Wine Pairing
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Some general guidelines (adapted from Baldy, 2009)

1. Acidity
   a. Does the wine make your mouth water?
   b. We taste acidity on the front and side of the tongue
   c. Tart and acidic wine will "cut thorough" a dish that is rich, oily or fatty. Tart and acidic works very well with butter/dairy based sauces and fried foods…sparkling wine can be a great companion to potato chips or roasted salted nuts.
   d. Salads are difficult to pair with wine: try acidic wine with a green salad/vinaigrette
   e. Similar to squeezing a lemon on food, citrus driven acidic wine will liven up flavors.
2. Sweetness
   a. Sweetness is called 'residual sugar' and we taste sweetness on tip of tongue
   b. Wines high in tannins or acidity distort perception of sweetness and will taste less sweet.
   c. Sweet wines balance spice in food. Try an off-dry Riesling with spicy Thai food.
   d. Slightly sweet wine can complement slightly sweet components of a dish. For example, pork tenderloin with a mango chutney, or off-dry wine with salty cheese.
   e. Dessert or extremely sweet wine usually should be *sweeter* than the dessert. If the dessert is *too* sweet, the wine will fall flat and bitter in comparison.
      Dryness (grams of sugar):
      i. Bone-dry: 0 calories per serving (< 1 g/L)
      ii. Dry: 0-6 calories per serving (1-17 g/L)
      iii. Off-dry: 6-21 calories per serving (17-35 g/L)
      iv. Medium-sweet: 21-74 calories per serving (35-120 g/L)
      v. Sweet: 72+ calories per serving (> 120 g/L)
      Sparkling wine scale of 'dryness':
      vi. Brut Nature: 0-1 g/L (no added sugar)
      vii. Extra Brut: 0-6 g/L
      viii. Brut: 0-12 g/L
      ix. Extra Dry: 12-17 g/L
      x. Dry: 17-32 g/L
      xi. Demi-Sec: 32-50 g/L
      xii. Doux: >50 g/L
3. Tannin
   a. Taste tannin on front inside of your mouth, drying out the tongue. This is drying sensation is due to astringency. Astringency is not a taste it is a *sensation*; bitterness is a *taste.*
   b. Tannins contribute to the classic paring of tannic wine and red meat. The fat softens the tannins in the wine, and the wine's fruit nuances will be more noticeable.
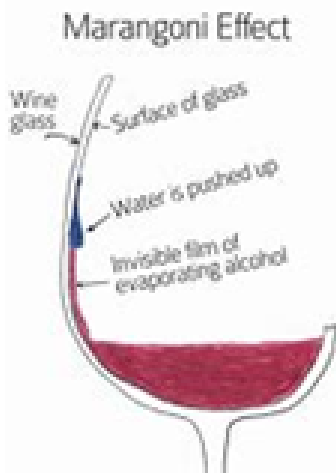   c. Tannin can accentuate salty flavors.
4. Oak
   a. Food can amplify oaky flavors in wine.
   b. Match perceived flavors of the oak with cooking method; grilled, charring, or smoking.
5. Alcohol
   a. Sense alcohol after you swallow as a slight burning sensation in the back of throat. More burning or tingling = more alcohol.
   b. Alcohol increases perception of weight and body, lower alcohol generally feels thinner and less full.
   c. Pair higher alcohol wines that have more weight and body with food that is also 'heavy'
   d. Salty food will make high alcohol wines seem even more alcoholic.
   e. High alcohol amplifies spice, making foods seem spicier! Thus, beer pairs well with New Mexican food!

f. <u>Marangoni effect</u>: Alcohol evaporates quicker than water. During evaporation, the alcohol in wine climbs the side of the glass. The water on top is pushed up in an arch, as water tension is released the water runs back down the side of the glass as "tears" or "legs". This can indicate more alcohol, *not* necessarily "quality".

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Brief Information on grape varieties of today's wines

'*Classic' grapes:* **Chardonnay**, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chenin Blanc, Grenach Noir, **Gewürztraminer**, Merlot, Muscat, Nebbiolo, Pinot Noir, **Riesling**, **Sangiovese**, Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon, Syrah/Shiraz, **Tempranillo**, Viognier and Zinfandel.

