



BEEER

FOR OENOPHILES

WHICH BREW IS EQUIVALENT TO A CABERNET SAUVIGNON? WHEN YOU'RE THINKING WINE BUT IN THE MOOD FOR A BEER, THIS CHART SHALL BE YOUR GUIDE.

BY STEPHEN BEAUMONT

It is without question one of the greatest of the divides that exists in the world of gastronomy today, equal to the schism between vegetarians and omnivores, more profound than the gulf that separates old school oenophiles from new world enthusiasts. It is, of course, the line between beer and wine.

For many, it's a passionate matter. "Wine is for snobs," come the cries from the beer camp. "Beer is for boors," the wine contingent retorts.

"Tarted up grape juice!"
"Trailer park swill!"

And so it goes. But really, there is no reason the two camps should be so at odds. After all, winemakers are notorious for their consumption—and deep appreciation—of ale and lager, particularly during the often hot, always arduous season of the harvest and crush. (Else why would it be said that it takes a lot of good beer to make a great wine?) On the beer side, more than a few American brewers cut their teeth first in the wine trade, either in sales or, more often than you might think, on the production side of the winery.

If these professionals can see the merits of each other's principle beverages, then surely we, as consumers, can do the same. Particularly since, as much as there exists a wine for every

beer aficionado, there is surely a beer for each and every oenophile.

When exploring such harmonies, the logical place to begin is with temperature, since the cooler serving temperatures of most white wines echoes the similar needs of the majority of lager styles. Thus, a situation that calls for a white, or a wine drinker whose preference falls towards the lean, less rounded flavors of a Riesling or Sauvignon Blanc, might favor a lager like a German Pilsner or Helles, since such beers are not only at their best when served with a sub-cellar chill, but will also more closely emulate the crispness of a white wine than will most ales.

The reverse is also true. Warmer fermentation tends to produce esters in ales, creating beers with fruity, mouth-filling richness, or in other words, broad flavor profiles not entirely dissimilar to those boasted by many red wines. No surprise, too, that ales are generally at their best when offered at cellar temperature or warmer.

Food affinities provide another point of beer-wine comparison, since it follows that a beer that

matches a specific dish might appeal to a person who enjoys the pleasures of that same dish with a specific wine variety. To this end, treat ales as you would red wines and lagers as you would whites, reach for hoppy ales when the situation would otherwise call for a wine of considerable acidity, and remember that in beer as in wine, higher alcohol levels tend to translate into richer, more mouth-filling characters.

The two greatest differences between beer and wine are hops and carbonation. Hops create bitter flavors that are mostly absent from the world of wine. When examined more closely, however, it becomes apparent that the bitterness of hops has more than a passing similarity to acidity in wine, to the point, even, that raw hops are measured by their levels of alpha acid. The fact that bitterness in food is mostly a learned appreciation should cause no worry, since a gastronome who has mastered the appeal of radicchio and arugula should surely be able to understand the complex, hoppy bitterness of a pale ale.

Finally, carbonation. The common assumption is that all beer is carbonated to the same degree, which couldn't be further from the truth. British-style ales and British and Irish stouts and porters, for example, normally have but a fraction of the carbonation of a mainstream lager; likewise, higher alcohol ales and lagers will usually boast more subdued carbonation than will lower strength beers. Bottle-conditioned beers, such as many Belgian-style ales and most German-style wheat beers, will have more of a soothing, pin-prick-style carbonation than will artificially carbonated beers, like most mainstream lagers.

Besides, whenever the elite of the wine world is trotted out, one highly respected, very food-friendly wine always stands front and center: Champagne. And I can't recall when I last heard complaints about its carbonation.



PHOTOS SHUTTERSTOCK

WINE: Cabernet Sauvignon
BEER: India pale ale
EXAMPLES: Victory Hop Devil, Bear Republic Racer 5
BECAUSE: Rich flavors of fresh and dried fruit backed by bracing hop bitterness make this the philosophical equivalent to a big-bodied Cab.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Grilled steak, rare roast beef, bison

WINE: Pinot Noir
BEER: Flemish sour ale
EXAMPLES: Rodenbach Grand Cru, Duchesse de Bourgogne
BECAUSE: Incredibly complex, highly fruity Flemish sours have a unique character that appeals to connoisseurs.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Suitable for small bites served before dinner, excellent with rare lamb

WINE: Zinfandel
BEER: Belgian-style dubbel
EXAMPLES: Rochefort 8, Allagash Dubbel
BECAUSE: Richly malty beers, dubbels have plentiful fruity notes and acres of body.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Big flavors from hearty stews to dark chocolate

WINE: Chianti/Sangiovese
BEER: Vienna lager, bock
EXAMPLES: Great Lakes Brewing The Elliot Ness, Aass Bock
BECAUSE: A partnership built in the kitchen and at the table, where all foods tomato-based are well matched to wine or beer.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Pizza, pasta, tomato-based stews

WINE: Côtes du Rhône
BEER: American-style pale ale
EXAMPLES: Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, Great Divide Denver Pale Ale
BECAUSE: A workhorse style of beer, with wide-ranging food affinities and broad appeal. Generally crisp and somewhat citrusy in character.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Everything from a hamburger to medium roast beef and

Hungarian goulash
WINE: Shiraz
BEER: British-style brown ale
EXAMPLES: Samuel Smith Nut Brown Ale, Lost Coast Downtown Brown
BECAUSE: Nutty, chocolaty malt and a dry finish make this an approachable, although sometimes complex, style.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Liver with onions and gravy, rabbit, robust meat stews

