

When it comes to pairing fine wines with Asian cuisine, Jeannie Cho Lee is the undisputed authority, and she offers up some East-meets-West advice. 談到亞洲菜如何配搭葡萄酒，李志延堪稱箇中權威。且聽這位葡萄酒大師細說東西匯聚的飲食心得。 By Kate Whitehead

# One for 美酒佳餚 the team

Long before it became fashionable, Korean-born American wine critic, author, TV host and entrepreneur Jeannie Cho Lee was pairing wine with Asian cuisine. Growing up in the United States, Lee benefitted from both worlds, though her mother usually cooked Korean or Japanese food at home. When Lee moved away to graduate school, it was only natural that a rice cooker went too. "I never thought about it as pairing as such," Lee recalls of teaming Western tipples with Eastern culinary delights. "I liked Asian food and I liked wine. It was that simple."

When Lee and her investment-banker husband moved to Hong Kong in 1994, she initially pursued a career in business journalism, only moving into wine writing a few years later. In 2008, she became the first person of Asian ethnicity ever to pass the prestigious Master of Wine exam, thereby achieving one of the highest standards of professional knowledge in the wine industry today.

After five years of studying wine exclusively, Lee then diversified to include food, even considering entering the F&B industry, but internships at several restaurants convinced her that commercial kitchens were simply too exhausting. And then came Lee's eureka moment: there were plenty of books out there about pairing wine with Western cuisine, but not with Asian dishes.

"I approached it in a very systematic way," says the mother of four, "taking the basic structure of flavours and taste, breaking it down into components and rating whether the cuisine was high in the use of salt, how it used sweet and sour, and whether spices and chili played a role. It was a fun journey and gave me a structure that I continue to use now."

In 2009, Lee published her first book, *Asian Palate: Savouring Asian Cuisine & Wine*, which covered cuisines across 10 Asian cities: Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Taipei, Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Mumbai. For many years the standard Western advice had been to enjoy Chinese food with an aromatic wine, such as Gewürztraminer, but

在美國長大的韓裔酒評人李志延，從小深受東西方飲食文化的影響，在家吃到的是母親烹調的韓式美食與日本料理，離家入讀研究院時也帶同飯鍋。早在酒舖配對仍未流行之時，她已經以葡萄酒配搭亞洲美食。身兼作家、電視節目主持人和企業家的李志延說：「那時沒刻意做甚麼配對，我愛亞洲美食，亦愛西方葡萄酒，很自然地就把兩者配搭在一起。」

1994年，李志延隨同任職投資銀行的丈夫移居香港，起初從事財經新聞工作，數年後才撰寫與葡萄酒有關的文章。2008年，她成功通過專業資格考核，成為首位獲得葡萄酒大師榮譽的亞裔人士。

花了五年苦心鑽研葡萄酒之後，李志延開始涉獵食品知識，甚至考慮轉戰飲食業。可是她在數家餐館實習過後，發現廚房的工作不太適合她。就在此時，她靈機一觸，想到坊間雖然有很多講述酒舖配對的書籍，卻沒有一本談及亞洲菜式與葡萄酒的配搭，因而萌生撰寫有關書籍的念頭。

已是四位女兒之母的李志延說：「我有一套系統去寫這本書。首先我會細心剖析每款菜式，由構成色香味的基本成分入手，逐一分析鹽是否比較多，酸甜味如何，有否加入香料和辣椒。整個過程很有趣，而這套方式，我一直沿用至今。」

2009年，李志延推出首部著作《東膳西釀》，書中詳細介紹香港、上海、北京、台北、東京、首爾、曼谷、吉隆坡、新加坡和孟買10個亞洲城市的美食。過去西方人總愛以香氣濃郁的葡萄酒比如Gewürztraminer配搭中菜，但是李志延卻大唱反調，顛覆一直被西方人奉為準則的看法。她說：「中菜多是味濃辛辣，很多人建議吃中菜時以Gewürztraminer中和味蕾，但可有想過，也許有人喜歡讓這股味道停留在舌尖上呢？」

Lee's groundbreaking book turned popular opinion on its head. "Chinese dishes are very flavourful and spicy, so many people recommended Gewürztraminer to cleanse the palate between bites," she says, "but we maybe wanted the flavour of the food to linger."

Lee does offer some basic guidelines on pairing wine with Asian food, but emphasises the importance of cultural sensitivities and individual taste, asking, "Do you have a preference for acidity? For chilli? In northern China, some people say white wine is sour because of the acidity – it's like sucking on lemon."

