

# A Healthy Way to Host a Wine Tasting



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## Introduction

Wine tasting is a sensory evaluation of a particular wine – it involves looking at the appearance, taste and smell. Professional tasters, called “sommeliers”, formally established the process in the fourth century. They have introduced constantly evolving niche terminologies to describe a wine’s characteristics including aroma and taste. These can be daunting sometimes - not everyone is familiar with tannins, complexity and concentration.

In professional wine tasting events, those sommeliers need to ensure there is no bias with regards to price, grape variety and geographic origin. That is why those tastings are blind. However, according to Professor Richard Wiseman, a wine expert from the University of Hertfordshire, most people could not tell the difference between cheap and expensive wine, when blind tasting. Moreover, they cannot distinguish between French or Italian wines or different grape varieties.

Do not worry though, in casual wine tasting, however, tasters do not need to be objective: the goal is to pair food with good wines and enjoy an evening as a sensory, but most importantly social experience.

Wine had long been a dinner table staple in many countries, and in some cases, the process of winemaking and other culinary traditions have evolved together through the years. That is why you see Italian (quite fatty) dishes paired with relatively high in acidity wines - the acid cuts through fatty food, and the latter makes refreshing wines rounder and smoother.

Wine and food pairing in the old days did not have set standards – local dishes were merely paired with locally produced wine. Today, wine pairing takes on a new “art” form, wherein guidelines for pairing are in place. This does not need to be snobbish or pretentious. The main task for a successful food and wine matching is to ensure that key elements in both the food and wine complement each other (or as in some cases, contrast with each other). Modern experts believe that the basic technique is to understand the “weight” of both the food and wine, and be able to strike a balance between them. These weights can be similar or contrasting for as long as one does not overpower the other or diminish attractive flavours.

This e-book is about a healthy way to a wine tasting. It means that apart from recipes, which were chosen to provide an interesting food and wine pairing, they were created with a view on nutrition and health, a wholesome approach. I welcome you to cook your meals from scratch, try and use the best possible ingredients, do it with care, and you will host an enjoyable wine tasting evening with your family, friends and loved ones.

# Chapter 1 – Pairing Principles

Before we move on to the actual recipes, you first have to know some basic guidelines, so you can think about your own alternatives, and fully savour the experience.

There is a lot of components that would determine how each wine is different from one another in terms of flavour. I will only state the main: the actual fruit, sugar, alcoholic strength, tannin levels, and acidity. A note about tannins: you sometimes have this coarse or mellow sensation on your gums - like you are drinking concentrated black or green tea. That would be similar to what people describe as 'tannic' wines. They originate in grape skins and stone, so there aren't any in white wines (no skin contact), some in rose and normally an abundance in red ones.

## Key Components of Pairing

Food can be also described through its different components: sweetness, saltiness, bitterness, fattiness, acidity and texture.

### Sweetness

Sweet, sugary food such as cakes and pastries may seem to be a no-brainer when it comes to pairing – they just need a sweet kind of wine. This may not always be the case, however, and this is where a general rule applies.

You have to note that different food have different levels of sweetness. Some may just have a pinch of honey or sugar such as mango sauce poured over a cut of beef. Its light natural sweetness very well complements Chardonnay, a white wine that has rich flavour. The higher level of alcohol in Chardonnay creates an impression of sweetness and neutralises the sweetness in the fruit sauce.

When it comes to sweet food, you have to ensure that the wine you are going to use is sweeter than the food. If not, that sweet food will overpower the sweetness of your wine and will make it appear tart.

You should also be careful of red wine and chocolate combo. Most wine manufacturers often associate these two, but relative to the type of wine and chocolate, your pairing might end up terrible. Use pure, dark chocolate and a sweet type of red wine (i.e. Port) for a delightful experience.

### Saltiness

Unlike sweet food, salty recipes are often thought of as limiting in terms of wine pairs. For instance, it can give Chardonnay a peculiar taste, dish the fruity flavour of a red wine, and render wines with high alcohol level bitter. However, there are also remarkable salty food and sweet wine combinations such as Bleu Cheese and the French wine Sauternes.

There are some cases when just a touch of seasoning though, may enhance flavour and reduce some abundant tannins. That is why you often see your steaks served with coarse salt - it will go as a treat with Bordeaux wines.

Sparkling wines are the most appropriate type for salty or fried food. Much like beer, the carbonated and yeasty texture flushes the salt while creating other nuances of flavour. Saltwater food such as oysters can also be complemented with sparkling wines to tame down the rich ocean flavour.

### **Bitterness**

Contrary to sweet wines that often cancel the sweetness of their food pair, bitter wines tend to intensify tartness when paired with bitter food. In winemaking, bitterness is due to use of not fully ripe grapes, or accidentally forgetting to separate stems and seeds from the grapes during fermentation. It can also be because of not well maintained wine barrels.

A word of caution: Some people perceive bitterness as generally unpleasant, so be careful when using bitter wines.

