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Perfect Pairings

German Wines & Asian Flavours

By Jeannie Cho Lee MW

Deutsches Weininstitut

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Perfect Pairings: German Wines & Asian Flavours

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AN OVERVIEW OF German Wines

The innovative wines and sophisticated packages emanating from Germany today please both the palate and the eye. A respect for 2,000 years of viticultural tradition, combined with quality-oriented, environmentally friendly vineyard practices and state-of-the-art cellar technology, put German vintners in the vanguard of contemporary winemakers.

Most of Germany's vineyards are planted on slopes or steep hills topped by protective forests that check the wind, and are almost always near a sun-reflecting river – primarily the Rhine and its tributaries – which help temper the climate. Germany is one of the most northerly wine-growing countries in the world. The growing season is long, with a perfect balance of rainfall and sunshine. This enables grapes to ripen slowly, thus maintaining their fruity acidity while developing natural sugars and absorbing minerals from the soil. The succession of warm days and cool nights in autumn brings forth an aromaticity that is unique in the world.

There is no doubt that Germany is the premier place for high quality Riesling with its transparent, crystalline flavours that can range from dry, crisp styles to unctuously sweet late harvest styles. However, the country is blessed with diverse micro climates that range from warm, sunny southern regions such as Baden or Pfalz to cooler sites such as Saale-Unstrut and Sachsen. All of Germany's winegrowing regions lie within the "cool climate" zone, bordering 50 degrees latitude. The wines are generally lower in alcohol, yet more aromatic and fruitier – perfect prerequisites for a great Asian food companion.



GERMAN WINE REGIONS

AHR - PINOT NOIR COUNTRY

The vineyards of Germany's "red wine paradise" line the valley of the Ahr River, which joins the Rhine south of Bonn. From the heights of a basalt cone to the east or the slate cliffs to the west of the elegant spa Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, there are magnificent views of the steep vineyards. Riesling is the premier white grape, but the tiny region is especially known for its fine red wines, particularly Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) and its early-ripening cousin, the rare Frühburgunder. Portugieser is the other important red wine grape.

BADEN - KISSED BY THE SUN

Warm and sunny Baden, the southernmost region, stretches some 400 km (240 miles) along the Rhine from the Bodensee (Lake Constance) to Heidelberg, taking in the Black Forest as well as the vine-clad terraces of the Kaiserstuhl, a volcanic massif. As in neighbouring Alsace and Switzerland, Baden has a great tradition of wine and food. Dry, food-compatible "Burgunders" (Pinots), red and white, have long been popular throughout the region. Rivaner vineyards are also widespread, while other classic whites, e.g. Riesling, Silvaner, and Gutedel, are more localised.

FRANKEN - BOCKSBEUTEL AND BAROQUE

Franken, the hilly region east of Frankfurt, follows the zigzag of the Main River. Distinctive wines and the Baroque Residence in Würzburg make it a popular destination for art and wine lovers alike. Not only the Bocksbeutel – a flat, round-bellied bottle – but also climate and drier-style wines set Franken apart. Cool climate and soil types make Riesling the exception and earlier-ripening white grapes, e.g. Rivaner or Bacchus, the rule. Above all, the region is known for powerful, earthy Silvaner wines. Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) and Domina, seldom seen elsewhere, are the main red grapes.

HESSISCHE BERGSTRASSE - GERMANY'S SPRING GARDEN

The old Roman trade route Strata Montana (Mountain Road) runs parallel to the Rhine along the foothills of the Odenwald (Oden Forest) south of Frankfurt. Known as "Germany's spring garden" – almond and fruit trees blossom early here – the Bergstrasse landscape is attractive, with castle ruins overlooking the hillside vineyards and orchards. Most of the small region's wines are produced in Bensheim and Heppenheim. Riesling is the predominant variety, accounting for over half the vineyard area, followed by Rivaner and Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris).

MITTEL RheIN - THE ROMANTIC RHINE

The Mittelrhein is the spectacular stretch of the Rhine River between Bonn and Bingen known as the Rhine Gorge. Here the river has carved its course through the slate stone hills to form a steep, narrow valley with a

microclimate in which vines have thrived for 2,000 years. Ancient castle ruins tower over vine-covered cliffs and medieval villages. Steeped in legend (the Loreley rock, the Nibelung dwarfs), the Mittelrhein has long been a source of inspiration to artists and winemakers. Crisp, fragrant Riesling wines are the hallmark of the region.

MOSEL - LEGACY OF THE ROMANS

The valleys of the Mosel River and its tributaries, the Saar and the Ruwer, have been the setting for some of Germany's most romantic wine country since Roman times. Vines and forests carpet the steep slate slopes framing the river as it loops its way toward the Rhine at Koblenz. It is a Riesling region par excellence. These are wines of incomparable finesse, rich in fragrance and fruity acidity and often a mineral undertone. A speciality from the vineyards opposite the country of Luxembourg, southeast of Trier, is Elbling, prized as a racy, light still or sparkling white wine.

NAHE - JEWEL OF THE SOUTHWEST

Nestled between the Mosel and Rhine valleys, the Nahe is named after the river that traverses the forested Hunsrück Hills as it gently flows toward Bingen on the Rhine. Striking rock formations, mineral deposits and gemstones attest to the remarkable geological diversity that also accounts for the Nahe's broad spectrum of wines. Sleek, piquant Riesling, fragrant Rivaner and hearty Silvaner wines are longtime classics. White and red Pinots, e.g. Grauburgunder, Weissburgunder and Spätburgunder, and the red variety Dornfelder are on the rise.

PFALZ - VOLUPTUOUS PLEASURES

For 85 km (53 miles) the Deutsche Weinstrasse (German Wine Road) winds its way through the picturesque villages and lush vineyards between the borders of Rheinhessen and France. Vines thrive in the warm, sunny climate of the Pfalz, yielding voluptuous, full-bodied wines. Riesling, the leading variety, and the white Pinots Weissburgunder and Grauburgunder are among the finest white wines, while Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir), Dornfelder and the rare St. Laurent are foremost for top quality reds. Rivaner and Portugieser are favourites for easy drinking.

RHEINGAU - A TRADITION OF QUALITY

The heart of the Rheingau borders the Rhine on its east-west course from Wiesbaden to Rüdesheim, where noble Riesling and Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) vines cover the slopes of the Taunus Hills. The region's success is due to an optimal climate, perfect southerly exposure and an ongoing commitment to the high quality standards set centuries ago by the Benedictines at Johannisberg, the Cistercians at Kloster Eberbach and the local aristocracy. The fortuitous "Spätlese" (late harvest) at Johannisberg in 1775 set the stage for the rich, ripe Botrytis wines for which Germany is renowned.

RHEINHESSEN - THE “LAND OF A THOUSAND HILLS”

The “Land of a Thousand Hills” lies within the large elbow formed by the Rhine as it flows from Worms to its bend at Mainz, then westward to Bingen. A region of this size, Germany’s largest, offers a great diversity of wines. Innovative varietal wines, such as RS (Rheinhessen Silvaner) or Selection Rheinhessen, and the increasing importance of white and red Pinots highlight the region’s quality potential. The classic whites Rivaner, Silvaner and Riesling predominate, but aromatic varieties are grown too, as are the red grapes Portugieser and Dornfelder.

SAALE-UNSTRUT - A MILLENNIUM OF VITICULTURE

The vineyards of the northernmost German wine region are about equidistant from Weimar and Leipzig. For ten centuries vines have been grown on the steep, terraced, limestone slopes of the Saale and Unstrut river valleys – a gentle landscape of hills ringed by forests, poplar groves and broad plateaus. Freyburg, Naumburg and Bad Kösen are the main towns. It is a small region known for dry varietal wines with a delicately spicy bouquet. Rivaner, Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) and Silvaner are the most important varieties.

SACHSEN - ITALIAN FLAIR ON THE ELBE

Germany’s easternmost wine region lies in the Elbe River Valley. Dresden, nicknamed the “Florence of the Elbe” because of its cultural ambience and mild climate, and Meissen are the main towns. Vines are planted mostly on steep, terraced slopes of granite. Although the palette of Saxon wines is diverse, Rivaner, Riesling and Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) are foremost, and sold as dry varietals. A small quantity of Goldriesling, a rare Riesling-Muscat crossing, is produced – a speciality found nowhere else in Germany.

WÜRTTEMBERG - HOME OF RED WINE SPECIALTIES

Württemberg is a rural, hilly region adjacent to Baden and south of Franken. Metropolitan Stuttgart and Heilbronn are wine centers, but most of the vineyards are scattered amid fields and forests throughout the Neckar River Valley. Red wine predominates and ranges from crisp, light Trollinger – the “Swabian national drink” – to wines with more colour, body and substance, e.g. Schwarzriesling (Pinot Meunier) and Lemberger (Blaufränkisch). Riesling is by far the most important white variety, followed by Kerner, a crossing which has affinities with Riesling.



GERMAN WINE & ASIAN FOOD PAIRING

Jeannie Cho Lee MW



In most Asian meals, it is impossible to think of matching one wine with one dish. A typical Chinese, Korean, Thai or Japanese family meal will consist of rice with six to eight different dishes, including a wide range of condiments and dips. An array of dishes often complement each other – there is always a vegetable dish, a seafood, fish or meat dish, soup and a wide assortment of small, tasty side dishes. Each bite brings about a different combination of flavours – a spoonful of soup, a mix of vegetables and fish, then pork and soup or rice and chicken. Sometimes we repeat a flavour combination because it is so appealing but rarely do we repeat the same flavours throughout an entire meal.

Wines in this setting are not about pairing one dish with one wine – that would be impossible. In this context, we need to place a greater emphasis and importance on specific characters in wine suitable for this type of dining experience: wines with versatility, sufficient acid backbone and seamless texture. Nearly all German wines may be considered versatile due to their firm acidity, elegance and refreshing characters. Whether we choose a dry Riesling or a perfumed Pinot Noir, the beauty of German wines are in their ability to pair with a wide range of ingredients and intense Asian spices.

Firm acidity has other benefits too – it adds refreshment value to the meal and is able to stand up to strong, pungent and even fermented flavours much better than wines that are flabby and fat. Along with acidity, the texture of the wine is crucial to balance the important textural element in many Asian cuisines. In many parts of Asia, ingredients like tofu represent an appreciation for texture in food; other examples include *sashimi* (raw fish), jellyfish, chicken feet and bird’s nest. The texture of wine is equally important and German quality wines fit this criteria for seamless texture.

Our definition of a ‘perfect pairing’ in an Asian dining context needs to be mindful and realistic that one wine will not be sublime with all the dishes on the table. It is important to note that traditional Asian beverages were not chosen and consumed to complement the flavours of the numerous dishes in a typical Asian meal. A perfect pairing with German wine is when wine heightens our appreciation of most, perhaps not all, of the dishes and maintains the integrity of the food’s flavours. A perfect pairing is when the flavours of the meal allow the wine to express itself in a flattering way. A perfect pairing makes us smile as we enjoy the conversation and company as much as the food and wine.



