

PERFECT PAIRINGS: APPETISERS WITH STYLE

Food and wine-matching expertise doesn't come much more accomplished than at London members' club 67 Pall Mall. Top sommelier and *Decanter* judge **Ronan Sayburn MS** explains how he worked with the club's head chef, Marcus Verberne, to produce an in-depth reference on the subject, and selects four of their superb in-house recipes with tips on wine-matching

Food and wine-matching can be as complicated or as easy as you want to make it: either drink the wine you like with the food you like and don't worry about it, or have fun and try to create something with a synergy that can elevate the combination to another level.

Personally, I look at good matches that either compare or contrast – echoing the flavours of the wine in the food's ingredients, or contrasting flavours to cleanse the palate and refresh for the next bite.

To create a truly memorable experience, it's important to consider the ingredients and cooking techniques, richness and flavour of sauces, garnishes and even the order of service of foods and wines. Chargrilled venison has a very different depth of flavour and texture to that of a poached Dover sole, and the wine match needs to take this into consideration.

Classic combinations

Comparable flavours may include fresh green herbs with lemons and capers on fish, matched with a crisp Sauvignon Blanc or Verdicchio. Match the creamy lactic flavours found in cream or cheese sauces with an oaky style of wine that has been through its malolactic fermentation and developed softer acidity and a broader, richer palate – classic oak Chardonnay from Burgundy or California would fit this. Deep and intense Asian flavours of fish sauce and palm sugar with chilli pair well with off-dry wines such as German Riesling or Alsace Gewurztraminer; roast leg of lamb with an elegant, mature Bordeaux; barbecued and charred ribs and sticky glaze with a full-bodied Zinfandel. All follow simple guidelines of matching flavours, weight and intensity without overpowering one another.

Contrasting flavours can be acidic wines counterbalancing fatty or oily foods, such as smoked salmon with Chablis; charcuterie and pâtés with a young Beaujolais; the salty flavour of Stilton cheese with sweet Port; or rich Christmas pudding with a light Moscato d'Asti.

For our book *Food and Wine: The Perfect Match*, 67 Pall Mall chef Marcus Verberne and I approached the pairings in different ways. Some were classics: moules marinière with Muscadet and choucroute garni with Alsace Riesling, for example. For others, we thought about flavours and ingredients from the country of origin and worked them into dishes around the wine's flavours: beef skirt rubbed with *merkén* spice and served with stuffed green peppers and sweetcorn to match Chilean Carmenère. Plus our favourite, where we threw caution to the wind and made a canapé/bar snack to go with Madeira, mirroring flavours of pecan nuts, prunes, smoked bacon and star anise with chicken (*see recipe, opposite*).

Here we share with you four recipes that make bite-sized portions – ideal for the festive season ahead – accompanied by wine match ideas that we believe work extremely well. Season's greetings!

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Above: the inaugural publication from London's 67 Pall Mall club, *Wine and Food: The Perfect Match* (£40, Jacqui Small, September 2020)

Below from left: Ronan Sayburn MS with head chef Marcus Verberne at the 67 Pall Mall club

Sticky chicken tulips, prunes, smoked bacon, toasted pecans, star anise

Serves 4 as an appetiser

INGREDIENTS

- 16 chicken wing 'drumsticks', ordered from your butcher
- 600ml chicken stock
- 8 star anise
- 2.5cm cinnamon stick
- 50g pitted prunes
- 40g pecans
- 1 tbsp honey
- 4 smoked pancetta rashers, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp groundnut oil
- 80ml Madeira
- 1 tbsp soft brown sugar
- salt

To prepare the chicken tulips, using the heel of a heavy cook's knife, assertively chop the small knuckle off the end of each wing drumstick to reveal the bone. Pull back the flesh from the drumsticks, turning it inside out to reveal the bone in its entirety. Place the chicken tulips into a small saucepan and cover with the stock.

Add the star anise and cinnamon and season well with salt. Over a medium heat, bring to the boil, skimming off any impurities that collect on the surface with a ladle. Once it is boiling, drop in the prunes and remove from the heat. Allow to cool and infuse for 30-40 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 170°C. Place the pecans on a small oven tray and toast for 5 minutes or so. Remove the tray from the oven, drizzle over the honey and mix, coating the nuts in the honey, then return to the oven for a final 2-3 minutes. Remove from the oven, mix them again, then allow to cool.

Once the stock has cooled, strain the chicken through a sieve over a bowl to collect the cooking liquor. Remove and discard the star anise and cinnamon: they have done their job. Place the chicken tulips on kitchen paper to dry. Chop the softened prunes very finely to create a paste. To finish the chicken, preheat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Fry the chicken tulips and pancetta in the groundnut oil until the pancetta is crispy.



