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NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION

WINE AND

CHEESE

GUIDE

December 31, 2015

Pairing Cheeses and Wine

How to match cheese and wine?

Both cheese and wine, with their centuries-old traditions, are natural products that are frequently consumed together. As a rule, the whiter and fresher the cheese the crisper and fruitier the wine should be. The great advantage of this union is that cheese and wine are both foods that can be enjoyed in their "raw" state, with little or no preparation, making them an ideal choice for quick snacks.

There are no hard and strict rules about which wine should be selected to accompany a particular cheese as the best selections are almost always based on individual tastes. However, we can offer you following principles:
- A smooth, fatty cheese may go very well with a similarly smooth, slightly oily wine.
- Sweet wine contrasts very well with a cheese with high acidity.
- White wines go better with many cheeses than reds.
- Not all red wines match with cheese. The most recommended are the fruity, light red wines.
- Dry, fresh red wines are ideally suited to soft cheeses, especially goat ones.
- A wine with good acidity may be complemented by very salted cheeses.
- Dry champagnes are brilliant combination with bloomy white rinds.
- The cheeses can be matched with beer or cider.
- Try regional combination, the cheese and wine from the same region.

But age definitely isn't the only factor to keep in mind. A cheese's texture, saltiness, and pungency also influence a wine pairing, as do the wine's structure and sweetness. Here are a few other notes to keep in mind:

Watch those tannins.
Tannic red wines are terrific with rich, aged cheeses, because their tannins literally bind to protein and fat, cleaning your palate after each bite. But the same process makes tannic wines feel far too astringent with young cheeses; they tie up what little fat's available, leaving you with a chalky sensation and a metallic aftertaste. If you must serve red wine with young cheeses, reach for one low in tannin, like Beaujolais or sparkling red Lambrusco.

Salt loves sweet.

Sweet wines beautifully balance the saltiest cheeses like hard Grana, blue cheese, aged Gouda, or feta. The salt in the cheese heightens the perception of sweetness in the wine, so a wine that's already headed in that direction makes for a breezy pairing.

Cheese loves fruit and nuts.

There's a reason we adorn cheese plates with fresh fruits, dried fruits, and nuts. The juicy, tangy fruits go well with young cheeses like Brie. Sweet dried fruits are wonderful with salty cheeses like Stilton. Buttery, bitter nuts are tasty with rich Cheddar. From fruity to sweet to nutty to tannic, these same pairing principles apply to wines, too. When in doubt, try to imagine which food would pair best with a cheese, and let that guide you toward a wine.

Texture: complement or contrast.

Rich, creamy cheeses blend seamlessly with buttery, oaky white wines, creating a truly harmonious palate sensation. But contrast can be welcome, too. The bubbles in sparkling wines pose a nice counterpoint to a rich cheese, scrubbing your tongue clean and making you want another bite. That's why Camembert and Champagne are a classic combination.

What grows together goes together.

Following this old adage, French goat cheese from the Loire is gorgeous with Loire Sancerre; the grassy, minerally qualities of the wine perfectly complement these flavors in the cheese. Red Burgundy's a natural with Époisses, a creamy cow's milk cheese whose rind is washed with a brandy made from Burgundian grape skins. Manchego, a hard Spanish sheep's milk cheese, is great with both Sherry and buxom, grippy Monastrell from southern Spain. Matching by region doesn't *always* work flawlessly—I wouldn't serve fresh Loire goat cheese with a tannic Loire Cabernet Franc—but pairing by terroir can be a great place to start.

Get to the Cheat Sheet, Already!

Here it is, an easy guide to pairing wine and cheese. Find each cheese by type below, then pick a wine from the recommended list to find pairing nirvana.

Fresh and Soft Cheeses

[Photo: Jessica Leibowitz]

Fresh and soft cheeses love crisp whites, dry rosés, sparkling wines, dry aperitif wines, and light-bodied reds with low tannins. Wines with apple, berry, stone fruit, tropical, melon, or citrus flavors work best. Avoid big, tannic red wines like Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Bordeaux, and Bordeaux blends.

