
U.S. Cheese & Wine APPRECIATION *Guide*

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History

OF CHEESE & WINE

in America

America is a nation of immigrants, and many of our traditions reflect our immigrant ancestry. One of those traditions is a love for cheese. In fact, when the first pilgrims arrived in America, they brought cheese with them on the boat. As more people arrived in America and began to settle the land, they found rich soil and lush grasses that reminded them of their European homelands. Soon they began farming the land, and as they grew grain for their breads, they stored any surplus to use over the long, cold winters. The pilgrims made grain stalks into hay, so cattle could graze on lush, pasture grasses in the summer and eat hay and grain in the winter. This steady source of milk, cream and butter started our dairy traditions, and cheese making was soon to follow.

In addition to having a taste for cheese, many of our ancestors brought with them the expertise to make it. Using centuries-old recipes and traditional methods, they quickly began making cheese with any surplus milk available, first for themselves, and then for others. An industry was born, and it started a long tradition of cheese making in the United States that continues today. Our industry has pioneered research in dairy science and cheese making, yielding tremendous production efficiencies and an unparalleled safety record. Today, the United States is the largest cheese producing country in the world, crafting hundreds of different varieties of cheese and over five million metric tons annually. Our cheese is top quality and consistently wins top honors at international competitions. We are justifiably proud of the heritage, craftsmanship and quality of the cheese that our cheesemakers produce.

Regarding our wine traditions, when Viking Leif Ericson landed near Newfoundland almost a thousand years ago, he named the North American continent Vineland. It was prophetic since currently, there are commercial wineries in 47 of the 50 United States, Canada and Mexico. First made in America by French Huguenots in Florida around 1560, wine making now flourishes from New York to California and many places in between. Prohibition almost destroyed the wine industry in the United States, but a handful of the best grapes were spared for use in "sacramental wines."

Since the late 1950s the renaissance in wine making and viticulture has spread from California across the country.

Improvements in pest and disease control have allowed the eastern seaboard to enter the world of super-premium wines. New York, long known for wine from the Finger Lakes region, now has a burgeoning artisanal wine industry on Long Island. Virginia has deservedly won several prestigious awards. One of the best sparkling wines in the country is from New Mexico. Missouri is home to dozens of wineries. California accounts for 90% of all U.S. wine production. Out of every three bottles of wine sold in the United States, domestic or imported, two come from California. However, there is no end in sight to the proliferation of small vineyards producing unique and exciting regional wines. America has truly become Vineland.

Cheese & Wine

PERFECT COMPANIONS

Cheese and wine are food combinations that man has enjoyed for thousands of years, and as grapes are to wine, milk is to cheese, the basic ingredient for a preserved food. Cheese and wine both represent a way to prepare and preserve surplus supplies so they can be consumed throughout the seasons. Both wine and cheese also go through a specific life cycle and period of maturation. They are referred to as quintessential combinations because each has the ability to make the other taste better. After a taste of cheese you want more wine, and after a taste of wine you want more cheese.

Any good flavor combination challenges the palate by the use of flavors that either complement or contrast each other. Endless varieties of cheese and wine offer a huge selection of flavors to accomplish this. With the addition of some basic breads and fruits, wine and cheese can become an entire meal, delicious through its diverse flavors and elegant in its simplicity.

Today, fine dining restaurants in the United States offer cheese courses, typically as an appetizer or finish course. Bar menus also feature wine, cheese and beer combinations. This trend is also now observed in many other countries as consumers develop more of a taste for both wine and cheese. Wine and cheese receptions at home have also become popular both in the United States and around the world. They are also a great way to entertain friends and family. With hundreds of cheese and wine varieties now available from America, the options are endless.

Use this guide to set up your perfect U.S. cheese and wine pairings!

Soft-Fresh CHEESES

Cream cheese and mascarpone can be served plain or used with other ingredients—for instance, to make sweet or savory dips and spreads. Due to their high moisture content, these cheeses carry other flavors well. Sweet flavors from fruits or liqueurs go well in both. They also work well with savory flavors like fresh herbs or garlic.

CHEESE

Cream Cheese

Creamy texture and flavor. Also available in reduced fat varieties.

