

Wine and Cheese: Local experts share their pairings

By Jennifer Killerich Thursday, 06/28/07



There's something both inherently sexy and unmistakably classy about nibbling on artisan cheeses while sipping fine wine. But what happens outside the confines of your favorite restaurant, when you're left to your own devices to create that perfect pairing for a special occasion? We asked a few local experts to demystify wine-and-cheese shopping by presenting their favorite picks for various situations, along with a few morsels of wisdom. Take this cheat sheet shopping with you, and you'll be sure to impress at your next rendezvous:

KNOW THIS FIRST

All of our experts agree that it's best to keep pairings uncomplicated. Brandon Fason of cheese shop Corrieri's Formaggeria advises against serving more than three different cheeses at a time to avoid overwhelming tasters' palettes. Also, "it's important to leave cheeses out at room temperature so they can open up," says Laura Wilson, co-chef at Elliston Place hot spot OMBI. Plan on one or two bottles of wine per person, depending on how robust your crowd is, and expect each guest to consume 2 or 3 ounces of cheese.

ROMANTIC PICNIC

Brett Corrieri, proprietor of Corrieri's Formaggeria, teamed with Corrieri's general manager Brandon Fason and Mark Johnson of neighboring wine shop Vinea to create a swoon-worthy lineup of wines and cheeses. Their selections are picnic basket ready and will stand up to a little heat, whether you opt for a daytime stroll or an evening at the park. Wines are available at Vinea and cheese selections at Corrieri's.

CHEESE PICKS

Tintern: This Welsh cow's milk cheese is flavored with scallops and chives, creating a savory taste you'll want to linger over. Use any extra to make a stellar omelet the next morning.

Lamb Chopper: The creamy Cypress Grove sheep's milk cheese is a milder option for cheese novices and connoisseurs alike.

Sweetwater Valley Smoked Cheddar: The firm consistency of this hickory-smoked cow's milk cheese, made right here in Tennessee, makes it less likely to melt during a sunny picnic.

Prima Donna: Aged for two years, this Holland Gouda is a nutty-flavored cheese with an inviting smell and flavor that anybody can appreciate.

Monte Enbro: Fason's favorite choice, this Spanish goat cheese features a bold, sharp kick for the more daring romantics. "When you bite into it, you and your partner sit and just stare each other down. It's absolutely amazing," he says.

WINE PICKS

Cycles Gladiator Pinot Noir: Exceptional in quality and in price (under \$10!), this earthy wine finishes off with hints of strawberry and cherry. Its acidity cuts through the fat in cheese, and since reds don't need to be chilled, Pinot is ideal for a picnic.

Pannotia Torrentes: This flirty, complex Argentinean white possesses wild orchid and honeydew-infused sweetness perfect for washing down a smooth cheese like Lamb Chopper.