### **Fattiness**

Most of the popular wine pairings – dairy and meat dishes included – have high fat content. Note that wine has zero level of fat, so depending on your food choice, choose something that can either temper the fat, level it down with tannin, or match its richness with the right alcohol content. A very good example is Cabernet Sauvignon paired with a medium rare cut of meat. The strong taste of the wine tames down the fat components of the meat. It conditions your palate for the fruity wine flavours that go perfectly with the smoky and salty flavours of the meat.

### **Acidity**

The level of acid is a rather crucial component of food and wine. In terms of wine, acidity adds a bit of a kick and a refreshing feel. You can describe the wine as 'flabby', or too 'jammy' if there is not enough acidity. The same is true for food – imagine a squeeze of lemon on grilled fish. When choosing the perfect wine to combine with acidic food, it is important to gauge the acidity levels of the wine since it must be equal to that of the dish. When the food is more acidic, it tends to wash out the taste of the wine, making it seem bland.

### **Texture**

This one is rather a given. The simple rule is that light wines go well with light food, and heavy wine complement heavy food. However, if you are feeling adventurous, you can try and play with contrasts - as long as the basic guidelines are followed, your experimentation can yield truly surprising results and make your wine tasting as a dynamic experience.

## A Healthy Way to Host a Wine Tasting

You most probably know a thing or two about wines, maybe you even have a few favourite ones, you also have disagreed with some food and wine pairings. As a host, you might encounter various opinions about your combinations. Nonetheless, what you have to remember is that both food and wine are meant to be enjoyed, so just trust your judgment and prepare your combos in the best way that you can, i.e. source locally grown produce, buy organic wines and have your guests amazed how well these can go together.

## Chapter 2 – Recipes for Red Wine

Red wine was probably the first wine that you have tasted in a fine dining restaurant. It is a type of wine derived from dark-coloured grapes painstakingly fermented to create a rich taste. The actual colours range from purple to ruby (these are most common in younger reds), and deeper garnet (for more mature ones).

I have included some more information on [www.iblamethewine.com](http://www.iblamethewine.com) about wine and its relation to health, but most of all remember about moderation!

To help you decide on your pairing, below are some helpful hints:

- Some red grape varieties such as Cabernet and Syrah go very well with food flavoured with rosemary and pepper - they are more spicy, could be rich in herbal aromas or sweeter spices (in hotter climates).
- Fruity ones such as Grenache, Sangiovese and Gamay are a perfect pair for dishes with garlic and tomatoes. These varieties are known to be acidic as well, so think about tomato-mozzarella sauce, fatty pieces of jamon or grilled tender lamb.
- The most difficult challenge to red wine pairing is having to match it with sweet or fruity sauces. The latter will mask beautiful fruit in red wines and thus should be very well thought through: add other balancing elements, i.e. acidity to make it sweet and sour.
- Cheese and wine is a long lived pairing, yet think about if it is salty, or smoky, soft and mellow (goat's cheese) or bold and thick (Dutch hard cheeses) and pair accordingly. Goat's cheese will go better with lighter bodied reds, whereas pronounced cheeses need either a more mature wine, or entirely different approach with contrast (think of very dry sherry or, in some cases, sweet and fortified wines).

Here are recommended healthy recipes for red wine pairing to help you get started on a wine tasting night.

### Seafood Jambalaya

Total Cooking Time: 1 hour 20 minutes

Serving Size: 8

#### Ingredients

2 tablespoons butter

400 g andouille sausages (smoked), thinly cut

1 large green pepper, diced  
1 large white onion, diced  
3 stems celery, diced  
5 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced  
Creole seasoning, to taste (preferably seafood)  
Salt and ground black pepper, to taste  
2 large tomatoes, chopped  
400 g prawns, peeled

200 g sea bass fillets, diced  
600 g premium, long-grain rice, rinsed well  
1.5 l water  
1 pint shelled oysters  
2 bunches green onions, thinly sliced  
¼ teaspoon chili sauce, or to taste

### **Creole Seafood Seasoning**

3 tablespoons iodized salt  
25 g powdered garlic  
25 g ground black pepper  
2 tablespoons cayenne pepper, or to taste  
1 tablespoons dried oregano  
1 tablespoons dried thyme  
2 tablespoons dried basil  
5 tablespoons paprika  
3 tablespoons granulated or powdered onion

### **Cooking Instructions**

1. Line a heavy-gauge pot with butter over high heat, and sauté sausage for 4-5 minutes. Add onion, garlic, peppers and celery and season with salt, pepper and Creole seasoning (it is quite pungent, so just taste whilst cooking, you can always add a bit more!). Stirring occasionally, sauté for another 6 minutes still over high heat or until the vegetables have browned.
2. Stir in the tomatoes, fish, prawns and bay leaf. Add the rice and water, stirring gently. Make sure that the rice doesn't stick to the bottom of the pot by moving a spoon across. Bring to a boil then reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes or until the rice is cooked. Turn off the heat, stir in the oysters and let it simmer for 10 minutes. During this time, the jambalaya will continue to cook with the remaining heat.
3. Transfer into a big serving bowl, then add in the green onions. Season with chili sauce.

