Pairing and the Power of Suggestion

By Erika Szymanski. Feb 24, 2013

The Palate Press

More often than not, food and wine pairing seems to me no more than hypnotism without the swinging watch. Some Authoritative Personality tells us that Sauvignon Blanc goes well with pesto because both are herbaceous. So I pull out a crisp Kiwi Sauvignon Blanc, sauce some pasta, and decide that the two taste good together. Why? Because there's something magical about matching herby with herby? Or because the Authoritative Personality told me that it was going to work? Then there's the idea that food and wine pairing is "Science." All we have to do is enter the component parts of our food and our situation into a calculator and (queue the number-crunching sounds) there's a perfect wine to match.

There's a theory about writing that says that good writers writing well are simply responding appropriately to their rhetorical situation: their audience, their topic, the medium they're using, and the role they need to play (expert, narrator, colleague, etc.). If we want to make food and wine pairing into a science, we can look at it the same way. The food and the occasion present the rhetorical situation. What's being served? Is it hot or cold? Sauced or not (and with what)? The second of six courses or a stand-alone entrée? A skilled matchmaker knows that the situation is about more than just the food. She'll also ask what season it is and what the weather's like, whether the meal is being served on a Sonoma patio or the seventh floor of a Toronto high-rise, whether this is your anniversary or a Tuesday dinner on the couch after working late. She'll need to know who you are, too: what your mood is, something about your characteristic likes and dislikes, and the budget you have in mind. But given all of this information, like the writer, the somm — or the chef, or you as you're standing in your kitchen wavering with corkscrew in hand — will be able to make the right decision. The situation has provided all of the information you need, if you've been attentive. There are right wines and wrong wines. Your skill will determine how well you choose and, if you make a bad choice, you've only yourself to blame. Food and wine pairing is a science.

But there's an alternative theory about writing that says the exact opposite. The writer creates the rhetorical situation; it can't exist on its own because it's built through perception. The writer decides how to see her audience, what the topic is, how she wants to position herself, and sometimes even what medium she wants to use. Maybe food and wine pairing is just about whatever we want it to be, too. We create the situation because we can envision it as whatever we want it to be. A swanky Valentine's dinner can be an excuse to playfully recall an inexpensive bottle with emotional significance; Tuesday leftovers can become an event by opening something special. I can even create the flavors I want to see, or that I need to see to make the pairing work.

Wine is complicated. We can never notice everything going on in a given glass — to try would be overwhelming — so we have to make decisions about what deserves our attention if we're going to make any sense of it. We apply filters based on our past experiences and our expectations. When we

decide what the wine is, our interpretation says as much about us as it does about what we're drinking. If I have a nice, crisp Finger Lakes dry Riesling, I can choose to work with its acidity or to draw out the hint of creaminess on its finish. I can emphasize its citrus or its pear notes, its minerality or its surprising mid-palate weight, or maybe I want to let its finish shine. I create a problem and then solve it. Is the problem finding a wine that will cut through the unctuousness of duck confit, or finding a wine with enough body to stand up to the density and heft of the confit served with roast parsnips and mushrooms? I'm never really constrained by the situation because I can make the situation what I want it to be.

Exercising a very little bit of imagination will demonstrate that this is poppycock. Certainly, a dish will have different elements that can be played up or down, but a sommelier can't turn an elk steak into poached trout no matter how creatively she thinks about it (unless she gets the diner to re-order, of course.)

Thankfully, there's an alternative approach. Writing is really more complex than either the science or the subjective model says it is. The point at which food and wine pairing becomes really interesting is when we have enough space — enough freedom — to put ourselves into the situation, but still have guidelines sufficient to make sense of it all. The guidelines are key; without them, we're so confused by all the possible ways of seeing a situation that we end up seeing nothing at all.

Aristotle would tell us to use topoi. Topos literally means "place" or "location," but Aristotle used the term to describe an approach to a situation that allows you to make sense of it and come up with an argument. And so, we can have topoi for food and wine pairing. Mouthfeel is a topoi. Balance is a topoi. Acidity is a topoi. Even François Chartier's über-trendy molecular method, which relies on creating pairings in which the wine and ingredients in the food have characteristic flavor molecules in common, is a topoi. We don't necessarily have to pay attention to any of these things to create a successful pairing, but they're helpful tools to make success more likely. The more topoi you have at your disposal as a wine-taster and as an eater of food — I'd like to think that you needn't be a professed foodie to do this sort of thing — the more handles you're going to have on approaching a particular pairing problem.

The question still remains of whether there are flavors in a wine — and in a food-wine pairing — or whether we create them when we taste. Science helps, but not much. We can say that a wine contains specific flavor molecules and, for the best defined of those molecules, we can say how they'll taste; methoxypyrazines will pretty reliably make a Syrah taste like bell pepper, for example. And yet most flavorful molecules can elicit a range of flavors depending on their context. Even more importantly, we all know that individuals arrive at different conclusions about how a wine tastes. To some extent, we create the flavors we perceive because of who we are, what we've tasted before — you're unlikely to find black currant in a wine if you've never had any (unless you've tasted a lot with wine dorks who use the term) — and the vagaries of our individual palates. We may consider some of those conclusions more valid than others because they are validated by the tasting conclusions of other people whose opinions and expertise we accept, but there's no denying the possibility of multiple different, "correct" conclusions.

I recently introduced a heretofore-teetotaler friend to his very first glass of wine. The wine I chose for his inauguration wasn't anything wildly special — the occasion was impromptu and I just pulled something out of my stash — but I wanted it to be complex enough to give him an idea of why I find the stuff so fascinating. I suppose that I wanted it to be meaningful to me, too, so I uncorked a bottle of a Bordeaux-style Washington red blend, made by a few winemaker friends and that I had helped bottle. To me, the nose was plummy, the mouthfeel dense but livened up by pleasantly dancing acidity, and the finish a bit tight and herbal and tannic. His first comment, after having sniffed and sipped, was "I don't understand why anyone would want to drink something that tastes like tires!" Thankfully, a few more sniffs led him to different conclusions and he finished the glass with more intrigue than disgust. I'd like to think that his perception became more nuanced because he knew that wine could contain more than that, that there was the potential to find all sorts of flavors if he exercised enough creativity to find them. I gave him the topoi of fruit and tannin and acidity and, being a smart and thoughtful guy, applied those tools to solving the what-does-this-taste-like problem. I told him, too, that the wine went well with the mushroom-covered venison steaks we were eating because the herbaceous notes of the venison harmonized with the herbaceous woodiness of the rosemary-garnished mushrooms and the weight of the wine matched the weight of the meat.

He agreed. Of course he agreed. I could claim it was Science. And, after all, I was the Authoritative Personality.