Above: canapé chicken tulips prepared with ingredients that mirror the flavours of Madeira

Deglaze the pan with the Madeira and add the brown sugar and prune paste. Toss the tulips in the pan to coat, then pour in 150ml of the reserved stock. Stirring regularly, reduce the stock to a sticky caramelised glaze, with a consistency that coats the chicken. Place the tulips on a serving platter and coat with the glaze. Roughly chop the honey-roasted pecans and sprinkle them over the top. Serve with a finger bowl and plenty of napkins. ➤

WINE MATCH

Madeira is one of the most wonderfully complex wines you will ever taste, but it's often left to the end of the meal, or served with cheese. We wanted to do something different. This sticky chicken dish works very well, as the intense flavours in the Madeira need to be paired with punchy ingredients. It's a fun bar snack or pre-dinner nibble. The sticky glaze is infused with the most prominent flavours present in aged Madeira, such as smoky bacon, prunes, honey and nuts, with the complementary spices of star anise and cinnamon.

Oyster tempura, green apple, wasabi & lime mayonnaise, shiso

Serves 4 as an appetiser

INGREDIENTS

- Tempura batter (see below)
- 100g tempura flour, to coat
- 1 tbsp wasabi paste
- 2 tbsp lime juice
- 150g mayonnaise
- vegetable oil, to deep-fry
- 12 live rock oysters
- 1 Granny Smith apple
- rock salt, to serve
- 1 punnet purple shiso cress, to serve (optional)

FOR THE MAYONNAISE

- 6 egg yolks
- 20g English mustard
- 40g Dijon mustard
- 35ml white wine vinegar
- 500ml vegetable oil
- 250ml olive oil
- Juice of ½ lemon, or to taste

FOR THE TEMPURA BATTER

- 300ml sparkling water, chilled
- 1 ice cube
- 150g tempura flour, plus more to dust

Start by making the batter, then leave it to rest for 30 minutes. When making tempura batter, it's important that the sparkling water is chilled. To keep it cold, slide an ice cube inside the whisk. Place the flour in a bowl. Slowly whisk in the sparkling water a little at a time. The consistency should be light enough to just coat the oysters. Chill until ready to use.

To make the mayonnaise, whisk the egg yolks, mustards and vinegar in a large bowl, until well combined. Slowly drizzle in the oils, whisking continuously until the mixture thickens and emulsifies. Don't rush this stage, or the oils won't incorporate with the egg yolks and the mayonnaise will split. Add the lemon juice and season to taste. If the mayonnaise is too thick, add a touch of warm water. It keeps for two weeks in the fridge.

In a mixing bowl, whisk the wasabi and lime juice into the mayonnaise. Don't adjust the seasoning yet, as you will add some of the salty oyster juice.

Once the batter has rested, set a deep-fat fryer to 170°C. If you don't have a fryer, place the oil in a large, deep saucepan, leaving

enough room at the top to allow for rapid boiling when the oysters are added. Place over a high heat, but be careful it doesn't get too hot. If you have a cooking thermometer, use it to regulate the temperature. If not, test the heat by dropping in a cube of bread; it should bubble on entry and start to brown after 15 seconds. Have to hand some kitchen paper and a slotted spoon to remove the oysters from the hot oil (don't try to use spring-loaded tongs – this can be very dangerous, for obvious reasons). Shuck the oysters (find a guide online, if you need it), then tip off the juices and reserve. Place the oysters into a colander and wash the bowl-shaped shells (discard the flatter half of the shells). Fill a serving platter with rock salt and sit the shells on the salt.

Strain the reserved oyster juice to remove any fragments of shell. Add enough of it to the mayonnaise to give a loose salad cream consistency. If you have a mandolin, use it to cut the apple into thin batons. If not, do so with a knife. Dress immediately with mayonnaise to prevent discolouration. Place a little apple into each shell, being generous with the dressing. Place the tempura flour into a bowl, and, one by one, coat the oysters with the flour, shaking off excess. Drop the floured oysters into the batter. When you're ready to cook the oysters, lift them out one at a time, placing them carefully into the fryer with a spoon. Hold the oyster in the spoon submerged in the oil for a few seconds to allow the batter to set, before letting it go (this will stop it from sticking to the bottom).

Cook 6 at a time, or they will stick together. Deep-fry for about 2 minutes, until golden and crisp. Drain on kitchen paper to soak up any oil, before placing them on the dressed apple in the shells. You shouldn't need to season. If you like, pick a few purple shiso tips and place them on top of each oyster to serve. ➤

Right: the laser-like acidity of a good-quality Hunter Valley Semillon perfectly cuts through oyster tempura

‘Fill a serving platter with rock salt and sit the oyster shells on the salt’

WINE MATCH

A Hunter Valley Semillon from Australia would be a perfect match here, with its flavours of lime and green apple, and oyster minerality. In this region, the grape variety produces wines that are bone-dry, with laser-like acidity. With age, flavours emerge that make you convinced these wines have been aged in oak, when in fact they have not. **ALTERNATIVE WINE MATCHES:** New Zealand Albariño, Alsace Sylvaner or blanc de blancs Champagne.



Cheese straw trio

Makes about 24 of each straw

INGREDIENTS

- 100g pitted Kalamata olives
- 100g salted anchovies
- 600g all-butter puff pastry
- plain flour to dust
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 300g Parmesan cheese, finely grated
- 100g Emmental cheese, finely grated

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Finely chop the olives and then grind them to a paste in a mortar and pestle. Wash out the mortar and pestle and do the same with the anchovies. Reserve both the pastes, separately, for later.

