

It Even Goes With Popcorn

You don't have to wait for a special occasion to pop the cork on champagne. The sparkling wine is a versatile option and pairs well with many different foods.



Champagne is one of the most versatile food wines available since it can complement just about any foods. Try pairing it with textured foods and rich foods for a great match.

Photo courtesy of John Kerr

by John Kerr
Community contributor

It's a shame that we save champagne for special occasions. Many of us keep the sparkling locked up, only to let it out of the basement for weddings and New Year's Eve. Not so in the rest of the wine producing countries where folks look for any excuse to roll out the bubbly. Is there hope for the USA? Happily, our restrictive tradition is showing a few cracks. You'll see this in some fine restaurants, where sommeliers are serving champagne as their secret food pairing.

So, what do they know that we don't? Champagne is arguably the most versatile food wine out there. Champagne contains a high level of acidity and a small amount of sugar. These two extremes complement just about any food other than possibly steak and the sweetest of desserts.

Yes, the sparkling is versatile but certain foods match best. And those are foods with texture. You'll find that texture in foods such as French fries, deep

fried mushrooms, and empanadas from Cecilia's Kitchen. Also pair champagne with creamy dishes. It's those fine little bubbles that cut right through the richness.

Looking for the easiest holiday party possible? Invite your friends or office mates over for a glass of champagne accompanied by popcorn and potato chips. Toast the New Year and then watch them go wild when they taste this pairing.

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Or you can take the high road and pair your sparkling of choice with a dish like phyllo encrusted sea bass and morels, or a sweeter one like crème brûlée. Just make sure that you know a little about the dryness of your sparkling and you'll have no problem making a good match. To avoid any tears, your bubbly should be the same or a bit sweeter than the food you are serving.

The powers that be for champagne

have made it easy with standard definitions. Note that “extra dry” is not the driest champagne. Here’s what to look for:

- Demi-sec – the sweetest of champagnes. Pair with wedding cake and desserts.
- Dry – a bit drier than demi-sec, and so plays the role of apéritif well. But it also goes with fish tacos and barbecued chicken.
- Extra-dry – one step drier but still a hint of sweetness. This pairs well with the range of foods served for the holidays from ham to yams.
- Brut – the driest and most popular of the champagnes.

Foods to serve with brut champagne at your party or the morning after are:

- Aged, hard cheeses such as Cheddar or Parmesan
- Risotto or any pasta dish made with a cream or mushroom sauce
- Seafood. My favorite – lobster mac and cheese at the Grovewood Cafe
- Mushrooms sautéed with garlic, parsley and a pinch of nutmeg (trust me)
- Roasted almonds or cashews
- Scrambled eggs

My choice for the holidays? It’s Thierry Triolet Brut Rosé, a base of Chardonnay with 15 percent an equal blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

Thierry Triolet sells most of their grapes to the big champagne houses like Krug, but keeps the best for their own bubbly.

The big boys sell for \$100 or more. Triolet? Just \$42 at the wine shop.

Now that you know how versatile it is, let the champagne flow on New Year’s Eve. But don’t wait for Valentine’s Day before you open your next bottle.



Brut Rosé from Thierry Triolet is Metro Wines owner John Kerr’s pick for his favorite holiday champagne.

Photo courtesy of John Kerr

2013 Metro Wines held its grand opening April 27, 2013.

Throughout the year, Metro Wines holds several different events, including benefits and wine tastings. There are a few lined up for December including:

- Wednesday, Dec. 4, from 6 to 8 p.m. Metro Wines will host the Animal Legal Defense Fund with Executive Director Steve Wells.
- Saturday, Dec. 7, from 5 to 7 p.m., it will host an open door wine tasting benefit. —*Metro Wines*

ABOUT METRO WINES

Owners John Kerr and Gina Trippi opened Metro Wines and celebrated their grand opening April 27 of this year. Located at 169 Charlotte St. in Asheville, Metro Wines is in the space of the former Wine Studio, near City Bakery, The Chop Shop and The Grove Park Inn.

Metro Wines offers a wide selection of wines focusing on pairing just the right wine with any dish or event. Here you will find grape specific shelves as well as categories ranging “from \$10 and under” to the “bucket list” to “a bad hair day.” John and Gina share the philosophy that wine is about friends, family and community. —metrowinesasheville.com

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John Kerr co-owns Metro Wines with Gina Trippi. You can find out more about the store by visiting metrowinesasheville.com.

Photo courtesy of John Kerr