TEN GOLDEN RULES FOR MATCHING FOOD WITH WINE

1 SALTY DISHES NEED WINES WITH NATURALLY HIGH ACIDITY

It is no coincidence that tangy Fino sherry goes so well with tapas—salted almonds, salted fish, and spicy, salty chorizo sausages, for example—because this combination of appetizer and aperitif evolved together in the same part of the world. Salt in food has the effect of neutralizing acidity in the wine and allowing the underlying fruit flavors to come to the fore—just as salt brings out the flavors in food. It is therefore best to choose wines that are naturally high in acidity to match salty dishes. With a salty cheese, such as Roquefort, always choose dessert wines with really zingy acidity, such as those from the Loire.

TRY Fresh anchovies or anchovy dishes, such as bagna cauda or pissaladière *(below)*, with Australian Riesling from the Clare Valley; moules marinières with Muscadet or Sancerre; feta cheese salad with Assyrtiko from Greece; Thai fish soup with well-chilled Pinot Grigio.

2 MEATY FISH DISHES CAN TAKE A LIGHT RED

Whoever had it laid down on tablets of stone that white wines are for fish and red wines are for meat should be put on bread and water rations for ever and a day. While it is true that tannins in red wine can create a nasty metallic taste when drunk with fish, there is fish and there is fish! Light, fruity reds with low tannins can match very well with fish with a dense, "meaty" texture, such as fresh tuna, salmon, and swordfish, especially if the wine is served slightly chilled. White fish, by contrast, tend to be light in texture and served with light sauces. These do need to be partnered with delicate white wines or, if the flavors are more intense, more juicy, aromatic whites.

TRY Tuna steak tartare and a spicy salsa with a Spätburgunder; roasted salmon fillet *(above)* with a Chinon; grilled or barbecued swordfish steak with a Carneros Pinot Noir from California; pan-fried monkfish wrapped in Parma ham with a chilled Dolcetto from Piedmont in Italy.

3 OILY FOODS NEED ACIDITY OR TANNIN

Some food-and-wine rules are about pairing like for like—sweet wines with desserts, for example—but others are about matching opposites, and this is certainly the case when choosing wines to complement oily foods. If dishes are oily, they are likely also to be fairly rich, sometimes creamy, but certainly with a degree of cloying opulence that needs to be tempered by the wine you choose to drink with them. If you are selecting a white wine, make sure it has a high degree of acidity, to cut through the fattiness or oiliness of the dish and leave a clean feeling on your palate. Tannin can do the same job; if you are choosing a red wine to match an oily dish—cheese fondue, for example—it will need to be fairly tannic to avoid tasting flabby.

TRY Smoked salmon *(facing page)* with a Sauvignon Blanc; scallops Mornay with a Chablis; cassoulet with chunky Barossa Shiraz; chicken Kiev with a California Roussanne; roast shoulder of lamb with an Italian Barolo or Barbaresco; roast goose with a Cabernet–Merlot blend.

4 SMOKY DISHES CLASH WITH OAKY WINES

Oak and smoke, in my opinion, is just too much of a good thing to make a good match. If you try to pair an oaked wine with a smoked meat or fish dish, you are in danger of overpowering your taste buds with too many very similar smoky, oaky flavors, and they will not be able to recognize anything else. Also, smoky dishes, by definition, have a strong flavor, and strong flavors in food need to be matched with a crisply fruity wine that refreshes the palate. Oaked wines have an oiliness and opulence that do not help to do so. White grapes to look out for that should guarantee an oak-free zone include Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Chenin Blanc, and the Pinots Blanc and Gris (Pinot Grigio in Italy). For smoked meats, choose from my Lively, Fruity Reds category: any more tannin, however soft, may join forces with the smoked flavors to create a "hard," woody taste.

TRY Smoked mackerel pâté with a Clare Valley Riesling from Australia; smoked salmon with a tangy French Sauvignon Blanc or, for a more festive occasion, a Pinot Meunier-based sparkling wine; smoked chicken salad with chilled Fleurie; smoked ham with Italian Barbera d'Asti.

5 MATCH RICH, DENSE FLAVORS WITH SIMILAR WINES

If your chosen dish is rich because it is creamy, try a crisp white wine to cut through the richness and refresh the palate. But rich dishes with greater weight and intensity of flavor normally require wines whose flavors and body pack a similar punch. If the wine is too light, it can be overpowered by the flavors and textures in the food. There are some classic extravagant pairings of food with white wine in this vein—foie gras and Sauternes and, less often served these days, lobster Thermidor with a Corton Charlemagne white Burgundy. But for the most part, we are talking rich, dense reds to partner hearty meat dishes here, especially those based on game or variety meats where you need a wine with good complexity of flavor to compete on equal terms.

TRY Pan-fried chicken livers with Monbazillac; roasted haunch of venison with a Pauillac; game casserole with a Châteauneuf-du-Pape; seafood risotto with a Meursault or New Zealand Chardonnay; cottage pie or sausage and mashed potatoes with a Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.

6 SPICY DISHES NEED REFRESHING WINES

Some people find that spicy dishes can overwhelm lighter styles of wine and prefer to match them with richer or even sweeter wines. I find that Chinese dishes generally work well with aromatic whites, such as German Riesling or Alsace Gewürztraminer, while more spicy Eastern cuisine benefits from being partnered with quite simple, crisp, dry whites, such as New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc or—the best choices in my view—a Pinot Grigio or a Chablis. These wines help to refresh the palate. Curry is not easy to match with wine. There are some good white partners for the lighter, more fragrant curries, but beware of ordering reds: most curries tend to knock back the fruit in a red wine, so the tannins become dominant. If the food is extremely spicy, it may be better to—just this once—forget the wine and stick to water or beer.

TRY Chicken and beef with green peppers and black bean sauce with a Chablis; chicken with cashew nuts with a Spanish Albariño; Szechuan pork or Thai stir-fry *(facing page)* with a German Riesling; Thai red curry with a Gewürztraminer; chicken tikka with a Pinot Grigio.

7 MATCH WHITE MEATS WITH FULL WHITES OR LIGHT REDS

The flavors in white meats are, on the whole, much more subtle than those in red meats, and so chicken, pork, and turkey dishes in which the meat is roasted, poached, or grilled in quite a simple style, rather than heavily flavored or richly sauced, work really well with more subtle wines, such as light reds. However, over the last few years, there has certainly been a trend for whites to become fuller and more opulent, especially the big, oaky-fruity New World wines, and these heavier whites have also proved good partners for white meat dishes, probably because their complex aromas and oily opulence balances and harmonizes with the mellow flavors in the meat.

