

Port and Food Pairing

Port and food pairing is the process of matching food dishes with Port to enhance the total experience. Successful combinations ensure that the correct balance between the "weight" of the food and the weight (or body) of the Port is achieved, as well as a synergy between the flavours which may be complementary or contrasting. The combination of Vintage Port and Stilton cheese, which has been part of the tradition of enjoying Vintage Port in England since the 18th century, is a classic example. The richness and body of the Vintage Port complements the intensity of the blue cheese, hence creating a perfect Pairing.

In recent years, the interest in food and wine pairings has encouraged the creation of a whole series of new Port and food pairings including a more specific approach to cheese, desserts and above all chocolate.

Port and chocolate (particularly dark) is a classic pairing that has increased in popularity over the past decade as dark chocolate has become more fashionable. The sweet and full berry flavours of Port complement the sweet, bitter, acidic and fruity flavours of chocolate. Premium Ruby styles (Reserve, LBV and Vintage Ports) pair with dark chocolate desserts, particularly in combination with red fruits, while the Aged Tawnies (10 or 20 year old) combine with chocolates that have a spicy or nutty component.

Other successful combinations with Aged Tawnies include dishes such as foie gras, providing a rich nutty alternative to sauternes, as well as presunto (Portuguese cured ham) or Spanish jamon iberico. A classic dessert combination is an Aged Tawny with a crème brûlée. The richness and concentration of flavour in these Tawny Ports, that have been aged in oak barrels for many years, complements the smoky character of the ham and helps to cut through the richness of the foie gras and the crème brûlée.

Alongside these more classical Port and Food pairings is the creation by a new generation of top chefs of a some more innovative combinations. These include serving young Vintage Port with fish based dishes such as roasted wrasse and smoked eel, drinking mature Vintages with delicate meat dishes such as braised ox cheek and young venison ribs and offering the 20 and 30 year old Tawnies alongside cod fish or pigeon based dishes. Combinations that are perhaps unfamiliar but clearly demonstrate the complexity and the versatility of the flavours of Port.

Today, our understanding of the true potential of pairing Port with Chinese cuisine is still very much in its infancy however a number of successful combinations particularly with Aged Tawnies have been identified including serving 10 Year old Tawny Port with hairy crab or Beijing duck. For an overview of the best Port and food pairings please see below.

Port Style	Meat Fish Dishes	Cheeses	Desserts	Fruits & Nuts
Ruby & Reserve		Gorgonzola, Fourme D'Ambert	Chocolate Mousse, Fresh Cherry pie	Red Fruits
Aged Tawnies	Foie Gras, Hairy Crab, Beijing Duck	Cheddar, Manchego, Mature Gouda, Parmesan, Cashel Blue	Creme Brulee, Egg Tarts, Caramel Apple desserts, Chocolate Tart, Fig Tart, Fruitcake	Pecans, Walnuts, Almonds, Dried Fruits
LBV & Vintages	Venison	Stilton, Cabrales Bayley Hazel Blue, Brie, Camembert	Dark Chocolates (60 to 75% Cacao), Hazelnut Chocolate Tart	Figs, Walnuts, Almonds, Roasted Chestnuts
White		Aged Gouda Gloucester		Olives, Salted Almonds