FIVE BASIC ASIAN FLAVOURS AND WINE

SWEET (Fresh and dried fruits, palm sugar, sweet coconut sauces)

IMPACT ON WINE: A dry wine becomes drier, thin, tannic or sour

CHOOSE: Wines that have sufficient or greater sweetness

WHY: Sweetness in food can overwhelm and strip wine's flavours if wine does not have equal or greater sweetness

SOUR (Tamarind, lime juice, green mangoes)

IMPACT ON WINE: Can overpower wine's flavours

CHOOSE: Flavourful, crisp white or medium or light-bodied red wines with high acidity to match the acidity of the dish

WHY: Without adequate acidity in wine, the wine will taste thin with scant flavours; sour dishes often overwhelm full-bodied red wines and can intimidate white wines with insufficient acidity

SALTY (Soy sauce, oyster sauce, shrimp paste, bean paste)

IMPACT ON WINE: Accentuates tannins

CHOOSE: White or red wine with soft tannins, crisp acidity and vibrant fruit profile

WHY: Sufficient fruit is necessary to stand up to the salty flavours thus red wines with moderate rather than high tannins avoid excessive bitterness; high tannins will exaggerate the food's saltiness; firm acidity in white or red wines can decrease the perception of salty flavours

BITTER (Roasted ginkgo nuts, char from hot wok, bitter gourd, ginseng)

IMPACT ON WINE: Enhances tannins in reds while adding a savoury character to whites

CHOOSE: Full-bodied white or red wine with oak maturation

WHY: Bitterness in food can be complemented by bitter-edged red wines with firm tannins or white wines with oak maturation

UMAMI (Fermented beans, dried or cured meats, mushrooms, double-boiled soups, seaweed)

IMPACT ON WINE: Brings out earthy, bitter or savoury notes in wines

CHOOSE: Savoury white or red wine with well-knit tannins and restrained fruit character; mature wines

WHY: Umami is both delicate and savoury, thus wines need equal delicacy and subtlety with emphasis on wine's silky tannin texture and mouthfeel



Cantonese Cuisine

The predominant cuisine in Hong Kong is Cantonese. The term derives from Canton, after the British colonial name for China's Guangdong province, adjacent to Hong Kong. Cantonese food is generally less spicy than other Chinese cuisines, with a strong emphasis on fresh produce, live seafood and a variety of meats. Unusual items in Cantonese fare include chicken or duck's feet and snake.

The mastery of this cuisine is in the combination of fresh ingredients prepared in a way that is light yet flavourful. This is often achieved by stir frying in extremely high heat. *Wok chi*, or *wok qi* in Mandarin, is considered one of the key methods for preserving the freshness in the food while coating the ingredients with just enough sauce to give them flavour. Steaming and roasting, again to enhance the flavours inherent in the ingredients, are equally common.

Seafood is a popular ingredient in Cantonese cooking, as well as roast and barbecued meats. Typical Cantonese dishes include steamed fresh fish with soy sauce, stir-fried clams in black bean sauce and abalone with green onion and ginger sauce. Chicken is a staple of the diet and is often included in double-boiled soups which are an integral part of nearly every meal, regardless of the season.

Dim sum is uniquely Cantonese. These bite-size treats literally mean "from the heart", signifying the care with which they were made. It is often enjoyed in the morning or early afternoon and served with large quantities of freshly brewed tea. Typical *dim sum* includes barbecue pork buns, shrimp dumplings, rice noodle rolls, sticky rice in lotus leaves, turnip pancakes and crispy taro balls.



GERMAN WINES & CANTONESE FOOD

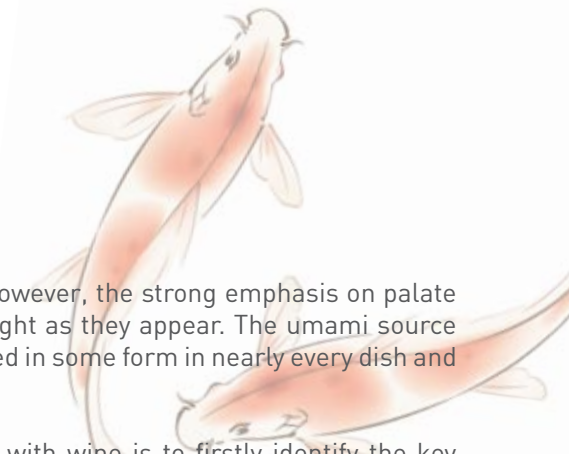
Cantonese food is generally considered light among Asian cuisines. However, the strong emphasis on palate texture and subtle umami elements result in dishes that are not as light as they appear. The umami source comes from the Cantonese kitchen's richly flavoured stock, which is used in some form in nearly every dish and as the base for various sauces and marinades as well as a soup base.

The best way to approach a traditional Cantonese dining experience with wine is to firstly identify the key focal point of the meal, and to secondly identify the strongest flavours on the table. This offers guidance on wine choices that can complement the special highlight dish which may be roast goose or steamed garoupa. Identifying the strongest flavours on the table enables us to narrow our choices and prepares us for how the wine's tannins, acidity, alcohol or flavours may be affected by strong seasonings like black bean sauce or XO sauce.

With Cantonese cuisine, it is important to consider the amount of salt and oil content in the meal and the methods of cooking. Ingredients can offer guidelines but the sauces and seasonings in Cantonese cuisine such as a strong vinegar dip or chilli sauce can impact the flavours of the dish much more than the actual ingredients. For a casual family style meal, one can either choose a wine that is refreshing, palate-cleansing and acts as a backdrop to the food, or stands up boldly to the flavours.

The best white wine choices are medium rather than light-bodied wines with fresh acidity and sufficient mid-palate weight to match the cuisine. Good, versatile white wine options that are wonderful complements to Cantonese meals include dry style Riesling, Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) or Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) from Pfalz or Silvaner from Franken. Light to medium-bodied German reds can work well with Cantonese food, including seafood dishes which have delicate texture, such as steamed garoupa or stir-fried live shrimp. The skillful addition of soy-based sauces, spring onions and garlic to seafood can add a mid-palate richness, which transform these seemingly delicate dishes into more rounded and flavourful dishes to match light to medium-bodied red wines.

Refined meals devoid of aggressive flavours are best suited with subtle, complex wines that have beautiful palate texture to mirror the texture of the food. With their delicate flavours, local favourites such as shark's fin and abalone are usually served as a single dish within a banquet style meal. These multi-course meals often start out with strong flavours and heavy dishes such as roast suckling pig or Peking duck which pair beautifully with the numerous Spätburgunders (Pinot Noir) produced throughout Germany. The lighter-flavoured dishes like vegetables and noodles which are served at the end can be enjoyed with the numerous dry and off-dry styles of Riesling.





while the medium body echoes the weight of the meal, neither too heavy nor too light. A fuller-bodied, more aggressive wine style would detract from the meal, and a very sweet style would alter the flavour integrity of the dishes.

In a formal banquet setting, the Chinese food sequence does not match the normal progression of enjoying light wine first before moving on to heavier, fuller-bodied wines. In this case where food is the focus, choose wines that follow the rhythm of the food; in other words, let the food dictate instead of wine, even if it means red wines are consumed before whites.

If only one wine is chosen for a banquet style meal, then choose a medium-bodied elegant red with low to moderate tannins such as Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from Ahr or a dry style Riesling with sufficient body and weight to balance the flavours and even pair with the meat dishes. The flavours should be substantial enough to stand up to barbecued meats,

CANTONESE FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST

BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT

- Salty ●●●○○
- Sweet ●○○○○
- Bitter ●●●○○
- Sour ●○○○○
- Spicy ●○○○○
- Umami ●●●●●
- Flavour intensity ●●●○○

WINE CONSIDERATIONS

- Sugar Dry or off-dry
- Acid ●●●●○
- Tannin ●●○○○
- Body ●●●○○
- Flavour intensity ●●●○○
- Finish ●●●●○

PALATE SENSATION

- Weight / richness ●●●○○
- Oil ●●●○○
- Texture ●●●●●
- Temperature ●●●●●

Low ●●●●● High

CANTONESE FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS AND RECOMMENDED WINES

Dim Sum & Communal Meals

Typical dishes – Dim sum (steamed buns of barbecued pork, steamed shrimp dumplings, steamed black bean spare ribs, deep-fried stuffed taro root puff, pan-fried radish cake), homestyle dishes

These communal meals incorporate a wide variety of flavours, intensity, body, richness and texture, while also containing moderate umami levels. Flavour combinations of light-steamed seafood to deep-fried spring rolls and barbecued pork buns with condiments such as red wine vinegar, soy sauce, XO sauce, and chilli sauce are very common.

German wine recommendations: Since most German wines are extremely versatile, the choices are very wide. For *dim sum* meals where fried and steamed dishes are served together, a crisp dry or off-dry Riesling from Nahe, Rheingau or Mosel works extremely well. The high acidity balances out any oily notes in fried dishes while it accentuates the citrus and delicate flavours of steamed dishes. Very sweet styles can overwhelm *dim sum* dishes such as steamed vegetable or shrimp dumplings, *har gau*, so opt for the drier styles.

Homestyle communal meals also range from delicate vegetable dishes to simmered meat dishes. Thus fuller-bodied styles tend to work better. Opt for a dry Riesling from the warmer regions of Pfalz or Baden – it works beautifully with a wide variety of dishes. Or try an elegant Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from Ahr or Nahe which is one of the most versatile red wine options for any casual Cantonese meal. Avoid intensely fruity, high alcohol or oaky styles that will compete with the steamed and delicate dishes.

Steamed Seafood

Typical dishes – Steamed garoupa, steamed fresh scallops, steamed crab meat over egg white, steamed fresh shrimp

Steamed seafood dishes are light in body and often delicate with sweet flesh. These dishes are frequently accompanied by a marinade of soy sauce, ginger and spring onion, with very few accompanying condiments.



German wine recommendations: Try one of Germany’s wonderful sparkling wines, Deutscher Sekt, produced throughout the country but especially successful in Rheingau or Rheinhessen. These quality sparkling wines often made from Riesling, Silvaner or Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) are a great backdrop to the delicate seafood dishes and preserve the integrity of these gentle flavours.

Other good wine options include the hearty Silvaner from Nahe or Franken which ranges from lean, Chablis-like in flavour to powerful earthy styles. The Grauburgunders (Pinot Gris) from Nahe or the Weissburgunder from Sachsen are good accompaniments because of their lean focused flavours and minerality.





Stir-Fried Dishes with Black Bean Sauce

Typical dishes – *Stir-fried meats such as beef, chicken or spare ribs, stir-fried crab with black bean sauce, stir-fried clams*

The strong and salty flavour of stir-fried dishes with black bean sauce are combined with high umami and slightly smoky, char notes from being cooked in high heat. Numerous ingredients are combined in a stir fry including meat or seafood and mixed vegetables. The smoky, char notes increase the dish's umami content, flavour and intensity. Depending on the chef's skill, the use of oil will be low to moderate.

German wine recommendations: The perfect wine for the strong flavours of stir-fried dishes with black bean sauce is Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir), preferably from a ripe vintage with intense ripe red berry fruit notes. Spätburgunders from Ahr are always good options but many credible Spätburgunders can be found throughout Germany's thirteen wine regions including Nahe, Franken, Pfalz, Rheingau and especially Baden.

White wines are also an option, but they need to have strong personalities to stand up to the salty, intense black bean sauce. Try full-bodied whites such as dry Riesling, Silvaner or Grauburgunders (Pinot Gris) from warmer regions such as Pfalz, Baden or Rheinhessen.

