

Instead of pairing wine with food,
pair food with wine for an innovative
twist on the wine-tasting party

perfect pairs

PINOT NOIR +
RISOTTO-STUFFED
MUSHROOMS, p. 51 

Oenologists (wine scientists and specialists) and sommeliers are often called on to match wine with food. But what happens when you flip the selection process and ask wine experts to choose the food that best complements a type of wine? We quizzed experts on which foods they would serve to enhance and showcase the complex flavors of a variety of wines. Then we paired their selections with easy-to-make hors d'oeuvres for a full-bodied wine-tasting party to enjoy with friends.



CAVA BRUT OR CHAMPAGNE + PARMESAN CHEESE

Jacob Kiel, wine director at Hotel Fauchère in Milford, Pa., says salty Parmesan cheese is a perfect foil for the crispness and delicate acidity of Spanish or French sparkling wine. Parmesan's texture matches the nutty flavors present in the sparkling wine, drawing out notes tasting of lightly toasted bread.

Parmesan Tasting Platter

SERVES 8

This sampling of breadsticks, nuts, and fresh and dried fruits showcases the complex flavors of Parmesan cheese.

PARMESAN CRISPS

4 oz. grated Parmesan cheese

PLATTER

8 oz. good-quality Parmesan cheese

broken into small chunks

1 3-oz. box grissini (crispy breadsticks)