Another drawback of generalising, Lee says, is that people enjoy different foods in different ways. Take dim sum: if no condiments are added, dim sum works well with white wines such as Pinot Grigio from Italy, or Chablis from Burgundy. But if XO sauce and chilli are added to the dim sum, then a completely different wine will be more suitable.

Wine pairing with Western cuisine has traditionally been based on dominant ingredients. The stock advice that red wine works well with red meat, and that white wine goes well with fish, is perhaps an over-simplification, but it is a rule that frequently pays off. When it comes to matching wines with Asian foods, however, Lee prefers to look at the condiments, spices and flavours present, which makes the process more complicated.

Then there's the communal style of dining in Asia, with a number of dishes shared between diners during a meal, which requires that wines be versatile. "Versatile wines, for me, are the cool-climate, light-bodied whites that Italy does so well, and grape varieties such as Trebbiano, Garganega and Pinot Grigio that don't have too-intense personalities," Lee says. "Pinot Noir also offers a lot of flexibility."

Despite these provisos, Lee does offer some hard-and-fast rules. First up, full-bodied wines tend to work well with full-bodied dishes. Secondly, red wine will accentuate heat in a meal that's heavy on chilli and spices (such as fiery favourites from central China). So, if you enjoy the burn on your tongue, choose a young, tannic Bordeaux that will encourage heat to linger. A dry Riesling will do just the opposite.

Another useful pointer is that wines rich in fruit work well with creamy dishes such as an Asian curry with coconut milk. "You need a strong backbone of acidity to cut through the cream," Lee says, adding that the same is true with deep-fried dishes, which pair well with reds and whites from cool climates that also feature such acidity. "Because the temperature is cool, the grapes always retain a wonderful acidity," she continues. "It's very important for wine to be refreshing, with enough acidity to stand up to spicy fried food."

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雖然李志延對於亞洲菜與葡萄酒的配搭提出了基本指引，但是她更強調，不同地區的飲食習慣與個人口味是不能忽略的。她說：「有些人對葡萄酒的酸度有特別偏好，對辣味亦有一定要求，中國的北方人不習慣酸度高的白酒，覺得就像檸檬汁一樣。」

李志延又說，各人享用菜式的方法不同，絕對不可一概而論。以中式點心為例，沒有蘸醬料時，最宜配搭意大利白酒Pinot Grigio或勃艮第的Chablis，但如果蘸了XO醬和辣椒醬，就要選擇另一款截然不同的葡萄酒了。

傳統西餐與葡萄酒的配搭，一般建基於主食材。紅酒配紅肉、白酒配魚等建議，聽似過於簡單，但卻很有道理。不過，在說到亞洲菜與葡萄酒的配搭時，李志延認為要兼顧蘸料、香料和調味料帶來的味道，就會更複雜了。

此外，用膳方式也要考慮。亞洲人習慣多款菜式同時上桌，大家一起分享，若要配對葡萄酒，便要選擇百搭型佳釀。李志延說：「我選擇的百搭酒會是來自冷涼氣候、酒體輕盈的意大利白酒，當中包括Trebbiano、Garganega及Pinot Grigio等個性不很強烈的葡萄品種。另外，Pinot Noir也可配搭不同菜餚。」

雖然百搭酒最穩妥，但是李志延還有其他的建議。首先，口感豐腴的菜式通常適合配對酒體豐滿的葡萄酒。其次，使用大量辣椒和香料的菜餚，比如中華地區的菜式，如果配對紅酒，會令辣味提升。要是你很享受舌尖上的悠長辛



Clockwise from left:  
Jeannie Cho Lee;  
before choosing a  
wine to pair with  
Asian dishes such as  
a stir fry, Lee suggests  
considering the sauce;  
a selection of wines  
for pairing

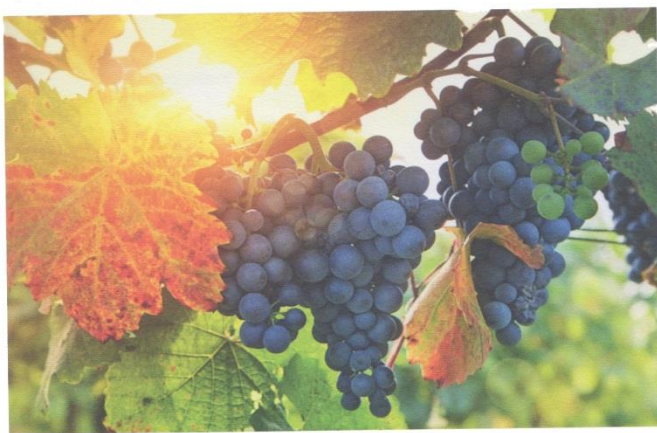
左圖起順時針：  
酒評人李志延；在選擇  
餐酒搭配以清炒等方  
法烹調的亞洲菜式時，  
李志延建議要考慮  
醬汁；供配對佳釀的  
葡萄酒