Roasted & Barbecued Meats

Typical dishes – *Roast duck, roast chicken or goose, barbecued pork, barbecued spare ribs*

The rich and meaty textures are combined with salty, soy-sauce based, lightly sweet flavours. There are contrasting textures between crispy, caramelised outside skin, with juicy, succulent flesh beneath. These dishes have high umami levels as well as high fat content. Rice and noodles are common accompaniments.

German wine recommendations: Full-bodied, ripe Spätburgunders are the best option here but other reds from Germany such as Dornfelder or Portugieser can work well too. Spätburgunders work better with the roast duck while the fuller-bodied Dornfelder and Portugieser will pair better with the barbecued pork or spare ribs. The best wine style with these meat dishes with a slightly sweet soy sauce marinade is a medium to full-bodied red with a good concentration of juicy core fruit and firm tannins.

An off-dry or lightly sweet medium-bodied Riesling can work with the roast goose or chicken dishes, since the sweet glaze of these white meat dishes will echo the sweetness in the wine, while the firm acidity can cut through any fatty elements of the meat.



Shanghainese Cuisine

Shanghainese cuisine is characterised by delicate ingredients combined with prominent flavours such as vinegar and sugar. Compared with Cantonese cuisine, it is oilier and often richer, although the base ingredients may be the same – fresh seafood, vegetables and live poultry. Soy sauce is liberally used in Shanghai and a technique known as “red cooking” is popular – when meat and vegetables are cooked slowly for a long time with soy sauce, rice wine, sugar and ginger root. These stews often contain pork and have a high fat content. Stewed seafood tends to be lighter but still quite oily and rich. The extremely popular *xiazi dawu shen*, dried sea cucumber cooked in oil, *huangjiu*, soybean sauce, sugar and shrimp roe, is hardly light.

Vinegar is also widely used, both as a flavouring ingredient as well as a dip. Special vinegars such as the Zhejiang black rice vinegar from Shanghai's northern neighbour, Jiangsu province, are considered by many to be the best of its type. The tart and slightly sweet taste dominates many Shanghainese dishes, and unlike its northern and western neighbours, spicy chillies rarely feature on the dining menu.

One key aspect of local dining culture is the snacks, or *xiao chi*. The small pork dumplings *xiao long bao*, are a favourite among the locals and famous throughout China. Other well known dumplings include *shuijiao*, boiled meat and vegetable dumplings, and *shengjianbao*, pan-fried meat dumplings, while popular snacks include fried onion cakes, beef soup noodles and *chou* (stinky) tofu.



GERMAN WINES & SHANGHAINESE FOOD

A typical Shanghainese meal includes a large selection of cold appetisers that are often seasoned with a combination of sesame oil, garlic, and vinegar. Popular cold dishes include finely diced vegetables and tofu, sesame oil with chilli-infused cucumbers and shredded chicken slices with sesame oil. An assortment of pickled vegetables is widely consumed and the most common condiments involve a combination of soy sauce, vinegar and ginger.

The use of vinegar, subtle sweetness and the fairly high oil content in many Shanghainese dishes often call for a wine with firm, crisp acidity. The choices within Germany for this style are enormous, whether it is Riesling, Grauburgunder or Silvaner. Whites with concentrated mid-palate weight,

vibrant fruit and firm acidity are great choices for Shanghainese meals. Since many dishes contain a noticeable amount of sweetness, the sweet Rieslings from Kabinett to Auslese styles are perfectly suited for Shanghainese cuisine.

One of the key considerations when choosing a good wine to suit the range of Shanghainese dishes is the acidity level and refreshment value, which needs to be fairly high to stand up to the vinegar elements in the meal. Red wines should be light to medium-bodied from the coolest sites such as the Ahr and Franken. Many dishes are deceptively rich with fairly high umami content, thus mature red Spätburgunders (Pinot Noir) can work extremely well. The wine’s acidity balances the richness and the umami content is echoed in the wine.

Versatility is also important since the wine needs to accompany cold appetisers with strong vinegar and garlic flavours followed by a combination of hot foods which can include braised meats, steamed seafood and salty Jinhua ham-based dishes. Choose wines with a vibrant fruit profile to stand up to the vinegar, ginger and salty flavours.

SHANGHAINESE FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST

BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT

- Salty ●●●○○
- Sweet ●●●●●
- Bitter ●○○○○
- Sour ●●●●●
- Spicy ●○○○○
- Umami ●●●●●
- Flavour intensity ●●●●○

WINE CONSIDERATIONS

- Sugar Dry to sweet
- Acid ●●●●○
- Tannin ●●●○○
- Body ●●●○○
- Flavour intensity ●●●●○
- Finish ●●●○○

PALATE SENSATION

- Weight / richness ●●●○○
- Oil ●●●●●
- Texture ●●●●○
- Temperature ●●●○○

Low ●●●●● High

SHANGHAINESE FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS AND RECOMMENDED WINES

Light Seafood with Vinegar Dip

Typical dishes – Steamed hairy crab, stir-fried baby shrimp with longjing tea leaves, steamed crab roe dumplings (xiao long bao)

These dishes are light-bodied, delicate with a fleshy texture and understated umami flavours. The use of vinegar as a dip is common, while other accompaniments can include a combination of soy sauce, ginger and spring onions. The delicate texture of the seafood is often contrasted with a strong vinegar flavour.

German wine recommendations: German sparkling wine, Deutscher Sekt, can be a wonderful option, especially those made from aromatic varieties such as Gewürztraminer, Morio-Muskat or Huxelrebe. Also try the rare Elbling sparkling found in the southeastern part of Mosel or a rosé sparkling wine made from Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir). Sparkling wine works particularly well because its minerality balances the umami content, the acidity stands up to the vinegar and the light, elegant style echoes the delicate flavours of the dish.

Light-bodied, sweet style Rieslings from the Mosel, Nahe or Rheingau are great choices because of their elegance and lightness, along with the sweet finish which reflects the natural sweetness in the fresh seafood, as well as the added sweetness in the sauce or marinade. With age, Riesling’s wonderfully complex aromatics of dried chrysanthemum and dried apricots aptly reflect the layers of flavours in the drunken dish.

Drunken Dishes

Typical dishes – Drunken crab or shrimp, drunken chicken, steamed fish with wine lees sauce



Drunken dishes infuse the strong rice wine flavour into light seafood or meat dishes. They have high umami levels and are subtle in taste with delicate textures.

German wine recommendations: Wine with subtle, layered flavours and textured mouthfeel are good choices to balance the delicate textures in the food. The best wines for these drunken dishes are Auslese or Spätlese Rieslings with at least ten to fifteen years of age with complex tertiary characters. Dry style Rieslings with complex mid-palate flavours and savoury elements can also work well with these drunken dishes. The best red wine choices are Spätburgunders with silky tannins with at least three or more years of bottle age. Finely textured tannins that echo the subtle and fine texture of the drunken flavours work very well together.



Salty Ham-Infused Dishes

Typical dishes - Salted chicken or duck, steamed salted pork, shark's fin soup with Jinhua ham

The strong salty flavour of the Jinhua ham is often combined with fairly light ingredients. These dishes utilise various ingredients from meats to delicate seafood and vegetables, and are also high in umami content. The oil content is usually low and these dishes are most often served hot.

German wine recommendations: Prominent fruit flavours in wine are desirable for these salty ham-infused dishes. Young fruity, ripe Spätburgunders (Pinot Noir) from warmer regions such as Baden and Pfalz will work well as well as ripe white wines from these warmer regions. Good

choices would be full-bodied dry Rieslings, Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) or Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) as well as Silvaner.

For more unusual options, try crisp, light Württemberg reds from ripe vintages such as Trollinger or Schwarzriesling (Pinot Meunier). In addition, Portugieser from Rheinhessen, Ahr or Pfalz can be fruity and light, with vibrant raspberry and strawberry flavours that can pair with the light ingredients while having sufficient fruit characters to balance the ham-infused flavours.

Stewed & Braised Dishes

Typical dishes - Stewed pork belly, braised pork knuckle, braised meat balls in casserole, braised whole fish

The rich and salty flavours of these dishes are infused with an array of ingredients. Also high in umami levels, these dishes are full-bodied with strong soybean paste flavours. A number of base ingredients are used such as fatty pork, fish and vegetables. Steamed rice is a common accompaniment.

German wine recommendations: These hearty braised dishes are best suited for full-bodied red wines. Dornfelder comes to mind, but ripe Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) can also work well. The high salt content means red wines with excessively high tannins are not suitable, and the high fat content in these dishes calls out for reds with firm acidity. All of these elements can be found in Spätburgunders throughout Germany and high quality Dornfelder from Nahe or Pfalz.

As a contrast, Kabinett or Spätlese Rieslings with sufficient body and depth can also work with these dishes, but be careful of delicate flavours which can get lost amid the salty and rich sauce.



Northern Chinese Cuisine

Food influences for Northern Chinese cuisine stretch as far west as Xinjiang and as far north as Heilongjiang. The Ming dynasty's southern Han-inspired cuisine includes influences from Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian provinces. During the reigns of the various dynasties, many cooks and chefs from around the country found work in Beijing; a melting pot of cuisines was created and thus the origin of a particular dish is often from outside the capital. However, there are several key characteristics of northern Beijing food that distinguish it from other regions in China: it is the home of imperial cuisine, meals are often wheat rather than rice-based, dishes tend to be heavy with dark sauces, and hot foods, cooked or kept warm at the table, are common.

Imperial court food, dishes that were traditionally served only to the royal family and the court has a history that goes back thousands of years. The modern versions are descended mainly from the Ming and Qing dynasties where lavish banquets often included rare and exotic dishes such as bears' paws or camels' humps.

In comparison, the daily food of Beijing residents is simple but flavourful. Meat is featured in some form in nearly every meal. Mutton, from the Mongolian dynasties, continues to be popular in hot pots, stews and barbecues. Pork is a main ingredient for many Han Chinese dishes while chicken, duck, goose and other fowl are also widely consumed. Roasting, stewing, barbecuing and braising are common cooking methods that give the meat richness and flavour. Wheat-based dishes such as steamed buns, both plain and stuffed, are a part of the northerner's diet. Other wheat-based staples include dumplings and noodles which are accompanied by thick dark soy-based sauce or a combination of chilli pepper, garlic, leek, spring onion, sesame oil and Chinese parsley.



GERMAN WINES & NORTHERN CHINESE FOOD

The richness and high meat content in many northern Chinese dishes means full-bodied red wines are often a good choice. However, not all the dishes are rich and heavy – imperial cuisine can be delicate and Shandong-influenced seafood dishes can be light and subtle in flavour. If there are many heavy dishes, fuller-bodied red wines such as Dornfelder or ripe Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) can work well. If most of the dishes are lighter with less heavy sauces and red meats, then opt for a light to medium-bodied red such as Portugieser, Trollinger or Lemberger.

Northern Chinese food in general is saltier, heavier and oilier with greater flavour intensity than in the

south. Since salt exaggerates tannins, a very tannic wine should be avoided and the wine’s acidity should be high enough to counter the oil and fat content; moderate tannins can also help balance the protein and fatty elements. Reds with sufficient flavour concentration and a spicy edge are useful in a meal that has a generous amount of garlic, spring onions, and sesame oil.