TRY Roast chicken *(above)* or pork or turkey escalopes with Australian Chardonnay from Margaret River; roast loin of pork with a white Châteauneuf-du-Pape; chicken breast with girolles mushrooms with a chilled New Zealand Pinot Noir; roast partridge with Barbera d'Asti.

8 RED MEATS CAN TAKE ON STRONG TANNINS

For lamb cutlets or shepherd's pie, I'd choose a fruity Merlot-based wine, but heavier fare gives bigger-bodied reds a chance to shine. Protein-rich food softens the tannin in red wine so that the fruit flavors are able to come to the fore more easily. Red meats can therefore be successfully matched with big, strong reds with firm tannins without your having to worry that the fruit in the wine will be overpowered. Cheese also has a similar effect on wine; the tannins are absorbed and the wine tastes more mellow and easy to enjoy. The more austere tannic wines can be made much more food-friendly by decanting; temperature helps, too—serve them slightly warmer than usual.

TRY Rare steak *(below)* with a Côte-Rôtie Syrah; spicy sausages with Cahors; confit of duck with a Barolo; mature Comté cheese with Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon; steak and kidney pie with Spanish Ribera del Duero; Pauillac or Coonawarra Cabernet with roast leg of lamb.

9 MATCH WINE TO SAUCES, NOT WHAT'S UNDERNEATH

The maxim "red wine with dark meat, white wine with light" is a little misleading; most wines can, in fact, be served with most meats. When trying to make the perfect wine and food match, it is much more likely to be the sauce served with the meat, be it chicken or beef, that takes precedence. Lemon chicken, for example, goes well with a Chablis from Burgundy, but the same wine would never be a good match for coq au vin, which needs a fruity, unoaked, lightly tannic red. Similarly, a steak au poivre needs a medium-bodied, low-tannin red, but a beef goulash can be matched with a ripe, full-bodied, fruity white. With wine-based sauces, it's often true that the wine you cook the dish with makes the perfect accompaniment to the meal, which makes life a little easier.

TRY Beef bourguignon with earthy Pinot Noir from Gevrey-Chambertin in Burgundy or an Australian Cabernet–Merlot; beef stroganoff with Brunello di Montalcino; venison casserole with a Gigondas Syrah; duck à l'orange with a St-Èstephe or an Australian Shiraz from the Hunter Valley.

10 MATCH DESSERTS WITH THEIR WEIGHT IN WINE

The weight and sweetness of a dessert wine needs to match the weight and sweetness of the dessert. It's obvious, really—would you want to drink the same wine with raspberry mousse as you do with sticky toffee pudding? It may sound unlikely, but it's true that the intensity of sweetness in a cinnamon bun can be enhanced by a really rich, sweet dessert wine; if you tried to drink a light, flowery wine with it, you can easily imagine that the flavors in one would destroy the flavors in the other. Don't forget, however, that sparkling wines can also be perfect matches for fruity summer desserts, particularly the semidry and sweeter styles. And strawberries have an affinity with red and rosé wine, particularly if the wine also has strawberry flavors. Try them with a light Beaujolais, a blush Zinfandel, or even a sweet, sparkling red Lambrusco.

TRY Sticky toffee pudding with a Hungarian "5 puttonyos" Tokaji; apple strudel with a Bonnezeaux; chocolate brownies with a chilled Maury or a Rutherglen Muscat; pear tart *(facing page)* with Moscato d'Asti; summer bread pudding with a German or Austrian *Beerenauslese*.

RULE #1: THINK REGIONALLY
If It Grows Together, It Goes Together

People eat similar proteins all around the world. It's our job [as sommeliers] to figure out the region that inspired a dish, and then to find a wine to match.

— PAUL ROBERTS, master sommelier, French Laundry (Napa) and Per Se (NYC)

There is nothing better than a regional pairing with a regional dish. It is organic. I see serving traditional pairings — like charcuterie with Riesling, and white asparagus with Muscat — as an added value to our guests. It is like a mini-vacation!

— ALPANA SINGH, master sommelier, Everest (Chicago)

If you are eating bouillabaisse in Nice and you open a bottle of Lafite Rothschild, it will be a great experience simply because you are drinking Lafite! However, if you were to open a bottle of Cassis Blanc that is neither fancy nor expensive, it would go even better with the bouillabaisse . . . just as it would if you opened a bottle of young, quaffable rosé with your sardines with fresh tomato and basil.

— TIM KOPEC, wine director, Veritas (NYC)

When in Rome, do as the Romans do. Or, if you prefer, remember the professional chefs' motto "If it grows together, it goes together."

According to our sommelier experts, thinking regionally — that is, pairing a dish with a beverage native to the same region — can take you at least 50 percent (and sometimes even 100 percent) of the way to the perfect pairing. Many of the same basic ingredients (such as chicken) are eaten the world over, with each region adding its own flavor profile (say, herbed and roasted chicken in France or stir-fried and soy-sauced chicken in Asia), so pairing can be a matter of finding your grounding in a specific longitude and latitude, and selecting a beverage from nearby.

Where did your meal originate? Italy? Spain? Japan? The red sauce of pizza and pasta pairs beautifully with Italian red wine, especially Chianti. Tapas shine with a dry sherry. Sashimi is sensational with sake.

Classic pairings represent the wisdom of history. With such an extensive realm of ingredients and an equally extensive realm of beverages from which to select, there's a nearly *infinite* number of possible food and beverage combinations to be tried. But it's not necessary to reinvent the wheel to come up with many of the best pairings among them, because we can benefit from the chefs and wine experts of history by paying attention to classic pairings which were already tried-and-found-true by these gastronomes of years past. In Chapters 5 and 6, you'll find literally thousands of food and beverage combinations cited in our research that have stood the test of time.

environment on wine and food, geography and climate provide many answers to the gastronomic identity but are only part of the story. Culture, history, trade, and ethnic diversity have a comparable impact on components, texture, and flavor profiles in both wine and food.

OLD WORLD AND NEW WORLD WINE AND FOOD MATCHES

Repertoires of traditional foods and wines that accompany them have, in many cases, developed over many years of refinement to meet local tastes and utilize local products. Such associations create an additional taste and flavor layering between the food and wine. In such matches, food flavors are generally deep and rich but not bold.

Table 4.1 provides a number of classic regional wine and food matches. This table outlines some of the classic matches from Old World countries such as France, Italy, and Spain. Additionally, New World wine and food combinations are provided from California, Washington, Australia, New Zealand, and South America. The first column lists the country of origin, the second column includes the wine and food description, and the third column contains a brief description of interacting wine and food elements. These examples provide a sense of the classic marriages (old and new) deeply rooted in the gastronomic identity of each country and regions within countries.