Cheeses: Ricotta, Mozzarella, Burrata, Chèvre, Feta, Halloumi, Brie, Camembert, Brillat-Savarin, Crottin, Bûcheron

Pair with: Riesling (dry to sweet), Gewürztraminer, Moscato, Champagne, Cava, Chablis, Chenin Blanc, Pinot Gris, Pinot Grigio, Albariño, Grüner Veltliner, unoaked Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Provençal rosé, Beaujolais, Lambrusco, White Port, Fino sherry

Semi-hard, Medium-aged Cheeses

These cheeses have a firmer texture and stronger flavors. They need medium-bodied whites, fruity reds, vintage sparkling wine, and aperitif wines that offer a balance between acidity, fruit, and tannin.

Cheeses: Havarti, Edam, Emmental, Gruyère, Jarlsberg, young Cheddar, Monterey Jack, Manchego, Tomme d'Alsace

Pair with: Chardonnay, white Burgundy, white Bordeaux, Pinot Blanc, Viognier, white Rhône blends, Riesling (off-dry), Gewürztraminer, Champagne, red Burgundy, Pinot Noir, Beaujolais, Dolcetto, Barbera, Zinfandel, Merlot, vintage Port, young Tawny Port, Amontillado sherry

Stinky Cheeses

Stinky cheeses call for light-bodied wines with demure aromatics that complement rather than compete.
Cheeses: Époisses, Taleggio, Morbier
Pair with: Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Sauternes, red Burgundy, Pinot Noir

Blue Cheeses

Blue cheeses need wines with both oomph and sweetness to balance their bold flavors and usually very salty, savory body.
Cheeses: Stilton, Gorgonzola, Roquefort, Cambozola, Bleu d'Auvergne
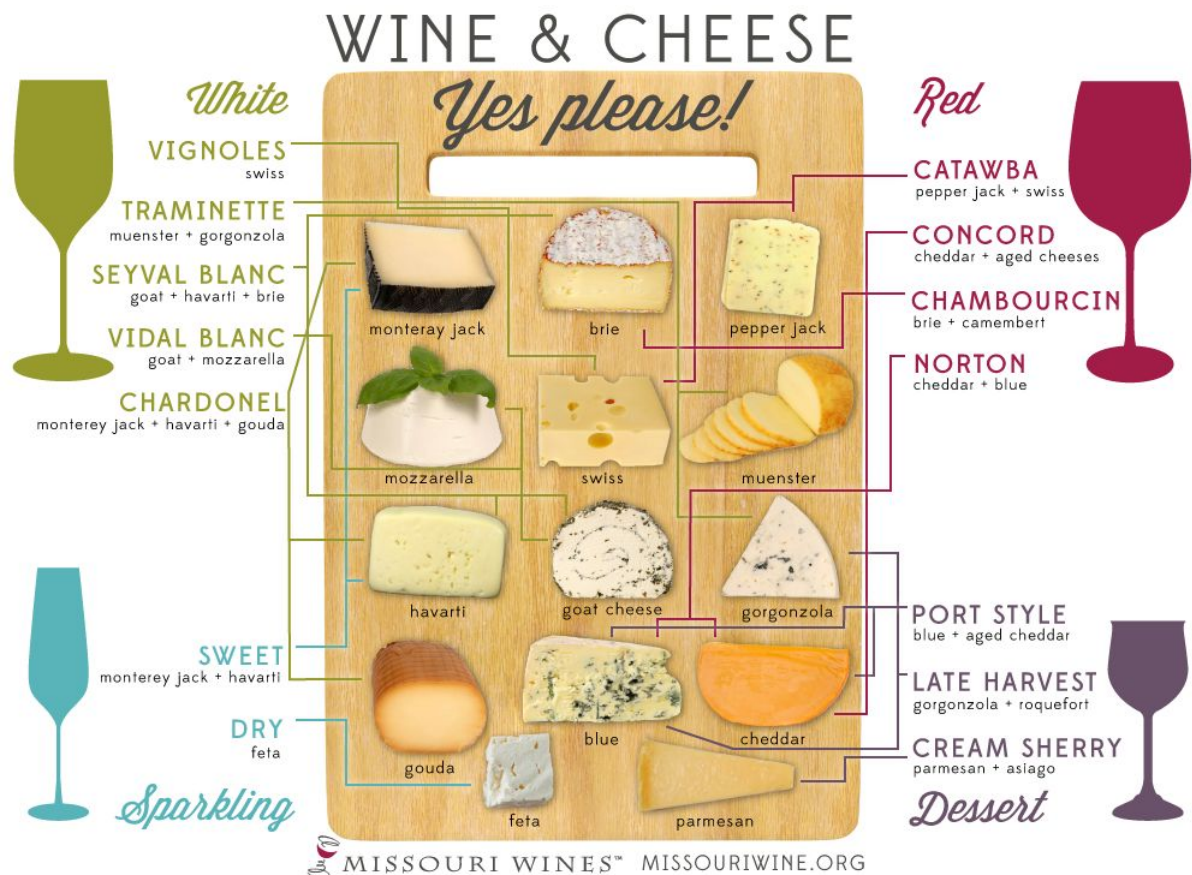**Pair with:** red Port, Tawny Port, Sauternes, Oloroso sherry, Banyuls, Recioto, Tokaji