### **Creole Seafood Seasoning (up to 500 ml yield)**



Mix all ingredients in a blender or mixing bowl, and pour the emulsion into a large glass container. Seal the container, and make sure it's airtight.

**Wine:** This is an interesting match, as this dish has a combination of meat, fish and seafood. You have a variety of options: from fresh, but definitely full bodied whites (unoaked!) - white fish and shellfish are definitely crying for one. yet if you want to give some wine for thought - try pairing it with some young Tempranillo wine from Spain. Cool it down to 14C (like what you will do to rose), it will prove to be richer, but also refreshing. You can try this find: [Spartico Tempranillo from Valencia - No Sulphites Added](#).

## Beef Steak Fillets with Horseradish Cream

Total Cooking Time: 33 minutes

Serving Size: 6

### Ingredients

6 beef tenderloin fillets (2 inches thick each)  
2 tablespoons all purpose flour  
3 tablespoons butter  
335 ml fresh milk  
3 tablespoons prepared horseradish  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
8 blades chopped onion chives  
125 ml dry sherry (optional)

### Cooking Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 180 C degrees.
2. Season beef with salt and pepper. Heat a large nonstick, oven-safe pan over high heat.
3. Sear meat on the hot pan to caramelize, observing 3 minutes on each side, or less if your cuts are rather thinner. Transfer the meat to the oven and cook for 7 minutes for medium rare, or 12 minutes for well-done result.
4. Melt butter over medium heat in a medium saucepan. Mix melted butter with flour and cook for 1 minute. Pour in milk and thicken to sauce consistency, then add chives, horseradish, pepper and salt. Transfer the sauce on a small serving bowl.
5. Take out meat from oven and move to a platter. Return the saucepan to the burner, and over moderate heat, deglaze it with dry sherry. Add remaining butter to the saucepan and pour the mixture on the steak fillets.

**Wine:** This rather rich and spicy dish will need a spicy companion. I recommend south west France (Languedoc or Roussillon), or wines from Catalunya (Penedes, Montsant, Priorat) - think of some herbal and spicy notes, but also good body and complexity of flavours. How about this [organic Priorat - Barranc dels Comellars?](#)

## Roast Duck with Hoisin Sauce

Total Cooking Time: 45 minutes

Serving Size: 6

### Ingredients

6 deboned ducks breasts  
4 tablespoons soy sauce  
1 tablespoon five spice powder  
2 tablespoons clear honey (I am allergic to honey, so used same amount of agave nectar)

### For the Sauce

600 g fresh chicken stock  
4 tablespoons hoisin sauce  
4 fresh ginger, thinly sliced, no need to peel  
1 teaspoon of sesame oil

### Cooking Instructions

1. Release fat from the duck's skin by pricking it with a fork, or by scoring it (this also makes it easier to roast). Mix the soy, honey and five-spice in a large platter. Add the duck and coat it very well. Place it in the fridge until ready for roasting.
2. To make the sauce, put the duck stock into a skillet, add ginger and hoisin sauce. Bring to a boil for a few minutes until the mixture is smooth. Add sesame oil and set aside.
3. To serve, preheat the oven to 170 C degrees. Get a roasting tin and pour a litre of water in the base, and place a rack over its top. This will stop the fat from the duck to drip on to the tin or fill the kitchen with smoke. Lift duck meat from the marinade and re-arrange on a rack, the skin facing up. Set aside the remaining marinade for the rice dish. Roast the duck for 15 minutes

if you would like it medium rare, or 25 minutes if well done. Slice each duck breast into half. Put some rice on to each plate, and top them with the halved duck breasts. Add remaining meat juices from the duck to the hoisin gravy and spoon one or two over the duck. Serve the remainder gravy and rice separately.

**Wine:** Some people like this rather fatty and sweet dish to match with rather contrasting Pinot Gri (it is white, a bit thicker than usual, but will contrast with its acidity to the sweetness of this dish). I, however, think that white wine is too thin, and will be absolutely lost here. I suggest going to south west France and sourcing a [Cote du Rhone Villages](#) or Chateauneuf-du-Pape wines (well, just have a stroll to your favourite retailer!), and play it on some sweet spicy notes that present in those wines, but also on the powerful flavours. Have a look at [Planet Organic](#), they have a few interesting Rhone reds, and let the battle begin!

## Baked Rigatoni Sausage (Paired with Negroamaro)

Total Cooking Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Serving Size: 8

### Ingredients

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
just under 350 g or approx. 6 links pork sausage  
salt, to taste  
1 large aubergine, cut into pieces  
3 cloves garlic, chopped  
1 large white onion, chopped  
400 g peeled whole tomatoes  
1 bunch fresh basil leaves  
400 g mozzarella  
400 g rigatoni  
Ground black pepper, to taste  
200 g grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

### Cooking Instructions

1. Boil lightly salted water over high heat for the pasta. I personally cook without salt, but it is just me! Prepare a ceramic baking dish.
2. Heat olive oil in a large pan over medium heat. Toss in the sausages and sauté for 3 to 4 minutes or until they are nicely brown on the outside but still raw on the inside. Put them in the baking dish and set aside.
3. Lower the heat a bit. Add oil to the pan and wait until hot. Add a single layer of aubergine pieces and sprinkle well with salt. Cook, occasionally stirring

and turning for 7 minutes, until aubergine is crisp and browned. Using a spatula, transfer it into the baking dish with sausage. Cook the remaining aubergine pieces, oiling the pan a little more as needed, and transferring the cooked pieces into the baking dish.

4. Add more oil to the pan, then toss in onion and garlic, and cook for 4 minutes, until brown or translucent. Mix in the tomatoes with their juices into a bowl and crush them. Add the crushed tomatoes to the pan with basil leaves, and cook until thick and pulpy. This will take approximately 10-12 minutes over medium heat.
5. When the water is boiling, add the rigatoni and cook for 7 minutes, with occasional stirring. Do not cook until tender as it will cook further while in the oven. Set aside a cup of the water used for cooking, then drain the rigatoni.
6. Preheat the oven to 200 C degrees. Slice the sausages into bite-sized chunky bits and return them to the baking dish. Mix in tomato sauce and the reserved water along with the rigatoni. Half the mozzarella and sprinkle over the mixture. Add salt and pepper to taste, and gently mix with a spatula. Dust the mixture with Parmigiano and a bit more olive oil. Bake for 15 minutes. Spread the remaining half mozzarella evenly in a single layer and continue to bake for another 12 minutes, or until bubbly.

Wine: This is a very creamy and satisfying recipe. It needs a proper Italian classic - it can be a [super Tuscan Chianti](#), a milder [Valpolicella](#) or a powerhouse [Barolo](#). As an option have a few different ones and find out what would your guests prefer - a more delicate touch or an explosion? These three were sourced from [Majestic Wine](#) - check out if they are on sale and you can mix and match for further savings!

## Chapter 3 – Recipes for White Wine

The key thing for the white winemaking is not to allow any skin contact. Grape juice is white, almost transparent, so you can produce white wines from red grapes! If you are unsure which ones are there apart from your favourite New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, then here are some more names: Colombard, Chenin Blanc, Muscat, Riesling, Semillon, Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay, which you probably already know.

White wines generally have a crisp and fruity taste, much more simple than what you can get from reds, but making it a good pair choice for light dishes. Regardless of variety, white wines tend to pair better with green vegetables, turkey, fish and chicken. Whilst I will disagree that these could not be matched with reds, it is probably interesting to vary your wine courses and pair your light starter with the white wine. Variety is so healthy (and entertaining!).

Another consideration in white wine pairings is its high acidity (normally). White wines are more acidic than red wines; thus, the level of acidity should be taken into account and preferably be of a similar level (rather than a contrast). It is so easy to add a teaspoon of lemon juice to your fish course, quick stir fry, or even a salad.

Newbie or not, let's check some recipes to go with white wines.

### Salmon Cakes with Lemon Caper Sauce

Total Cooking Time: 55 minutes

Serving Size: 8

#### Ingredients

1 pound salmon fillet (skinless)  
2 tablespoons olive oil, for sprinkling  
Salt and pepper, to taste

#### Patties

1 large egg, beaten  
3 tablespoons vegetable oil  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
15 g fresh chives, sliced  
26 freshwater crackers, crushed  
100 g frozen kernel corn, thawed  
2 tablespoons mustard  
3 tablespoons mayonnaise (add more as needed)  
1 tablespoon capers, thawed and drained  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1 tablespoon lemon zest

## Sauce

Salt and ground pepper, to taste  
100 ml half-fat unflavoured yogurt  
1 ½ tablespoons capers, thawed and drained  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1 tablespoon lemon zest

## Cooking Instructions

1. **Salmon:** Preheat a charcoal grill or put a grill pan (any sort of griddle will do) over medium heat. Sprinkle the salmon with olive oil and add salt and pepper, to taste. Grill it until the flesh is cooked well and easily flakes with a fork. The flesh should be pink-ish (that is how I prefer as your fish is more flavoursome this way), but not raw, so make sure you do not cook it for more than 10-12 minutes. Set aside to cool for about 20 minutes.
2. **Patties:** With a fork, flake the fish into half inch pieces and transfer into a medium bowl. Add the beaten egg, half of the crushed crackers, chives, corn, mayonnaise, mustard, capers, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Mix gently until fully combined. Form the mixture into 2 patties that are half inch in diameter and about 3/4 inches thick. (In case the mixture is too dry to form into patties, put additional mayonnaise, a tablespoon at a time.) Coat the patties in the remaining crushed crackers and put in the fridge to cool for 1 hour. In a large nonstick pan, heat the butter and add oil over medium heat. Put in the patties and cook until crispy and golden, about 6 minutes per side. Drain the patties on paper towels just to remove some extra fat.
3. **Sauce:** Get a small bowl and combine the capers, yogurt, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
4. Arrange the salmon cakes on a big platter and serve with the sauce. The salmon can also be baked in an oven (180 C degrees). Sprinkle the salmon with olive oil and season with salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer into a baking dish and bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until cooked through.