Good white wine choices will have flavour intensity, sufficient body, weight and crisp acidity. Good options include ripe, generous dry or off-dry Rieslings and Grauburgunders (Pinot Gris) from Pfalz or Baden or late harvest Rieslings from Nahe or Rheingau.

NORTHERN CHINESE FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST

BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT

- Salty ●●●●●
- Sweet ●○○○○
- Bitter ●●●●○
- Sour ●○○○○
- Spicy ●○○○○
- Umami ●●○○○
- Flavour intensity ●●●●●

WINE CONSIDERATIONS

- Sugar Dry or off-dry
- Acid ●●●●○
- Tannin ●●●○○
- Body ●●●●●
- Flavour intensity ●●●●●
- Finish ●●●○○

PALATE SENSATION

- Weight / richness ●●●●●
- Oil ●●●●●
- Texture ●●●○○
- Temperature ●●●●●

Low ●●●●● High

NORTHERN CHINESE FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS AND RECOMMENDED WINES

Soybean Paste & Thick Sauce Dishes

Typical dishes – Tofu with soybean paste sauce, noodles with soybean paste sauce, sea cucumber with rich, dark soy sauce, fish fillets in light soy sauce, mushrooms in dark soy sauce

Dishes with thick sauces have a strong salty flavour with high umami levels. Sauces are soy sauce-based, ranging from dark, rich and savoury to light brown with greater subtlety and delicacy. In these dishes, a variety of base ingredients such as noodles, vegetables, meats and tofu can be found. Accompaniments will often include chilli peppers, crushed nuts or spring onion strips.

German wine recommendations: Red wines with savoury rather than fruity flavours work better with the salty thick sauce which has high umami content. An aged Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) with bottle-aged characters like mushroom and dried herbs would be a good choice. Mature Spätlese or Auslese Riesling with more than ten years of bottle age also works well since tertiary characters echo the layered umami content of the sauces.

Dishes served with soybean paste sauces are rarely rich or hearty, just salty and flavourful. The best wines are reds with modest tannins such as Spätburgunder, Portugieser or Schwarzriesling. A fruity, ripe, off-dry Riesling or any of the white Pinot varieties from warmer regions can balance the dish’s salty flavours.

Roast and Barbecued Meats

Typical dishes – Roast mutton and lamb, barbecued meat skewers with mutton, lamb or beef, Peking duck

Roast and barbecued meats are rich in flavour with high salt content, and the skin is often covered with a soy sauce-based marinade and a mixture of spices. There are contrasting textures between the crispy, caramelised skin, and the juicy meat. The fat content can be fairly high in these meat dishes, with a wide range of umami levels. Sauces are commonly served with barbecued meats, such as plum sauce or sugar dip for Peking duck.



German wine recommendations: If there is one widely accepted perfect pairing in Chinese cuisine, it is that between Peking duck and Spätburgunder. The red berry flavours accentuate the sweetness of the sugar dip or plum sauce and the wine’s acidity cuts through the fat and cleanses the palate. The savoury and spicy undertones in Spätburgunder bring out the meaty flavours of the duck.

Other barbecued meats such as beef or lamb skewers or roast mutton require a fuller-bodied hearty red such as Dornfelder. Spätburgunder can also work here, but opt for ripe styles with firm tannins and medium to full body.



Thick Doughy Snacks

Typical dishes – Meat filled buns (baozi), thin pancakes with scallions, thick skinned dumplings with pork filling (jiaozi)

The thick doughy snacks are a mixture of savoury fillings that often combine meat and vegetables. These dishes are actually more than just snacks since a dozen *jiaozi* or several pan-fried *baozi* can be consumed as a light lunch meal. The snacks can be found steamed, boiled or fried. Soy sauce or vinegar for dipping is common.

German wine recommendations: The key consideration here is in the wine's versatility and relative lightness. The dishes tend to vary in their filling and their cooking methods, so a versatile wine such as Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) or Silvaner from Saale-Unstrut, Sachsen or Franken can work well. These versatile white wines with restrained

fruit characters work as a great backdrop to the savoury snacks and dipping sauce, while providing the acid backbone to balance any oil or meaty flavours.

Sparkling wine, Deutscher Sekt, is a good option because of its versatility and crisp refreshing characters. For pork dumplings, young light, fruity Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) can be a good pairing.

Offal Dishes

Typical dishes – Ox or pork tripe, pork kidneys, duck gizzards

Offal dishes have a strong gamey flavour and are served with salty and/or spicy broth or sauce. The addition of garlic and a range of spices are used to soften the rich, heavy taste of the gamey flavours. The umami level is moderate to high and chilli oil, vinegar, and coriander are often used as condiments.

German wine recommendations: Since Northern Chinese offal dishes are often served with chilli oil and other spicy and hearty sauces, wines chosen should tend toward heavier and fuller-bodied styles. Dornfelder and Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from warmer regions can balance the richness in the dish as well as echo its meaty or spicy elements. Red wines that have notes of savoury or gamey characters with firm acidity are good options.

White wines can be too gentle and delicate for these offal dishes, but there are exceptions. One example is a ripe, full-bodied Silvaner which can work with dishes like stir-fried pork kidneys. Avoid light and delicate wines for these intensely flavoured dishes.



Japanese Cuisine

Umami is the fifth taste identified by a Japanese professor over 100 years ago. It is an integral element in the majority of Japanese food as well as most Asian cuisines. It is as much a subtle savoury flavour in its own right as it is a conduit for lifting and enhancing a dish's existing flavours. High umami content ingredients include seaweed, mushrooms, *dashi*, soy sauce and *mirin*, a mildly sweet rice wine.

While Japanese cuisine has many unique features, several stand out as being closely associated with Japanese food: appreciation for texture, the importance of umami and seasonality, attention to eating sequence and the aesthetic presentation of dishes. An elaborate multi-course *kaiseki* meal in a traditional *ryokan*, a Japanese inn, is a poetic experience. The courses follow a ritualistic precision from the *sakizuki*, *amuse bouche*, to the *sashimi* course, the simmered dish, the grilled dish and to the lidded bowl filled with seasonal ingredients.

The Japanese are voracious consumers of seafood in a myriad of ways and the most common way is raw, as *sushi* and *sashimi*. The flavours of the sea also form the basis of *dashi*, the essential stock used for most Japanese soups, sauces and seasonings. For basic seasoning, soybean is the key ingredient and once fermented, produces soy sauce as well as *miso*, fermented soybean paste. It is also the main ingredient for tofu and *yuba*, soy milk skin. Vegetables are used as pickles, vinegared foods, *tempura* and as decorative edible garnishes.

The Japanese categorise their food, not by key ingredients, but by cooking methods. The main categories include dishes that are grilled and pan-fried, deep-fried, simmered, steamed and vinegared. Other categories may include everyday favourites like noodles, one pot dishes, rice bowls, soups and *sushi*.



GERMAN WINES & JAPANESE FOOD

In many ways, pairing wine with Japanese food is the easiest among all the Asian cuisines. A key characteristic of Japanese cuisine is the highly specialised nature of the types of food – *sushi*, *soba*, *ramen*, *yakitori* and *kaiseki*. This means that pairing wine is often limited to a more manageable range of flavours. In addition, the seasonings and flavours are rarely aggressive or powerful, allowing plenty of room for subtle or flavourful German wines to express themselves.

With *sushi*, the main ingredients, raw fish and vinegared rice, are both light, but add a dash of *wasabi* and soy sauce, and each mouthful has depth, contrasting flavours and varying mid-palate weight depending on the type of fish. A simple light white such as Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc), may be a

good accompaniment but better options would be vintage sparkling wine, a ripe, powerful Silvaner with depth and length. Mature red wines with finesse and delicacy can also work well with *sushi* and *sashimi*, especially when soy sauce and *wasabi* come into play.

Kaiseki, multi-course meals, are challenging because they feature a large number of high quality, expensive ingredients. Wine chosen to accompany these meals should possess balance, quality and fine texture. These are the moments to open the rare Rieslings from the 1971 or 1976 vintages to savour them over a long, lingering meal. Everyday Japanese dishes have heartier and simpler flavours and the most common combination of flavours include soy sauce, *miso* or *dashi* with *mirin*, rice wine and a hint of sugar. This flavour combination is found everywhere, from the dipping sauces of *tempura* or *soba* noodles to *yakitori* marinades.

Tempura and other fried items require wines with sufficient acidity to cut through the oil. Ideally, crisp medium-bodied whites are ideal, such as a dry Pfalz Riesling or a crisp Silvaner. The white wines need sufficient body and crisp acidity to balance the oily content in the food. Light-bodied German reds are good options since the *tempura* dipping sauce has plenty of umami content to balance the flavours in Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) or Schwarzriesling.

Japanese noodles, be they *soba*, *udon* or *ramen*, are more difficult to match since most Asian noodle meals are considered quick, fast food options. Try a versatile white wine such as Weissburgunder or Silvaner. For hot pot dishes with thinly sliced beef and high umami content, a red wine with savoury but robust characters is excellent. Try any one of Germany’s light-bodied reds such as Portugieser or Schwarzriesling (Pinot Meunier).

JAPANESE FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS AND RECOMMENDED WINES

Raw Fish, Sushi & Sashimi

Typical dishes – *Silky textured seafood such as sea urchin, raw white fish such as snapper, sea bream, raw fatty fish such as salmon, fatty tuna, assorted sushi, rolled sushi (norimaki)*



Sushi and *sashimi* have delicate texture and neutral flavours. However, soy sauce and marinated fresh ginger are common accompaniments while wasabi adds fragrance and subtle sting to each bite. The soy sauce and seaweed wrappers in *sushi* add an umami content to the meal. The quality of the meal revolves around texture rather than flavour.

German wine recommendations: A plate of *sashimi* would be best complemented with crisp, light-bodied whites such as dry Rieslings from Rheingau, Mittelrhein, Hessische Bergstrasse, Mosel or Nahe. Vintage Deutscher Sekt or its rosé version, both being extremely versatile, would also work well. Any number of high quality, crisp, dry style German wines such as Rivaner, from the Nahe, are fine accompaniments for the lighter white fish slices.

With a plate of *sushi* where vinegar rice comes into play, try a fuller-bodied white such as Baden’s Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) or Silvaner. Franken Silvaner can work well with the white fish and vinegar rice combination, while a light, elegant Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from Ahr can be fantastic with oilier fish such as salmon, fatty tuna or yellow tail with a smattering of spicy *wasabi*, and enjoyed with a dip of soy sauce.

Avoid fruity wines or sweet styles since these can easily disrupt the delicate flavour of raw fish. The best wines are those that are layered, subtle rather than obvious, savoury rather than sweet and finely textured.

