

CONTACT: Michael Wehman
312-988-2344
mwehman@webershandwick.com

SIPPING WITH SALADS

Simple Tips for Salad and Wine Pairing Dilemmas

CHICAGO – Who would’ve imagined that mesclun mix would become a supermarket staple and iceberg lettuce wedges would make their way back onto upscale restaurant menus? As America’s salad tastes have changed, the classics have endured, too. From sensational sides to main dish masterpieces, salads are more popular than ever. “But a lot of people are confused about pairing wines with salads,” explains *Wine & Spirits* contributing writer and wine educator Jordan Mackay. “Vinaigrettes pose the main challenge, as they often contain more acid than a typical table wine, making the wines taste dull and flat. Luckily, this is a challenge that is easy to overcome.”

For starters, high-acid sparkling wines, crisp dry rosés and white wines with little or no oak work well with many vinaigrettes. Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, dry Riesling or Spanish Albariño are several great options. “The crispness and acidity in these wines can usually stand up to a vinaigrette in a more balanced way,” explains Mackay.

But if you’re looking to expand the wine-friendliness of your vinaigrette-based salads even further, consider the following simple solutions:

5 Quick Fixes for More Wine-Friendly Salads

- **Make it meatier.** Including a protein such as poultry, meat or seafood will help buffer the acidity in the vinaigrette. The protein and fat will still pair nicely with crisp, acidic whites, but will also welcome the soft tannins in red wines.

-more-

- **Vary your vinegar.** Even just changing the type of vinegar in the dressing can help in pairing a salad with wine. Consider a milder vinegar such as rice vinegar, which is easier to balance with wine. A little balsamic vinegar will also offset the acidity with its mild sweetness.
- **Splash in a substitution.** Try substituting fresh citrus juice (such as lemon, orange, lime or grapefruit) or wine for all or part of the vinegar. The citric acid in the fruit juices are a much better wine match than the acetic acid in vinegar. Alternately, incorporating some wine into a vinaigrette helps bridge flavors for wine pairings, too.
- **Adjust the oil.** Using a higher ratio of oil to vinegar can help reduce the acidity of the dressing. Using a fruity variety of olive oil as your dressing base will also help make it more wine-friendly.
- **Get salty...or cheesy...or nutty.** Adding a salty ingredient (such as olives, capers or anchovies), a few chopped nuts or a bit of a high-impact flavorful cheese will help neutralize some of the acidity in the vinegar.

Above all, don't be afraid to have fun experimenting with salads and wine to discover the pairings *you* like best. To get you started, Mackay and the Wine Market Council have shared some winning wine pairings for favorite salad classics.

SALAD FAVORITE	WINE SUGGESTION
Caesar Salad	Garlic and anchovies give Caesar salad its unmistakable bite. A bright, tart Italian Pinot Grigio or a Portuguese Vinho Verde will stand up those powerful flavors.
Cobb Salad	Because of the meat and cheese in this traditional hearty salad, a light red is a nice choice – something with good acidity and not too much alcohol like a lighter Pinot Noir or Beaujolais . If you prefer white, a dry Riesling is a palate-pleasing option.
Nicoise Salad	Briny olives and fish give traditional Nicoise salads a distinctive Mediterranean flavor which calls for a bright, Mediterranean-style wine. A dry Rosé or try a tangy and bright Spanish Albariño are great partners. If the salad is made with seared tuna steak, a light red like a Pinot Noir is also a nice match.
Caprese Salad	The Caprese is a well-balanced salad with creamy mozzarella that tames the high acidity in the tomatoes. A salad like this calls for an equally well-balanced wine – one that's not too tart and not too creamy, and one that won't get in the way of unadorned natural flavors of the salad. Pinot Grigio fits the bill, as does Sauvignon Blanc , which also has flavors that will complement the basil.

SALAD FAVORITE	WINE SUGGESTION
Crab Louis	Crab is a delicate flavor, but gets a new personality in Crab Louis. The mixture of crab with the assertive, spicy ingredients and creamy mayonnaise distinctive to Crab Louis make this salad a perfect pairing for a high-acid style like a crisp Chablis or a lighter, unoaked Chardonnay .
Greek Salad	A good Greek salad is a strong dish, with loads of salty, sharp flavors that calls for an assertive wine. A lively, brash New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc , loaded with acidity and pungent flavors, stands up to this salad's aggressive flavors.
Asian Chicken Salad	Asian chicken salads get their distinctive flavor from rice vinegar, lime juice and sesame oil, while hot red pepper flakes add a bit of heat to this cool summer salad. An off-dry Riesling is a great match for this salad. Its crispness balances the tangy Asian flavors, while a hint of sweetness handles the spice.
Pasta Salad	Pasta salads are picnic staples that tend to be very rich and creamy with mayonnaise. An equally rich wine, like a classic California Chardonnay , brings welcome balance to its heaviness.

For more information, tips and wine pairing advice, check out wineanswers.com.

###

Wine Market Council is an independent, non-profit trade association of grape growers, wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and other organizations affiliated with the wine industry. For more information, visit winemarketcouncil.com or wineanswers.com.