

## A How To For Picking Wines at Restaurants

Navigating a wine menu at a restaurant can be nothing short of intimidating at times. What will pair well with my meal? Should I choose a red or a white? Is this wine sweet or dry? Fruity or oaky? Does the server know these answers? At some places they do, and some they do not.

These are all common questions you may think about before ordering a glass or a bottle. If you find yourself overwhelmed by the thought of choosing the perfect wine with your entree, especially if your server doesn't have the info on the wine at their fingertips, then consider these tips the next time you are out.

- Ask your server for a sample first. Many restaurants allow you to try a wine out before ordering a full glass.
- Many restaurants have their wines listed from lightest to heaviest in body. If you plan on having a lighter meal or hors d'oeuvres, you may wish to choose wines toward the top of the list.
- Match the wine's region to the cuisine you plan on ordering. (Try an Italian wine with an Italian-inspired meal). For example, heavy Tuscan meat dishes often call for heavier Tuscan red wines.
- Pick your wine first and then food second. We often determine the wine we want and then match the body and weight of the food to the body and weight of the wine. If we are having a lighter white then we may gravitate toward a salad dish or light seafood dish.
- Often reds from California, like Napa and Sonoma Valleys, are going to be heavy and more fruit forward in style. Try to consider this when pairing with your food.
- Wines from Europe (ie. Italy, France), generally, have more acidity. Not always but often. These are typically great partners for higher, acid-based dishes that may incorporate tomatoes.
- Pick Rose. Rose wines, which are lighter reds, are great for pairing with varied dishes from burgers to seafood to pasta dishes with herbs and olive oil. Most of them are unoaked and have nice acidity for matching with food.
- Share a bottle. If your group also plans on ordering wine, try to find a bottle that will partner with varied palates and meal choices. Bottles from the Rhone Valley (Syrah & Grenache blends) in France typically offer great value.
- With extensive lists, narrow things down by finding familiar varietals/areas.
- Try something new! Don't be afraid to go out of your comfort zone and order a wine that you've never tried before or even heard of.