SUSHI/SASHIMI AND WINE CHECKLIST

BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT

- Salty ●●●●○
- Sweet ●○○○○
- Bitter ●○○○○
- Sour ●●○○○
- Spicy ●○○○○
- Umami ●●●●●
- Flavour intensity ●○○○○

WINE CONSIDERATIONS

- Sugar Dry
- Acid ●●●●○
- Tannin ●○○○○
- Body ●○○○○
- Flavour intensity ●○○○○
- Finish ●●●●●

PALATE SENSATION

- Weight / richness ●○○○○
- Oil ●○○○○
- Texture ●●●●●
- Temperature ●○○○○

Low ●●●●● High



Kaiseki (Multi-Course Meals)

Typical dishes – Broiled dishes (*yakimono*), simmered dishes, seasonal soup, sushi or sashimi, soup and rice, hot pot dish

Kaiseki consist of numerous courses, a variety of flavours, varying intensity, body, richness and texture in each dish. It is common to enjoy over a dozen different dishes that can include raw fish, light steamed seafood dishes, fried dishes and soups. *Kaiseki* meals are high in umami content and focus on delicate, refined, seasonal dishes. There is a tremendous amount of time spent on every detail such as sequence, presentation and balance.

German wine recommendations: Given the top quality seasonal ingredients in *kaiseki* meals, the best pairings will be found in the highest quality examples of whatever wine is chosen. With so many

different courses, and each dish consisting of only a few mouthfuls, it would be impossible to choose one wine that can work with every single dish served. The safer and better bet would be to select a dry to off-dry wine of the very highest quality with complex mid-palate depth, lingering, delicate flavours and seamless texture.

The options for top quality Riesling are plentiful from Germany, from complex dry styles in the Pfalz to the sweeter, long-lived styles from Mosel, Mittelrhein, Rheingau or Nahe. If opting for a late harvest Riesling, choose one with at least fifteen years of age and plenty of subtle, delicate flavours. A complex Spätlese or Auslese from the Mosel with many years of bottle age will pair beautifully. Dry style options include a Rheingau Riesling from a top vineyard site or a Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) with complexity, depth and finely grained tannins.

KAISEKI (MULTI-COURSE MEAL) AND WINE CHECKLIST				
BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT		WINE CONSIDERATIONS		PALATE SENSATION
• Salty	●●●●○	• Sugar	Dry or off-dry	• Weight / richness ●○○○○
• Sweet	●●○○○	• Acid	●●●●○	• Oil ●○○○○
• Bitter	●○○○○	• Tannin	●○○○○	• Texture ●●●●●
• Sour	●○○○○	• Body	●○○○○	• Temperature ●○○○○
• Spicy	●○○○○	• Flavour intensity ●●○○○		
• Umami	●●●●●	• Finish	●●●●●	
• Flavour intensity	●●○○○			Low ●●●●● High



Simmered Dishes

Typical dishes – Simmered tofu with vegetables, simmered mixed vegetables, simmered chicken, simmered fish

Simmered dishes tend to be light with medium body and a fleshy, soft mouthfeel. The broth normally consists of light soy sauce and *dashi*, fish and seaweed stock, *mirin* and sometimes a dash of sugar. Strong umami flavours are inherent in the savoury broth with soft, velvety textured key ingredients. These dishes are served warm but not hot.

German wine recommendations: The high umami content in simmered dishes call for wines with some bottle age. Light to medium-bodied Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) with bottle age brings out the savoury and sweet elements in the dish. Opt for high quality Spätburgunder, without aggressive acidity with finely textured tannins that echo the soft, velvety

texture of the simmered dishes.

Mature Kabinett or Spätlese Rieslings can work well with simmered dishes that have a touch of sweetness. Simmered dishes can consist of fish, chicken or vegetables, so depending on the dish, a touch of sweetness from mature Rieslings is welcome. Good dry white wine options include ripe, medium-bodied whites such as Silvaner or Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris). Most importantly, opt for white wines with subtle flavours without any rough edges.

Fried Dishes

Typical dishes – Stir-fried noodles (*yakisoba*), deep fried shrimp and vegetable (*tempura*), pan-fried batter cake (*okonomiyaki*), fried rice

Japanese fried dishes are not heavy, even items with a high oil content from deep frying. Seasonings on fried dishes are delicate with an emphasis on texture rather than spices or strong flavours. Condiments are common accompaniments and often include a soy sauce-based dip, which adds umami content to fried dishes.

German wine recommendations: Given the oil content, wines must possess crisp, refreshing acidity. Dry Rieslings are perfect for *tempura* dishes with the citrus notes complementing the crispy batter and adding a zesty flavour to the meal. Avoid very sweet styles which can alter the flavour balance.

Yakisoba or *okonomiyaki* work well with off-dry, Kabinett style Rieslings. These dishes have a hint of sweetness in the dish, which can be complemented by the sweetness in the wine. For everyday fried rice or simple noodle dishes, try an uncomplicated refreshing white made from Rivaner or Silvaner. The wines should be young, refreshing and versatile.





Grilled & Skewered Dishes

Typical dishes – *Chicken skin, heart or gizzard yakitori, mushroom yakitori, grilled fish, spring onion yakitori, asparagus yakitori*

These grilled dishes are flavourful, umami-laden, often salty with a soy sauce-based marinade and can have a touch of sweetness. A wide range of ingredients are used, from vegetables to liver and gizzards. Generally, the dishes are light to medium in weight depending on the ingredient used.

German wine recommendations: The robust flavours of the grilled aroma and marinade call for a vibrant wine with fruity characters. Young ripe Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) is an obvious choice, especially for chicken *yakitori* and mushroom *yakitori*. Fruity Dornfelder will work well with chicken liver, beef or gizzards, while the lighter-bodied

reds such as Portugieser or Lemberger can work with fatty fish or eel.

White wine options for grilled dishes should also have a fruity core and be able to accompany a wide variety of skewered vegetables and light fish. Ripe, dry or off-dry Rieslings can work well with a wide variety of vegetables such as spring onions or peppers. Fruity Rivaners or Grauburgunders (Pinot Gris) pairs well with numerous skewered dishes including white fish and ginkgo nuts.

Rice Bowls & Noodle Soups

Typical dishes – *Chicken and egg with rice (oyako donburi), eel and rice (unagi donburi), one pot soup dish (yosenabe), thinly sliced beef in hot pot with sour ponzu dip (shabu shabu), miso noodle soup, miso ramen*

These are the comfort foods of Japan and include a wide variety of rice bowls and noodle soups. The flavours are more obvious than in formal meals with moderate to high umami levels. The rice in the *donburi* is used as a base ingredient to dilute the salty and slightly sweet flavours of the toppings which can range from meat, eggs and fish, to vegetables. Noodle soups are also one of the basic staple foods for the Japanese, and the broths can range from light and delicate, to rich and savoury.

German wine recommendations: Flavourful reds without high tannin levels are good accompaniments to many meat-based *donburi*, rice bowl dishes. For chicken or beef egg with rice dishes, try a fruity Dornfelder or a young Spätburgunder. For fish *donburi*, opt for a Rheinhessen Silvaner or Riesling. There are plenty of choices from the sunny Pfalz or Baden for fruity reds or whites. For soup-based dishes try a Deutscher Sekt rosé. A fruity Spätburgunder served a few degrees below its normal serving temperature works very well for beef hot pot or *miso* pork *ramen*.



EVERYDAY JAPANESE FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST

BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT

- Salty ●●●●○
- Sweet ●●●○○
- Bitter ●○○○○
- Sour ●●○○○
- Spicy ●○○○○
- Umami ●●●●●
- Flavour intensity ●●●○○

WINE CONSIDERATIONS

- Sugar Dry or off-dry
- Acid ●●●●○
- Tannin ●●○○○
- Body ●●○○○
- Flavour intensity ●●●○○
- Finish ●●●●○

PALATE SENSATION

- Weight / richness ●●○○○
- Oil ●●○○○
- Texture ●●●●●
- Temperature ●●●○○

Low ●●●●● High





Korean Cuisine

Korean food’s regional differences can be traced back to the Joseon dynasty when the peninsula was divided into eight provinces. Over hundreds of years, these separate regions formed their own unique cuisines based on each individual region’s geographical location and topography. However, what unites Korean cuisine is the key flavouring ingredients, *yangnyim*, and the numerous preservation techniques applied to everything from vegetables to seafood to meats.

Basic seasonings include sea salt, soy sauce, soybean paste (*denjang*), chilli paste (*gochujang*), and rice vinegar. Common flavour combinations include garlic, ginger and soy sauce. Other ingredients used for accent are sesame seeds and oil, spring onions, garlic, pepper and chilli flakes. Sugar is only sparingly used and Korean meals contain very few dishes with noticeable sweetness.

A normal meal enjoyed in a modest middle-class family home will have no less than five small dishes to accompany steamed white rice. These side dishes along with rice form the core of Korean cuisine. Various forms of fresh and marinated vegetables or herbs make up the majority of the small dishes, accompanied by some type of soup or stew. Meat makes up a very small portion of the average Korean diet. Flavours range widely from simple light tofu with soy sauce, spring onion and sesame seeds to salty, pungent pickled seafood and fiery hot *kimchi*, fermented cabbage.

Korean food has bold flavours often from numerous pickled and fermented products. These also come from bitter vegetables and herbs, the generous use of garlic and the abundant use of red chilli pepper in all of its many guises – as paste, flakes or even freshly sliced. Soybean pastes are also very strongly flavoured and form the basis of many soups, sauces and dips.

GERMAN WINES & KOREAN FOOD

Korean cuisine’s bold, spicy flavours are a challenge to pair with wine. The wines must be equally bold in their fruit characteristics but with ripe, moderate tannins. Korean food has many fermented flavours and fairly high umami levels and wines need to possess seemingly opposing characteristics – boldness with subtlety, ripeness without sweetness and full body without heaviness. Good examples are ripe, high quality Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) or dry, fruity Riesling.

Korean cuisine incorporates many bitter flavours from numerous root vegetables and herbs such as ginseng. For a meal where ginseng soup or other bitter vegetables take centre stage, opt for bold red wines like Dornfelder that can stand up to the bitter flavours. For very spicy dishes, opt for sparkling wine or full-bodied red wines with fruit-forward flavours.

With typical Korean meals that incorporate a wide range of flavours, versatile wines with refreshing acidity work best. The spices require a refreshing element in the wine, and the varied textures and ingredients mean that versatile wines from cool climates work very well. Nearly all German wines fall into this category, but choose wines with sufficient ripe, vibrant flavours to stand up to the strong flavours of Korean cuisine.

Sweet wines and intensely aromatic varieties are not recommended with typical Korean meals; sweetness is not a common flavour in most traditional dishes and any sweetness from the wine can detract from the integrity of the flavours. Aromatic wines should also be carefully introduced since it introduces a sweet, perfumed dimension in a cuisine with pungent, earthy flavours.

KOREAN FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST				
BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT		WINE CONSIDERATIONS		PALATE SENSATION
• Salty	●●●●●	• Sugar	Dry	• Weight / richness ●●●○○
• Sweet	●○○○○	• Acid	●●●●○	• Oil ●○○○○
• Bitter	●●●●○	• Tannin	●●●○○	• Texture ●●●●○
• Sour	●●●○○	• Body	●●●●○	• Temperature ●●●●○
• Spicy	●●●●●	• Flavour intensity	●●●●●	
• Umami	●●●●○	• Finish	●●●○○	
• Flavour intensity	●●●●○			Low ●●●●● High



KOREAN FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS AND RECOMMENDED WINES

Stir-Fried & Pan-Fried dishes

Typical dishes – Seafood and spring onion pancake (haemul pajeon), stir fried glass noodles with vegetables (japchae), pan-fried zucchini (hobak jeon), meat stuffed peppers (gochu jeon), stuffed pan-fried tofu (dubu jeon)

Korean stir-fried dishes have mildly salty flavours from soy sauce-based seasoning and are neither fatty nor rich. Numerous ingredients are used, with vegetables being the prominent feature. Condiments and dips made with soy sauce, chilli flakes and spring onions are common. Side dishes are a common

feature in every Korean meal, with very spicy dishes such as *kimchi*.