Mascarpone

A triple cream style of cheese containing over 72% milkfat. Rich, creamy texture and flavor.

WINE

Semi-Sweet Sparkling

Sparkling muscat, demi-sec champagne.

Light-Bodied Whites

Off-dry riesling and gewürztraminer from the Pacific Northwest and New York. Vidal blanc, cayuga white and niagara from New York.

Late Harvest

Riesling, gewürztraminer, muscat, vigneoles and rkatsiteli. Fruit wines from the Midwest.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Serve plain, fruit or sweetened varieties of soft fresh cheese with butter cookies, gaufrettes, ginger snaps, shortbread, vanilla wafers or other cookies, or fresh berries such as strawberries, raspberries, blackberries or blueberries. Serve herbed or savory cheese varieties with assorted vegetable crudités or crackers for dipping.

Mascarpone & Sparkling Muscat

Mascarpone is paired with a sparkling muscat from California and served with shortbread and fresh raspberries. The light sweetness and intense floral aromas of this wine pair perfectly with the richness of this cheese.

Soft-Ripened CHEESES

*The category includes **brie** and **camembert**. When selecting a wine to pair with these cheeses, the major factor to consider is the age or ripeness of the cheese. Pair younger brie with milder, sweeter wines. Pair ripe or mature brie with fuller, drier wines.*

CHEESE

Brie and Camembert

When young, brie and camembert have mildly earthy and buttery flavors and a firm texture. As they ripen, the flavors become more buttery and distinctly earthy. At the same time, their texture becomes soft, silky and creamy.

WINE

Semi-Sweet Sparkling

Sparkling muscat, demi-sec champagne.

Dry Sparkling

Extra dry, brut and natural champagne.

Light/Medium-Bodied Reds

Napa gamay, grenache, pinot noir.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Tropical fruits, melons and fresh berries. Also, stone fruits like peaches or nectarines. Plain water crackers or a good, crusty bread.

Brie & Champagne

Well-ripened brie is served on french bread and paired with an extra dry champagne. Nectarine slices can be enjoyed on the side or placed in the glass of champagne.

Semi-Soft CHEESES

*One common denominator in this group of cheese is that all are made with whole milk and have creamy flavors and textures. Many are American Originals. Semi-soft cheeses are separated into two distinct categories, **dry rind** and **washed rind**.*

***Dry rind semi-soft cheeses** have no surface ripening and are the mildest. Among these are monterey jack, muenster, fontina and havarti.*

***Washed rind or surface ripened semi-soft cheeses** yield strong, earthy flavors and pungent aromas. In particular, limburger and brick tend to pair better with beer than wine.*

CHEESE

Muenster

Muenster has a mellow flavor and mild aroma when young and becomes more savory with age.

Fontina

Fontina has a mild, earthy and buttery flavor that ranges from mellow to sharp depending on age.

WINE

Light/Medium-Bodied Whites

Gewürztraminer, riesling, müller-thurgau, sylvaner, vidal blanc, rkatsiteli, seyval blanc, semillon/sauvignon blanc blends.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Red or green grapes, tart apples including granny smith and mcintosh. Plain, buttery or wheat crackers.

CHEESE

Monterey Jack

Monterey Jack has a delicate, buttery and slightly tart flavor. Available plain and in many flavored versions, including hot peppers (pepper jack), herbs and spices.

Havarti

Havarti is a supple and creamy cheese. Available plain and in a variety of savory flavors including garlic and herb, dill, caraway and horseradish.

WINE

Medium/Full-Bodied Whites

Pinot gris/grigio, pinot blanc, sauvignon blanc, viognier.

Light-Bodied Reds

Beaujolais nouveau, maréchal foch, napa gamay, pinot noir.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Red or green grapes, tart apples including granny smith and mcintosh. Also pears, stone fruits like nectarines, apricots or peaches. Full-flavored breads including rye, herbed and multi-grain.

Havarti & Sauvignon Blanc

Rich, creamy havarti is served on flatbread and followed by a light, fruity sauvignon blanc. The richness of the havarti is contrasted nicely by the crisp acidity in the sauvignon blanc.



