

## Wine Rules!

I have a funny relationship with rules - I'm far too mindful of them (I wish it were otherwise). I put it down to my upbringing...

There used to be rules for everything – from when not to swim (within an hour of a meal), to what not to wear (red and green should not be seen without a colour in between; and of course busty girls should avoid horizontal stripes at all costs (try telling that to your well-endowed Rabbitohs supporter)).

There were rules for what not to eat (green apples – they give you the runs), and what not to drink (Adelaide tap water – same reason). Sorry Adelaide, I'm talking 50 years ago - I'll bet it's beaut now.

But even for a law-abiding kid like me, some rules were hard to swallow - especially the *no swimming after a meal* rule. It defied logic. On a blistering summer's day, you'd pack up the Ford, drive to the coast (with the windows wound up in case a passing car kicked up a stone), search for a beach *without a rip* but *with a picnic area*; then unpack the car, throw the old Onkaparinga over the bindies, open the Tupperware and force down a limp salad with hard boiled eggs and warm beetroot. You'd think a kid would deserve a treat after that, but no - they'd pull the one hour rule. Torture.

No-one *likes* rules: they always start with words like Don't and Never, and who wants to see those words applied to *wine*? The great news is that the number one rule of food and wine matching is: There are no rules. Woo hoo... wine anarchy!!

Well... not quite. But it is time to throw out those old notions about white wine for seafood, and red wine for meat. In any case, this is the era of Master Chef – there's a celebrity chef in every kindergarten in the country. With such an extraordinary level of culinary sophistication, it's time to get a bit more savvy with our food and wine matches.

**The thing that distinguishes wine from all those other beverages that make us witty and attractive is its extraordinary ability to partner with food.**

When it comes to food and wine pairing, you don't need a great wine, you need the *right* wine. But here's the catch: it has to be the right wine *for you*. So your first step is to work out what you like. Because however dreamy your celebrity chef thinks the aged Riesling will be with his char grilled eggplant, if you don't enjoy Riesling (or eggplant for that matter) it won't be a memorable meal.

So let's say you've put a few toes in the water, and you have a fair idea of the kinds of wine you like. Now it's time to start experimenting (ooh, how seventies!).

There are two - equally valid - ways to approach food and wine matching: Contrasts and Complements. The complementary (like-for-like) approach balances the weight, texture, and flavour of the food with a complementary wine. Think: Sauvignon Blanc with Asparagus risotto; or a spicy aromatic Gewürztraminer with Thai red curry; and, OK –a full-bodied Aussie Shiraz with beef fillet.

The Contrast method takes the reverse view, and pitches food and wine from opposite ends of the flavour spectrum, to create balance. Much like the delights of putting maple syrup on your pancakes and bacon, think: stinky blue cheese partnered with sweet, luscious Tokay; or a lively young Riesling with pan roasted scallops in a rich butter sauce.

Whether you decide to opt for a complementary wine, or a contrast, what you are striving for is *balance*. Pay close attention to the key ingredients in your meal. Consider the weight and textures of your choices as much as the actual flavour, and then play your hunch. And don't let anyone tell you your choices are wrong. If *you* love them, you've made the perfect match!

If you're not up for experimentation, there are a number of classic food and wine matches, which will stand you in good stead. For example Oysters with a squeeze of lemon and fresh cracked pepper are indecently good with Champagne or Sparkling wine. Pinot Noir is sensational with duck. Serve your great big full bodied Barossa Shiraz with Venison or Kangaroo, and bring out the vintage Port to serve with hard cheese and dried fruits.

Finally, here are a few guidelines (NOT RULES!) to help you in your quest to find the perfect food and wine match:

- Close your eyes. The colour of your wine is immaterial
- **All** wines go better with company
- There is no wine match for All Bran, and there is a reason for this.