German wine recommendations: White or red wines work with these pan-fried dishes. Normally, the various pancakes are enjoyed dipped in soy sauce and the accompanying spicy *kimchi* can add bolder, spicier flavours to each bite. Wines will need to have a fruity core without harsh tannins such as a ripe Portugieser or Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from warmer regions. White wines can work if *kimchi* is avoided and dry, medium-bodied Riesling would work extremely well with spring onion pancake or stir-fried glass noodles. Fruity white wines from Pfalz or Baden such as Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) are also good options.

Spicy Chili Garlic-Based dishes

Typical dishes – Chilli pork stir fry (jehyuk bokeum), pork and kimchi stir fry; spicy fermented cabbage (kimchi), spicy stir fried octopus (nakji bokeum), spicy cold noodles (bibim gooksu)

The flavour combination for these spicy dishes include spicy chilli paste or chilli flakes, garlic and spring onions. There are strong, salty and spicy flavours with a barely detectable amount of sugar that may be added to round out the flavours. The use of sesame oil is common in many of the stir fry items.

German wine recommendations: These are some of the most challenging dishes to pair with wine, since most wines will be overwhelmed by the spicy flavours. Avoid delicate or nuanced wines and opt instead for bold, powerful styles, whether red or white from the warmer German regions. A good choice would be a Dornfelder from Rheinhessen or Pfalz.

For these spicy intense flavours, try a sparkling wine or a flavourful, ripe Grauburgunder. An off-dry or sweet style would appear to be a good pairing, but many local Korean palates find sweetness in wine with spicy, savoury meals too jarring. Light-bodied crisp reds are another good option.



Barbecued Meats

Typical dishes – Barbecued beef short ribs (galbi), barbecued sliced tenderloin (bulgogi), barbecued chicken breast (dak bulgogi), spicy pork barbecue (daejji bulgogi)

Flavourful soy sauce-based marinades for barbecue meats include garlic, sugar and sesame oil as key ingredients. Spicy marinades can include the addition of Korean chilli paste, *gochujang*. Common condiments include sliced raw spring onions, garlic, soybean and chilli paste, *samjang*, and various types of Korean lettuce leaves used as a wrapper for the meats.

German wine recommendations: For many people, Korean food conjures up images of delicious barbecued beef short ribs. For these flavourful meat dishes, a fruity red wine works extremely well. Spicy pork or other meat dishes with a chilli paste addition require bold reds like Dornfelder. However the thinly sliced beef tenderloins are very well suited for Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from Ahr, Pfalz or Nahe.

Since one-third of Germany's vineyards is now planted with red varieties, there are many choices to accompany Korean barbecues besides just Dornfelder or Spätburgunder. From the red wine dominant region of Württemberg, try the Lemberger, Trollinger or Schwarzriesling. From the Pfalz, try their St Laurent and Portugieser.

Flavourful Stews

Typical dishes – Kimchi stew (kimchi chigeh), miso and bean curd stew (denjang chigeh), soft bean curd stew (soondubu chigeh)

The stews have very intense flavours ranging from salty and pungent *denjang*, salty fermented soy bean paste, to very spicy chilli flavours. There is high salt content and generous use of garlic. Cooked at high temperatures, the stew is generally served bubbling hot in clay pots to maintain the high temperature.

German wine recommendations: Avoid shy wines with delicate flavours and very tannic wines, since it will enhance the spices and the wine will taste even more tannic. The best wines are those that can provide a refreshing component and fruity, bold flavours.

Opt for fruity Dornfelder or Portugieser from Rheinhessen, or the region's Silvaner or sparkling wine. Choose dry styles rather than sweet wine styles since many spice lovers find sweetness in the midst of the fiery spices and intense flavours distracting.





Thai Cuisine

Thai cuisine is generally divided into four regions. First is the Central Plains, a rich and fertile river delta that includes Bangkok. Jasmine rice, the long grain variety indigenous to this part of Asia, is included at every meal. Fresh seafood is also a prominent feature. Eggs are also enjoyed in various ways including omelettes, fried and served on top of rice or within a stir-fried dish. Noodles are popular, such as boat noodles made with rice noodles served in dark beef broth. The dishes most commonly served in Thai restaurants in the West originate from this region such as *tom yum kung*, spicy prawn soup, as well as *phat Thai*, stir-fried rice noodles.

The second cuisine is Northern Thai, which includes the mountainous region of Chiang Mai and features bitter flavours and root vegetables such as acacia leaf and small eggplants. Sticky rice is often preferred over Jasmine rice. With Burmese influence, many of the dishes use a greater quantity of onions, garlic and ginger compared to the south. This region borders Myanmar and China’s Yunnan province, and borrows heavily from both culinary traditions. Noodles in their various forms are found here as well as a wide variety of spicy sausages like *sai ua*, made from ground pork, shallots, lemongrass, kaffir lime peel and dried chillies all stuffed into pork intestines.

The third type of Thai cuisine is from the Northeast, also called Isaan. Grilling and roasting meats are common and served with a variety of spicy and flavourful dips, *naam jim*. Isaan cuisine is heartier with more meat dishes, and grilling and roasting are common ways to prepare meats. A spicy minced meat dish, *laap*, originates from this region and is popular throughout Thailand.

Southern Thai cuisine, covering 14 provinces, is located along the peninsula that is shared with southern Myanmar. This region has strong Indonesian and Muslim influences, found in dishes such as *khao mok kai*, a type of chicken *biryani* where rice and chicken are cooked together with spices. The large Chinese population has incorporated stir-fried dishes, barbecued pork and noodles as mainstays of the diet. Dishes with Malaysian influence such as fish curry and favourite Malay snacks like fresh *roti* and fluffy wheat bread are consumed with curries or stuffed with savoury or sweet fillings.

GERMAN WINES & THAI FOOD

Pairing Thai food with wine goes beyond the usual challenge of matching wines in a communal dining setting with intensely flavoured dishes. Thai dishes have strong flavours and distinct fragrances from the abundant use of fresh herbs and thus, can often overpower the aromatics of wine. Wines with sufficiently vibrant fruit and intense aromatics are optimal. In addition, high levels of tart and sour flavours in the salads, relishes and even soups, which are part of every meal, require wines with very firm acidity. Aromatic German wines are perfect accompaniments here, providing sufficient acidity to balance the tart and vibrant flavours in the food, and intense aromatics which can stand up to Thai seasonings.

Chillies are used in nearly every dish or are closely at hand, often found floating in the ubiquitous *phrik naam plaa*, fish sauce. This intensely salty and spicy combination makes pairing red wines with Thai food especially challenging. Given this and the relative lightness of the dishes, numerous German white wines are ideal. Try the earthy Silvaner, the aromatic Gewürztraminer or Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) and of course the intensely flavoured Rieslings.

The sweet flavours in many of the dishes on the table means off-dry and even chilled late harvest wines can work well. A wine needs to have the following essential ingredients to balance Thai food: very firm, crisp acidity, intense fruit characteristics, relative lightness in body and an element of sweetness that can echo the sweet flavours in the food. Thai food has intensity and a vibrant brilliance that should be echoed in the wine.

THAI FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST				
BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT		WINE CONSIDERATIONS		PALATE SENSATION
• Salty	●●●●●	• Sugar	Dry to sweet	• Weight / richness ●●○○○
• Sweet	●●●●●	• Acid	●●●●●	• Oil ●●○○○
• Bitter	●●○○○	• Tannin	●●○○○	• Texture ●●●●○
• Sour	●●●●●	• Body	●●●●○	• Temperature ●●●○○
• Spicy	●●●●●	• Flavour intensity	●●●●●	
• Umami	●●○○○	• Finish	●●●○○	
• Flavour intensity	●●●●●			Low ●●●●● High



THAI FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS AND RECOMMENDED WINES

Relishes, Sauces, Dips & Condiments

Typical dishes – *Sweet chilli sauce (sriracha), green chilli dip (naam phrik num), fish sauce with sliced chilli dip (phrik naam plaa), chilli and shrimp paste dip (naam phrik kapi)*

The salty and fishy sauce, *plaa*, forms the base of many sauces. The flavours can be extremely pungent and spicy. Chilli is a common ingredient in most relishes and sauces and it can change the flavour profile of a dish or an entire meal by enhancing the spicy, sweet, salty or sour flavours. Common

condiments, in addition to the sauces, are chilli flakes, sugar, cilantro, lime and chopped nuts.

German wine recommendations: These sauces and condiments are always enjoyed with a variety of ingredients from toasted rice crackers to vegetables to seafood and meats. How these sauces and dips affect wine is especially important because they are used generously in many dishes. Fermented flavours such as fish sauce can ruin a wine's flavours, so use it sparingly when enjoying delicate German wines.

When sweet chilli sauce is used, the wine needs to have residual sweetness to balance the sweetness in the sauce; here a lightly sweet Riesling such as Kabinett would work well. For dips with chillis, opt for refreshing wines such as sparkling Sekt or a crisp Silvaner. The strong shrimp paste dips will require a wine with greater depth and bolder flavours – try a ripe Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) with spicy notes.

Spicy & Tangy Salads

Typical dishes – *Green papaya salad (som yam), minced meat salad (laab kai), pomelo salad (yam sam-o), fried shredded catfish salad (yam plaa duk fuu), baby squid salad (yam plaa meuk)*

The intensely tart flavours in Thai salads are from raw fruits and lime juice balanced by sugar, fish sauce and chillies. There is a high chilli content in the authentic version of nearly all salads. Ingredients like lemongrass, kaffir leaves, shallots and coriander contribute to the strong aromatics in the salads. These salads are very flavourful and often spicy, but still very light because its main ingredients are from raw fruits and vegetables.

German wine recommendations: The perfect pairing for Thai salads is off-dry and late harvest Rieslings made throughout Germany. The sweet Rieslings echo the sweetness of the raw fruit such as pomelo, papaya or mangos, and their vibrant fruit profile stands up to the chilli component of the dish. The firm acidity in Riesling is useful as a counter balance to the sour, vinegar component of many Thai salads.



Stir-Fried Dishes

Typical dishes – *Stir-fried rice noodles with shrimp (phat thai), stir-fried chicken with basil and chilli (phat bai kaphrao), stir-fried kale (phat phak kha naa), stir fried mixed vegetables (phat phak ruam)*

Thai stir-fried dishes have salty and pungent flavours from fish sauce-based seasoning. Noodles or vegetables are the main ingredients with some meat or seafood added as garnish. These dishes have moderate seasoning and flavour intensity, but the accompanying sauces offer the spicy, extra salty, sweet or sour element. The most common condiments are *phrik naam plaa*, fish sauce with sliced chillies, and common garnishes include sliced spring onions, cucumbers, chillies and cilantro.