General Wine and Food Relationships Demonstrated

There are several consistent food and wine element relationships in these classic marriages. First, there are several examples of matching food texture to wine texture. In Bordeaux, fattiness in lamb is matched with the tannins in these predominately Cabernet Sauvignon wines. The richness of foie gras works with the richness of Sauternes due to the palate-cleansing qualities inherent in this crisp, sweet wine.

Similar to the red Bordeaux and lamb match, the Tuscan combination Bistecca alla Fiorentina and Chianti matches food fattiness to tannin as well as body to body based on the cooking method employed for the food (grilling).

Second, there are several examples of food and wine matches that use a flavor match: the earthy flavors in Coq au Vin with those of a red Burgundy, the earthy/intense flavors of dishes made with white truffle paired with intense wines using Nebbiolo grapes, and the buttery flavors in California Chardonnay matched with similar flavors of butter-dipped Dungeness crabmeat.

The impact of wine acidity is highlighted in a number of situations. Tangy foods paired with crisp white wines are an acid-to-acid match in marriages such as Sancerre with goat cheese. And the acidity of German or Alsatian Riesling is a contrast to the fattiness in pork and other meat dishes.

The classic Old World combination of oysters and Chablis.

Port wine matched with Stilton cheese provides a classic example of a contrasting match, with the sweetness of the Port standing out against the salty character of the cheese.

All in all, these marriages indicate that there are substantial differences in the type of matches in different locales, whether Old World or New World. But there appear to be some consistent relationships in the perception of match among components, texture, and

Table 4.1 Classic Regional Wine and Food Matches

Region	Wine and Food Match	Description
France—Bordeaux	Red Bordeaux and lamb	The rich fattiness of young lamb matches with the wine tannins to create a smooth characteristic in the mouth. The strong texture and flavor of lamb matches the substantial body of this Cabernet/Merlot blend.
	Sauternes and foie gras	The richness of Sauternes matches with the richness of foie gras. The acidity in the Sauternes cuts through the fattiness of the foie gras.
France—Burgundy	Coq au Vin and red Burgundy	The earthiness of the onions, naturally raised bird, and mushrooms pair with the earthy character of the Old World Burgundy. The bridging technique of including the wine during the cooking process assists in the marriage. The cooking method and bridging technique creates a body match with the Pinot Noir–based wine.
France—Beaujolais	Poached pork sausages with warm potatoes bathed in olive oil and shallots and Beaujolais wine	The Beaujolais is bursting with fruitiness. Relatively low in tannin, this humble wine works great with humble and down-to earth foods.
Southern France	Lamb and the Rhône wines made from Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre	Rich, gamy, wild flavors of lamb marry with the rich wines.
France—Loire	Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé and Crottin de Chavignol (a small disk of goat cheese made in Chavignol)	A small disk of goat cheese made in Chavignol and high-acid wines made with Sauvignon Blanc provide perfect tangy counterpoints.
	Tarte Tartin and Quarts de Chaume	A sweet, lightly honeyed dessert wine from Chenin Blanc grapes paired with caramelized tart apples on a light crust.
France—Alsace	Pork and game with hearty vegetables, potatoes, cabbages, and onions served with Alsace Riesling	Perfect cold-weather foods pair wonderfully with this region's Riesling. The acidity of the Riesling provides a nice contrast to cut through the fattiness of the pork and game as well as to provide an additional layer of taste sensation with the other food items.
Italy—Piedmont	White truffle dishes with Barbaresco and Barolo	Earthy and intense flavors of dishes made with white truffle paired with intense wines using Nebbiolo grapes.
Italy—Tuscany	Bistecca alla Fiorentina and Chianti	A large slab of grilled beef served with wine made from Sangiovese grapes—fatty, full-bodied food with tannic reds.
Spain—Rioja	Wild mushrooms in garlicky olive oil served with red Rioja	The earthy character of wild mushrooms, extra-virgin olive oil, and garlic paired with the Old World earthiness in Spanish Rioja.
Spain—Jerez	Garlic shrimp with Manzanilla	Shrimp sautéed in olive oil, dried red pepper, and lots of garlic paired with the salty, briny olive-scented characteristics of Manzanilla.
Spain—Penedès	Pan con tomate served with Cava	Thick slices of warm grilled country bread rubbed on both sides with the cut side of a juicy ripe tomato, drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil, and sprinkled with salt. Served as summer night fare with Spanish **méthode champenoise** sparkling wine. The wine-friendliness of garden-fresh tomatoes combines with food-friendly, refreshingly acidic Cava.
Portugal	Port and roasted nuts or cheese	Blue cheeses (Stilton, Gorgonzola, etc.) with Port are a classic contrasting match. The saltiness of the blue cheese (or nuts) contrasts with the sweetness of Port (think of popcorn and candy at the movies).

Table 4.1 (*Continued*)

Region	Wine and Food Match	Description
Germany	High-acid Rieslings and every meat dish imaginable	No oak and varying levels of sweetness make them the most versatile white wine with food. The acidity and complexity of German Riesling makes it very food-friendly—it can be paired with a wide range of foods including grilled sausages and pork roast.
United States—California	Dungeness crab dipped in butter with Chardonnay	The butter-dipped crab matches with the buttery Chardonnay (malolactic fermentation) when the wine is not overly oaky. The sweetness of the crab contrasts with the light acidity of the Chardonnay.
	Zinfandel with grilled anything; Petite Sirah with grilled steak	The sweet charred flavor and crusty texture makes any food more red-wine-friendly. The wine's simple jammy and fruit-forward character makes it a match with everything from grilled veggies to chicken to steak.
United States—New York	Hudson Valley foie gras and New York ice wine	The richness of ice wine matches with the richness of Foie Gras. The acidity in the wine cuts through the fattiness of the foie gras.
Washington	Pacific Northwest oysters with Riesling, Sémillon, or Sauvignon Blanc	The oysters are briny and minerally. The higher acidity in Washington white wines complements the oysters much like a squeeze of fresh lemon.
Oregon	Pinot Noir and wild Pacific salmon	The higher acidity and lower tannin in these cool-climate Pinots match well with the fattiness and texture of salmon cooked over an open fire.
Canada	Ice wines and desserts	The intensely sweet and yet refreshingly acidic ice wines match with less sweet desserts such as poached fruit, fruit tarts, crème brulée, and sugar cookies.
Australia	Grilled pepper steak and Shiraz	The peppery characteristics of Australian Shiraz match with the body and spice of grilled pepper steak and is also great with lamb, duck, or venison.
New Zealand	New Zealand fusion cuisine with Sauvignon Blanc	The fusion of European traditions combined with indigenous products and tropical techniques creates a cuisine that includes chiles, lime, and many tropical fruits. These ingredients pair nicely with the high acidity, slight sweetness, and pungent character of Sauvignon Blanc.
South Africa	Barbecued meat with Pinotage and Shiraz	Grilled antelope, deer, lamb, sausages, and beef cooked without any seasoning match the body of South African reds; the meat fattiness mellows the tannic nature of the wines.
Argentina	Malbec and beef	Malbec is Argentina's most interesting wine. Its exotic nature allows it to be paired with beef prepared as empanadas, roasted, or barbecued.

flavors that crosses cultural boundaries. The upcoming sections and exercises investigate many of these traditional relationships.