**Wine:** Semillon will be a good choice. It would be a good pair with zesty and aromatic fish cakes, have a look at Laithwaite's, they stock some fantastic Australian whites like [this one](#) from Hunter Valley.

## Chilli Prawn Linguine

Total Cooking Time: 25 minutes

Serving Size: 3

## Ingredients

280 grams pasta linguine  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
200 grams sugar snap peas, trimmed  
2 cloves garlic (large), finely chopped  
1 red chilli (large), finely chopped  
12 cherry tomatoes, halved  
24 large king prawns, peeled raw  
1 handful of fresh basil leaves  
Mixed salad leaves and toasted white bread, to serve

## Dressing

2 tablespoons fat-free natural yogurt or fromage frais  
2 limes, zest grated and juice extracted  
2 tablespoons golden caster sugar

## Cooking Instructions

1. Combine all dressing ingredients in a small mixing bowl then season with salt and pepper, to taste. Set aside.
2. Cook the pasta following the instructions on the packet. Once al dente, add the sugar snap peas before turning off the heat.
3. Meanwhile, heat the oil in large skillet, toss in the garlic and chilli and cook over a fairly low heat for about 30 seconds, making sure the garlic does not turn brown. Mix in the prawns and cook over high heat for about 3 minutes or until pink, stirring occasionally.
4. Tip in the tomatoes and cook for 3 minutes until they start to get soft. Drain the pasta with sugar snaps, then toss into the prawn mix. Tear the basil leaves and stir into the mixture. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
5. Serve with salad leaves sprinkled with the lime dressing.

**Wine:** [Albarino](#) from Northwestern Spain provides this light peachy sweetness, full of herbal and floral notes, but most importantly it is refreshing and goes really well with prawns, no doubts about that!

## Chapter 4 – Recipes for Rosé Wine

For a long time, rosé wines have been out of fashion. It is predominantly because many people are not sure how to match them with food and simply buy them during warmer months as a light refreshment. Whereas there is nothing wrong with the latter, some producers started to offer more pronounced fruit in these light, but aromatic wines, which are not made by mixing whites and reds actually! On contrary, the process starts with simply getting black grapes, and crushing and pressing them with minimal skin contact (so you get that tiny amount of colour to it!), and then vinifying the wine without those skins (as opposed to reds). Good rose wines are not just perfect for picnics, but will match a wide variety of different foods.

Here are some pointers for you to consider:

- Rose wines can be light or more pronounced both in aromas and flavours, check how intense is the colour. If it is closer to red, you can match it with meat and poultry, if it light, stick to salads, healthy snacks, and light starters. As a general rule, these wines are quite delicate, so avoid very robust flavours like eggs, garlic, rich sauces (especially based on full fat cream), they will make the wine taste very thin.
- Rosés can pair well with seafood, especially those dishes with minimal preparation time to make the seafood flavours dominant.
- Rosés never fail with summer salads. Stay away from bitter flavours of kale and dandelion, and instead focus on lettuce, apples, clementines and other light citrus dressings.

### Tuna Tataki

Total Cooking Time: 25 minutes

Serving Size: 4

#### Ingredients

25 g sesame seeds

50 g minced ginger

1 tablespoon ground black pepper

200 g fresh, sushi grade tuna (organic, yellow fin are best)

Salt, to taste

1 tablespoon lime juice

3 tablespoons peanut oil, for searing

1 ripe avocado (medium sized), peeled, seeded, quartered and sliced

12 thin slices red onion

400 g mixed green vegetables



1 tomato (medium sized), peeled, seeded, and diced  
Ginger Sauce

### **Ginger Sauce**

½ teaspoon fresh ginger, finely grated  
1 small shallot, minced  
Group black pepper, to taste  
100 ml soy sauce  
75 ml lime juice  
100 ml olive oil

### **Cooking Instructions**

1. Mix together the sesame seeds, ginger and black pepper on a shallow platter. On a separate plate, season the tuna with salt.
2. Slice the tuna, about half inch each for easier slicing at the end. Roll it afterwards on the ginger mixture, pressing lightly until mixture sticks to the fish.
3. Place a medium skillet over high heat. Add the peanut oil and sear the fish on all sides, about 30 seconds on each side. Transfer the tuna to a serving dish and set aside. Deglaze the pan with lime juice, and then pour the lime juice on the tuna.
4. In a mixing bowl, combine tomatoes, the mixed greens, avocado, and red onion. Add some of the Ginger Sauce. Continue slicing the tuna, following the cuts made earlier. Place some of the dressed mixed greens on 4 plates. Top with sliced tuna and sprinkle with some more of the ginger sauce, to taste.

### **Ginger Sauce**

Combine the ginger, shallot, a few pinches of pepper, lime juice and soy sauce in a small bowl. Whisk in the olive oil slowly and set aside. Once ready to serve, combine the mixture thoroughly.

**Wine:** Rose from Spanish upcoming region Bierzo will not disappoint. [Pizarras de Otero](#) is a true gem - it is intensely fruity with raspberry and redcurrant notes and some pleasant leafy ones to complement to the complexity of the dish. Tuna is quite a meaty fish, but the tataki dish is so fresh and aromatic with ginger sauce, it will be spicy, fruity combination that should ignite your senses!

