



# SWEET COMPANIONS

NEW RULES FOR LETTING CHOCOLATE COZY UP TO WINE

by **Kate Parham**

Forget what you think you know about pairing wine with chocolate. While the old standby that wine must be sweeter than the dessert is still true, you don't have to be stuck always matching chocolate with a sickly sweet beverage. In fact, there's a whole world of delicious duos.

## FRUITY FOOT FORWARD

Finding wines that are sweeter than their chocolate counterparts can be hard. But if you opt for a fruit-forward wine instead one that is too sugary, it will more than make up for the sweetness factor. "I'm playing it fast and loose with the traditional thought," says Amy Lewis, sommelier at one sixtyblue in Chicago. "Make sure fruit is the driving force in the wine and that the tannic structure is minimal." She pairs a chocolate ganache tarte with

a fruity Zinfandel. "Whatever you do," she says, "avoid Old World wines that have non-fruit notes, like tobacco or anise."

Lewis also suggests the body weights of the wine and the chocolate be equal: If your wine is too light, it'll get lost in the richness of the dessert, and vice versa.

Angela Roman, wine director at Chicago's The Signature Room at the 95th, likes rich desserts with bubbly. She pairs a white chocolate passion fruit mousse with a demi-sec Champagne. "When you have something fatty, you need wine with high acid to cut it," says Roman. "You want to pair a rich dish with something light to cleanse the palate."

Another factor to consider is cocoa percentage. Judy Mattera, owner and pastry chef of Boston's Sweet Solutions, says chocolate with at least 64 percent cocoa is easier to pair with wine. She likes her

**Chocolate hazelnut torte, Owner-Pastry Chef Judy Mattera, Sweet Solutions, Boston. RECIPE, p. 100.**

chocolate hazelnut torte (recipe p. 100) with a reserve Porto. Another option

is to use a fruit-infused wine, such as framboise, says Mattera. Or if you prefer to do a sweet wine pairing, She suggests macerating the fruits of your dessert in the wine. "Muscatel-macerated fruits with chocolate sorbet is another fabulous pairing," she adds.

## THE BITTER AND THE SWEET

Roman also suggests pairing wines and chocolates that have similar flavors, smells, and textures. She likes Chef Patrick Sheerin's citrus-cured scallops with cocoa nib gremolata and oranges with Riesling (\$11, recipe, [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com)). "When chocolate is cured with citrus, it's less bitter, and the Riesling has citrus undertones, so its vibrancy makes a perfect harmony." Equally important is the tannic structure of the wine and the chocolate. "All they want to do is fight," says Roman.

Apply similar principles with beer. "Tannins in wine can be comparable to hoppiness in beer," says Roman. "It's a bittering agent, and thus you need to consider the bitterness level when pairing." Roman suggests the lighter the beer, the more bitter the chocolate, noting that it's easiest when both have light tannic structures.

Sheerin likes how chocolate stouts and malts pair with nutty, caramel flavors in chocolate desserts. "The balance has to be on the savory end, don't go crazy with the sweet, that just brings out the bitterness," he says.

Kate Parham prefers to pair white chocolate with something bubbly. For recipes from this article and more, visit [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com).

It's said that **GIACOMO CASSANOVA** savored chocolate before every romantic escapade. ❤️