Hard-aged Cheeses

Harder cheeses love full-bodied whites and tannic reds. Their nuttiness also works with oxidative wines like sherry, and their saltiness makes them terrific with sweet wines.

Cheeses: Aged Cheddar, Cheshire, Comté, aged Gruyère, aged Gouda, Pecorino, Manchego, Asiago, Parmigiano Reggiano

Pair with: Aged white Burgundy or Bordeaux, white Rhône blends, sweet Riesling, Viognier, vintage Champagne, Vin Jaune, red Burgundy, red Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon, Barolo, Barbaresco, Nebbiolo, Petite Sirah, California red blends, red Rhône blends, Zinfandel, red Port, Tawny Port, Madeira, Sauternes, Oloroso sherry.

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WINE & CHEESE
Yes please!

White

VIGNOLES
swiss

TRAMINETTE
muenster + gorgonzola

SEYVAL BLANC
goat + havarti + brie

VIDAL BLANC
goat + mozzarella

CHARDONEL
monterey jack + havarti + gouda

SWEET
monterey jack + havarti

DRY
feta

Sparkling

Red

CATAWBA
pepper jack + swiss

CONCORD
cheddar + aged cheeses

CHAMBOURCIN
brie + camembert

NORTON
cheddar + blue

PORT STYLE
blue + aged cheddar

LATE HARVEST
gorgonzola + roquefort

CREAM SHERRY
parmesan + asiago

Dessert

monteray jack · brie · pepper jack
mozzarella · swiss · muenster
havarti · goat cheese · gorgonzola
gouda · blue · cheddar
feta · parmesan

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garnacha manchego shiraz smoked gouda cabernet sauvignon bandage-wrapped cheddar

pinot noir gruyere sauvignon blanc goat cheese prosecco asiago

riesling fondue chardonnay triple cream cheese vintage port stilton

Wine and Cheese Pairing Examples

Cheese	Wine
Bloomy	
Camembert	Champagne
Brie	Chardonnay
Robiola	Sparkling Wine
Taleggio	Pinot Blanc
Hard	

Gouda	[Merlot](#)
Cheddar	[Cabernet Sauvignon](#)
Parmesan	[Chianti](#)
Double Gloucester	[Zinfandel](#)
Pecorino	[Valpolicella](#)
Gruyere	[Sauvignon Blanc](#)
Fontina	[Bardolino](#)
Blue	
Gorgonzola	[Port](#)
Stilton	[Sauternes](#)
Blue	[Riesling](#)
Cambozola	[Eiswein](#)
Fresh	
Ricotta	[Pinot Grigio](#)
Mozzarella	[Sauvignon Blanc](#)
Goat	[Chenin Blanc](#)
Feta	[Beaujolais](#)
Burrata	[Tocai Friulano](#)