



Perfect Pairings: German Riesling (and more) Rules at Vancouver's Bao Bei

(2 May, 2012 – by Tim Pawsey) We're still stoked about last week's German wine pairing dim sum, presented by the German Wine Institute with Master of Wine Jeannie Cho Lee, at Vancouver's Bao Bei, Tanis Ling's groundbreaking Chinese room.

As we're tight for time, here's our North Shore News story (below) to bring you up to speed. In summary, though, we think this is quite the most brilliant partnership and are still wondering how come it didn't happen sooner!

Not to worry. The top of mind message is that Riesling in particular continues to rule as a phenomenal food wine in all its forms, proving yet again to be a highly versatile partner to any number of cuisines.



The Perfect Pairings booklet is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in matching wines with Asian plates. In fact, it's an incredibly concise and well-crafted piece of work that packs a heck of a lot into a small package. Regardless of whether you're an interested diner, restaurateur or sommelier, you'll want to check it out.

A quick reminder: if you're in Vancouver you should try to get over to BC Liquor Stores at 39th & Cambie, May 5th, where, between 3 and 6 pm you can sample some of the tastes we tried, matched with the wines, and grab yourself a copy of the free booklet.

We have way too much more material that we'd like to add here (and maybe we'll do that later) but in the meantime, here's what went down...



“This past week, Jeannie Cho Lee blew through town as part of a whirlwind tour to promote Perfect Pairings, a snappy new booklet she’s penned on behalf of Wines of Germany. The first Asian Master of Wine (MW) hosted an excellent event at Chinatown’s hip Bao Bei, which turned out to be an ideal spot to explore German wines with Asian cuisine.

First off, you couldn’t ask for a better spokesperson. Smart, erudite and widely travelled, Ms. Cho Lee took us through a number of courses, each served with a pair of wines, in order to discern which might (or might not) pair with specific ingredients. And that’s precisely the point, she explains... Even the notion of a “perfect pairing” may not be realistic, especially when it comes to Cantonese and Shanghainese cuisines.

In fact, the current practice in Western cultures of applying the “ideal” match for a specific dish—doesn’t necessarily work with Chinese dining—if ever.

The main challenge of matching wines with Asian plates, she says, comes courtesy of the “roving chopstick”, which means (because we’re tasting any number of different ingredients, or small tastes such as pot stickers) that any bite we take most likely doesn’t repeat the one we took before it.

There’s not space here to do full justice to her full thesis, that spans contrasting Chinese regional styles, as well as Korean, Japanese, Thai Singaporean and Indian flavours. But here are a few pointers that can help you when pairing wines not only with Asian cuisine but food in general:

- The more versatile the choice, the better. When the wine can go with 60 or 70 percent of the meal, it's quite likely the perfect pairing. "And you can't go wrong with Sekt," she suggests. (Case in point: Dr. Loosen Sparkling Riesling, BCLS \$18.99, that bridges easily between mild and spicy flavours.)
- In food pairing, as always, acidity is key. It cuts through spices as well as fat, and brings a textural element. And not only in white wines. Look to higher acid reds, such as German Pinot Noir, to be an easier match than many typical styles of New World reds.
- Where possible, seek out aged wines which have had a chance to "mellow", where the sharpness of the flavours has softened. (Too bad it's so hard to buy aged wines in this market, she notes...) Schloss Reinharthausen Pinot Noir 2006, BCLS \$23.99, is a great match with Bao Bei's chili and garlic piqued crispy pork belly—and with black bean, curried lotus root.
- Be cautious of overpowering flavours, or adding too much sweetness, when matching aromatics (such as Gewurz) to spicy plates.

Our Bao Bei foray yielded no shortage of good tastes and worthy matches (Kruger Rumpf Pinot Blanc with cold tofu – who knew?), as well as a couple of brilliant reminders as to how some late harvest Rieslings can absolutely sing with spices such as Sichuan peppercorn: Fritz Haag Riesling Auslese (Braunberger Juffer Sonnenuhr) \$37.99

BC Liquor Stores features German wines, focusing on their suitability for Asian cuisines, throughout May. But here's the real deal: a free consumer tasting of the eight featured German drops paired with many of the Bao Bei tastes we sampled, at Cambie and 39th Signature BC Liquor Store, May 5th, 3 to 6 pm. Includes Jeannie Cho Lee's free Perfect Pairings booklet—which just happens to be a remarkably concise and thorough guide—will also be available throughout the promo at all 60 participating stores.

Obviously, we highly recommend it."