Roast meats popular in Asian cuisine, such as goose and suckling pig, pair impressively with flavourful, medium-bodied red wines, says Lee, ranging from Pinot Noirs to spicier and more robust Syrahs. Shanghai Freshwater Shrimp, Steamed Garoupa and other seafood dishes match nicely with light, elegant white wines from cool-climate regions (consider Chablis, Pinot Grigio from northern Italy and Albarino from northwest Spain). Plus, Lee says, it is also important to consider texture. Soft food requires a silky wine, for example, and a mature, creamy-textured Chardonnay goes down a treat with many tofu dishes.

When multiple Asian dishes are shared, Lee recommends enjoying two or more wines at once. "There are sometimes up to 10 dishes on the table – chicken, fish, meat, vegetables – and different combinations of flavours," she explains. "The best way to go is to have a medium-bodied red wine such as a Syrah, and a white wine such as a Chablis, and for diners to have a small glass of each."

Lee today is a professor of practice (wine) at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Hotel & Tourism Management and visiting professor of the International Culinary Institute, and though many other books have explored the pairing of wines with Asian cuisine since the publication



of *Asian Palate*, she has expanded on her pet subject significantly over the years. When pairing wine with Cantonese cuisine, for instance, Lee considers whether the food is from Hong Kong or Guangdong, borrowing a term that is commonly used in the wine industry. "Every cuisine has a specific terroir – the reflection of the place and the people," she argues.

Lee's final word of advice is that there is no big secret to successful wine pairing: you simply need a keen interest in Asian cuisine and to be able to judge a wine's quality and flavour profile. Beyond that, she suggests you choose the most versatile wine available – one that will pair with the majority if not all of the dishes on the table. 🍷

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(同時享用多款亞洲菜時) 最好選擇一款酒體中等的紅酒如Syrah和一款白酒如Chablis，每杯葡萄酒的分量不用多 🍷

辣感，不妨選擇酒齡較年輕、單寧較重的波爾多紅酒。相反，酒味偏乾的Riesling，則能中和辣味。

除此之外，果香濃郁的葡萄酒，與椰汁咖喱等口感濃稠的菜式堪稱絕配。李志廷說：「味道濃郁的食物須以酸度高的葡萄酒來平衡。」

同樣，油炸菜式需配對高酸度的紅酒和白酒。李志廷說：「氣候清涼的地區才能種出高酸度的葡萄；由這些葡萄釀製的酒，不單酸度高，口感亦清新，可平衡香口及豐腴的油炸食物。」

亞洲人愛吃燒鵝和乳豬等烤肉，最適宜配對酒體中等、酒味芳香的紅酒，如Pinot Noir和較為辛香濃烈的Syrah。至於清炒蝦仁、清蒸石斑及其他海鮮類菜式，則與輕盈淡雅、來自冷涼氣候的白酒最為匹配，當中包括意大利北部的Chablis和Pinot Grigio，以及西班牙西北部的Albarino。

李志廷更稱，食物與葡萄酒的質感同樣不容忽視，例如軟綿的食物適宜配對絲滑口感的葡萄酒，比如豆腐菜式與口感細滑成熟的Chardonnay是天作之合。

若是與賓客分享多道佳餚，李志廷建議同時選擇兩三款葡萄酒。她解釋說：「桌上有時會擺滿多達十道菜，有雞有魚有肉有菜，五味紛陳。此時，最好選擇一款酒體中等的紅酒如Syrah和一款白酒如Chablis。每杯葡萄酒的分量不用多，讓嘉賓細意品嚐即可。」

李志廷的《東離西釀》出版後，坊間陸續出現不少講述亞洲菜與葡萄酒配搭的書籍。雖然百家爭鳴，卻無損她熱誠的鑽研態度。今天，她身為香港理工大學酒店及旅遊管理學院實務教授(酒類)及國際廚藝學院的客座教授，對酒類配對的研究更上一層樓。以專業為例，李志廷認為香港人與廣東人的口味也有區別。她借用葡萄酒業常用的「terroir」(具特殊風土條件的產區)的概念去解釋：「每種菜式都有其獨特風味，反映出某個地方的風土人情。」

最後，李志廷坦言，酒類配對其實沒甚麼重大秘訣，只要你對亞洲菜興趣濃厚，並能識別不同葡萄酒的特質、香氣和味道，選配時自能得心應手。當然，若求穩當，她建議還是選擇一款可以配合大部分菜式的佳釀。 🍷