Blue CHEESES

*This group includes **blue** and **gorgonzola**. There are dozens of different blue cheeses made in the United States, and while each has its own unique flavor and texture, most react similarly with wines.*

CHEESE

Blue Cheese

Blue cheese ranges in texture from firm and crumbly to creamy. Flavors vary but are typically sharp, piquant and full-flavored.

Crumbly Gorgonzola

Gorgonzola is produced in two different styles: crumbly and creamy. Crumbly or aged gorgonzola is similar to traditional blue in flavor and texture and pairs well with similar wines.

WINE

Full-Bodied Whites

Chardonnay.

Full-Bodied Reds

Cabernet or cabernet blends, syrah/shiraz, barbera, nebbiolo.

Late Harvest

Sauvignon blanc/semillon (sauterne style).

Fortified

Ruby port, vintage port, late bottled vintage port.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Pears including d'anjou, bosc, bartlett or red asian. Sweet apples including fuji, golden delicious and jonathan. Unsalted nuts, like hazelnuts or pecans. Honey roasted or candied nuts also work well. Plain crackers, sourdough or any crusty bread.

CHEESE

Creamy Gorgonzola

The most traditional style of gorgonzola is italian-style or creamy. This style has a creamy texture with a flavor that is more earthy than sharp. Accordingly, it calls for different wine choices.

WINE

Medium-Bodied Reds

Pinot noir, syrah/shiraz, rhone-style blends.

Late Harvest

Sauvignon blanc/semillon.

Fortified

White port.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Pears including d'anjou, bosc, bartlett, or red asian. Roasted garlic. Plain crackers, crusty bread or fresh, soft ciabatta.

Blue Cheese & Ruby Port

Sharp, tangy blue cheese is accompanied by hazelnuts and sliced bartlett pears. These flavors are classically combined with a snifter of vintage port. The sweetness of the port contrasts with the saltiness and assertive flavors of the blue cheese.



Gouda & Edam

CHEESES

*Both **gouda** and **edam** are available mild or aged. Both cheeses pair well with a range of wines. However, the smoked and seasoned varieties (caraway, cumin, etc.) work better with beers and ciders.*

CHEESE

Gouda and Edam

Mild gouda is typically made with whole milk and has a creamy texture. Edam is typically made with part-skim milk and is firmer. Their flavors are best described as buttery and nutty.

WINE

Semi-Sweet Sparkling

Sparkling muscat.

Light/Medium-Bodied Whites

Riesling, müller-thurgau, gewürztraminer, sylvaner, rkatsiteli, niagara.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Stone fruit including apricots, plums, cherries, nectarines and peaches. Sweet melon like honeydew or crenshaw. Rye or pumpernickel bread, whole wheat crackers.

Gouda & Merlot

Rich, buttery gouda is simply paired with dried cranberries and followed by a soft, fruity merlot, with flavors of blackberry, cedar and tobacco.



CHEESE

Aged Gouda and Edam

Known as sweet curd cheeses, they do not become sharper with age. Instead, their buttery and nutty flavors intensify, yielding flavors like caramel or butterscotch.

WINE

Medium/Full-Bodied Whites

Sauvignon/fumé blanc, riesling, gewürztraminer, pinot blanc.

Medium/Full-Bodied Reds

Pinot noir, shiraz/syrah, merlot, cabernet sauvignon.

Late Harvest

Riesling, gewürztraminer, sauvignon blanc/semillon.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Similar accompaniments as mild gouda, with the addition of dried fruits like cherries or cranberries. Nuts including cashews, pecans, almonds and macadamia nuts. Whole wheat, rye and multi-grain breads or crackers. Flatbread crackers are also traditional.



Pasta Filata

CHEESES

Pasta filata translates in Italian to “spun paste or curd” and refers to the cheese making procedure where fresh cheese curds are dipped in hot water and stretched or pulled like taffy.

*In the United States, **mozzarella** is made in a wide range of styles, including fresh high moisture, low moisture, part-skim milk and whole milk.*

***Provolone** is always made from whole milk and is available mild or aged in a wide range of shapes and styles, smoked or plain.*

CHEESE

Fresh Mozzarella

Fresh mozzarella is typically packed in water and has a fresh, clean milky flavor and a soft creamy texture.

