

#4: RIESLING AND FOOD GUIDE

Rieslings are terrific partners for many types of cuisine. With their extraordinary range of sweetness levels and regional styles, it's possible to find a Riesling for just about any dish. The key is to find the appropriate combination of sweetness, acidity, intensity, texture and aromatic harmony (or contrast). Here are some general guidelines.

DRY RIESLINGS

Dry Rieslings are less flamboyantly aromatic and fruity than those with sweetness, and their higher alcohol gives them a big, full-bodied structure. This is what makes them well-suited to traditional European-style cuisine:

- **Pure, “stony” fruit.** Dry-style Rieslings have a fruitiness that can be described as “stony.” It is not as overtly fruity as with sweeter Rieslings. The wines have a sappy, spicy texture and density that gives them the body and power to pair well with full-flavored foods and classic sauces.
- **Unoaked flavor.** The absence of oak in these wines enables them to bring out the subtle flavors in fine cooking, rather than smothering them with wood or tannin. Classic preparations of fish, poultry and pork all benefit from this.
- **Firm structure.** Dry Rieslings have a clean, focused structure and a fine mineral edge that can cut through the heaviness of classic reductions and cream sauces. The wines brighten the flavors of the food and refresh the palate.

PAIRING IDEAS: Fried or baked fish, simple seafood dishes, cream sauces, butter sauces, sauteed mushrooms, roasted chicken, grilled pork chops, charcuterie.

LIGHTLY SWEET RIESLINGS

Delicacy and a mineral-inflected fruitiness are the hallmarks of fine, off-dry Rieslings. Their elegant style and absolute purity of flavor make them excellent partners for modern cooking that emphasizes high-quality, fresh ingredients. Spicy Asian/fusion cuisine, smoked fish and salty cheeses are excellent matchups for these qualities of lightly sweet Rieslings:

- **Naturally low alcohol.** A lightly sweet Riesling's moderate alcohol makes it ideal for spicy foods. High-alcohol wines only make spicy heat taste hotter and less palatable. Lower-alcohol wines also fit well with today's healthier lifestyle.
- **Fine structure.** Rieslings get their structure from ripe acidity, rather than from tannins drawn from stems and oak barrels. Tannic wines give spicy foods an unpleasant bitterness, whereas Riesling helps tame the spice.
- **Cooling sweetness.** This attribute makes lightly sweet Rieslings exceptional partners for spicy foods. The slight sweetness cools the palate and keeps the food fresh and lively. A bit of sweetness also helps carry flavor, bringing out the fresh taste of the food. Lightly sweet Rieslings also make excellent apéritifs.
- **Crisp acidity.** Riesling's bright acidity balances its sweetness and helps cleanse and freshen the palate.

PAIRING IDEAS: Lemongrass chicken, crab cakes, roasted meats with pan sauce, dishes with acidic sauces such as beurre blanc, pumpkin ravioli, roasted vegetables, white-rind soft cheeses.

SWEET AND VERY SWEET RIESLINGS

Sweeter Rieslings, such as German Auslese, work well on their own as a refreshing “sorbet” between courses. They can also pair well with rich, spicy Indian dishes or moderately sweet tropical dishes featuring fresh fruits. When they are mature (10 to 20 years old), Auslese-style Rieslings become earthier and drier to the taste, making them classic partners to braised or roasted game dishes, such as fowl, wild boar and venison.

Very sweet, dessert-style Rieslings (BA, Ice Wine, TBA) are extremely intense, concentrated wines, best enjoyed on their own. But their richness also matches very well with strong, salty blue cheeses, fruit desserts and foie gras. When pairing with a dessert, however, it's important to be sure that the sweetness of the dessert does not overpower the wine. Avoid chocolate, one of the few things that Riesling does not work with.

For more enlightenment, please visit: www.LoosenBrosUSA.com/Riesling.asp