German wine recommendations: Stir-fried dishes often require wines with crisp, refreshing acidity. Dry or off-dry Rieslings are wonderful with *phat thai*, and can even stand up to dips in the pungent fish sauce. The sweetness in the wine counters any spicy element and also adds balance to the numerous condiments that accompany these dishes. Deutscher Sekt, ripe Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) or Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) would also work well with most stir-fried dishes.

Wines need to have a strong acid backbone, and fruity Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) with its firm acidity can provide a nice balance to these dishes. Other red varieties, as long as their flavours are sufficiently intense and ripe with firm acidity, can work with the stir-fried Thai dishes, especially those that contain slices of chicken, pork or beef.

Curries

Typical dishes – *Red chicken curry (kaeng kai), roast duck red curry (kaeng phet pet yang), green chicken curry (kaeng khiaw waan kai)*

The intense flavours in Thai curries come from fresh herbs and roots including chilli, galangal, lemongrass, shallots, garlic and tamarind. Fish sauce and shrimp paste can add a salty and often pungent element to the curries. Spicy elements vary from mild to very high, and the dishes vary in oil and fat content, but are generally not too heavy.

German wine recommendations: Since Thai curries can vary from mild to very spicy, opt for aromatic white wines such as Riesling, Grauburgunder, Scheurebe or Gewürztraminer. With the sweet coconut-based curries, off-dry and late harvest Rieslings work extremely well. What all curries require are young, ripe aromatic wines with a touch of sweetness. Very spicy curries are more challenging to pair but try sparkling wine or off-dry Rieslings for mildly spicy green curries.





Singaporean Cuisine

In Singapore, it is hard to define where Chinese or Peranakan influence ends and where Malay or Indian influence begins. This wonderful melting pot of cultures and cuisines can take something as simple as noodles, and infuse it with wonderful spices such as turmeric, tamarind, chilli and galangal, resulting in a dish that is not Malay, Indian nor Chinese, but uniquely Singaporean. Its traditional food fare is considered predominantly Peranakan or Nyonya cuisine and includes dishes such as beef *rendang*, *sambal* prawns and *asam* fish head curry.

Chinese food, with its numerous regional styles and cooking methods, forms the base of Singaporean cuisine. Although Hokkien Singaporeans are the largest group, restaurants that cater just to Hokkien food are limited. The most popular restaurants are Cantonese, considered the most refined Chinese cuisine, followed by a range of regional foods such as Sichuan, Shanghainese and Teochew. One binding factor is the ubiquitous soy sauce and sliced chilli condiment, and spicy *sambal* on nearly every Chinese restaurant dining table in Singapore.

There are numerous Singaporean versions of regional favourites such as Hainanese chicken rice or *yong tau foo*, beancurd stuffed with minced fish and vegetables. These differ from the original in the greater intensity of flavours – for example, the Singaporean version as opposed to the original Hainan style dish involves serving hotter chillies and darker, more flavourful soy sauce with the boiled chicken.

Nyonya, a respectful term for Malay women of the upper social classes, is used interchangeably with Peranakan to describe the country’s indigenous cuisine. This wok-based culinary style blends Chinese and Malaysian ingredients and cooking methods. Combinations can include Chinese-influenced oyster sauce with coconut milk and toasted

peanuts or *belacan*, prawn paste, with ginger and garlic. A classic Peranakan dish is *otak-otak*, a coconut-based fish dish, seasoned with *galangal*, chilli paste and other herbs wrapped in banana leaf and grilled over flames.

Although Indians make up less than 10% of the population, their long-term presence is felt in their strong influence on the food culture. The majority of Indians in Singapore are Tamils from the southernmost state of India, as well as Sri Lanka. Southern Indian style banana leaf restaurants abound – using banana leaf as the “plate”, a pile of rice forms the base and is enjoyed with a wide selection of spicy fare. This can include *pappadom*, a thin, crispy wafer, chicken or prawn *masala*, marinated vegetables and spicy curry dishes.

GERMAN WINES & SINGAPOREAN FOOD

Singaporean cuisine’s bold and intense flavours can be challenging to pair with wine. Spices and chilli combine with salty dried shrimps or anchovies, and sour notes from tamarind or kaffir lime. The liberal use of sugar in some stir-fried dishes mean that off-dry and medium sweet Rieslings can work well by acting as a foil for the array of spices.

The low serving temperature of dry and sweet Rieslings and many light-bodied German whites add refreshment value by cooling the mouth, offering firm, fresh acidity and at the same time, balancing the spiciness in the food. Sparkling wines are great refreshing companions to Singaporean food, and versatile enough to pair with seafood dishes, stir-fried items and savoury snacks.

The best wine choices for a typical family style Singaporean meal have a vibrant fruity core profile that matches the food’s intensity and flavours. Vibrant, bright Spätburgunders (Pinot Noir) are good options for flavourful poultry dishes or meat dishes with spicy broth. The spices and herbs used in oxtail stew or pork bone soup echo the spices in Spätburgunder, and the flavours of the wine blend well with the food’s hearty flavours. Even with Singaporean seafood dishes, light-bodied reds like Portugieser or Lemberger can work because the tannins are low and the acidity is fairly high.

SINGAPOREAN FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST				
BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT		WINE CONSIDERATIONS		PALATE SENSATION
• Salty	●●●●○	• Sugar	Dry or off-dry	• Weight / richness ●●●●○
• Sweet	●●●●●	• Acid	●●●●○	• Oil ●●●●○
• Bitter	●○○○○	• Tannin	●●○○○	• Texture ●●●●○
• Sour	●●●●○	• Body	●●●●○	• Temperature ●●●●○
• Spicy	●●●●●	• Flavour intensity	●●●●●	
• Umami	●●○○○	• Finish	●●●○○	
• Flavour intensity	●●●●●			Low ●●●●● High



SINGAPOREAN FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS AND RECOMMENDED WINES

Spicy Seafood

Typical dishes – *Grilled stingray with sambal, fried peppered prawns, black pepper crab, chilli crab*

Spicy seafood dishes often derive their intense, fiery hot spices from chillies. The strong, aggressive flavours are counter-balanced by soft, often sweet, fresh seafood. The lightness of ingredients is combined with intense flavours in these spicy Singaporean seafood dishes.

German wine recommendations: Off-dry and late harvest Rieslings are good choices for these spicy dishes. The sweetness balances the spices and also reflects some of the sweet flavours in the seafood and the seasonings. Sparkling wines work very well with their light body combined with vibrant acidity, complementing the spicy sauce and soft flesh of prawns, crabs or fish. Whether red or white, from Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) to Riesling and Rivaner, German wines are inherently versatile because of their restrained personality, fresh, crisp acidity and moderate tannin levels for reds.

Stir-Fried Dishes

Typical dishes – *Hokkien fried noodles, fried rice flour noodles (char kway teow), fried rice stick noodles (bee hoon), stir-fried water spinach with shrimp paste (kangkung with belacan), fried yellow noodles (mee goreng)*

Stir-fried dishes have a fairly high salty flavour from soy sauce-based seasonings. They can also have smoky, char notes from being cooked in high heat, and have moderate umami levels. Noodles or vegetables are at the core, with meat or seafood added in small quantities. The strong seasoning and flavour intensity often derived from garlic, sliced chillies and spring onions. Condiments include sliced chillies in soy sauce or chilli paste.

German wine recommendations: Although these dishes contain little meat, the sauces used for preparing these noodles or vegetables are flavourful and intense. Combined with the condiments that accompany these dishes, it is best to opt for a light-bodied Spätburgunder or Portugieser, rather than a light-bodied white wine. Low to moderate tannin reds with a lean body and fresh acidity are desirable with the acidity cutting through the oily elements of the dish. White wines are good options, but opt for those with sufficient body and mid-palate weight to stand up to the intense flavours. Medium to full-bodied Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) or Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) from warm regions of the Pfalz or Baden are safe options.



Poultry Classics

Typical dishes – *Hainan chicken rice, roast chicken and rice (nasi ayam), Teochew braised goose, claypot chicken rice*

These poultry classics have moderately intense flavours from seasonings and condiments, rather than from the main ingredients, which are fairly neutral in taste. A soy sauce-based seasoning is commonly used, creating dishes with fairly high salt content, and moderate to high umami levels.

German wine recommendations: Hainan chicken rice has a soft fleshy texture from being poached and the accompanying condiments provide the spicy and flavourful elements. A light-bodied elegant Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) or medium-bodied Weissburgunder (Pinot

Blanc) would work brilliantly. The flavours should be delicate, but the mid palate should have some weight and depth to balance the flavours of the delicate meat.

Other light-bodied red wine options can include Portugieser, Lemberger or Sankt Laurent. For whites, dry savoury wines like Silvaner are good choices.

Meat with Flavourful Broth

Typical dishes – *Indian mutton soup (sop kambing), hot and sour oxtail stew (buntut asam pedas), pork bone soup (bak kut teh)*

These soups and stews have savoury umami laden flavours from long, slow cooking and a mixture of hearty ingredients. Diverse broths are used ranging from pork and chicken to mutton bones and meat. Rice accompanies these rich, meaty soups and stews, which are enjoyed throughout the year.

German wine recommendations: Full-flavoured red wines such as Dornfelder would work best with these hearty dishes. While Spätburgunder might also work, it needs to be a ripe, generous style from Pfalz or Baden to stand up to the intense flavours of these meat-based stews and soups. Württemberg, Ahr or Rheinhessen are good places to find ripe medium to full-bodied red wines from a variety of grape varieties including Spätburgunder, Dornfelder, Trollinger, Schwarzriesling and Lemberger.

Although white wines are less ideal, Spätlese or Auslese Rieslings made in a trocken or halbtrocken style can be rich and complex enough for these meat dishes. A hint of residual sweetness would add to the richness of this dish. Avoid fragile and delicate wines, and serve the red wines slightly chilled.





Indian Cuisine

India is a vast country comprised of numerous local cuisines. The focus here will be mostly on the cuisine of Mumbai, a city where nearly all of the major local Indian cuisines can also be found. Mumbai's local fare is often referred to as western coastal Indian or Maharashtra cuisine, both of which are broad, encompassing terms. Seafood, prepared in the western coastal style, is much loved by locals. King crabs, jumbo prawns, lobsters and local pomfret or king fish are extremely fresh and can be prepared simply, with butter and garlic, pepper or chilli. The Bombay duck, a misnomer since the 'duck' is really a sun-dried fish, is another popular seafood dish throughout Mumbai.

Maharashtra food includes western coastal fare and popular inland styles such as Varadi cuisine. Here, the key ingredients shift from seafood and fresh coconut to chicken and mutton dishes, as well as a wide range of vegetarian food. Tamarind is a vital seasoning, and flavours are often sweet and sour, even in curry dishes. Various nuts such as peanuts and cashews are more generously used while grated coconut is preferred over fresh coconut along the coast. In general, Maharashtra cuisine, whether it comes from the east or west, is considered fairly healthy and refined. There is little deep frying, but rather more steaming and pan cooking. Spices are used with a more restrained hand.

Besides Maharashtra and western coastal cuisines, other Indian dishes are extremely popular. From south India, Mumbaikars adopted their love for rice. Much of south Indian food is characterised by strong, spicy and sour flavours mostly derived from tamarind interlaced with coconut. Banana leaf meals are sought-after, and the best snacks are often from the southern states. *Dosas*, large rice flour crêpes, or *idlis*, fermented rice cakes, usually served

with *sambar*, vegetable stew, and fresh chutneys, are among the famous south Indian snacks found throughout Mumbai. From the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad's oven baked *biryani* is widely found on menus in the city. From Goa, Portuguese influenced dishes such as pork *vindaloo* are well loved. Kerala state's coconut scented hot and sour fresh fish dishes find favour with many seafood lovers.