WINE

Light/Medium-Bodied Whites

Pinot gris/grigio, semillon.

Light-Bodied Reds

Napa gamay (valdiguié), beaujolais nouveau.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Traditional ingredients of basil, tomatoes and olive oil (caprese salad). Great with antipasti including olives, pickled vegetables and cured meats.

Aged Provolone & Zinfandel

A spicy zinfandel, with flavors of black pepper and grape jam, stands up to the sharp, piquant flavor of a well-aged provolone. A selection of mediterranean olives round out the combination.



CHEESE

Mild Provolone

Provolone is made similarly to mozzarella, but always uses whole milk. Also, cheese makers use more and different cultures in the production of provolone, which yields a much fuller flavor.

WINE

Medium/Full-Bodied Whites

Sauvignon/fumé blanc, chenin blanc, pinot gris/grigio.

Medium-Bodied Reds

Pinot noir, grenache/shiraz blends, malbec.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Fresh figs, fresh apricots and a range of dried fruits. Antipasto platters with a variety of olives, pickled vegetables, and cured meats. Focaccia, ciabatta, french baguette and sourdough bread.

CHEESE

Aged/Sharp Provolone

As provolone ages, it develops sharp, piquant flavors, and its texture becomes more granular.

WINE

Full-Bodied Reds

Barbera, sangiovese, nebbiolo, zinfandel, merlot and aged cabernet sauvignon, petite sirah.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Olives, pickled vegetables and cured meats. Focaccia, ciabatta, french baguette and sourdough bread.

Cheddar & Colby CHEESES

Cheddar is the most popular cheese in the United States and across the world.

The different styles and different ages of cheddar make each one distinctive.

Colby, an American Original, is named after its town of origin in Wisconsin; it is similar to mild cheddar.

CHEESE

Mild Cheddar and Colby

Mild cheddar is aged over 30 days. Its texture is firm and elastic. It has a slightly sweet aroma, mild flavors and a slightly tart finish.

WINE

Light/Medium-Bodied Whites

Gewürztraminer, white grenache, pinot gris/grigio, sauvignon/fumé blanc, rkatsiteli, vidal blanc.

Light/Medium-Bodied Reds

Pinot noir, syrah/shiraz, merlot, zinfandel, maréchal foch.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Apples including rome, gala, red or golden delicious. Grapes and pears also work well. Plain water crackers, butter crackers or french bread.

Aged Cheddar & Madeira

The rich, sharp, beefy flavors of a five-year-old cheddar is perfectly contrasted by a rich solera-style madeira. The sweet madeira also carries the flavors of ripe plums or prunes.

CHEESE

Medium Cheddar

Medium cheddar is traditionally aged over 90 days. It has a creamier texture than mild cheddar and a slightly brothy flavor.

WINE

Light/Medium-Bodied Whites

Chenin blanc, semillon/sauvignon blanc blends, seyval blanc, vidal blanc, niagara.

Medium-Bodied Reds

Pinot noir, syrah/shiraz, merlot, malbec, zinfandel.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Apples including fuji, jonathan, mcintosh. Green grapes and asian pears go nicely as well. Plain crackers, butter crackers or your favorite bread.

CHEESE

Aged Cheddar

Cheddar can be aged for months or years. As it ages, the cheese develops full, sharp, almost beefy flavor. Cheddar aged from 2 to 5 years is a good choice.

WINE

Full-Bodied Whites

Chardonnay.

Medium/Full-Bodied Reds

Syrah/shiraz, zinfandel, merlot, cabernet sauvignon.

Late Harvest

Riesling, gewürztraminer.

Fortified

Madeira, tawny port.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Tart apples like granny smith, mcintosh or pippin. Also, a range of pears and dates. Nuts, like pecans, walnuts and hazelnuts. Water crackers, butter crackers or seeded breads.

Swiss CHEESES

Baby swiss and aged swiss contain holes or “eyes” as cheese makers refer to them. As these cheeses age, certain cultures produce carbon dioxide, which expands to form the holes.

