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Asparagus Can Be Friends With Good Pairings

by: TINA CAPUTO

in: DRINKING W/RECIPE



5.2.14 - When tasting certain wines, critics are often inspired to make food-pairing declarations. "This is a perfect oyster wine," one might say about a crisp Sancerre, or "This Cabernet is crying out for a grilled steak!"

That almost never happens with asparagus. It's known in the wine world as an asparagus on enough to make it impossible. It can even

Chad Hendrickson, executive chef at the restaurant, says he uses to help bring the wine to the table. Grilled asparagus is a classic pairing, he said. The next step is to pair it with a salad that consists of chickpeas and wildflower honey vinaigrette.

Hendrickson recommends pairing it with a wine that has a mineral background, he said, noting that Pinot Grigio is one of his favorite asparagus-friendly varieties. He also likes to pair certain asparagus dishes with richer wines, such as Viognier.

An overabundance of fruit character can also cause pairing problems, according to Lia Huber, who creates recipes for Bonterra Organic Vineyards in California. "Fruit-forward, because overt fruitiness can be overwhelming," she said. "Instead, choose wines with a balanced acidity. These wines come right alongside asparagus."

The best pairings

To find out which wines really work best with asparagus, I joined me in the Mother of All Wine-and-Food Pairing Challenge. Between bites of asparagus, we tasted 28 different wines, each awarded a medal rating of "gold," "silver," or "bronze." Once initial medals were awarded, we went round to crown the Asparagus Champion.

Having judged quite a few professional wine tasters for this one. Rather than simply select the best wine running — asparagus compatibility was the key.

Winning wines

Of the 28 wines we tasted, five earned gold medals, and they did, but there were so many good ones that I had doubts about the rosés, but one of each made it into our top five. Starting with the Asparagus Champion, the winning wines are:



Winning Wines

Casey Flat Ranch

2013 Capay Valley Rosé (\$18): Pale pink in color, this dry rosé has subtle aromas of strawberries and orange zest. It's fresh and crisp, with lively acidity and a balanced fruitiness.



After blind-tasting 28 wines with grilled asparagus, these wines came out on top. Credit: Tina Caputo

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For mindsets a bit different from the good ones in the

ancient wines to the modern ones, and had