## **Bouillabaisse**

Total Cooking Time: 2 hours 45 minutes

Serving Size: 6

### **Ingredients**

4 tablespoons rapeseed oil  
18 mussels, scrubbed  
6 sea scallops, rinsed and patted dry  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
6 medium halibut fillets  
6 large red shrimp (with shells and heads)  
3 lobster tails (about 3), boiled in salted water for 4 minutes, drained and halved lengthwise

### **Seafood Stock**

50 g rapeseed oil  
225 ml white wine  
450 g raw prawn shells (heads and tails), rinsed well  
1 medium white onion, peeled and chopped  
1 medium carrot, chopped  
1 bay leaf  
1 medium celery stem, chopped  
2 large tomatoes, chopped  
10 sprigs flat-leaf parsley  
½ teaspoon whole black pepper

### **Tomato Aioli**

2 tablespoons extra concentrated tomato puree  
1 white onion, finely sliced  
2 anchovies, drained and finely chopped  
100 g mayonnaise  
2 teaspoons tomato paste  
½ lemon, juice and zest extracted  
Salt and pepper, to taste

### **Anchovy Butter**

4 tablespoons butter  
6 anchovies, drained and finely chopped  
Salt and pepper, to taste

### **Broth**

2 tablespoons rapeseed oil  
1 small white onion, halved and thinly sliced  
1 small head fennel, halved and finely sliced  
100 ml pastis (you can use sherry, but it won't be that aromatic)  
400-500 g plum tomatoes (about 1 can, but can be two if there is too much of

liquid), drained  
Pinch of saffron  
1 head garlic, halved crosswise  
Pinch of Calabrian chilli flakes (use regular one, would be OK)

### To Serve

2 tablespoons fresh tarragon (include more for garnish), chopped  
50 g flat-leaf parsley (include more for garnish), chopped  
1 teaspoon lemon zest, finely grated  
Six slices baguette, each about 1/2 inch thick, lightly toasted  
Fresh chives (for garnish), finely chopped

A note for my cooking oil suggestions: I use rapeseed oil, because you can find good British rapeseed oils (why not to buy local?), which are 30% less in saturated fat than olive oil. Also, olive oil doesn't like scorching heat, so I use it mostly to dress salads or to sprinkle on top of the dish for an additional flavour. Also try coconut oil - it is the best oil to cook on high temperatures, will give a bit of coconut flavour, but not that much to overpower your roasted potatoes or poultry!

### Cooking Instructions

1. **Seafood Stock:** Put a large saucepan over high heat, pour oil and wait until hot. Toss in prawn shells and tails, carrot, onion and celery, and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the wine and cook until reduced by half. Pour 2l of cold water, then add parsley, bay leaf, tomatoes, and peppercorns. Bring to a boil then reduce heat to medium low. While simmering, skim occasionally for about 40 minutes.
2. Strain the stock pressing on the solids to extract as much broth as possible. This can be prepared 2 days in advance and refrigerated. It can last up to 3 months.
3. **Broth:** Heat oil in a large pan over high heat, and cook the onion and fennel until translucent. Mix in pastis and simmer for 5 minutes or until reduced by half. Add the tomatoes, chili, saffron and 2 cups shrimp stock. Boil, add the garlic and cook for 10 minutes. Add additional 4 cups of seafood stock, reduce the heat and cook until the broth is slightly reduced. Strain the broth into a large bowl, remove the solids and pour the liquid back into the pan. Set aside.
4. **Tomato aioli:** In a small mixing bowl, combine anchovies, mayonnaise, tomato powder, tomato paste, white onion, lemon juice and zest, salt and pepper. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.
5. **Anchovy butter:** Combine the anchovies and melted butter in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper and refrigerate for 20 minutes until solid again.
6. **Seafood:** Heat oil in wok. Season the scallops with salt and pepper and sear

on one side until browned. Turn over and cook for another 30 seconds, then remove. Do the same for the halibut fillets and prawns. Deglaze the pan with a cup of the prawn-tomato broth then move the liquid back into the pan.

7. Heat the pan with prawn-tomato broth over high heat. Toss in the mussels, cover and cook for about 2 minutes. Remove the mussels with a slotted spoon and remove any that did not open. Add the seared seafood and lobster tails to the broth, cover and simmer for 2 minutes.
8. **To serve:** Mix the anchovy butter with the shrimp-tomato broth and simmer until thickened. Add the tarragon, lemon zest and parsley. Generously spread each slice of baguette with tomato aioli and garnish with onion chives. Divide the seafood and broth among 6 soup bowls. Garnish each with a tomato aioli crouton and sprinkle with more tarragon or parsley or onion chives, as desired.

**Wine:** This dish is rich with seafood flavours and herby. At the same you have spent a fortune on these lobster tails, so you deserve a matching treat as a rose wine - [Sancerre](#) is the answer! It is mineral, light and refreshing, and summery beautiful with elegant charm of Lore Valley. Longer finish creams quality. See it for yourself!

