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# VALENTINE POLITICS: THE CHOCOLATE AND CABERNET DEBATE JUST DOESN'T GO AWAY

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About this time of year, some wineries in the Napa Valley, where I live, start heralding cabernet as the perfect wine with chocolate. I know what I think (and will share in a minute), but since this issue just won't go away, we decided to ask some Napa Valley vintners what they think. Heidi Barrett and Jean-Charles Boisset were in opposite corners on this one. Here's what they said:



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Heidi Barrett:

"I love chocolate and I love cabernet. But I don't love them together. I think it is a forced pairing that mostly doesn't work. When a sweet food like chocolate is forced to go with red wine, it will usually make the wine taste more acidic and possibly bitter next to it unless the wine is sweeter than the food. Since most winemakers don't make cabernet sweet (thankfully), chocolate is not going to show off the wine in its best light (in the way, say, that a perfectly cooked medium rare filet mignon shows off cabernet). So, I think: Go ahead and enjoy chocolate. It's usually so good just on its own. But chocolate and cabernet are better enjoyed separately."

Jean-Charles Boisset:

"I believe wine and chocolate can certainly go together. I recommend dipping dark cherries and raisins in a sensual, melting fondue of 76% dark chocolate from Belgium. Our luscious and velvety Raymond Vineyards Generations Cabernet Sauvignon will amplify the sweet-tartness of the fruit and richness of the chocolate."

And me?

I'm with Heidi (sorry JCB). It may sound romantic—even inspired—but as marriages go, cabernet and chocolate are a match made in hell (or in the depths of the marketing department). Chocolate is an extremely powerful, profound, and complex flavor. Its deep bitterness accentuates the tannin in cabernet sauvignon, making the wine taste severe and angular. Chocolate's rich fruitiness blows away cabernet's graceful fruity nuances, making the wine taste drab and hollow. Moreover, chocolate's profound sweetness makes most dry wines taste sour. In short, the would-be dominatrix chocolate needs a partner more powerful and sweeter than herself. (Which may be one of the reasons sweet, luscious, opulent Port is a life necessity—and a better choice.) But you be the judge. What's your take on cabernet and chocolate? Let us know [here](#).