

Hedonistic Pairings: Indulge In Chocolate and Wine!

If the mere mention of chocolate and wine makes your mouth beg, rest assured these best-of-both-worlds pairings are a match made in heaven. Chocolate, like wine, is often concurrently sweet, bitter, acidic and fruity, which means the intensity of the wine should be comparable. If you've had chocolate and wine pairings that aren't compatible, more than likely the culprit is the chocolate. A lively dark or bittersweet chocolate will result in the most consistent taste; however, go ahead—be adventurous—just keep the following “rules” in mind:

1. **How Sweet It Is:** To avoid the relationship going sour, wine should be as sweet, preferably sweeter than the chocolate.
2. **On Common Ground:** Match lighter flavored chocolate with lighter-bodied wines; likewise, the stronger the chocolate, the more full-bodied the wine should be.
3. **Milk It For What It's Worth:** Milk chocolate is the trickiest when it comes to pairing with wine. Try a soft and fruity Pinot Noir or a lighter Merlot, which highlight the chocolate and milk content while balancing the sweetness.
4. **On the Lighter Side:** When pairing white chocolate, hold off on the bubbly, it's too sweet. White chocolate's rich, buttery flavor with fruit and vanilla notes is an ideal mate for an off-dry Riesling or an un-oaked fruity Chardonnay.
5. **The Best for Last:** Who doesn't love a show-stopping, ultra-rich, chocolate dessert? Their flavor is grand but they are much too sweet for most table wines. Instead, go for a sweet dessert wine or Port.

Midwest Wines to Pair with Chocolate

Tassel Ridge Winery 2006 Finale Premier Red is featured on our cover. This “dessert-in-a-bottle” is the perfect compliment to high-cocoa solids like dark chocolate, but not the too-sweet milk chocolates. In 2008, Finale Premier Red won three awards, including Gold at the 2008 Mid-American Food Pairing Wine Competition.

Other award-winning wines dessert wines include:

- Snus Hill Vineyard & Winery (IA) Frontenac Dessert Wine, a sweet, fortified ruby port-style, which won Silver at the 2008 Mid-American Wine Competition.

- Snus Hill Vineyard & Winery (IA) Seyval Dessert won Gold at the 2008 Mid-American Wine Competition.
- Eagles Landing Winery (IA) 2007 Big Red won Gold at the Mid-American Wine Competition. This semi-sweet, red-raspberry wine is delightful chilled and served with chocolate cake or brownies.
- Prairie Moon Winery (IA) Winter Moon Ice Wine is a unique dessert wine made from grapes picked when frozen on the vine. It pairs well with fine chocolate.
- Galena Cellars (IL) Vin de Chocolate NV, Bronze at the 2008 Mid-American Wine Competition and Frontenac Port, a triple Gold winner at the 2008 Illinois State Fair Indy Wine Competition.
- Blue Sky Vineyards (IL) Chambourcin Port, emphasizes the fresh characteristics of the Chambourcin grape and pairs well with chocolate, nuts and coffee flavors.

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