



How to pair Chinese foods with wine

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Wine expert Jeannie Cho Lee, who holds a Master of Wine, offers general guidelines on how to pair typical Chinese ingredients with the right wine profile.

Chinese cuisine can present a challenge when it comes to food and wine pairings, given that proteins like beef and seafood in varying degrees of salty, sweet and spicy aromas arrive at the same time. But with the national holiday, Golden Week, currently in full swing in a country where wine consumption is growing in explosive numbers, here's a primer on how to pair Chinese dishes with the right wine. Unlike with Western fare in which dishes are served in a prescribed order, sitting down to a Chinese meal often means that dishes arrive all at once. Though challenging, pairing wine with dishes infused with earthy, umami-laced soybean or black bean sauces, chili oils, ginger and sesame amounts to a question of balance and counterbalance.



On her site Asian Palate, wine expert Jeannie Cho Lee, who holds a Master of Wine, offers general guidelines on how to pair typical Chinese ingredients with the right wine profile.

For dishes based on soy or oyster sauce, shrimp or bean paste, for example, choose a white or red wine with soft tannins, crisp acidity and vibrant fruit, she advises. Otherwise, wines high in tannins risk exaggerating the dish's saltiness.

A typical dish of noodles with soybean sauce, for instance, would go well with a Chilean Merlot, Lee says, who recommends the Berrys' Chilean Merlot by Dona Javiera Estate, described as a rich wine with plummy fruit and hints of coffee.

Peking duck on the menu during the seven-day holiday? Opt for wines with strong flavor intensity such as a 2004 Domaine du Pegau, Chateauneuf-du-Pape, 1998 Domaine du Pegau, or a 2010 Gerard Bertrand – Chateau L'Hospitalet La Reserve.

Editor of China Luxury Xi Chen recommends a Pineau de la Loire for crispy duck, telling trade publication The Drinks Business that the crispy, fatty duck meat with sweet sauce, onions and cucumber make for a rich dish that requires a "lighter white wine with acidity and slightly sweet taste."

For kickier Szechuan dishes, the general consensus is to reach for a dry Alsace Riesling, which helps offset the heat with its fruity character.

And when it comes to dim sum, experts recommend everything from Chablis to a flute of bubbly.

French sommelier Cedric Maupoint of the

Michelin-starred Cantonese restaurant Shang Palace in Paris, for example, recommends either a dry white Riesling or Chablis, while Zach Yu of the Michelin-starred restaurant Ming Court in Hong Kong tells The Drinks Business that champagne's acidity and bubbles serve as an ideal accompaniment to dim sum.

"Champagne is always at home with delicate seafood dishes and with crisp, deep-fried foods. Therefore, it goes well with dim sums because they're a mixture of flavours and textures – some delicate and steamed (usually seafood), some more robust or fried (like pork buns)."

Golden Week, China's seven-day national holiday, wraps up Oct 7.

- AFP Relaxnews