Cut the pastry into 3 x 200g portions. Dust a worktop with flour and roll each into a large square. Prick heavily with a fork. Trim the edges to get 3 x 30cm squares. Using a pastry brush, brush a coating of egg on the first pastry square right to the edges. Mix 100g of the Parmesan in a bowl with all the Emmental. Sprinkle half of this evenly over the egg-washed pastry right to the edges. Cover with a sheet of baking parchment and, using a rolling pin with no force, gently roll it across the pastry so the cheese sticks. Remove the parchment and lay it flat on the worktop.

Carefully turn the pastry sheet over on to the parchment, then repeat the process on the other side, with more egg and the other half of the cheese mixture. Cut each pastry sheet into 12 x 2.5cm strips. Line several baking trays with baking parchment. Twist the ends of each strip in opposite directions until you have a tight straw and lay them out on the baking trays, leaving space between them so they crisp up (you may have to bake these in batches). Bake for 10-12 minutes until golden and crispy. While they are still warm, using a serrated knife, trim each end and cut each straw in half. Cool on a wire rack.

Spread the second pastry sheet with half the olive paste and scatter with another 50g of the Parmesan. Cover with a sheet of baking parchment and, using a rolling pin with no force, gently roll it across the pastry so the cheese sticks. Remove the parchment and lay it flat on the worktop. Carefully turn the pastry sheet over on to the parchment, then repeat the process on the other side, using the remaining olive paste and 50g more Parmesan. Form the straws and bake as above.

Make the anchovy straws in the same way as the olive straws, replacing the olive paste



Above: cheese straws are easy to make, and go well with Champagne

Right: Taittinger's Comtes de Champagne, Blanc de Blancs



with anchovy paste. Serve at room temperature, or flash back through the oven for a couple of minutes to serve warm.

WINE MATCH

The perfect pairing for Champagne or sparkling wine. Rather than just one flavour, we are giving you three: both salted anchovies and olives are great with Champagne and sparkling wine, so we are using those. These are so easy to make. The lactic and nutty nature of cheese and the toasty, yeasty character of pastry both work well with Champagne, which can have similar flavours. The wine's acidity will also cut through the richness of the pastry.

Aubergine chickpea fritters, barrel-aged feta & pesto

Serves 6 an appetiser

FOR THE FRITTERS

- 4 large aubergines
- 2 garlic cloves
- 200g canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 50g gram flour, plus more if needed
- pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1 tbsp tahini paste
- juice of 2 lemons, or to taste
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 200g feta cheese, chopped into 1cm cubes
- vegetable oil, to deep-fry
- basil cress, to serve (optional)

FOR THE PESTO

- 40g pine nuts
- 80g basil leaves
- 80g Parmesan cheese, finely grated
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 1 chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
- 300ml extra virgin olive oil
- salt & pepper

Below: aubergine chickpea fritters paired with a smoky St Laurent red from Austria

To produce 400g of aubergine pulp, burn the aubergine skins over a charcoal barbecue, or the flame of a gas hob. Turn to char all sides evenly, until the aubergines start to collapse. When cool enough to handle, remove the skins and tops. Spoon the pulp into a muslin cloth, tie it to form a bag and, using string, hang it over a bowl in the fridge overnight.

The next day, put the garlic cloves in a small saucepan, cover with water and set over a high heat. Boil for 8 minutes, then drain and cool. To make the pesto, preheat the oven to 170°C. Place the pine nuts on a tray and toast in the oven for 5-7 minutes, or until golden. Remove from the oven and spread out to cool. After about 10 minutes, add all the ingredients to a blender and pulse-blend until amalgamated but still a little coarse; be careful not to over-blend the pesto. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

Pulse the chickpeas coarsely in a food processor and remove. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Put the aubergine in the food processor with the gram flour, cayenne, garlic, tahini, lemon juice and cumin. Blend to a purée, put in a bowl and fold in the chickpeas. Season, adding lemon juice if needed.

Set up a deep-fat fryer to 190°C, or use a saucepan. Test a spoon of fritter mix in the fryer. If it disintegrates, add a little more gram flour. Fold in the feta. You can use 2 dessert spoons to shape the mixture into quenelles, but this is tricky for a novice, so don't feel defeated if you choose to drop the mixture from a spoon instead. Deep-fry the fritters for a couple of minutes until golden and crispy. You'll need to do this in batches. Once ready, drain on kitchen paper. Serve with the pesto and sprinkle basil cress over, if you like. **D**

WINE MATCH

This is inspired by the Arabic meze dip baba ganoush. The key is to make sure the skins of the aubergine are charred to ash; only then will you achieve the smoky flavour integral to the dish. You can serve as a starter, or smaller, as a canapé. Austrian St Laurent is a deep and dark red wine with a smoky character, and this is mirrored in the charred aubergines that go into these fritters. **ALTERNATIVE WINE MATCHES:** Petit Verdot, Douro red or German Spätburgunder.