Gruyere and raclette are also swiss-style cheeses, but are washed rind or surface ripened. They have very few eyes and develop more intense, buttery and earthy flavors with age.

CHEESE

Baby Swiss

Baby swiss, an American Original, is made with whole milk and has a mild buttery, nutty flavor and a creamy texture with small, pea-size holes or eyes.

WINE

Light/Medium-Bodied Whites

Riesling, gewürztraminer, müller-thurgau, pinot blanc, chenin blanc, vidal blanc, seyval blanc.

Light/Medium-Bodied Reds

Beaujolais nouveau, pinot noir, grenache, napa gamay.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Strawberries, kiwi, guava or green grapes.
Cashews or almonds. Plain water crackers, wheat crackers or whole wheat bread.

Gruyere & Riesling

The rich earthiness of a well-aged gruyere works nicely with a wide range of rieslings from dry to sweet. Riesling has aromas of honeysuckle, spices, and a bit of a mineral character. The pairing is accompanied by a crusty whole wheat bread and green grapes.



CHEESE

Aged Swiss

Aged swiss is made from part-skim milk and is very firm. It is typically made in large wheels, has large eyes and is well aged for a nutty, piquant flavor.

WINE

Medium/Full-Bodied Whites

Riesling, sauvignon blanc, vidal blanc, seyval blanc.

Medium/Full-Bodied Reds

Pinot noir, syrah/shiraz, merlot, malbec, zinfandel.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Apples like fuji, gala and jonathan. Also, pears or grapes. Cashews or almonds. Rye bread, pumpernickel or most seeded breads.

CHEESE

Gruyere

Gruyere is surface ripened and has rich buttery, nutty and earthy flavors. It is traditional in dishes like french onion soup, quiche lorraine and fondue, and it is a wonderful table cheese.

WINE

Light/Medium Whites

Riesling, gewürztraminer, sauvignon/fumé blanc, pinot gris/grigio, vidal blanc, seyval blanc.

Medium-Bodied Reds

Pinot noir, malbec, grenache, syrah/shiraz, merlot, zinfandel.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Tart pickles like cornichons or gherkins, pickled onions and boiled new potatoes. Also, apples, pears or green grapes. Crusty french or whole wheat bread.

Hard CHEESES

*This group includes **parmesan, asiago, dry jack, romano** and **pepato**. Parmesan is known as the “king of cheeses” and is one of the oldest cheeses known, with references dating back almost 1,000 years. These cheeses are also known as “grana,” referring to the granular texture they develop with long aging.*

Romano and pepato are sharper and more enzymatic in their flavor compared to the rest of this family, and they tend to pair best with beers and ciders.

CHEESE

Aged Parmesan

Aged from 10 months to two years or more, parmesan is buttery and nutty and has an almost sweet, tropical fruit flavor that intensifies with long aging.

WINE

Light/Medium-Bodied Whites

Riesling, gewürztraminer, pinot blanc, vigneoles, vidal blanc.

Late Harvest

Gewürztraminer, riesling, sauvignon blanc/semillon, muscat.

Fortified

Tawny port, madeira.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Fresh and dried figs or apricots, and most any dried fruit. Salted walnuts or cashews. Baguettes or simple plain crackers.

CHEESE

Aged Asiago

In Italy, asiago is typically enjoyed young, as a table cheese known as asiago fresco. In America, the most popular version is aged asiago. Asiago is made with higher milkfat content and yields a softer texture and sharper flavor than parmesan.

WINE

Light-Bodied Whites

Riesling, gewürztraminer.

Late Harvest

Riesling, gewürztraminer, sauvignon blanc/semillon, muscat.

Fortified

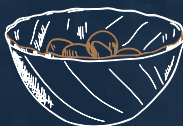
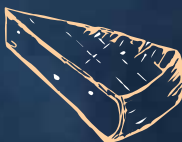
Madeira, tawny port.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

Fresh and dried figs or apricots, and most any dried fruit. Salted walnuts or cashews. Baguettes or simple plain crackers.

Parmesan & Late Harvest Gewürztraminer

This classic combination features a well-aged parmesan. Accompaniments include dried figs and buttered, salted, roasted walnuts. After enjoying a taste of the cheese, fruit and nuts, finish with a tiny sip of almost nectar-sweet late harvest gewürztraminer.