## Provençal Vegetable Soup

Total Cooking Time: 1 hour 20 minutes

Serving Size: 6

### Ingredients

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
2 large white onions, chopped  
4 leeks (white and light green parts), chopped  
600 g unpeeled boiling potatoes, diced, each about 1/2-inch  
600 g carrots, each about 1/2-inch  
1 teaspoon ground black pepper  
1 1/2 tablespoons salt  
3.5 l chicken stock  
125 g green beans, ends removed and halved  
1 teaspoon saffron threads  
120 g spaghetti, cut into pieces  
225 ml Pistou  
Grated Parmesan cheese, for serving

### Pistou

4 garlic cloves (large)  
24 pieces medium basil leaves  
50 g tomato paste  
50 g Grated Parmesan cheese

50 g cup olive oil

### **Cooking Instructions**

1. Heat the olive oil in a large wok, add the onions, and sauté for 10 minutes over low heat for 10 minutes. Toss the potatoes, leeks, carrots, salt, and pepper and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Pour in the chicken saffron and stock, bring to a boil, then simmer until vegetables are tender (about 10 minutes). Add the spaghetti and haricots verts then simmer for 15 minutes.
2. To serve, add 100 ml of the pistou into the hot soup, then season with salt and pepper to taste. Add more salt depending on the saltiness of your chicken stock. Serve with more pistou and grated Parmesan cheese.

### **Pistou (1 cup yield)**

Puree the garlic, basil, tomato paste and Parmesan cheese. With the blender motor is running, pour in olive oil down the feed tube to thicken the mixture until paste-like. Pour into a sealable container and close the lid.

**Wine:** A true Provençal classic requires what Provence is famous for - rose wines! [Minuty Cuvee Prestige 2014 Cotes de Provence](#) is a typical rose that will be a brilliant. It will be a bit too light for the above bouillabaisse, but to be served with this soup (as as an aperitif to it) would be just right!

## Chapter 5 – Recipes for Sparkling Wine

Champagne, a type of sparkling wine, is the classic choice for celebrations and special occasions. In fact, when you ask most wine lovers of what their wine choice would be in a desert island situation, it would most probably be cold champagne.

Three characteristics that add depth to a sparkling wine's fruity flavour is minerality, yeasty or bread-alike flavours and high level of acidity. Sparkling wines' acid content cuts through fatty and flavourful dishes and can neutralise even high-acid ingredients such as apple cider vinegar and fruit sauces. Not to mention, of course, that a little bit of sparkle adds a festive feel to any event. Sparkling wines are perfect to complement a laidback weekend lunch, but can also serve as a cocktail drink for formal soirees.

The food pairing possibilities of sparkling wines are almost limitless. The following is a selective list of easy to prepare and healthy recipes to pair with sparklers. Whether served at home or at any outdoor (picnic) party, or even at work, these pairings are sure to enhance your sensory experience.

Do not be surprised of the first of them. There is a way how to make pate sound posh and exciting - try it with the sparkler and see how it goes down. When made from scratch, it can be an exciting starter, made with care and some additional booze (exciting!).

### Chicken Liver Pate

Total Cooking Time: 6 hours 40 minutes

Serving Size: 6

#### Ingredients

400 g fresh chicken livers  
200 g cold butter, cut into small pieces  
225 ml milk  
½ teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoons garlic, minced  
2 bay leaves  
200 g white onions, chopped  
2 tablespoons black peppercorns  
1 teaspoon thyme leaves, chopped  
½ teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground  
50 ml Cognac  
1 handful fresh parsley leaves, for garnish  
French bread croutons or toasts  
French cornichons (as accompaniment, optional)

## Cooking Instructions

1. Soak the chicken livers in milk in a medium bowl for about 2 hours. Drain well.
2. Melt 4 tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet over medium to high heat. Mix in the onions and cook until soft, continuously stirring for about 3 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until golden brown, or for about 30 seconds. Add the chicken livers, thyme, the bay leaves, salt, pepper and 1 tablespoon of the peppercorns. Cook for about 5 minutes, occasionally stirring, until the livers are cooked on the outside but still pinkish on the inside. Pour in the Cognac and cook until only a little liquid is left and the livers are cooked enough but still tender.
3. Remove pan from the heat and let cool slightly. Remove the bay leaves so as not to overpower the dish.
4. In an electronic mixer, puree the chicken liver mixture. Add the remainder of the butter and continue to blend. Add the remaining tablespoon of peppercorns and season with salt, to taste.
5. Mold the pate into 6 ramekins, observing about 4 ounces each. Cover with plastic film and refrigerate until firm. This may take at least 6 hours.
6. To serve, place the ramekins on serving plates (1 each). Sprinkle with parsley and surround with French croutons and cornichons.

I am not in favour of the classic method when you cover your pate with a thick layer of butter, it is healthier without it.

**Wine:** Pate is a robust starter, you need something that is more aggressive rather than your aristocratic champagne - try [Cloudy Bay Pelorus NV](#) from New Zealand, it is made from Chardonnay grapes and delivers a powerful apple flavour together with yeasty complexity. Try it, Cloudy Bay is not just for Sauvignon Blancs!