2 pears, each cored and cut into 8 wedges

2 medium-tart apples, each cored

and cut into 8 wedges

6 dried figs, cut into ½-inch pieces

8 dried apricots, halved

1 cup celery sticks

1 cup toasted whole hazelnuts

½ cup raisins

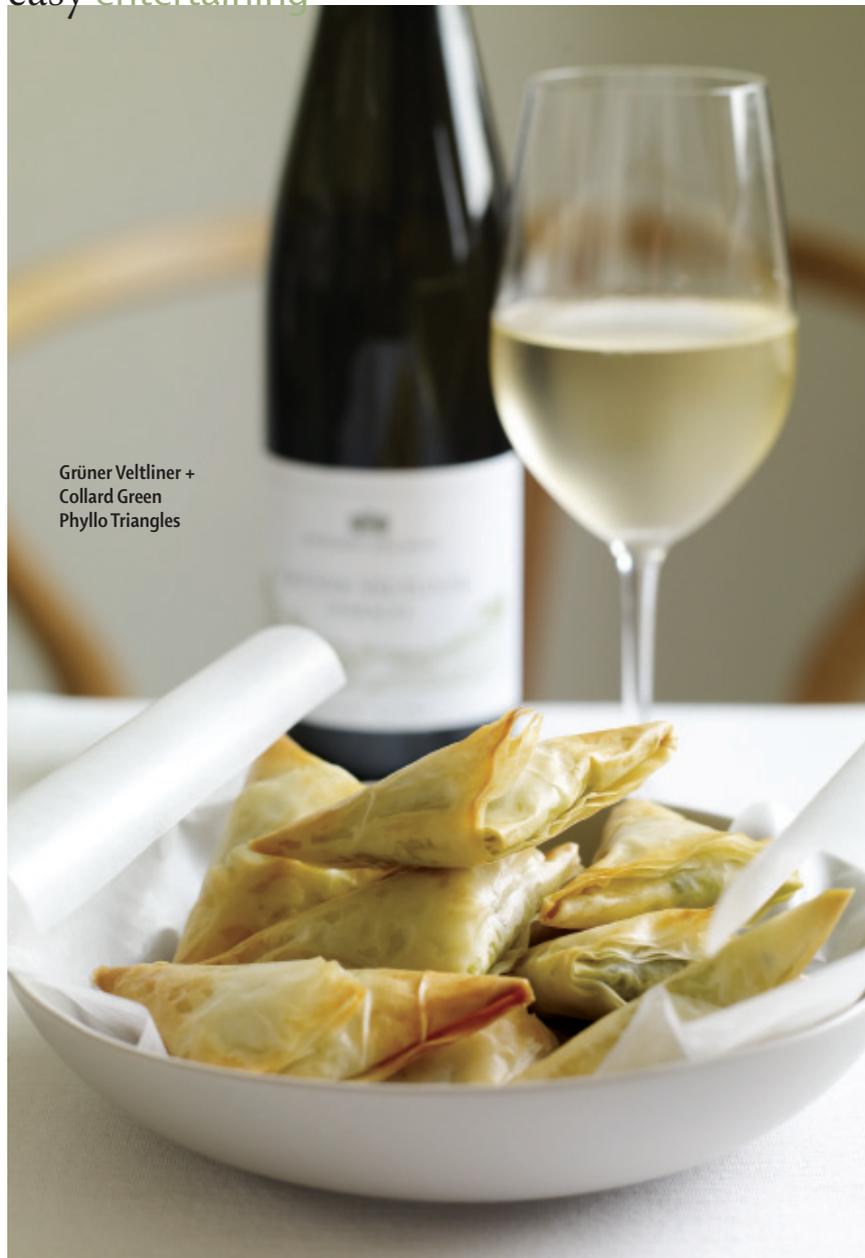
½ cup dried cherries

Aged balsamic vinegar, optional

1. To make Crisps: Preheat oven to 325°F, and line baking sheet with silicone baking mat. Spread tablespoonfuls of grated cheese into thin circles on baking mat. Bake 15 to 18 minutes, or until cheese has stopped bubbling, looks dry, and begins to brown. Cool on baking mat, then remove with spatula.

2. To assemble Platter: Arrange Parmesan Crisps and all other ingredients on large platter. Provide toothpicks, and encourage guests to try chunks of cheese with different items when tasting wine.

PER PARMESAN CRISP: 20 CAL; 2 G PROT; 1 G TOTAL FAT (<1 G SAT FAT); <1 G CARB; 4 MG CHOL; 72 MG SOD; 0 G FIBER; <1 G SUGARS



Grüner Veltliner +
Collard Green
Phyllo Triangles

Collard Green Phyllo Triangles

MAKES 16 | 30 MINUTES OR FEWER

If you want to tame the taste of collard greens in the filling for these triangles, halve the amount of greens, then mash them with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup firm tofu.

- 16 oz. collard greens, stemmed and coarsely chopped
- 1 large shallot, coarsely chopped
- 2 Tbs. olive oil, plus more for brushing phyllo
- 1 clove garlic, minced (1 tsp.)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. balsamic vinegar
- 12 sheets thawed phyllo dough (6 oz.)
- 1 small pear, peeled and thinly sliced

1. Pulse collard greens and shallot in food processor until finely chopped.
2. Heat oil in large skillet over medium heat. Add collard mixture and garlic, and sauté 5 to 7 minutes, or until collards have shrunk and are tender, and most of liquid has evaporated. Stir in vinegar, season with salt and pepper (if desired), and set aside to cool.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat baking sheet with cooking spray, or line with parchment paper. Place 1 phyllo sheet with long side closest to you on clean work surface; cover remaining phyllo sheets with damp kitchen towel to prevent drying. Brush phyllo sheet with oil. Stack 2 more phyllo sheets on top, brushing each with oil. Cut phyllo stack lengthwise into 4 strips.
4. Spoon 1 Tbs. collard mixture $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from a short end of 1 phyllo strip. Top with 1 pear slice. Fold upper corner over filling to make a triangle. Continue folding triangle onto itself, across, and down to make triangle packet. Transfer to prepared baking sheet. Repeat with remaining phyllo strips, then repeat entire process with remaining phyllo sheets, collard mixture, and pear slices.
5. Brush triangles with oil, and sprinkle with kosher or sea salt, if desired. Bake 15 to 18 minutes, or until golden brown.

PER TRIANGLE: 68 CAL; 1 G PROT; 3 G TOTAL FAT (<1 G SAT FAT); 9 G CARB; 0 MG CHOL; 56 MG SOD; 1 G FIBER; 1 G SUGARS 

GRÜNER VELTLINER + COLLARD GREENS

Bitter greens with wine? Surprising, but true. Portland, Ore.-based Pamela Heiligenthal, editor of Enobytes.com, says the pungent tang of the collards complements the earthy, mineral taste of Grüner Veltliner, while the greens' delicate mustard flavors bring out the citrusy character of this off-dry white wine. She suggests a Grüner Veltliner from the Kamptal, Kremstal, or Wachau regions of Austria, or else from New Zealand. Grü-V is the hipster wine lover's name for this increasingly popular varietal. A spicy Italian Verdicchio would work equally well.

