

# Pairing Wine and Cheese is an Art?

By Kenneth Frawley

Like painting, music, and all other art forms, wines and cheeses are very much works of art. As such, in order to create yet another artistic pleasure, their unique individual flavours and aromas must be respected and properly paired with one another. Thus, the pairing of wines and cheeses begins with the understanding that the basic rule for this culinary matchmaking is: *opposites attract*, although there are couple exceptions to the rule.

When selecting the most complimentary pairing, it is important to firstly assess the individual traits of each partner. For example, *brie* is a soft, light, and creamy, cows milk cheese from France's *Île-de-France* region. Its gentle and smooth taste is lovely. Yet, when paired with a *chardonnay* wine, one immediately discovers the missing blast of luster. Alone, each is brilliant. Yet together, they clash because neither is dominant. Therefore, consider the traits of each delight to be certain of a contrast of flavours is present. For, a brie is best suited with a *petite sirah*, a *cabernet sauvignon*, a *zinfandel*, or any robust red wine. The desired blast of luster is provided by the contrast of the bolder-tasting red wine and the light, buttery-smooth brie. *Expérience superb!*

*Roquefort*, an artwork from the village of *Roquefort-sur-Soulzon* in Southern France, is made from ewe milk, to which the mould *Penicillium roqueforti* is injected, before it is aged in underground caverns for three to ten months. Unlike *brie*, though soft and creamy, Roquefort is a strong cheese. Thus, when paired with a full-bodied red wine, one discovers a collision of powerful flavours battling for supremacy. As usual in such warfare, a victor is always hard to single out, a real tragedy. To properly compliment the

Roquefort, it is better to pair it with a chardonnay, a sauvignon blanc, a pinot grigio, or any light, non-dessert white wine. This allows the cheese's strong flavour to be gently underscored with the spry taste of the wine. *Il est sublimé!* Yet, to further enhance the experience, place a sliver of *Roquefort* atop a slice of *pippin* apple. With the added touch of sourness found in the apple, the palate receives a further burst of stimulation. Note: wine and cheese pairing routinely includes fruits, herbs and nuts.

An exception to the basic rule is found with the pairing of Roquefort and *porto*, or port. Both possess strong characters and flavours. Port, that wondrous Portuguese blending of wine and brandy, is a rather full-bodied, sweet, after-dinner wine. Yet the thick, bold, sweetness of the wine actually compliments the cheese, and vice versa. On the subject of exceptions, the exquisite French dessert wine from the Bordeaux region, the *sauterne*, like the port, also pairs nicely with the Roquefort.

Produced in the *Loire Valley* of France, goat cheese, or *chèvre*, is a rather unique cheese. For not only does it contain more protein than cheese made from cow milk, it is a cheese delight that can even be enjoyed by the lactose intolerant. The *chèvre* is a soft, gamy, yet tangy and gentle cheese. Therefore, when combined with a *zinfandel*, or the *petite sirah*, the mouth glows. The combination of the *chèvre*'s flavours and the boldness of either wine create a masterpiece of a taste experience. To further enhance the experience, sprinkle a bit of fresh *rosemary* upon the *chèvre* and look for even greater pleasure. Another alternative is to place one single basil leaf atop a slice of the *chèvre*. Either option is guaranteed to inflict a two-day glow.

Ah, what an art form!