## Balsamic Melon Salad

Total Cooking Time: 2 minutes

Serving Size: 4

### Ingredients

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

800 g fresh melons, cut into bite-size pieces  
1 teaspoon black pepper, freshly cracked  
2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar  
½ teaspoon chilli powder  
2 teaspoons fresh basil leaves (about 4), chopped

### Cooking Instructions

1. Toss together all salad ingredients in a large bowl, excluding basil leaves. Place in serving bowl and garnish with basil.
2. Chill for 15 minutes. Serve cold. As an option, serve it with the torn pieces of Italian parma ham - this is how they do it, why shouldn't you try as well? Fruit will complement the saltiness of cured ham really well!

**Wine:** If you are a fan of Prosecco, give it a try. I suggest making a test drive: if you serve Prosecco and something else from Italy, say [San Leo Asti NV](#), you can try both and compare. The latter is a more frivolous style - it is very aromatic and grapey, such a good match for fruity starters.

## Smoked Eel, Sturgeon and Caviar Salad with Dill Buttermilk Dressing

(FYI: sturgeon is the fish)

Total Cooking Time: 58 minutes  
Serving Size: 4

### Ingredients

200 g all-purpose flour  
170 ounces smoked sturgeon, nicely flaked  
220 g smoked eel, cut into 1 inch pieces  
100 g cup red onions, sliced  
2 tablespoons onion chives, snipped  
2 tablespoons Champagne vinegar (try good quality white wine instead)  
2 tablespoons rapeseed oil  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper, ground  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
30 g caviar  
230 g lettuce, rinsed and patted dry  
Essence  
Dilled Buttermilk Dressing

### Essence



2 tablespoons salt  
1 tablespoon black pepper, ground  
2 ½ tablespoons paprika  
2 tablespoons garlic powder  
1 tablespoon dried leaf oregano  
1 tablespoon onion powder  
1 tablespoon cayenne pepper  
1 tablespoon dried thyme

### **Dilled Buttermilk Dressing**

1 large egg  
1 ½ teaspoons fresh dill, finely chopped  
200 ml rapeseed oil  
110 ml buttermilk  
2 tablespoons lemon juice, freshly squeezed  
¾ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon black pepper, ground

### **Cooking Instructions**

1. Put a frying pan over a medium heat.
2. Season the all-purpose flour with essence and transfer into a shallow platter. Coat the eel in the seasoned flour, removing any excess.
3. Fry the coated eel for about 3 minutes until golden brown. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels.
4. In a mixing bowl, combine the sturgeon, vinegar, oil, onions, chives, a spoonful of the Buttermilk Dill Dressing, salt, and pepper, and gently toss.
5. In a separate bowl, combine oil, salt, pepper, vinegar, and sprinkle over the lettuce. Distribute the lettuce among 4 large salad plates (about 1/4 head each). Place the sturgeon mixture over the lettuce, and top with the eel. Sprinkle each plate with 3 spoonful of the buttermilk dressing. Place a teaspoon of the caviar in the centre of the plate.

### **Essence (150-170 ml yield)**

Mix all ingredients thoroughly and store in an airtight container. This can last up to two weeks.

### **Dressing (280-300 ml yield)**

To prepare the dressing, mix the egg and dill in the bowl and transfer to a food processor or a mixer. Blend on high speed for about 15 seconds until smooth. With the machine motor is on, add oil in the tube feed and process until an emulsion is formed. Transfer the mixture to a small bowl and whisk in the lemon juice,

buttermilk, and salt and pepper, to taste.

**Wine:** Eel is a daring choice, I agree, but if you want to surprise your guests and tantalise their senses then why not? As for the wine match, you may consider splashing out and serving this rich dish with a classic [Pol Roger Reserve](#). Superb quality and extra fine mousse guaranteed.

# Your Own Food & Wine Pairing Journey

Like every wine expert would say, food and wine pairing does not need to be a rocket science. Actually, it is more art than science, and is rather a matter of personal taste. There are no rules set in stone, you should think about it more like a recommendation. Just trust your palate, and you will eventually learn the art of pairing confidently and be able host a healthy wine tasting event.

This selection of recipes discussed earlier aims to help you on your journey with food and wine pairing. Remember that your end goal as a host is to create an experience for your guests (and for yourself!) and, of course, enjoy good wine with a food cooked from scratch. That is what I say, a healthy and happy wine lifestyle: it is social, exciting, and somewhat of a learning experience every time!

If you want a quick recap on the guidelines, here they are:

1. Complement flavours. Contrast is a more risky business (but be adventurous and daring after you've tried some good complementing dishes).
2. Choose similar textures and weights. The mood of your party, and the weight of your dishes should be also a match - they can either be light, medium or rich. The idea is to match the strength of flavours of your dishes, wines and also your audience.
3. Consider the other pairing components - sweetness, saltiness, bitterness, fattiness, and acidity. The right combination of these can bring out a delightful dining experience.

I hope you enjoyed this mini ebook. Please visit [www.iblamethewine.com](http://www.iblamethewine.com) to leave comments and I wish you the best of luck in your pairing journey!