

HANNA
LEE

Wine 101 for Business Lunches and Dinners

A simple guideline from light-bodied to full-bodied wines

by Hanna Lee of Hanna Lee Communications, Inc. www.unwindwithwine.com

"I am taking my prospects to dinner tonight. Could you tell me which wine should I order?" It was a panicked call that I received from one of my friends who is in the fashion marketing business. There was too little time to educate her about wines in a five-minute phone call. I gave her a simple guideline that demystified white and red wines, from the light-bodied to the full-bodied, along with the food recommendations.

Like my friend, we are all in the business world and we often go to business lunches and dinners. Ordering wines for your clients, prospects or colleagues is not as challenging as you might think, once you understand the basics of the different styles of wines. For those of you who have a business meal today, here's a quick and easy guide to let you take charge when entertaining. I've listed retail prices; restaurant prices will be significantly higher. Let's start with white wines:

Light-bodied White: Riesling

A lot of people associate Riesling with "sweet," but this is not necessarily so. They are refreshing white wines with

fruity aromas (lemon and green apple) and maintain a nice acidity. Germany is the largest producer of Riesling wines. Another place known for Riesling is Alsace, France; theirs are made in a dry style, with a tangy flavor.

Food pairings: Off-dry Rieslings often pair well with spicy dishes, especially Asian cuisine, as well as clams and oysters. Dry Rieslings are great accompaniments to oily or fatty fish like smoked salmon. Their acidity offsets the oil.

Recommended Brands:

- Trimbach Riesling 2003 (\$18)
- Lucien Albrecht Riesling 2004 (\$13)

Medium-bodied White: Sauvignon Blanc

The two best-known regions for this charming wine are France's Loire Valley and New Zealand's Marlborough region. To enjoy their zesty, crisp and vibrant fruit flavors of lemon, lime and tropical fruit, it is recommended they be consumed young and fresh.

Food pairings: Sauvignon Blanc is terrific with goat cheese, cold gazpachos, sushi, oysters and your favorite white-

fleshed fish.

Recommended Brands:

- J.C. Chatelain, Pouilly-Fume, 2004 (\$15)
- Cloudy Bay Marlborough, Sauvignon Blanc, 2005 (\$30)

Full-Bodied White: Chardonnay

California and Burgundy, France, are known for producing Chardonnay grapes. Chardonnay is one of the most popular white wines and you probably have experienced this rich and heavy wine already. The California style tends to be "okay."

Food pairings: Chardonnays pair well with barbecue, as well as fish dishes like sole and halibut. More full-bodied chardonnays work nicely with fattier fish, like salmon and tuna, as well as meats like roast chicken, pork and duck. Big, buttery, creamy chardonnays are good matches for butter and cream-based dishes and pasta sauces.

Recommended Brands:

- Louis Latour, Chassagne-Montrachet, 2002 (\$38)
- Talbott Chardonnay Sleepy Hollow Vineyard (\$45)

Light-Bodied Red: Pinot Noir

The movie "Sideways" made it trendy to drink Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir is the main red grape of Burgundy, France, but it is also produced in Oregon and New Zealand. It is soft and subtle. I love its silky and velvety texture.

Food Pairings: Believe it or not, fish. Its high acidity pairs nicely with seafood. And, of course, duck and roast chicken.

Recommended Brands:

- Pinot Noir, Au Bon Climat Pinot Noir 2003 (\$34)

- Willamette Valley Vineyards Pinot Noir 2002 (\$21)

Medium-Bodied Merlot

It was slammed in "Sideways." But Merlot wine lovers continue to savor its softness and rich scents of plum and dark berries. Bordeaux and California make some of the most beloved Merlots.

Food pairings: Grilled seafood, quail, chicken or steak, pastas (either red or white sauces), pizza, game birds, veal and pork chops.

Recommended Brands:

- Francis Coppola "Diamond Collection" Blue Label 2003 (\$14)
- Turning Leaf Vineyards "Coastal Reserve" 2002 (\$11)

Full-Bodied Red: Cabernet Sauvignon

Cabernet Sauvignon is the leading red grape of Bordeaux. Napa and Sonoma, California are well-known for it, too. It is stronger, more intense than Merlot, with aromas of black currants and often vanilla from being aged in oak.

Food pairing: Lamb chops, steak and game.

Recommended Brands:

- Jordan Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma County (\$59)
- Louis Martini Cabernet Sauvignon 2001 (\$35)

If you are interested in learning more about wine, please visit www.unwindwithwine.com. "Unwind with Wine Club" is an educational wine tasting and networking club targeting professional women's organizations and their members, as well as a business organizations. ■

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Dear MCC:

I just wanted to drop a line to you regarding Eric Robinson at Procurement Solutions Corp.

I recently joined the Chamber and spoke with him about health insurance. He helped me find an appropriate plan, answered all my questions and expedited the request very quickly. I believe good service should be acknowledged.

Thanks,

Miguel Parga
Karmic Entertainment