WINE, FOOD, AND TOURISM

Does gastronomic identity have implications for wine or food tourism? The interest in food as a travel motivation has been clearly documented as a type of special-interest tourism. In gastronomic tourism, visitors travel to go to a specific restaurant, market area, or winery, with nearly all of the trip's activities related to food and other gastronomic endeavors.

As shown by the earlier discussion of Chef John Folse, the ability to leverage a gastronomic identity in a business model can be used to attract customers with a variety of interests. In this example, part of the value added is the education of the consumer—tying together history, culture, and food products to create a unique bundle of activities.

BEEF & WINE

A GUIDE TO PAIRING FOR PROFIT

ADVICE FROM
World-Renowned
Wine Expert
Karen
MacNeil
Author of *The Wine Bible*

SELL MORE BEEF. SELL MORE WINE.

The marriage of beef and wine used to be as easy as steak and something rich and red. While that idea remains a favorite classic, today's menus offer a brave new world of possibilities—and today's beef might mean anything from Thai steak salad to fajitas or Tuscan braised short ribs. As for wine, thousands of brands are now available in the United States. At no other time in history have the possibilities of pairing beef and wine been so thrilling, so delicious, so limitless. So how can you make sense of all the options?

More than 50% of full-service restaurants surveyed say steak has a positive impact on the sale of wine.

"2007 Volumetric Assessment of Beef in Foodservice" study by Technomic, Inc.*

The truth is, there are no rigid rules. Extraordinary flavor affinities do exist, but they are not the predictable result of scientific principles. Rather, great matches are born from instinct, imagination, and a lot of fun experimentation. And when they happen, "wow" moments of beef and wine are like sensory fireworks. From a taste perspective, they're the equivalent of 1 + 1 = 3.

One thing is certain. Beef and wine share more than just flavor affinities. They're both about experience. More than most foods and most beverages, beef and wine are sensual and deeply rooted in pleasure and satisfaction. That adds up to a simple, powerful strategy for building check averages: sell more beef, sell more wine. It's a synergy that can give a boost to two of the highest-ticket items on your menu. And the more you know about pairing, the better it works.

*Funded by The Beef Checkoff

BEEF & WINE: PRINCIPLES OF PAIRING

After years of pairing different beef dishes and hundreds of different wines, here are some of the principles I've found:

- **Pair great with great, humble with humble.** Aged prime rib is far more satisfying when it's served with a wine of commensurate greatness. Similarly, pot roast feels just right with a juicy, humble wine.
- **Work with natural flavor affinities.** As any good cook knows, coffee and cream have an affinity for each other that coffee and basil do not. So trust your instincts when it comes to beef and wine. Beef's density and deep flavors have an affinity with rich, powerful wines. Fragile wines or extremely light-bodied ones may taste out of place.
- **Complex wines go with simple preparations.** Many of the greatest bordeaux or California cabernet sauvignons are best enjoyed with a high-quality but simple dish, such as a fine steak.
- **Robust seasonings require robust wines.** Beef dishes with bold/spicy/hot flavors are perfect for spicy, big-flavored wines. Which is one reason many Latin beef dishes work so well with zinfandel, and why certain "pyrotechnic" Asian beef dishes with lots of chile heat or piquancy from ingredients like garlic and ginger are so good with outrageously fruity gewürztraminers.
- **Watch "weight" when pairing.** Besides the intensity of the flavor, the sheer weight of the beef dish and the weight (or "body") of the wine should be in harmony. A light-bodied wine will feel about as weighty as skim milk in your mouth; a full-bodied wine will feel like half-and-half. If the beef dish is hearty and substantial, it will work best with a wine that's full in body.
- **Fruitiness in food and fruitiness in wine have natural synergy.** Dishes with a significant fruit component to them—a Moroccan tagine made with dried fruit, for example—often pair beautifully with fruity red wines like gamay (the grape that makes beaujolais) or Australian shiraz.
- **Tannin can be beef's best friend.** Tannin is a compound that comes from grape skins and seeds. Some grape varieties, such as cabernet sauvignon, merlot, petite sirah and nebbiolo, are naturally high in this compound. Tannin acts as the wine's structure, and wines that are high in tannin are usually described as "big." Tannin tastes bitter (like dark chocolate or espresso) and feels dry (like fine-gauge sandpaper). High-tannin wines taste best with dense foods that are rich in both protein and marbling (like beef), which offset this bitterness and dryness.
- **Don't forget rosés.** Rosé wines, often overlooked, are wonderful with a surprising range of beef dishes. Rosés have the earthy, bold red-fruit character of red wine and the freshness and acidity of white wine. This combination is an enormous asset with certain beef dishes—especially those that include highly pungent ingredients, such as garlic. In the Mediterranean, for example, aioli and other garlicky foods are always served with a chilled dry rosé.
- **Balance salty with sweet.** Salty foods dull the flavor of many wines, making them taste neutral. This is an important consideration for beef dishes seasoned with a significant amount of soy sauce. Acidity can counterbalance a food's saltiness, but another brilliant strategy is to juxtapose that saltiness with a touch of sweetness. An Asian beef stir-fry seasoned with soy sauce, for example, is terrific with an off-dry gewürztraminer.

BEEF & WINE: PAIRING Q&A

1. ***Beef and wine are a classic match. What makes them taste so good together?***

Beef and wine have an undeniable affinity for one another. The profound, meaty, complex, rich flavor of beef is complemented by a beverage that's equally complex, savory and rich. Nothing fits the bill better than wine. There's also the all-important issue of texture. Mouthfilling concentrated wines provide just the right counterbalance to beef's dense texture. Like the perfect gastronomic seesaw, a sip of the wine makes you want another bite of the beef, and a bite of the beef makes you want a sip of the wine.

2. Which wine varietal overall is most "beef flexible"?

Cabernet sauvignon. Among the most powerful and concentrated red varietals, cabernet sauvignon can also be elegant at the same time. For its part, beef has a flavor that's bold and yet refined at the same time. In this way, cabernet "mirrors" beef, creating a whole that's greater than the sum of the parts. Cabernet sauvignon also possesses a considerable amount of tannin, which gives it the structure and intensity to pair well with beef.