Many restaurants serve or are influenced by Mughal food, considered a royal cuisine. Its diverse dishes are associated with popular Indian food like *tandoori* meats, kebabs and *koftas*, spiced meatballs. One theme that unites most types of cuisines available in Mumbai is the strong vegetarian element. Whether it is the entire meal or just a few dishes, vegetables and all of their wonderful array of flavours and textures are found in every dining outlet.

GERMAN WINES & INDIAN FOOD

The context in which wine is served and local dining habits pose challenges in pairing wine with Indian cuisine. For example, many restaurants do not have adequate air conditioning and storage for wines, thus wines are often not served or kept in the best conditions. The habit of eating with one's hands makes it difficult to handle and keep a wine glass clean, much less pour wine for one another during a meal.

As with most Asian meals, all the dishes in India are served at the same time. The flavours of Indian meals are very intense, and locals are not shy about adding salty pickles, fiery hot chillies or other strongly flavoured condiments to just about everything. Enjoying wine in this setting can be difficult, but this is changing quickly in cities like Mumbai and Delhi as restaurants move upmarket.



Expectations about a perfect food and wine union must be kept in check. There are surprisingly wonderful combinations such as *tandoori* chicken with ripe Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir), vegetable fritters with Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris), curry prawns with Kabinett Riesling and butter chicken with Silvaner.

In the perfect world, we would have more than one wine, which is a luxury, but often the best option for Indian meals is to choose one ripe, vibrant Spätburgunder, and an off-dry, medium-bodied, expressive Riesling. Another option is to drink the wine selectively between bites, knowing that one wine can never go well with every single dish on the table.



INDIAN FLAVOUR COMBINATIONS AND RECOMMENDED WINES

Western Indian Vegetarian Dishes

Typical dishes – *Mixed vegetable curry (undhyoo), vegetable fritters (bahji), marinated lentils with rice (kichidi), stewed black beans*

Western Indian vegetarian dishes have a wide variety of ingredients, with rich, intense flavours. Moderate levels of spices with rice and *chapatis*, flatbreads, are the base of the meal which has moderate levels of umami. There is richness in texture due to various pulses and starchy vegetables used in many of these dishes. Salty pickled vegetables and spicy chillies are common condiments.

German wine recommendations: Rich intense flavours call for full-bodied wines with rich texture to balance the pulses and starchy vegetables. Ripe, fruity Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) will bring out the spicy elements in the curry and provide depth to stewed bean dishes. The fruity elements in the wine can balance the salty and spicy condiments while the acidity in the Spätburgunder balances the richness. Modestly tannic reds such as Portugieser or Schwarzriesling will work well just as ripe, flavourful Rieslings, either dry or off-dry. Late harvest styles can balance curries with an element of sweetness while the dry styles will complement the flatbreads and starchy vegetables.

Western Coastal Indian Seafood Dishes

Typical dishes – *Spicy coconut-based fish curry (kalvan), Bombay duck (bombil), curry prawns, king crabs with garlic and butter*

There is a range of spices from mild to very intense in coastal western coastal Indian seafood dishes. The delicately textured seafood contrasts with bold flavours in the seasonings such as garlic or curry leaves and condiments. There is a fairly high oil content with ingredients that may be fried, or sauces that contain rich coconut juice, ghee or butter.

German wine recommendations: Medium-bodied Kabinett or Spätlese Rieslings can work well with fish or prawn curry dishes, adding a touch of sweetness to the creamy spicy sauces. The firm acidity in Riesling can offer a refreshing character to ghee or butter-influenced seafood dishes. Other whites that will pair well with seafood dishes like Bombay duck or crabs with garlic and butter are riper styles from Rivaner, hearty Silvaner or the full-bodied Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris). Whites are best for this category but light, elegant reds with a fruity profile can also be good options.



WESTERN / COASTAL INDIAN FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST

BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT

- Salty ●●●●○
- Sweet ●●●●○
- Bitter ●○○○○
- Sour ●●●●○
- Spicy ●●●●○
- Umami ●●●○○
- Flavour intensity ●●●●○

WINE CONSIDERATIONS

- Sugar Dry or off-dry
- Acid ●●●○○
- Tannin ●●●○○
- Body ●●●●○
- Flavour intensity ●●●●○
- Finish ●●●○○

PALATE SENSATION

- Weight / richness ●●●●○
- Oil ●●●●○
- Texture ●●●○○
- Temperature ●●●●○

Low ●●●●● High





Meat-Based Mughlai / Punjabi Meals

Typical dishes – Tandoori chicken (chicken tikka), minced meat kebabs, butter chicken (murgh makani), lamb curry (rogan josh)

High spice content is part of these meat-based dishes. The marinade includes garlic, coriander, ginger, chilli, cumin and *garam masala*, a blend of spices. These meat dishes can contain fairly high umami levels depending on the amount of spices used. The type of meat ranges from light white meat to very rich lamb and mutton. Condiments may include sliced fresh cucumbers, onions, *raita*, mint yoghurt, or pickles; breads and *dahl* balance the richness and are often part of the meal.

German wine recommendations: *Tandoori* meats, whether they are chicken or lamb-based, require a full-bodied red such as Dornfelder or ripe Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir). Tandoori spices can be very intense, so opt for ripe styles with firm tannins and medium to full body. With Germany’s lighter-bodied reds such as Portugieser, Trollinger or Schwarzriesling, the butter chicken or fish *tandoori* can work well. Opt for red wines from the warmer regions of Germany.

If only one wine can be chosen for most meat-based Punjabi dishes, then Spätburgunder would be the best choice. The red berry flavours add a sweet fruit element to the flavourful, spicy seasonings, and the light tannin profile does not fight with the spicy ingredients. Spätburgunder’s acidity adds lift to the palate and cuts through the fatty elements of the meat.

NORTHERN INDIAN FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST

BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT		WINE CONSIDERATIONS		PALATE SENSATION
• Salty	●●●●○	• Sugar	Dry or off-dry	• Weight / richness ●●●●●
• Sweet	●●●○○	• Acid	●●●○○	• Oil ●●●●●
• Bitter	●○○○○	• Tannin	●●●●●	• Texture ●●●●●
• Sour	●●●○○	• Body	●●●●●	• Temperature ●●●●○
• Spicy	●●●●○	• Flavour intensity	●●●●●	
• Umami	●●●●○	• Finish	●●●○○	
• Flavour intensity	●●●●●			Low ●●●●● High



Southern Indian Specialties

Typical dishes – Red fish curry (meen kari), spicy and sour vegetable curry (gojju), spicy meatballs in sour gravy (kola kozhambu), banana leaf rice meal with an array of curries and dahl

Southern Indian specialties have intense, strong flavours from a wide range of spices that are used and numerous condiments that accompany a rice-based meal. There is a wide range of flavours from less spicy *dahls* to intensely salty, spicy and sour flavours that can be found presented at once. Condiments are common and can include a wide variety of chutneys, pickled sour vegetables, dips and sauces.

German wine recommendations: For less spicy dishes, a medium-bodied white wine such as a Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) or a late harvest dry Riesling are both good options. The flavour spectrum of southern Indian meals is very wide, and very spicy seasonings are common. In this context, Kabinett, Spätlese to Auslese Rieslings can match the food’s intensity. However, avoid styles with delicate flavour profiles, which will be overwhelmed by the strong seasonings.

Aromatic varieties like Gewürztraminer or Goldriesling, Scheurebe or Muskateller, can pair well, especially if their acidity levels are high. Their aromatics will be echoed by the numerous seasonings and spices used in south Indian cooking. The most important aspect of the wine’s profile must be its crisp, refreshing acidity to balance the spices.

SOUTHERN INDIAN FOOD AND WINE CHECKLIST

BASIC FLAVOUR ASSESSMENT		WINE CONSIDERATIONS		PALATE SENSATION
• Salty	●●●●●	• Sugar	Dry or off-dry	• Weight / richness ●●●○○
• Sweet	●●●●●	• Acid	●●●●○	• Oil ●●●○○
• Bitter	●○○○○	• Tannin	●○○○○	• Texture ●●●○○
• Sour	●●●●●	• Body	●●●●○	• Temperature ●●●○○
• Spicy	●●●●●	• Flavour intensity	●●●●●	
• Umami	●○○○○	• Finish	●●●○○	
• Flavour intensity	●●●●●			Low ●●●●● High

GERMAN GRAPE VARIETIES

RIESLING

Germany’s – and perhaps the world’s – premier white grape variety. The first documented mention of Riesling dates from the 15th century. Today, Germany is still home to more than half of the worldwide area devoted to Riesling. No other white wine can better express its origin, or *terroir*. Distinctive for its elegance, firm acidity, complexity, longevity – and extraordinary versatility with food. Crisp apple, ripe peach, mineral rich, or the honeyed tone of Botrytis are variations on a theme: Riesling.

SILVANER

An ancient variety that yields full-bodied, juicy wines with a fine fruity acidity. Neutral enough to enhance the delicate flavours of seafood and light meats or white asparagus.

RIVANER

A drier, more food compatible version of its synonym Müller-Thurgau. The wines are flowery, with a light Muscat tone, and not too acidic – easy on the palate. Enjoy while young.

GRAUBURGUNDER (Pinot Gris)

This variety is quite popular in Germany and brings out powerful, mouth-filling white wines with a rounded acidity. Grauburgunder needs good vineyards with deep, heavy soil. Harvest time is usually late September and early October. It is grown primarily in Baden and the Pfalz.

WEISSBURGUNDER (Pinot Blanc)

Elegant white wines with refreshing acidity, a fine fruitiness and bouquet reminiscent of pineapples, nuts, apricots or citrus.

SCHEUREBE

Ripeness is essential to bring forth its characteristic bouquet reminiscent of blackcurrants or grapefruit, and its fine, spicy undertones. A dry Scheurebe wine is a delicious sipping wine for an evening get together, while those with some sweetness are remarkable for their ability to enhance and refine the exotic spices and aromas of Asian cuisine.

GEWÜRZTRAMINER

The wines show a very pronounced bouquet, reminiscent of roses or marzipan with medium to fine acidity, spicy flavour, rich, full-bodied. It is produced as both a dry varietal and as a richer, sweeter wine.

SPÄTBURGUNDER (PINOT NOIR)

Germany’s finest and foremost red variety yields mouth-filling, velvety smooth red wines with a slightly sweet, fruity aroma. In Germany, the area under Pinot Noir cultivation has grown steadily in recent years to encompass almost 12,000 hectares. That makes Germany the third largest producer of Pinot Noir in the world.

DORNFELDER

This full-bodied, complex wine wins over its fans with a deep red colour and a smooth tannin structure. Typical Dornfelder aromas are reminiscent of morello cherries, blackberries and elderberries.

LEMBERGER / BLAUFRÄNKISCH

These red wines are rich in fruit, acid and tannin, with a bouquet ranging from berry-like to vegetal, such as green bell pepper.