1. ***Non-Vintage Gruet Brut, method champenoise****, winemaker, Laurent Gruet, (0-12 g/L sugar)*
   Chardonnay: This rendition of the Gruet lind likely contains up to 75% Chardonnay and 25% Pinot Noir. This first version of this wine was initially offered in 1987, typically has about 8 g/L of sugar added as 'dosage' and is the best-selling wine of Gruet. Let's discuss the main component; Chardonnay, *the* white wine grape, likely originated in Burgundy, France as a cross of Gouais Blanc and Pinot noir and has expanded to a global presence. Named for the village of *Chardonnay* in the Mâconnais, it is a neutral flavored variety and made into many different styles of wine: sparkling, still table wines that range from "fat and buttery" with full malo-lactic fermentation and oak barrel aging, to lean and mineral style when grown in cool-climate Chablis, to lush, creamy, stone fruit laden wine when grown in warm climates. Chardonnay can be found as an inexpensive 'commodity' type wine and as complex wines that age gracefully for decades. Bottom line: Chardonnay is a very adaptable vine variety that grows and thrives most anywhere in the world. Having said that, of all the wine regions I have visited and worked in, New Mexico has generally not impressed with its Chardonnays. Part of the reason for Chardonnay's lackluster performance in New Mexico may stem from a general rule of viticulture: cool-climates typically produces leaner, more acidic wines and warm climates tend to produce lusher, fruitier wines…the acidity lacking in warm climate grown grapes can lead to "flabby" "heavy" wines. HOWEVER, when grown in selected mesoclimates, and picked early prior to loss of acidity…it can and does make excellent sparkling wine…Thus, Gruet Winery in Albuquerque and our first wine today.
   Food Pairing: Chardonnay's broad range of flavors = a Chardonnay for every occasion. The big, complex, oaked, malo-lactic, Burgundian and New World versions go with rich fish, seafood, some smoked foods and garlic laced foods, including guacamole. The unoaked Chardonnays with more fruit forward character pair with spicy Asian or New Mexican cuisine…and of course with holiday turkey. Sparkling wines can work as an aperitif with light hors d oeuvres with dairy, or even potato chips and/or lightly salted nuts.

2. ***Wines of the San Juan, 'Girls are Meaner'****, winemaker, Josh Arnold: "*table wine' No specific alcohol % is listed, because TTB regulations allow a wine below 14% to designated as 'table'. This allows the producer to use the same label stock over many vintages.
   Gewürztraminer: If Chardonnay is the epitome of a 'neutral' white grape then Gewürztraminer is its alter ego with intense (overwhelming to some) aromatics and flavors. "Spicy' if often applied to Gewurztraminer but this is quite limiting and often incorrect. Lychee and rose petal…'floral' might apply to "Gewurz", whose 'home' *terroir* is the Alsace region of northeastern France. Gewürztraminer is a light yielding grape variety, and thus is not popular with many growers who have a hard time marketing it to a wine consuming public that is unfamiliar with it.
   Food pairing: Oz Clarke says this wine, when young, is fine on its own. Pairs well with pungent cheeses, Indian or Chinese …I also suggest Thai, especially those dishes with ginger and other spices such as lemongrass or coriander and/or coconut. But it might be ideal with not-too-spicy New Mexican fare…pozole? carne adovada? When the spices are less pronounced try a more mature Gewürztraminer. To my taste it pairs very well with roast turkey or ham.

3. ***Sheehan Winery, Chambourcin, hybrid grape****, winemaker, Sean Sheehan:* There is not a lot of information on this hybrid variety wine grape. According to Jancis Robinson et al. (2012) it was developed by grape breeder Joannes Seyve in 1945, and released in 1963. Despite the French propensity to disregard hybrid varieties, as of ~2012, there were nearly 2,000 acres of Chambourcin being grown in France, down from over 8,000 acres in the 1970's. These acres are mostly in the Loire region of central France. Chambourcin can and does make full-flavored wines without the characteristic flavors of most hybrids. The variety has good resistance to fungal

diseases and is resistant to winter cold. It is susceptible to chlorosis and drought…. but these can be easily overcome with simple amendments to the soil and use of irrigation. This hybrid is grown throughout the eastern and midwestern US and several New Mexico growers are producing it successfully. It is the most popular hybrid in Australia and is even being grown in such places as Vietnam, where it tolerates the high humidity. Chambourcin can thrive in many different soils and climates, including New Mexico.

> *Food pairing:* I have Chambourcin to a great wine to drink when eating barbeque…it is a versatile will pair well with hamburgers or other grilled meats and possibly even grilled vegetables…

4. **Luna Rossa, 2017 Sangiovese,** viticulturists/winemakers, Paolo and Marco D'Andrea: Sangiovese is the main and traditional varietal component of Chianti wines from Italy. The D'Andrea family has been growing grapes and making wine in the Mesilla Valley near Deming for over 30 years. They are traditional wine makers and I think this Sangiovese is a purely varietal rendition with no blending of other varietals. Remember, that in the U.S. in order to state the varietal on the label, the wine must consist of at least 75% of the stated varietal.