3. Does the cut of beef matter when choosing a wine?

Yes. Certain cuts of beef like flank steak and chuck are often very flavorful. They need a wine that's bold and lipsmacking. Simple but fruity merlots and zinfandels work well, as do most inexpensive reds from Australia—which are super-fruity and usually soft as velvet. "Middle meat" cuts from the rib and loin—like tenderloin, strip steak and prime rib—are at their best with more sophisticated, complex (expensive) wine.

4. How do seasonings and spices impact a wine choice?

Seasonings and spices often act as a bridge to wines. As a simple example, sprinkling beef with some cracked black pepper helps the dish marry well with syrah/shiraz, which has a black pepper–like flavor. Herbs in a beef dish can underscore the hint of herbal flavor in many cabernet sauvignons and bordeaux. The seasonings to be careful with are hot chiles, which can make a wine taste hollow. Chiles need a cushion of sweetness to land on, so fiery-hot beef dishes often do best with a white wine that has a bit of residual sugar. Wines with a lot of oak flavor often need a bridge to connect them to beef. Toasted nuts, brown butter and sesame oil are all excellent bridges to oaky chardonnay.

5. What about cooking method?

Cooking method, too, should influence wine choice. One of the best American wine and food marriages is grilled steak and a big, oak-aged cabernet sauvignon. The flame-seared flavors and crusty texture imparted by grilling are echoed by the toasty oak of the wine. Similarly, soft, braised beef dishes taste best with wines that feel soft and seamless on the palate. That's the principle behind beef stew and red burgundy (pinot noir).

6. Are white wines an option with beef?

Yes—depending on the dish, many white wines work very well, as do rosés. Thai beef salads and beef stir-fries are fantastic with minerally rieslings from Germany. Steak salads with greens and vegetables are terrific with sauvignon blancs, which have a "green" flair of their own. And with garlicky beef dishes, a dry rosé is a must-try experience.

7. How does marbling affect wine?

Since fat is a carrier of flavor, marbling gives beef richness. The more marbling the beef has, the more dense and concentrated the wine should be. A well-marbled piece of beef should not be served with a light-bodied wine, since the wine will taste frail next to all that beefy flavor. Instead, opt for a powerhouse—a wine that's muscular enough to balance the richness.

8. If the wine is rare and expensive, what sorts of beef dishes would work best?

Simple, expensive ones. A beef dish with loads of ingredients and flavors happening all at once will take the limelight off the wine and make it taste neutral. A good rule of thumb is: The more expensive and rare the wine, the more you should opt for "luxury" cuts of beef (prime rib, tenderloin, ribeye and so on) and then prepare the meat utterly simply.

9. Are there a few best wine bets when the beef dish is humble (e.g., pot roast)?

One of the principles of good pairing is matching wines and foods of the same "status." A simple pot roast doesn't require a super expensive bordeaux. In fact, the two can feel wrong together. For example, you can pair humble, flavorful, no-fuss cuts of beef, like ribs, with humble, flavorful, no-fuss wines—juicy, inexpensive reds from Argentina, Spain or the south of France. However, when a fine New York strip or prime rib is being served, a more complex, expensive wine (such as a top-flight bordeaux or a great American cabernet) is definitely in order.

10. Last but not least, what's the biggest "no-no" in beef and wine pairing?

The biggest mistake in pairing beef and wine is adding blue cheese to the dish. Blue cheese is one of the most powerfully pungent, salty and microbial foods. It makes most wines—red and white—taste dull and insipid. So save the blue cheese for dessert and serve it with a sweet fortified wine such as port.

UPSELLING TIPS

- Feature one or two wine recommendations on the menu, adjacent to beef menu items; consider one that's by the glass and one by the bottle.
- Conduct waitstaff tastings of great beef and wine pairings; the more your staff enjoys a pairing, the more likely they will be to sell it.
- Train staff to get in the habit of suggesting by the glass offerings with beef dishes, and provide plenty of descriptive language for them to bring the pairing to life: "We've got a really juicy, soft zinfandel that'll be perfect with that, for $X a glass."
- Offer a taste of a by the glass wine when you bring the beef dish to the table. Tasting the wine with the beef dish is worth a thousand words and will likely lead to a sale.
- Offer wine flights of three or four small servings of wine so guests can experience the interplay of several wine flavors with their beef dish.
- Pair two different wines with two different beef cuts and offer as a small plate with wines to match.
- Invite winemakers to participate in special winemaker dinners focused on wine and beef dishes.
- Invest in supplemental education for your beverage manager so that he or she is well informed, can keep up with trends and is able to train staff to be comfortable suggesting beef and wine pairings.

Karen MacNeil *is a writer, educator and winner of two James Beard awards. She is the author of the award-winning book* The Wine Bible*; the host of the Emmy Award-winning television show* Wine, Food, and Friends*; and the chairman of the Wine Studies Program at the Culinary Institute of America, Greystone.*

For more information, contact
Foodservice Marketing
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
www.beeffoodservice.com

BEEF
Funded by
The Beef
Checkoff

©2008 Cattlemen's Beef Board and National Cattlemen's Beef Association

FOOD HARMONY AND MOLECULAR SOMMELLERIE

THE GENESIS OF A NEW HARMONIOUS SCIENCE BALANCING CUISINE, WINE, AND WINE AND FOOD PAIRINGS

'The process determines the product. If you don't change the process, you will always end up with the same product."

FRANCO DRAGONE, DIRECTOR, CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

SCIENCE AND WINE, SCIENCE AND CUISINE… SCIENCE AND WINE AND FOOD PAIRINGS!

Since the end of the 1980s, wine growers have benefited from scientific advances in winemaking in order to better understand their profession, which had often been learned empirically. At the four corners of the earth, even in those regions where scarcely twenty years ago it would have been unthinkable to cultivate wine grapes profitably, winemakers are now producing the best wines in history.

Since the mid-1990s, the results of scientific research on molecular gastronomy (a discipline dating back to the early 1980s), first conducted in laboratories and then adapted to

'The upheavals of modern science have transformed our understanding of what knowledge is. Scientific knowledge is, from a practical point of view, the most exact and the most useful knowledge that we humans possess. Therefore, to be credible, every notion describing knowledge must also apply to scientific knowledge."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

FRANÇOIS CHARTIER SHOWING SOME OF HIS SKETCHES

LOOKING FOR FOOD PARTICLES

Since then, I have been researching "volatile molecules" and charting in detail foods' aromatic compounds—starting with my "bridge ingredients," as described in my book *À table avec François Chartier*. I established the potential correlations among wine and food components with the goal of creating more precise wine and food pairings and opening new pairing vistas.