Choose wine glasses that are tulip-shaped and large enough (at least 16-ounce capacity) to comfortably tilt, swirl, and shift around the wine.

easy entertaining

CABERNET FRANC + ROSEMARY + CHÈVRE

The sharp flavors of rosemary and chèvre (goat cheese) complement the high acidity and fruit-forward flavors of Cabernet Franc.

The herb's pine-like fragrance works well with the dusty characteristics of this red wine. Heiligenthal suggests a Cabernet Franc from the Loire Valley. A Spanish Mencia is equally good but may be a little harder to find. If you can't find either varietal, choose a cooler-climate Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon from Washington state or California's North or Central Coast.

Endive Petals with Rosemary Chèvre

MAKES 32 PETALS | 30 MINUTES OR FEWER

The rosemary–goat cheese filling here can be made up to two days ahead. Arrange the finished petals in concentric circles on a large round platter for an elegant flower-like presentation.

- 8 oz. fresh chèvre or goat cheese (2 4-oz. logs)
- 2 small shallots, finely chopped (¼ cup)
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 4 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary

- ½ tsp. cracked black pepper
- 32 small red or green endive leaves (about 4 heads endive)
- 32 candied pecan or walnut halves

1. Mash chèvre in bowl until chunky. Stir in shallots, oil, rosemary, and pepper, and season with salt, if desired.
2. Spoon 2 tsp. chèvre mixture on widest end of each endive leaf, and top each with 1 candied pecan. Set leaves in circular pattern on serving platter.

PER ENDIVE PETAL: 38 CAL; 2 G PROT; 3 G TOTAL FAT (1 G SAT FAT); 1 G CARB; 3 MG CHOL; 33 MG SOD; <1 G FIBER; <1 G SUGARS **CF**

PINOT NOIR + MUSHROOMS

Wine journalist and author Steven Kolpan, professor and chair of wine studies at The Culinary Institute of America, says oyster, shiitake, and other wild mushrooms in a risotto are a great match for a fruity red wine such as Pinot Noir. The mushrooms' earthiness contrasts nicely with and also brings out the fruit in the wine. Plus, the creaminess of the risotto cuts the tannins in the wine, which further amps up the fruitiness. Kolpan suggests Valpolicella if you like a lighter, fruitier red, or a bold Zinfandel if you prefer your reds more robust.

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Endive leaves
make beautiful
serving cups for
spreads and soft
cheeses. Try them
alongside other
crudités for
dipping as well.



Risotto-Stuffed Mushrooms

MAKES 32

Because risotto is not easy to eat at a wine-tasting party, we decided to stuff it in mushroom caps so that it can be served as finger food.

- 32 large white or cremini mushrooms, washed and drained
- 6 oz. oyster or shiitake mushrooms, finely chopped
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- ½ small onion, finely chopped (½ cup)
- 1 clove garlic, minced (1 tsp.)
- ¼ tsp. dried thyme
- ¾ cup Arborio rice
- 2 Tbs. dry white wine
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley

1. Stem white mushrooms, and set caps upside down on baking sheet. Set aside. Chop stems, and add to chopped oyster mushrooms. (You should have about 2 cups total.)
2. Heat oil in medium skillet over medium heat. Add onion, and sauté 2 to 3 minutes, or until translucent. Add chopped mushrooms, and cook 15 to 20 minutes, or until browned. Stir in garlic and thyme; add rice, and cook 2 to 3 minutes, or until rice turns opaque. Add wine; simmer 2 minutes, or until most liquid has evaporated. Add broth, season with salt, and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer 18 to 20 minutes, or until most liquid is absorbed. Remove from heat, and stir in parsley. Cool.
3. Preheat oven to 400°F. Fill each mushroom cap with 1 heaping Tbs. rice mixture. (A small cookie scoop works well.) Bake 20 minutes, or until mushrooms are tender and rice begins to crisp on top.

PER STUFFED MUSHROOM: 32 CAL; 1 G PROT; <1 G TOTAL FAT (<1 G SAT FAT); 5 G CARB; 0 MG CHOL; 12 MG SOD; <1 G FIBER; <1 G SUGARS   

After researching this story, Peggy Myers Walz threw her own tasting party. To read about her wine-shopping experience, check out her blog post on vegetariantimes.com.

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