> *Food pairing:* This is light and slightly oaked version of Sangiovese, can have a fairly high acid and tannin content and will pair well with acidic red sauced dishes…of course, any tomato-based pasta dishes come to mind. Most will detect some savouriness ..and likely some dark fruit…plum, black cherry…so perhaps think cranberry or other acidic oriented sauces, gravies or dressing with mushrooms might be ideal. The oak component renders it a bit more intense than the preceding wine, Chambourcin, and thus will likely stand up to most roasted meats.

5. ***Casa Rondena, '1629' Tempranillo (blend), viticulturist, Josh Franco:*** The "Spanish Cabernet", Tempranillo is what growers call a "late budder" (buds out relatively late in the spring) and it ripens fairly early. Thus, the word; "*temprano"* that means "early", gives the grape its name. Given the intense but often short growing seasons in New Mexico this variety is one to consider. However, one must consider "winter injury", due to low temperatures (about -8° F). The grape can produce thick skins, that impart the deep rich color, if the vines are exposed to heat, but acidity depends on cool night temperatures…such conditions occur in the relatively high elevations of Ribera del Duero and possibly in New Mexico?

Tempranillo harkens back to Spain and early European settlers in New Mexico…and the first documented winery in the US near modern day Socorro, NM. It is the leading grape variety in Spain, especially in the Rioja and Ribera del Duero. In Spain, red wines categorized as *Crianzas* and *Reservas* must spend at least one year in oak, *Gran Reservas* spend at least two years, whereas *Joven* wines are unoaked. Spanish winemakers traditionally prefer American oak with its strong vanilla notes, although recently, winemakers are moving to more French oak. The current style is toward a full, soft Merlot-like wine. Many Tempranillo's express themselves best when blended with a bit of Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot or some of the Spanish varieties: Mazuelo or Graciano these blended wines tend to age the best. Today's wine is blended with Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. Although Tempranillo wines are not generally known to be as "complex" as Pinot Noir or Cabernet Sauvignon, it captures some of each of those varieties. It has lush, deep color, with oak undertones of course. It also presents rich strawberry/blackberry and black cherry/red raspberry fruit. Other descriptors include tobacco, plum, and cocoa.

> *Food Pairing:* Suited to northern Spanish cuisine. Good with game (New Mexican elk?), cured smoked ham and spicy chorizo, grilled lamb with herbs, soft cheeses.

6. ***Vivac Winery, 2017 Late Harvest Riesling, 'Abbott vineyard',*** viticulturists/winemakers, Jesse and Chris Padburg: Before being superseded by Chardonnay in the 1970's Riesling was the most popular white wine in the United States. Riesling is famously produced in Germany along its rivers; Mosel, Rhine and Main. The vineyards on steep south facing aspect take advantage of the slope's angle that allows exposure to the sun as it is 'lower' in the sky in its autumnal cycle. This exposure is the ripening grape's advantage. Riesling when grown in a suitable climate has abundance of fresh tree fruit (apple and pear) and crisp acidity…it does not cotton well to oak (unlike Chardonnay). This 'late harvest' version is made by allowing the grapes to dry or 'raisin' a bit on the vine. In New Mexico at high elevation the relatively cool nights preserve the grape's acid. They are harvested later than that of table wine, this extra step allows the grapes to concentrate its sugar content as water evaporates out of the berries making for an almost unctuous juice that is very sweet, but balanced with retained acidity (remember that acidity is what makes wine interesting to the palate). In the winery, after the fermentation reaches a

desired level of alcohol the fermentation is stopped by chilling the wine to low temperatures that arrests the yeasts. This leaves some residual sugar and along with the alcohol, imparts the wine's characteristic viscosity. *Riesling is best done as an off-dry to fairly sweet, but Riesling has the pointed acidity that can match when the wine is done as an intensely sweet wine style as this 'late-harvest' is. Grapes contain fructose and glucose. The glucose ferments first, so when you stop the fermentation before it is complete, the fructose remains and it tastes fruitier and more refreshing than glucose[4]. This differential adds another dimension to the wine.*

    Food Pairing: The sweetness level should allow a wide range of dessert pairings. Most Riesling will associate with peach, green apple and honey. In this late harvest style look for more honey, apricot and perhaps pineapple. Some may detect short bread and buttered toast, according to Mr. Oz Clarke

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