To reach my goal, I held discussions, exploratory meetings, and collaborations both in Quebec—with, among others, Dr. Richard Béliveau and the Food Research and Development Centre of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada—and in Europe, with the Bordeaux wine scientist Pascal Chatonnet, chef Ferran Adrià of the Catalan restaurant elBulli, and members of the food research center Alícia, located near Barcelona.

In addition, I had several exchanges with food science and molecular biology researchers, including Martin Loignon, Ph.D., as well as with wine scientists

Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc—and let's not forget sherries, whether fino, amontillado, or oloroso, and certain naturally sweet wines.

SCIENCE: AN END IN ITSELF?

"Over the course of the twentieth century, science has undergone profound changes. This has led, among other consequences, to the idea that our most advanced knowledge is merely made up of fallible theories subject to modification. Sooner or later, today's theories will be replaced by better ones. Human knowledge is fallible precisely because it comes from human beings; and now we are confronted with this discovery: science does not consist of unchanging certainties."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

WHAT PATH LED ME HERE?

- I spent twenty years developing wine and food pairings by redefining from the very beginning what had been considered "absolute references" (1989-1992).

- I started by selecting the wine.

CHARTIER IN THE KITCHEN OF ELBULLI, ACCOMPANIED BY JULI SOLER AND FERRAN ADRIÀ, AS WELL AS JOSEP ROCA, SOMMELIER OF THE RESTAURANT EL CELLER DE CAN ROCA

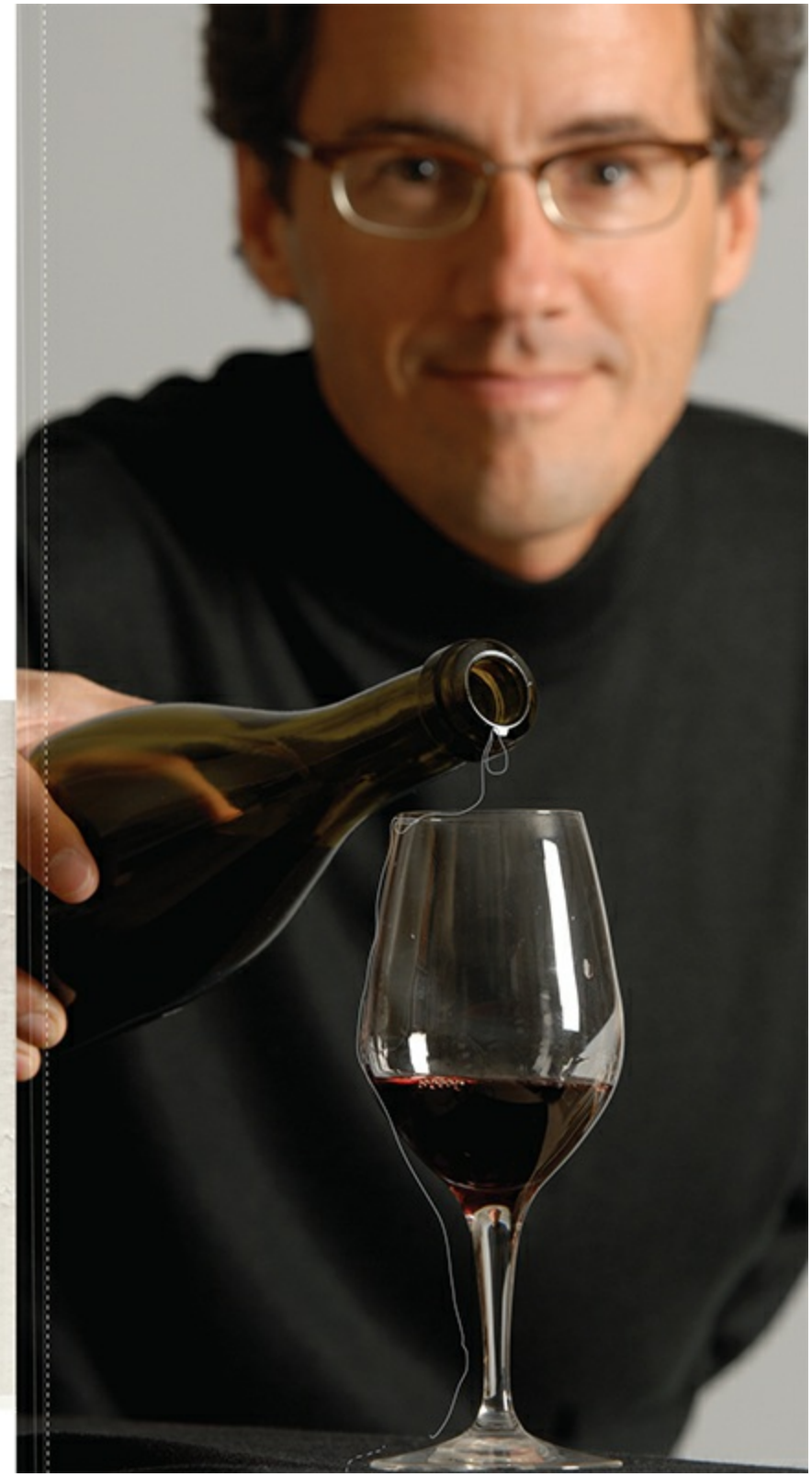
collaboration during the first two Montréal Passion Vin galas), Besson from Laloux, de Canck from La Chronique, Desjardins from l'Eau à la Bouche, Fradeau from the Hotel Vogue, Gaildraud and Halbig from the Bistro à Champlain, Godbout from Chez l'Épicier, Laloux from the caterers Laloux, Laprise from Toqué!, Lemieux from Bouchon de Liège, Picard from Le Club des Pins (now with Au Pied de Cochon), Massenavette from La Clef des Champs, Claude Pelletier from Mediterraneo (now with Le Club Chasse et Pêche), and Tavares from the Ferreira Café. I also want to note my collaboration with two great French chefs on their visits to Quebec: Paul Bocuse from Bocuse and Philippe

in successful wine and food pairings. So I redirected my research towards these bridge ingredients (2002-2006).

Ever since 2006, one thing has been certain: given the omnipresence of creative, avant-garde cuisine influenced by molecular gastronomy research—thanks to the joint efforts of scientists and chefs, including Ferran Adrià of elBulli—we absolutely must redefine wine's place at the table. In fact, this new cuisine will considerably influence our food preparation methods and how we eat over the course of the next fifteen years.

- Since the spring of 2006, I have entirely devoted myself to this

- At the same time (2006), after several months of reflection, I integrated scientific findings into my work in order to better understand the wine and food pairings that I had been applying for the last twenty years. I did so especially to identify why certain ingredients become the harmonious bridges to some kinds of wines. This gave birth to the field that I call food harmony and molecular sommellerie.
- Since then, thanks to the scientific literature and my collaborations with scientists, I have been able to discover the principal aromatic molecules that define the structural identity of foods and wines. This has allowed me to determine why some pairings work so well and to create new harmonious bridges, both on the plate and between plate and glass.



