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UNUSUAL WINES

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CHOCOLATE

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& WINE? TOGETHER!

Ahhh, who doesn't love chocolate? Wine enhances the flavors of so very many foods, but chocolate and wine together? Do they complement each other? Some chocolate and wine lovers swear that it's one of the best taste sensations on the planet. Others scoff at even the idea of enjoying the two together. If you're willing to explore this culinary realm, the following will be your guide to determining what, if any pairing(s) you'll enjoy this season!

So, what wines pair best with your favorite chocolate dessert? Well, it all depends on you, the chocolate and the wine. The following presumes your use of fine Belgian, Swiss or local fresh chocolate.

The most important factor is, as always, you and your guests. If you like a big Cabernet Sauvignon with milk chocolate then that's the best pairing. It's truly what you enjoy that matters, regardless of what the experts say. With that "rule" in mind, let's explore pairing wines with chocolate.

White chocolate followed by milk chocolate, finishing with dark chocolate, each type pairs best with different types of wine. The wine should be at least as sweet as the chocolate. This is critical. If the dessert is sweeter than the wine the wine will taste flat and bitter. However, many individuals want to drink dry wines with their chocolate, so those options are provided for as well as the preferred dessert wines

As you know, white chocolate is the softest, mildest form of chocolate. It's actually derived from true chocolate. White chocolate lacks the cocoa solids found in milk chocolate and dark chocolate. From a technical perspective it isn't really chocolate, As cocoa butter is the primary ingredient, white chocolate is creamy, mellow and buttery. Sweet Spanish sherries pair well with lighter chocolate. Popular sparkling wines like a Moscato d'Asti or Prosecco from Italy, and champagnes that are demi-sec (much sweeter than brut or extra-dry) can complement white chocolate. The bubbles in the sparkling wines



compliment the buttery taste of white chocolate. Orange Muscats can be fun and a bit unusual to enjoy with light chocolate. Lastly, really sweet Rieslings such as Eisweins (ice wines) add to the chocolate experience. These wine are lighter in style than many sweet wines. As a result, they pair well with light white chocolate.

Milk chocolate is the most popular style of chocolate. It must contain 10 percent chocolate liquor, 3.7 percent milk fats, and 12 percent milk solids. The best wine to drink with milk chocolate is Brachatto d'Aqui' a sweet, slightly sparkling wine from Italy. This sparkling Italian is fruity and highlights the sweetness of the chocolate. If you want to serve a red wine with milk chocolate, choose a lighter, fruitier red instead of a big bold red wine. A fruity Merlot or a bigger style Pinot Noir is best. Tawny ports also pair with milk chocolate, especially if there are nuts in the chocolate, because the nuttiness of the Tawny port compliments the flavor of the nuts. A Hungarian Tokjai is an interesting choice if your budget allows for this rather unusual wine



Dark or bittersweet chocolate is very popular, especially in many desserts. Usually ranging from 35 percent cocoa solids to 75 percent cocoa solids, this is the richest, most intense chocolate available. As these chocolates are less sweet than white chocolate or milk chocolate, a bolder wine is required. Many people choose a Cabernet Sauvignon to drink with dark chocolate but be careful: much tannin can make the wine taste harsh. Try a Cabernet Sauvignon that's softer than the one you would serve with that rib-eye steak. Zinfandel can be a great match with darker chocolates. Port wines are a classic pairing with darker chocolate. From simple ruby ports, to LBVs (late bottled vintage), to vintage ports, these fortified

wines have the structure to enhance the flavors of your desserts. Tawny ports compliment nutty desserts.

Banyuls, a fortified wine from France is *The Wine Counselor's Choice* for pairing with chocolate, particularly dark chocolate. This wine morphs itself to fit the type of chocolate you're enjoying. Try it, you'll be amazed, and so will your guests! ●



Cheers!

About The Author

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For more information, visit Michael's blog at WineCounselor.net.