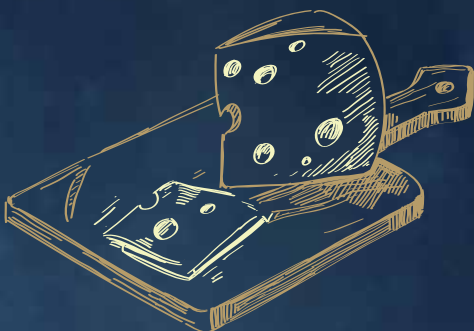
Tasting TIPS

To enjoy the full pleasure of a cheese and wine tasting, you need to employ all your senses. There are guidelines for tasting cheese and wine separately, but when tasting them together, there are no hard and fast rules regarding which one to start with, the cheese or the wine. Either way, take enough time to think about and enjoy the flavors you experience along the way.

Here are some helpful tips to guide you and your guests through a cheese and wine tasting.

- Start the tasting with pairings that feature lighter sparkling and white wines, continue with light, medium, and full-bodied red wines and conclude with fortified or late harvest wines.
- Look at the wine, noting its hue and clarity.
- Check the aroma of the wine by lightly swirling it around your glass. This will aerate the wine and help release the aroma or bouquet.
- Take a small sip of the wine, swirl it around in your mouth and think about the flavors you are detecting.





- Look at the cheese, noting its general appearance, color, texture and aroma. With semi-soft or firmer cheeses, check the texture by compressing a small piece of the cheese between your fingers. This will also help release the aroma of the cheese, which will be a precursor to the flavors you will experience.
- Taste a small bite of cheese, and as it fills your taste buds, note the flavors you detect along the way and at the finish.
- Take another small sip of wine to experience the cheese and wine flavors together while the cheese is still on your palate.
- Refresh your palate with fruit, bread, crackers and other chosen accompaniments between tastings. Cheese and wine are rich foods and proper accompaniments help balance the flavor experience.



Selecting & PURCHASING CHEESE

Use this guide as a checklist to help select cheese and accompaniments for your tasting, highlighting or checking off your favorites as you go.

- Purchase cheese from a store that staffs their cheese department with a sales person and tell them what you are planning to do. Ask for their help if needed on cheese selections or amounts to purchase.
- Ask for a taste of any unfamiliar cheese.
- For an appetizer portion, purchase 56 grams (2 ounces) of cheese per person (total, all cheese).
- For a main course portion, purchase 112 grams (4 ounces) of cheese per person (total, all cheese).

Serving CHEESE

- For small groups, place a small knife with cheese so guests can cut their own pieces.
- For larger groups, pre-cut some of the cheese into smaller pieces. Do not cut any more pieces than you need for one taste for each person. After that, they can go back and cut their own pieces.
- Place bread slices or crackers on a plate near the cheese.
- Wash and cut fruit into bite-size pieces or slices. Cut grapes into small clusters, and serve berries whole.
- Place dried fruit, nuts and other accompaniments in small bowls or plates near the appropriate cheese.

Selecting & PURCHASING WINE

Use this guide as a shopping list for recommended wine varieties, highlighting your selections for purchase as you read along.

- Visit stores that conduct tastings. Tasting wine is the best way to learn.
- Visit wineries for a more personal way to experience wines in their native surroundings.
- Shop at a store with a wide selection of wine and a knowledgeable service staff. Tell them what you are planning to do and ask for their help in making your selections by letting them know your budget or price range for particular wines.
- Purchase at least 59 ml (2 ounces) of each wine per person, which will yield approximately 12 pours to a bottle.

Serving WINE

- Serve sparkling and white wines at 4-10°C (40-50°F), reds and fortified wines at 13-18°C (55-65°F). Temperature is most important.
- Use real wine glasses for tasting. Plastic glasses give off chemical aromas that can ruin your wine tasting experience.
- Use flutes for sparkling wine and traditional wine glasses for other wines.
- Encourage your guests to make small pours of wine (59 ml = 2 ounces or less).



U.S. Dairy
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