THE PRAGMATISM OF C. S. PEIRCE

Another theory, expressed by the American mathematician and

'un into difficulties, we try to mprove the theory, and perhaps even replace it. This means that scientific knowledge is not a collection of certainties, but explanations. Enhancing scientific knowledge does not mean adding new certainties to previously existing ones, but replacing present explanations with better ones.

CONTINUING RESEARCH IN FOOD HARMONY AND MOLECULAR SOMMELLERIE?

would certainly need a good wenty years to survey all the oods and wines that are found on our table.

I will continue my discussions, ny collaborations, and my exploratory meetings, in Quebec and abroad, with researchers, wine scientists, chemists, and chefs—in particular with Juli Soler and Ferran Adrià of elBulli, where worked as a pairing consultant, as well as with the Fundació Alícia center for scientific studies n gastronomy.

And, certainly, I will work to prepare a second volume, extending this initial volume to

MINT AND SAUVIGNON BLANC

AN OPEN DOOR INTO THE WORLD OF ANISE-FLAVORED FOODS AND WINES

"The art of the good researcher is above all to ask the right questions. Einstein was a real master."
HUBERT REEVES

MINT: THE FIRST AROMATIC TRACK

In the course of my research, I tried to identify those molecules responsible for the flavors of given foods, especially the harmonic bridge ingredients. I noticed that foods could be divided into large aromatic families so as to provide greater precision when looking for harmonious wine and food pairings or inventing new culinary dishes.

We can note, for instance, a particular correspondence between mint and Sauvignon Blanc, as well as among dishes dominated by foods rich in volatile anise-like compounds, such as mint.

BIRTH OF A DISCIPLINE

After having delved into the aromatic world of vin jaune (yellow wine) and curry (see the Sotolon" chapter), the harmonious pairing of mint and Sauvignon Blanc was the first

So I started out trying to establish a molecular understanding of mint and Sauvignon Blanc in order to determine the reason for their mutual attraction. Later on, to my great surprise, I was able to establish (first on paper, later in the kitchen) the multiple aromatic links among mint and other herbs and vegetables sharing the anise-like taste of mint and Sauvignon Blanc. I started with green basil, fresh fennel, celery, chervil, parsley, and certain root vegetables such as carrots. When I tasted them individually, these foods always seemed to have a touch of anise. But to establish the links uniting them, I had to make a more "scientific" connection.

In the course of my work, while creating tables organized by volatile compounds, I came to understand that all these ingredients were interconnected by an assembly of similar aromatic molecules possessing

HARMONIC PROOF…

I had right before my eyes (and on my taste buds!) both the theoretical and practical confirmation that my pairing theory made sense. Since then, I've taken it upon myself to survey the greatest possible number of wines and foods with the goal of uncovering new harmonic families. This knowledge offers a new road to creative cuisine, both for professional chefs and for inexperienced cooks. This process is well under way and continues to inspire me. I hope that this book, which offers a sampling of my research, will be the first in a long line to come.

HERBS AND VEGETABLES TASTING OF ANISE

Herbs and vegetables with an anise-like taste usually come from one of three families: Apiaceae (Umbelliferae), which includes chervil and fennel; Asteraceae, which includes tarragon; and Lamiaceae, which includes basil and peppermint.

These basic ingredients contain anise-flavored compounds such as anethole (green anise, badian palate" (taste memory). This set the stage for a harmonious combination of ingredients on the plate, which in turn led to more vibrant recipes and an aromatic osmosis with the selected wine. This process culminated in wine and food pairings that were just as harmonious and yet even more precise than ever before.

Let's take, for example, my idea of redefining the mythical Gargouillou of young vegetables," a signature dish of Michel Bras, the famous chef of the restaurant Laguiole in Aubrac, France. The idea was to decompose this jumble of vegetables and herbs to include only ingredients that taste of anise—in other words, foods from the Apiaceae, Asteraceae, and Lamiaceae families.

The result was a made-to-order salad (what a salad!) in perfect harmony with a white wine with the same anise-like tones—for example, a young, dry, non-oaked white wine based on Sauvignon Blanc or Verdejo. The dish is also compatible with wines based on Albariño, Greco di Tufo, Vermentino, Pinot Blanc, Furmint, Chenin Blanc, and

1. COMPLEMENTARY FOODS

ANISE-FLAVORED/MINT/SAUVIGNON BLANC

COLD-TASTING SANDWICH
EN MODE ANISÉ (ANISE-FLAVORED)

mint—accompanied by a purée of oot vegetables such as parsnips or Jerusalem artichokes.

Pair the meal with a wine such as Sauvignon Blanc, and you'll easily have an almost perfect union of elements. No more false notes, as so often happens when the accompanying vegetables don't match the wine selected for the fish or meat.

All too often, wine is chosen to go with the main element of a dish (meat or fish, for example) without consideration of the vegetables, sauce, and other meal components. A fuller understanding of food flavors and wines makes it easier than ever to take into account all components of a given dish. Doing so will increase the meal's harmony and the success of the wine pairing.

SOMMELIER-COOK'S HINT

An anise-flavored sandwich that's quite cool. Make a goat cheese sandwich with thin, crunchy slices of green or red apple, accompanied by a julienne of fresh fennel (or slices of yellow beets) and cucumber, accompanied by fresh mint and

ANISE-FLAVORED MOLECULES

As I mentioned before, volatile anise-flavored compounds are chiefly found at various concentration levels in vegetables and herbs of the following families: Apiaceae (umbellifers), Asteraceae, and Lamiaceae. Figure 2 shows some of the major volatile compounds in these anise-flavored foods.

The dominant molecules of anise-type aromas are anethole and estragole, which are found chiefly in Chinese star anise (badian), green basil, fresh fennel, celery, chervil, and tarragon, and to a lesser extent in fresh apples.

Foods rich in anethole include

eally the case for red beets, which are fruitier and earthier asting due to the presence of geosmin, a volatile molecule with a strong odor of wet earth/rotting wood, an aroma considered a ault when found in wine.

COLD-TASTING" FOODS

Mint is one of a group of "cold-asting" foods. I chose this term because of various aromatic compounds such as menthol, or estragole in apples, that provide a cooling sensation in the mouth.

Menthol occurs in all types of nint. A small quantity sets off the nouth's thermal cold receptors. A arge quantity has a burning effect, the way capsaicin does in not peppers. Just like apples, green peppers, and cucumbers,