WINE: Rioja
BEER: Belgian-style spiced ale
EXAMPLES: Brasserie des Rocs Ambrée, Unibroue Maudite
BECAUSE: Spice is the common currency here, with dried fruit, cocoa and other malty notes providing the beer's backbone.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Big flavors from lamb stew to steak au poivre

WINE: Nebbiolo
BEER: Double IPA, aka Imperial pale ale
EXAMPLES: Russian River Pliny the Elder, Three Floyds Alpha King
BECAUSE: Powerful and aggressive beer that may take years to mellow, but when in ideal balance can be a great pleasure even young.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Neither is an easy pairing, but smoky, peppery flavors can work well

WINE: Sauvignon Blanc
BEER: German-style pilsner
EXAMPLES: Jever Pilsner, Bitburger Pilsner
BECAUSE: Dry, austere lagers with crisp hoppiness and slightly biting character.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Blackened chicken or fish, salty dishes, deep-fried foods

WINE: Chardonnay
BEER: Czech-style pilsner, German-style märzen
EXAMPLES: Pilsner Urquell, Ayinger Oktoberfest-Märzen
BECAUSE: Classic Czech pilsners are rounder than their German cousins,

with a slightly buttery maltiness. German märzens have rich, honey-ish maltiness.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Herbaceous dishes like roast chicken with sage, garlic shrimp

WINE: Grüner Veltliner
BEER: Belgian- and German-style wheat beers (bières blanches and hefeweizens)
EXAMPLES: St. Bernardus Wit (Bel.), Schneider Weisse (Ger.)
BECAUSE: Despite being ales rather than lagers, both styles of wheat beer possess light, quaffable characters and a perfumey, spicy palate.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Shirred eggs and other breakfast dishes, poached whitefish

WINE: Riesling/Gewürztraminer
BEER: Bavarian-style golden lager (helles)
EXAMPLES: Aecht Schlenkerla Helles Lagerbier, Penn Gold

BECAUSE: Fermented in the same fashion as sparkling wines, except without the removal of the yeast, traditional lambics are bone dry and often have a biscuity maltiness.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Excellent when poured as aperitifs, well-suited to acidic cheeses

WINE: Ice wine/Sauterne
BEER: Strong Trappist or abbey-style ale
EXAMPLES: Koningshoeven Quadrupel, Lost Abbey Judgment Day
BECAUSE: Sweet, complex characters that vary widely in interpretation and presentation; a supreme after-dinner indulgence.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Fruit desserts, on their own after a meal (Note: for the classic Sauterne and foie gras partnership, a strong, sweet and golden Belgian or Belgian-style ale may be substituted instead)

WINE: Dry Sherry (Fino & Manzanilla)
BEER: Belgian-style tripel and Belgian strong golden ale
EXAMPLES: Westmalle Tripel, Duvel
BECAUSE: Broadly twin interpretations of a single style, each offers a character that has complexity, restrained fruitiness and an appetizingly dry finish.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Suitable as aperitif, green olives, salty cheeses

WINE: Rich Sherry (Oloroso & Pedro Ximénez)
BEER: Vintage British-style barleywine and old ale
EXAMPLES: L.W. Lee's Harvest Ale, Thomas Hardy Ale
BECAUSE: As these beers age, they devel-

“WINE IS FOR SNOBS,” COME THE CRIES FROM THE BEER CAMP. “BEER IS FOR BOORS,” THE WINE CONTINGENT RETORTS. “TARTED UP GRAPE JUICE!” “TRAILER PARK SWILL!”



BECAUSE: An off-dry, sometimes sweetish lager with easy approachability and enough hop to be very versatile with food.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Just about anything with pork, ceviche, salty foods

WINE: Viognier
BEER: Kellerbier
EXAMPLES: St. Georgen Keller Bier, Mahr's Ungespundet Lager
BECAUSE: A too-rarely-seen style of Germanic lager bottled unfiltered, with great hop perfume and full, if slightly reserved flavor.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Mildly spiced Indian foods, honey-glazed chicken

WINE: Champagne/sparkling wine
BEER: Traditional gueuze lambic
EXAMPLES: Cantillon Gueuze, Hanssens Gueuze

WINE: Ruby Port
BEER: Strong Scottish-style ale (“Scotch ale”)
EXAMPLES: Gordon Scotch Ale, Traquair House Ale
BECAUSE: Deeply malty and sweet, with ample fruitiness and a character that can range from fairly simple to complex.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Custard-based desserts, fruit tarts

WINE: Vintage Port
BEER: Imperial stout
EXAMPLES: North Coast Old Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout, Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout
BECAUSE: A bold and complex ale, well suited to aging and best enjoyed at the end of the night in front of a roaring fire.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Strong cheeses, cigars

op complex characters rich with notes of raisin and other dried fruit, tanned leather and brown spice.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Shoo fly pie, dark chocolate ice cream, aged cheddar and Manchego cheeses

WINE: Rosé
BEER: Steam beer and cream ale
EXAMPLES: Anchor Steam Beer, Sleeman Cream Ale
BECAUSE: Supped fresh and young, these thirst quenchers are hybrid styles that present some of the fruitiness of ale with the crispness of lager.
FOOD AFFINITIES: Suited to a picnic spread of sandwiches and crudités

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK