

WINE COLUMN

By Graham Simpson, Whitmore & White

Wines for a romantic meal

As I write this, Valentine's Day is almost upon us and love is in the air. If you are not able to book a cosy table for two at your favourite restaurant, then the next best thing is to cook dinner for that special someone in your life. This month I have selected six of our wines to match with six scrumptious main meals. I'll leave starters and desserts in your capable hands, but Champagne and a lovely sticky dessert wine are always good choices.

Vegetarian option – Mushroom Risotto

Tenuta Olim Bauda Gavi di Gavi £18.95

A fantastic crisp and dry white wine from North Italy. But this is no basic Italian white wine. Made with the Cortese grape, this is a full-on white with notes of elderflower, honey, orange blossom, a mineral core and a long, long finish. This is a wine that works really well with a creamy risotto.

Chicken Option – Roast Chicken Breast filled with Gruyere Cheese and rolled in Parma Ham

St Veran Le Moulin du Pont £18.50

Roast chicken and a full-bodied Chardonnay were made for each other. This southern Burgundian St Veran is rich, with buttery, toasty notes and a honey and mango core. This chicken dish takes it to the next level with the addition of Gruyere cheese and Parma ham. Serve it with roasted Mediterranean vegetables and a big glass of this white Burgundy.

Fish Option – Poached Fillet of Salmon with butter and lemon

Riverby Estate Chardonnay £21.95

I am going with another full-bodied Chardonnay here. This one is from New Zealand though. Quality-wise it ranks up there with white Burgundies at almost twice the price. As with the St Veran above, it is toasty and buttery but this has more tropical fruit notes in the background. This makes it perfect with a simple poached fillet of salmon. Just add lemon, butter and some black pepper. Serve with some baby Charlotte potatoes and a side salad.

Pork Option – Roast Fillet of Pork with Apple and Celeriac

Casa Silva Cool Coast Pinot Noir £17.50

Pork and Pinot Noir are great bedfellows. This Chilean Pinot Noir is from a cool coastal climate which carries all of the fruit character of the grape into the wine. The sweetness of the apple and the earthy-sweetness of the celeriac will also go well with the earthy-fruity notes that Pinot Noir gives to the drinker.

Lamb Option – Grilled Lamb Cutlets with Leek Gratin

Monte Real Rioja Gran Reserva £25.95

Rioja and lamb are a match made in heaven, so perhaps Valentine's Day is the perfect time to pair them up? Lamb cutlets are juicy and sweet and work so well with the redcurrant and strawberry fruit notes from the Rioja. With this being a no expense spared Gran Reserva, everything is there in 3D, super-surround sound cinemascope so to speak. You may well forget there is also leek gratin on the plate though...

Beef Option – Ribeye Steak with Chunky Chips and Mushrooms

Allegrini La Grola £26.95

If you are a steak person, then this combination is right up your street. Fried ribeye steak. Fried chips and fried mushrooms. Let's go all 1970s 'Gallop Gourmet' and fry it all in butter (okay, perhaps best not to just use butter...). The wine is from north-east Italy, not too far from Verona, and is a single vineyard wine, from vines growing about 400 metres up. A stunning wine. Opulence personified. Layers of red and black fruit, spicy oak, firm but also supple tannins. A perfect partner to steak.

There you have it. Valentine's dinner boxed off. I hope you enjoy your day.

Graham

Irby milliner turning heads with 'Beautifully British' hat designs

Wirral-based milliner, Sue Wood, owner of Sue Wood Millinery, has been invited to exhibit at London Hat Week 2018.

The prestigious event will bring together talented milliners from across the world, showcasing over 300 hats from 37 countries. Sue Wood is also just one of 30 milliners who has been invited to join the Press Preview Day in February.

The theme of London Hat Week 2018 is 'The Great Hat Exhibition', inspired by The Great Exhibition of London in 1851 which celebrated modern industrial technology and design.

All entries are inspired by a piece of history or culture, or have been created using a unique technique or craft from their chosen country. Sue Wood's hat, which is named 'Oswaldtwistle', has been inspired by the Industrial Revolution.

Formerly a full-time secretary, the start of Sue Wood Millinery was somewhat unconventional. Her daughter was getting married and she could not find a hat to fit her self-proclaimed "small head". Determined to wear an elegant hat to the wedding, Sue Wood enrolled onto a three-day millinery course with Rose Cory, the late Queen Mother's milliner.

Making hats very quickly became a passion for Sue, who signed up for further courses at Liverpool Community College and Leeds College of Art, all while maintaining her full-time role as a secretary. In 2013, Sue graduated with distinctions and higher distinctions and set up her own business, Sue Wood Millinery, which she now runs from a studio in the back garden of her home.

Sue Wood has worked on multiple big theatre productions, including Disney's The Lion King and receives regular commissions for weddings and other special events. The Wirral-based milliner now leads her own millinery workshops, teaching others how to make spectacular hats.

Her invitation to join London Hat Week came just weeks after being nominated for a Northern Power Women award and shortlisted for two FSB Merseyside, West Cheshire and Wigan awards.

London Hat Week is taking place between 22 – 28 March 2018. The official charity partner is Brain Tumour Research and supporters of the event include Stephen Jones OBE and Rachel Trevor-Morgan, milliner to the Queen. To purchase tickets for the event, visit: www.xterrace.com/hat18/

