold to catch fresh fish, and an assortment of fresh, flavoured and frozen fish are available locally.

When pairing wine with fish it is important to consider the type, weight and texture of the fish, preparation, cooking method, sauces, and spices. For wine one must be mindful of weight, texture, aromas and flavour.

Mild white fish such as pickerel or perch call for wines that balance, not overwhelm, their flavour. Look to delicate white wines like Pinot Grigio, Vinho Verde or Chablis, and wine made from the grape varieties Pecorino, Muscadet, and Picpoul.

Medium fish such as red snapper, trout, cod and halibut, call for a light- medium-bodied wine with stronger flavour and aromatic profiles than wines suitable for pairing with delicate fish. Unoaked Chardonnay, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc from South Africa are suitable selections.

Full flavoured meaty fish like salmon, swordfish, and tuna, pair beautifully with Australian and Californian Chardonnay (unoaked or lightly oaked), dry Spanish or Italian rosé and rich weighty white wines such as Viognier which compliments as well as balances flavour and texture.

Red wine, rosé and sparkling wines are suitable to partner with strongly flavoured fish such as smoked fish. Try Pinot Noir from Burgundy or Oregon or Gamay from a Cru Beaujolais. Many Portuguese red wines are also complimentary.

Sauces and/or spices may define the wine and fish pairing. Pair light-bodied dry and zesty white wine with fish prepared with lemon or citrus. Butter sauce is enhanced by lightly oaked Chardonnay and Alsatian or Oregon Pinot Gris. Sweet and fruity sauces call for a slightly sweet or off-dry white wine to amplify fruit flavours.

The strong flavour of smoked fish is complimented by a sparkling wine such as Spanish Cava, dry Grenache rosé, and Pinot Noir while the distinct flavour of curry based sauce is enhanced by Gewurztraminer, off-dry Rieslings or slightly



sweet Moscato. Paprika and pepper call for a spicier wine. In this instance choose Grüner Veltliner from Austria, known for its peppery aromas and flavours or herb-laden Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand. The light-bodied red wines made from Grenache and Gamay are suitable red wine selections.

Serve Sparkling white wine or dry white wine such as Chablis, Sauvignon Blanc, or Muscadet from the Loire Valley in France, Picpoul from Southern France, and Moschofilero from Greece, alongside raw fish, mussels, oysters, crab, shrimp, and sushi.

The principles used when pairing wine with fish are similar to guidelines followed when pairing other food with wine. The goal of pairing is for both the food and wine to taste better together than either would when served separately.

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